

Common Core Monthly Reporter

Transitioning to the Common Core State Standards

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Common Core Full Implementation: Teacher Leadership Has Much to Do With It!

By Nia Rashidchi, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services

According to the California Department of Education, full implementation of the **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** and the new **Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC) system** will occur over several years and in the context of a continuous learning process. The state's implementation process lays out three different phases of work:

- **The Awareness Phase** represents an introduction to the CCSS, the initial planning of systems implementation, and establishment of collaborative opportunities;
- **The Transition Phase** is the concentration on building foundational resources, implementing needs assessments, establishing new professional learning opportunities, and expanding collaboration between all stakeholders; and
- **The Implementation Phase** expands the new professional

learning support, fully aligns curriculum, instruction, and assessments, and effectively integrates these elements across the educational field.

CDE's CCSS Implementation Plan for California was created to support districts in creating implementation plans based on local needs and resources. That plan is organized around the following seven guiding strategies:

- Facilitate high quality professional learning opportunities for educators to ensure that every student has access to teachers who are prepared to teach to the levels of rigor and depth required by the CCSS;
- Provide CCSS-aligned instructional resources designed to meet the diverse needs of all students;
- Develop and transition to CCSS-aligned assessment systems to inform instruction, establish priorities for professional learning, and provide tools for accountability;

It is our teachers who are leading our transition and eventual full CCSS implementation efforts.

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For more information about the CCSS for the West Contra Costa Unified School District, visit <https://sites.google.com/a/wccusd.net/wccusd-common-core-standards/>

Increasing “Student Talk” and Listening Opportunities Is Key as We Transition to the Common Core

By Mary Lugton, Elementary ELD Coach; Hector Franco-Marina, SIOP Coach; and Mimi Melodia, Coordinator of Educational Services, English Learners

The revised California ELD Standards are designed to amplify English Learner (EL) students’ capacity to meet the increased demands surrounding the content and language necessary to access the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards. A critical instructional shift to facilitate the academic growth of ELs is to provide increased opportunities for speaking and listening both in content instruction and during ELD.

Providing regular and purposeful opportunities for EL students to practice structured speaking and listening during ELD and in content instruction has remained a focal point throughout the district’s professional development this year. For ELs, incorporating regular, structured speaking and listening practice using content-based academic vocabulary will be an essential scaffold for access to the content standards.

Research suggests that ELs spend a mere two percent of their instructional day discussing focal lesson content. Instead of the former paradigm, which is teacher-centered (i.e., initiation, response, feedback), the PD focus this year has been on building in class routines and supporting teachers in planning and structuring “student talk” opportunities.

During professional development sessions, ELD teachers have worked to plan for and create student-centered daily language objectives that target student oral practice on specific language structures during ELD. SIOP requires teachers to post and verbally articulate daily content and

language objectives in order to inform and clarify for students the content and the language skills needed to access each lesson.

In both the secondary content-based SIOP and in ELD for elementary and secondary levels, coaches have been working with teachers on

small group differentiated instruction. Creating small differentiated groups where speaking and listening skills can develop in a more intimate setting with less stress and lowered affective filter can truly support EL students in having opportunities to practice the language structures.

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History Teachers Emphasize Support for English Learners

By Natalie Wojinski, Teacher at Hercules High School and TAH Project Lead

Educators in the Teaching American History (TAH) Project continue to develop Common Core-aligned curriculum that meets the needs of their English Learners. Planning within the project starts with a SIOP-inspired template and checklist that includes vocabulary development support, reading support, and inclusion of meaningful activities.

Language objectives also play a key role in professional development activities and lesson planning in the TAH Project. Teachers focus on including multiple literacy domains (reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking) into lessons; students work individually or collaboratively to develop their language skills.

Support for English Learners is also evident in lesson activities, such as the use of Sensory Figures. When learning about the experiences of historical figures, students identify what the individual thinks, feels, touches, and speaks; they visualize how the figure moves through his/her life and the events of that historical period. Students do this activity after reading a biographical piece or other narrative information about particular groups of people in history. Though Sensory Figures help students build language skills, they also help students build empathy for other lives and situations because students put themselves in the shoes of people in history.

Students are further supported by the extensive use of graphic organizers to encourage knowledge acquisition. TAH teachers are using graphic organizers in traditional ways for processing information, but also for planning essays and other writing assignments. Some

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What **Teachers** are Saying About WCCUSD's **Brokers of Expertise** Blended Learning Approach to **Common Core Professional Development**

By Educational Services Staff **Sonja Neely-Johnson, Coordinator; Lyda Butler, Program Assistant; and Cherie Noland, Program Assistant**

The Brokers of Expertise (BOE) online learning modules are the product of collaborative efforts between the California Department of Education and content and professional learning experts throughout California to help educators transition to the Common Core

State Standards.

