Teaching the Teachers About Common Core

The California Common Core State Standards (CCSS), an integrated model of literacy in English language arts, history, social studies, science, and technical subjects, are taking root in the state this year. Designed to build critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and communication skills, the standards are expected to prepare all students for success in college and the workplace. Now, teaching the teachers how to implement and leverage the standards is a primary initiative at Cal State Fullerton’s College of Education.

Developing the framework for CCSS and English Language Development Standards

After California adopted the CCSS, the state began the process of developing a framework to provide guidance on implementation, and a Cal State Fullerton College of Education faculty member was tapped to help draft the potentially highly influential document. Hallie Yopp Slowik, professor of Elementary and Bilingual Education, worked with Nancy Brynelson, with whom she co-directs the CSU system’s Center for the Advancement of Reading, to write chapters for the state’s Curriculum Framework and Criteria Committee.

“I immersed myself in the standards and drew upon my background in research and practice to write, in collaboration, more than 1,100 pages of text,” explains Yopp Slowik. “It was a rewarding opportunity to contribute to the development of the first attempt to create a framework that integrates standards for the English Language Arts (that is, the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy) with California’s new English Language Development Standards.”

The framework is now with the Instructional Quality Commission, which will suggest edits or changes, and then the document will be posted for public review.

“Comments will be reviewed and revisions, as appropriate, will be made,” explains Yopp Slowik. “The updated draft will undergo a second round of review. Then, it will be forwarded to the State Board of Education where it will, hopefully, be adopted.” Yopp Slowik will be involved throughout the process.

Yopp Slowik is optimistic about the standards, particularly if they are implemented as outlined by the framework.

“I think we will see subjects that have not, in recent times, been in the forefront of our schools, such as social studies, science, and the fine arts, reemerging to take the important place they should have. That is very exciting!

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2…
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— Marilyn Leuer
Department of Secondary Education

Professional development around CCSS

To help implement CCSS quickly, efficiently, and effectively, Cal State Fullerton adopted an intensive capacity-building and professional development program for college faculty to help them understand how the standards will help students and how to develop curricular material in order to reshape teacher training. In October 2012, a group of education leaders from the college attended a Project CORE Common Core Conference and returned to their departments to share with their colleagues an overview of CCSS and how to implement teaching the new standards to pre-service teachers.

“The conference provided us with the big picture regarding the shifts within the standards,” says Kim Case, lecturer, Elementary and Bilingual Education. “We were then able to come back to the department and focus on the K–8 implications in snapshots. We divided up into content areas so that we had team leaders for faculty to go to with more questions. We also provided some additional resources and created a Titanium Site on which we house common core resources and updates.”

Implementing the standards across all content areas

This past summer, Maria Grant, associate professor, Secondary Education, and Marilyn Leuer, faculty, Secondary Education, co-directed a literacy seminar for credential candidates and teachers from local school districts, and emphasizing how the new CCSS can be embedded across all content areas.

“We want to help students process what they learn in our classroom each day. We want to build critical thinkers. To do that, we can blend creative strategies and modern technology to help them interpret, process, and preserve their knowledge,” explains Leuer (see Illustrated Journaling on page 3).

“Teachers can be apprehensive about implementing common core standards. Our seminar demonstrated that Common Core offers an opportunity to enhance learning by going deeper and connecting disciplines,” says Grant.

The sessions featured presenters Cynthia Gautreau, assistant professor of Elementary and Bilingual Education, and veteran teachers Alex Gonzalez and Kim Elliott, who demonstrated how technology can facilitate the incorporation of common core into all curriculums. Chris Street, professor of Secondary Education, also offered examples of how CCSS and academic writing connect to all disciplines. Additionally, Minerva Chavez, assistant professor of Secondary Education, shared her work in high schools connecting Common Core and reading, and Leuer shared how to use art as a creative way to apply CCSS across all subject areas.

“We want to help students process what they learn in our classroom each day. We want to build critical thinkers. To do that, we can blend creative strategies and modern technology to help them interpret, process, and preserve their knowledge,” explains Grant.

Teaching veteran teachers

Many veteran teachers are interested in merging instruction based on state content standards with curriculum driven by the new CCSS. “The CSUF literacy seminar provided tools and strategies to support these veterans in their quest to access the tenets of CCSS, which include processing content through reading, writing, listening, and speaking,” says Grant.