WCCUSD's blended learning approach allows K-12 teachers from all subject areas to complete online learning sessions at their leisure and then attend one-hour debrief sessions with colleagues. Topics to date range from Literacy and Science to CCSS Overview to Math Practices, and more.

Two new online learning modules have been added at the Brokers of Expertise website www.myboe.org:

- Getting Started with the CA ELD Standards
- Assessment Literacy

More opportunities are coming soon. Look for our flyer with full details!

Dates	Times for Elementary Teachers	Times for Secondary Teachers	All debrief sessions at 2625 Barnard Road, San Pablo
Tuesday, March 11 Tuesday, April 15 Tuesday, May 6	3:30 – 4:30 pm for all dates	4:30 – 5:30 pm for all dates	

Teacher feedback shows that BOE is an engaging learning opportunity

"Videos are valuable in showing how a 21st century classroom should be—where students are active participants in the education process. The strategies are really helpful."

"The CCSS Brokers of Expertise module and debriefing session has given me more insights about improving instruction and the consequent student learning."

"It was great to see how to integrate speaking & listening and writing into science instruction."

"I enjoyed the online learning because I can work at my own pace and review sections as I want or need".

"I will be having 'text-talks'—discussions of content—before asking the kids to write informative responses."

"It made me think about my writing expectations. I would like students to reflect more and cite evidence from the text in their writing."

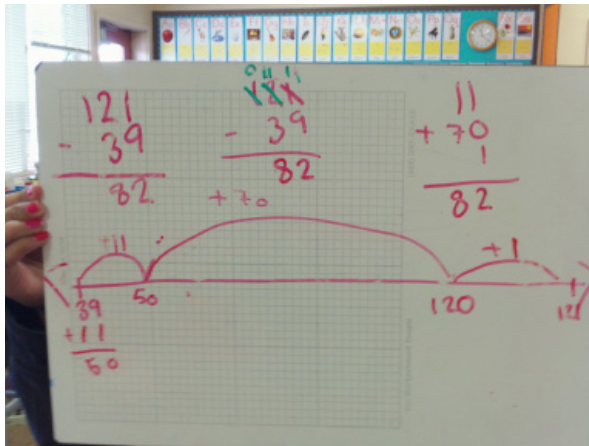
Multiple Methods in Mathematics: Promoting Success For All Students

By Marsha Takemoto, RSP Teacher at Fairmont, with Phil Gonsalves and Drew Kravin, WCCUSD Mathematics Center

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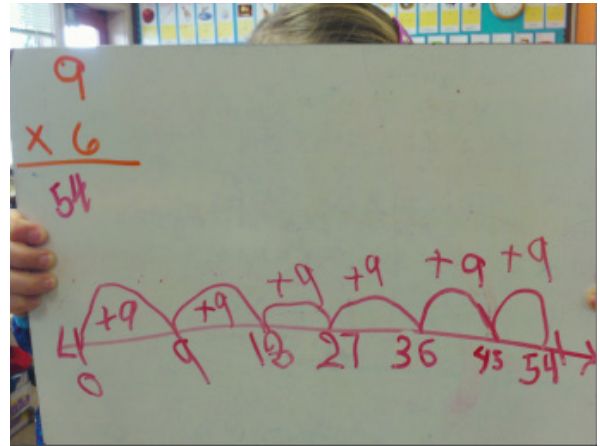
he use of Multiple Methods in mathematics teaching and learning works because students learn in different ways. Rather than teaching “the” way, I teach many approaches and let students choose the method that makes sense to them in the context of the problem. Over time, students learn to make connections among methods and representations, and develop more efficient approaches.

In my Special Education classes, the use of multiple approaches has empowered students in mathematics.