These ideas build on knowledge that pre-service teachers have already accrued during their course of study at Cal State Fullerton. “We are finding that teaching our pre-service teachers to understand Common Core, and then partnering them with veteran teachers in classrooms, helps both new and experienced educators hone instructional methodology,” says Grant.

Mark Ellis, associate professor of Secondary Education and director at-large of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), finds that veteran educators have a unique
Combining art and technology to help students grasp and clarify new concepts is just one way to implement Common Core State Standards.

“When teachers use a more diverse and creative thinking assignment like illustrated journaling, they find that students thoroughly process the material taught and become life-long learners who better understand the world and their place in it,” says Marilyn Leuer, lecturer, Department of Secondary Education.

Leuer recently taught credential candidates and teachers about illustrated journaling and its use in all subject areas. By formulating a visual of material learned, students are able to cement and clarify concepts and respond to written or spoken questions.

“Common Core aims for interdisciplinary connections and deep understanding. Illustrated journaling accomplishes both of those goals,” she says.

Seminar attendees like Cal State Fullerton Secondary Education teacher candidates Jennifer Eckert-Toler and Darlene Dzul-Baron were able to take the examples of illustrated journaling back to their classrooms and put them to use immediately.

“It is nice to have an alternate form of assessment for students to express themselves,” says Eckert-Toler. “It helps students who are struggling with content or academic vocabulary express the main idea. I can easily see if students ‘get it’ by their drawings, even if they struggle with writing or content vocabulary.”

For Dzul-Baron, who is undertaking her first semester of student teaching in 9th grade English classes, seeing the concept of illustrative journaling at work has been transformational.

“I am observing classes composed of students who require additional support. At times, during classroom discussion, it is apparent that the students are capable of conducting the literary analysis required in the Common Core State Standards. However, many of the students — including English language learners — do not yet have the academic language to convey their analysis and thoughts on the reading,” she explains. “By illustrating those thoughts, the students can demonstrate their literacy observations without the pressure of searching for academic language or struggling with being grammatically correct.”
Reading Skills Improve for Elementary Students in Collaborative After-School Program

Ask most kids if they want to stay after school, and the response is likely a resounding “No!” But for certain third- and fourth-graders at Melrose Elementary School in the Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District and graduate students in the Cal State Fullerton Read 516 course, after school is where the learning – and fun – happens. Once a week, these unique teams collaborate for the express purpose of reading improvement.

Pictured above: Melrose Elementary students are proud of their success in the after-school program that helped them improve their reading skills. Students (top row) Eric Alvarez, Betzayda Mejia, Sergio Ramos-Escatel, Sergio Gonzales, Celia Barrios, and (bottom row) Alfredo Hernandez, James Bedolla, and Adrian Rodriguez were tutored by Read 516 course participants from Cal State Fullerton.
“At Cal State Fullerton, we prepare our pre-service teachers for the real world by providing them with opportunities to serve actual students with real reading needs. The mission of the Hazel Miller Croy Reading Center is to serve children from the local community. Bringing these together through partnerships like the one we have with Melrose help us achieve both ends. It’s really a win-win for all.”

— Erica Bowers, associate professor and chair, Department of Reading, director of the Hazel Miller Croy Reading Center

“Our school motto is Pointing to Success and our school mission statement is Whatever It Takes to Get Our Students to Succeed,” says Vivian Cuesta, Melrose principal. “We believe that strong literacy skills are the key to success. This program gave us the opportunity to have other professionals work with our lowest-performing readers and provide additional information we can use to meet their needs. We saw this as another level of intervention for our students.”

“Melrose Elementary and the principal, Vivian Cuesta, could not have been a better match for our program,” exclaims Erica Bowers, associate professor, chair of the Department of Reading, and the director of the CSUF Hazel Miller Croy Reading Center. “Our program strives to serve children in high-need areas where we can make the greatest impact, and Melrose is the perfect fit!”

“Our program requires two practical experiences; one for the Reading Certificate level and one for the Reading and Language Arts Specialist Credential level,” explains Laura Keisler, who teaches the Read 516 Diagnostic-Prescriptive Teaching of Reading program. Once Cal State Fullerton master’s candidates are matched with their third- and fourth-grade Melrose students, they work together for a five-week period, and Keisler oversees the experience.

“I guide our graduate students in assessing their students in various elements of literacy and help them provide the school and the students’ parents with reports that document results, identify areas for further investigation, and recommend necessary intervention,” she says.

By carefully matching students with the Cal State Fullerton reading teachers, an effective synergy was established early in the sessions.

“In walking from room to room, I could feel the energy and see kids working hard and enjoying their time with our Cal State Fullerton students,” says Keisler. “This experience supported growth in children’s motivation for, and interest in, reading.”

With the first sessions complete, feedback from Melrose students and their Cal State Fullerton reading teachers was positive.

“Both the Melrose students and the Cal State Fullerton students were sad to see their sessions come to an end,” says Keisler. That sentiment was echoed by Cuesta.

“When I asked the students what had changed since they received reading help, their answers showed an increase in confidence and pride,” she says. “They told me things like ‘I now speak more English.’ ‘I now know how to read hard words,’ and ‘I can read chapter books.’

The collaborative program also benefits the Cal State Fullerton students.

“Our Cal State Fullerton students are gaining experience with two children at two different levels, which helps them put into practice what they’re learning in a safe space with the guidance of an experienced professor,” explains Bowers. “This experience will really benefit these master’s candidates as they begin their careers.”

“At Cal State Fullerton, we prepare our pre-service teachers for the real world by providing them with opportunities to serve actual students with real reading needs. The mission of the Hazel Miller Croy Reading Center is to serve children from the local community. Bringing these together through partnerships like the one we have with Melrose help us achieve both ends. It’s really a win-win for all.”
SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union Pledges $500,000 Naming Gift to the College of Education

SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union has continued its longstanding support of the College of Education by pledging a new naming gift of $500,000 to the Center for Creativity and Critical Thinking.

“SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union is very much interested in supporting teacher development and advancing education and we are proud to partner with them in those efforts,” says Claire C. Cavallaro, dean of the College of Education.

In 2009, the credit union pledged $50,000 every year for five years to establish the Center at CSUF, which promotes educational approaches and methods that infuse the arts, science, and technology as central components in school curriculum. To accomplish that, the SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union Center for Creativity and Critical Thinking focuses on developing effective education models that promote ingenuity and reflective processing. It also builds partnerships with local schools, working with teachers to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students need in order to thrive in and influence a global economy.

“This funding from SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union means we have the opportunity to expand the reach of the Center to serve more teachers, schools, districts, and community organizations, especially those that serve high-need populations,” says Teresa Crawford, director of the Center. “This gift comes at a crucial time when schools are in need of high-quality teacher-development services to ensure teachers have the skills to understand and teach using the new Common Core State Standards. Thanks to SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union, the Center is poised and ready to meet this need, as well as to expand our services in the arts, technology, and STEM education.”

In its first five years, the Center has provided direct service to nearly 600 teachers and future teachers and to nearly 8,000 students.

“The Center could not have a more perfect partner than SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union,” says Crawford. “They have not only recognized the potential of the Center to positively impact educators and students, but have made it a priority to help us expand our reach and services.”
Moving a City Closer to College

With more than 65 percent of its residents failing to complete high school and about a quarter of its population falling below the poverty line, the City of Maywood is a careworn community, oft-forgotten by outsiders. Despite the city’s deficiencies, Jessica Barco (MS ’10) has always believed in its—and her own—potential to achieve more.

“My passion to make a difference is grounded in my faith and life experiences,” she says, recalling her journey of hope and hardships. “I was the first in my family to graduate from high school and aspire to attend college. My efforts were met with adversity; I had no support models and the reality of college was an overwhelming unknown.”

Spurred on by her natural gifts and abilities, Barco remained college-bound, determined to succeed. In high school, her motivation was evidenced by her exceptional academic performance, regular involvement in school and community activities, and strong leadership as student body president.

“I had a lot of ambition, but it was almost no match for my internal struggle. I feared that by going to college, I was putting myself before the needs of my family. I wanted to contribute,” Barco says. “Against all odds, I did make it to college, but I still found myself wanting to contribute in greater ways.”

In 2009, while attending CSUF, Barco did just that when she created the Maywood Education Fair, an event designed to encourage Maywood residents to pursue college education. Through a continued partnership between CSUF’s Department of Educational Leadership’s Master of Science in Higher Education program and the City of Maywood, the fair has become an annual autumnal mainstay.