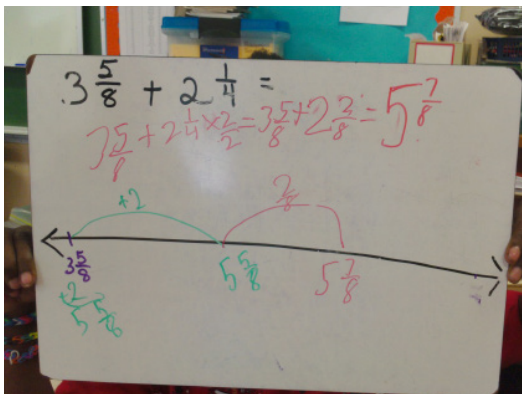
Example 1

This student was only able to jump by ‘ones’ for the longest time and I thought I was talking myself blue explaining, “You can leap by other numbers. Let’s analyze this problem first.” She spontaneously figured out her leaps (correctly and independently). She could not subtract reliably ‘17 minus 9’ when I first started with her.



Example 2

This was a very exciting day for me and for my students. The multiplication ‘one’ I wasn’t sure they would get, but because I had taught them the open number line for subtraction, it was pretty easy for them (I was so thrilled!).



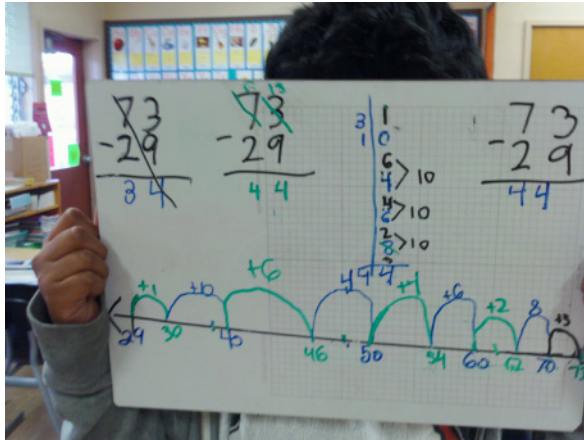
Example 3

My upper graders did the fraction pictures. Although they don’t quite get it, since it was my first attempt, they are familiar with the open number line. This picture shows my students using the open number line technique working as a group to solve a math problem.

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Multiple Methods in Mathematics: Promoting Success For All Students

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Example 4

This '73 minus 29' problem was completed by two of my weakest skilled students. It was absolutely charming. One of them is a bit ahead of the other. He was whispering to the other student to "jump 10" and then trying to "fix" the jumps to get to the next ten and then whispering to his partner to jump 10. Although he never did take his partner's advice, I used this opportunity to re-teach the concept after they were finished.

I have been encouraging teachers to be braver about trying out these techniques. What I say is, "It's a little scary trying out these techniques, especially with the students who don't seem to 'get' math. It looks like they are not getting it for what seems like forever, but what I found is that they eventually get it and they start making leaps that I have not taught them."

I had a bunch of students who were jumping by 'ones' and not finishing a problem in a 45-minute period, which was upsetting to me. But then I had the other students explain how they solved their problems, and put absolutely no pressure on the ones who did not finish. I did a short instructional lesson with them again the next time I saw them. Eventually, they started getting it.

The result is that they are becoming better at mathematical reasoning, which I find an extremely difficult skill set to teach the "traditional way."

We have to stop thinking for and telling our students how to solve problems. We are so pressured into thinking or feeling that we need to have an end product that "looks good." While students may have produced written problems, in reality we've basically spoon fed them step-by-step; we might as well just write the solution on the board for them to copy.

For our students in Special Education, the use of multiple methods can be especially important to opening a door to their success in mathematics. These students, like all students, learn differently, and traditional methods may have led them to believe (incorrectly) that they cannot learn mathematics. By showing these (and all) students multiple approaches, they now see connections and ways of thinking mathematically that lead to their development of understanding, skill, and successful achievement.

By showing Special Education (and all) students multiple approaches, they now see connections and ways of thinking mathematically that lead to their development of understanding, skill, and successful achievement.

Common Core Full Implementation: Teacher Leadership Has Much to Do With It!

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- Collaborate with parents, guardians, and the early childhood and expanded learning communities to integrate the CCSS into programs and activities beyond the K–12 school setting;
- Collaborate with the postsecondary and business communities and additional stakeholders to ensure that all students are prepared for success in career and college;
- Seek, create, and disseminate resources to support stakeholders as CCSS systems implementation moves forward; and
- Design and establish systems of effective communication among stakeholders to continuously

identify areas of need and disseminate information.

Each year, we will continue to finely-tune our action plan for transitioning to the Common Core State Standards and SBAC, keeping these phases and guiding strategies in the forefront of our planning.

Over the last two years of beginning transition work to the CCSS, WCCUSD's most important truth stays consistent... **It is our teachers who are leading our transition and eventual full CCSS implementation efforts...** moment-by-moment, daily, weekly, monthly, and annually, inside and outside the classroom.