“I’m thrilled by the long-term success of the Maywood Education Fair because I know all too well what first-generation students in the City of Maywood and many other cities can face,” she says. “In the event’s conception, I had high hopes and big dreams to provide an education resource within the community’s unique context and culture. Having the opportunity to watch this dream come to life has truly been a blessing.”

Five years since its inauguration, the Maywood Education Fair continues to grow. This fall’s event included food, prizes, and informative CSUF student-organized workshops that drew more than 500 parents, students, and community members. Barco still offers support, attending every year to engage the community and provide a closing keynote speech. She credits CSUF for helping the fair thrive and informing her own career path.

“My experience with the Maywood Education Fair has provided me with a greater understanding of how ideas can impact communities by putting theory into practice,” she says. “CSUF and the fair have given me the resolve to stand up and provide a voice for what I believe in. Moreover, CSUF provided me with the framework I needed to objectively measure what I manage, and manage what I measure.”

Today, Barco remains dedicated to leading with courage and conviction. In addition to being the assistant director of financial aid at Biola University, she and her husband Luis Fernando Barco serve as youth pastors at Iglesia Betania church in Maywood.

“We’ve done exciting work at the church, providing interactive and bilingual financial aid workshops, college admission workshops, and more,” she says. “I’m grateful for the ability to see people as invaluable individuals beyond the context of any projects. In doing so, I can sustain my passion and continue to assist in shaping the next generation of leaders.”
Janice Myck-Wayne, associate professor of Special Education, has successfully landed a $1.25 million U.S. Department of Education grant to fund her Supporting Teacher Advancement and Retention (STAR) project. The grant will help 32 teacher candidates, called Project STAR Scholars, from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds complete the required credential programs for special education preschool teachers. The grant also funds the development of seminars that promote the successful inclusion of children with special needs into the general education preschool setting as well as the development of new course modules to enhance the credential program with evidence-based practices.

Project STAR partners include general education preschool teachers in the Cal State Fullerton Children’s Center and the Santa Ana Unified and Anaheim Unified school districts.

“Grant scholars are participating online with students from eight other countries in the International Project on Education, which addresses the cultural competence aspect of the grant,” she says. “In addition, several scholars have also participated in local professional development workshops.”
Helping students excel in math through dual-language education

A passion for equitable education underpins almost everything Mark Ellis, associate professor of Secondary Education and director at-large of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, does as a professional educator. That passion landed him a $1.5 million National Science Foundation grant to examine the effect of dual-language programs on increasing mathematics and science achievement among Latino junior high students.

The Transforming Academic and Cultural Identidad through Biliteracy (TACIB) project targets bilingual students transitioning from elementary school to junior high school. These students will be taught mathematics and science in both English and Spanish during seventh and eighth grades. The project will draw upon students’ linguistic, familial, and cultural resources to foster a strong sense of identity (“identidad” in Spanish) toward learning and excelling in these disciplines.

“I was fortunate to be part of a collaborative team that includes professors Armando Martinez-Cruz and Sam Behseta in Mathematics and Natalie Tran in Educational Leadership, as well as Michael Matsuda from the Anaheim Union High School District and Janet Yamaguchi at the Discovery Science Center,” Ellis says. “These folks were on board from the beginning with the idea for this project and are deeply committed to seeing it successfully implemented.”

TACIB project partners include the Anaheim Union High School District, the Discovery Science Center, the Anaheim City School District, and the California Association for Bilingual Education. Ellis expects to spend the first year of the project recruiting and working with teacher partners to create instructional materials, as well as working with parents to learn how math and science are important to them and how to support their children’s science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education.

“We will also set up after-school STEM learning activities in collaboration with the Discovery Science Center and recruit Cal State Fullerton students who are planning to earn math or science credentials and who are bilingual in English and Spanish to work with the teachers in the field as paid Fellows,” he explains.

This project comes just as new curriculum standards have been adopted in California for math (Common Core State Standards) and science (Next Generation Science Standards), which emphasize students not only learning content, but also becoming proficient with the disciplinary habits of doing math and science. For this reason, Ellis says, “We also plan to identify CSUF faculty in mathematics and science who want to partner with the teachers in our project, to exchange ideas about how to support students in learning the habits of mind important to the disciplines of mathematics and the sciences.”

Securing this grant enables Ellis to continue his focus on helping all students learn.