We know that teacher leadership is key to our success as a district in ensuring that the Common Core State Standards come to life regularly in each classroom for every student.

We also know that there are lots of places and spaces around the district for other teacher leadership opportunities that some folks might not know about, and so we thought we would highlight some of those opportunities in this issue of the *Common Core Monthly Reporter*.

So, **Go Ahead...Get Your Read On** regarding some of the diverse teacher leadership opportunities in WCCUSD, as well as the other wonderful articles shared in this edition.

WCCUSD Teacher Leadership Opportunities

ACADEMIC SUBCOMMITTEE TEACHERS: Discuss the critical academic issues that impact WCCUSD students, staff, teachers, administration, families, and stakeholders to make informed recommendations to the Board of Education, ensure that stakeholders' voices are heard, and examine academic issues from a variety of perspectives.

CCSS TEACHER TRAINERS: Train colleagues on CCSS PD modules during the school year, after school, and at summer institutes.

CCSS WORKING GROUP TEACHERS: Advise the Board's Academic Subcommittee about the implementation of CCSS in WCCUSD, including professional development, the monitoring of individual school initiatives, and plans on the use of additional CCSS state funding and the use of supplemental materials.

ELEMENTARY LEAD TEACHERS: Facilitate and support teacher Pizza and Planning PD afterschool discussions; create activities to share with teacher groups to model best practices and new instructional approaches.

LINKED LEARNING (PATHWAY) LEAD TEACHERS: Support and grow the Linked Learning/College and Career Readiness High School Pathway Initiative.

SECONDARY LEAD TEACHERS: Participate in cross district meetings to identify and resolve department-related challenges/issues; act as a curricular liaison between site teachers and central staff.

TEACH AMERICAN HISTORY GRANT LEAD TEACHERS: Facilitate professional learning communities, mentor the lesson planning process for the summer institute, and develop professional learning opportunities to deepen the practices of other teachers in their departments; model research-based teaching strategies that improve literacy and serve as a resource of knowledge about the CCSS.

TECH LEAD TEACHERS: Discuss the critical technological issues that impact WCCUSD students, staff, teachers, administration, families, and stakeholders, and make recommendations to the Technology Advisory Committee, as well as support the effective use of classroom technology tools by students and teachers.

Three for Three: Time for a Little Check-in Fun, with Rewards!

Answer three questions about our district's transition to the Common Core State Standards. The first three respondents who answer all three questions correctly will win a prize! Be the first to email your three correct answers to nrashidchi@wccusd.net!

1. What is the BOE blended learning approach in WCCUSD?
2. Transitioning to the Common Core is a lot of work. Name one of the state's seven guiding strategies for CCSS implementation and briefly explain why this strategy is important.
3. How does Multiple Methods help our teachers and students transition to the CCSS?

Winners of the November/December 2013 Three for Three Check-in: Benny Gill from De Anza High, Tracy LaFreniere from Harding Elementary, and Chris Read from Downer Elementary

Increasing “Student Talk” and Listening Opportunities Is Key as We Transition to the Common Core continued from page 2

Teachers are encouraged to develop collaborative tasks for students to complete in small groups that require them to participate in linguistically rich discussions. These structures also allow ELs to collaborate with peers in their home language as they work on tasks to be completed in English.

In order to provide teachers with a forum to develop, discuss, and share strategies for increasing “student talk” around content area subject matter, the following is being implemented:

- The SIOP coach conducts regular Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings at school sites.
- Secondary ELD teachers meet monthly at departmental meetings and are provided individual coaching, and

Providing regular and purposeful opportunities for EL students to practice structured speaking and listening during ELD and in content instruction has remained a focal point throughout the district's professional development this year.

- The elementary ELD coach provides group and individual coaching for teachers.

In all venues, teachers are exposed to new strategies to enhance the use of regular structured language practice based on the content. Teachers are encouraged to try new strategies to engage students in discussions around content and refine the strategies that they currently use.

Teacher feedback has been positive, as they see an increase in EL student retention of content knowledge when activities are well planned and incorporate specific strategies for enhancing “student talk.”

History Teachers Emphasize Support for English Learners

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organizers include visual cues to support text-based category instructions.

In our last year of the TAH grant, participants are focusing on appropriate technology integration to support language development and content knowledge for students. TAH teachers will continue to share the expertise gained in the TAH project with other teachers through ongoing professional development opportunities, presentations to the Academic Subcommittee and Board of Education, and conferences both inside and outside our school district.