“This project demonstrates a commitment to collaborate with school district partners, in particular those serving students from high-need communities, to prepare teachers who have the disposition and skills to support all learners,” he says.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10…
Equipping medical professionals to better serve children with autism

When children with autism and related disorders must undergo cancer treatments, their difficulty in communicating and in understanding treatment protocols can lead to stress and subsequent behavior problems, often leaving medical professionals feeling ineffective. Erica Howell, assistant professor of Special Education and co-director of the Cal State Fullerton Center for Autism, has secured a $50,000 grant to teach these medical professionals how to more effectively support children with autism as they undergo cancer treatment.

"With my prior experience as a teacher of children with autism, I saw the power of behavioral, communicative, social, and sensory interventions in improving the quality of life for my students," explains Howell.

Howell will work in collaboration with co-principal investigator Dr. Leonard Sender, medical director of the Hyundai Cancer Institute at Children’s Hospital Orange County (CHOC) and director of clinical operations and program development at the Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, UC Irvine Medical Center. The grant is part of a P20 grant funded through the National Cancer Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health. It was awarded by CSUF’s Health Promotion Research Institute, in partnership with The Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center.

“The work that Dr. Sender and I are completing is novel and highly needed,” she says. “Not only does it allow for strong collaboration between the Center for Autism and CHOC’s Hyundai Cancer Institute, it also integrates the knowledge we have as education specialists in the College of Education within the medical field.”

Howell will conduct focus groups with families of children with autism who receive treatment at CHOC and also with doctors, nurses, and child life specialists.

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Erica Howell, assistant professor of Special Education and co-director of the Cal State Fullerton Center for Autism, has secured a $50,000 grant to equip medical professionals to better serve children with autism.
As California embarks on the new transitional kindergarten program—a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate—Cal State Fullerton is helping to prepare future teachers for these classrooms.

Kimberly A. Norman, professor of Elementary and Bilingual Education, will coordinate development of transitional kindergarten instructional materials for CSU teacher preparation programs along with other Fullerton faculty. These faculty include Lisa D. Kirtman, Hallie Yopp Slowik, Ruth Yopp-Edwards, and Sharon V. Chappell, all professors of Elementary and Bilingual Education, and Sheila Arnold, a part-time faculty member and an Early Childhood Education Coordinator with the Orange County Department of Education.

“The six Cal State Fullerton faculty selected for the project are recognized nationally for their expertise in early childhood teaching and learning, child development, teacher education and development, as well as language and literacy, mathematics, the arts, science, and social studies,” says Norman.

The project supports the development of innovative, scalable designs and resources that integrate transitional kindergarten into pre-service teacher preparation. It also provides support for candidates in CSU’s 15 doctoral programs in Educational Leadership to conduct research on transitional kindergarten and related topics.

“This work is important because it draws attention to a change that is happening in California and helps to ensure that transitional kindergarten will be included in teacher education,” says Kirtman. In fact, education experts across the country are watching the program for lessons on how the Obama Administration’s proposal for universal Pre-K could work.

The project provides teacher candidates with another layer of information and experiences regarding the education of young children. The CSU Transitional Kindergarten Modules being developed address child development, English learners, literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts.

“This work is grounded in an understanding of child development and instructional practices that are developmentally appropriate for young children,” explains Norman. “Several themes are integrated throughout the eight modules, including the role of exploration and play in building conceptual understanding as well as social-emotional and language development. Other themes include teacher-student and peer interaction, practices that are inclusive and meet the needs of individual learners, and the critical role of partnerships with families and communities.”

This past spring and summer, the project team developed and field tested the instructional modules. This fall, undergraduate and Multiple Subject Credential Program faculty at Cal State Fullerton and Cal State Channel Islands are piloting the instructional materials in their courses.

“The feedback from students, instructors, and stakeholders throughout the state has been extremely positive,” says Norman.

In spring 2014, the project team will disseminate the modules to programs throughout the CSU system through the CSU Teaching Commons website and webinars. These and other events are designed to foster rich discussion on the preparation of teachers for working with young children.

The collaborative aspect of the project has included discussions with colleagues from other CSU campuses, county offices of education, the California Department of Education, as well as policy, research, and professional organizations.

“Being part of this initiative has helped me reflect on my work and think about the importance of active, hands-on, standards-based work at all levels,” says Kirtman.

The project is funded by a $75,000 award, made possible by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, to the CSU Chancellor’s Office.
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Send an email to knaujokas@fullerton.edu to share your message.