



Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement

Lucy McCormick Calkins, Mary Ehrenworth, Christopher Lehman

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"As challenging as it must have been to write and finesse the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, that accomplishment is nothing compared to the work of teaching in ways that bring all students to these ambitious expectations. The goal is clear. The pathway is not."

-Lucy Calkins, Mary Ehrenworth, and Christopher Lehman

The Common Core is written, but the *plan* for implementing the Common Core is not.

Lucy Calkins and her colleagues at the Reading and Writing Project have helped thousands of educators design their own pathways to the Common Core. Now, with *Pathways to the Common Core*, they are ready to help you find your way.

Designed for teachers, school leaders, and professional learning communities looking to navigate the gap between their current literacy practices and the ideals of the Common Core, *Pathways to the Common Core* will help you:

- * understand what the standards say, suggest, and what they don't say;
- * recognize the guiding principles that underpin the reading and writing standards;
- * identify how the Common Core's infrastructure supports a spiraling K-12 literacy curriculum; and
- * scrutinize the context in which the CCSS were written and are being unrolled.

In addition to offering an analytical study of the standards, this guide will also help you and your colleagues implement the standards in ways that lift the level of teaching and learning throughout your school.

Specifically, it will help you:

- * become a more critical consumer of the "standards-based" mandates that are flooding your desk;
- * craft instruction that supports students in reading more complex texts, developing higher level comprehension skills, and writing at the ambitious levels of the CCSS;
- * develop performance assessments and other tools to propel Common Core reforms; and
- * create systems of continuous improvement that are transparent, collegial, and accountable.

Above all, this book will help you interpret the Common Core as a rallying cry that ignites deep, wide and lasting reforms and, most importantly, accelerates student achievement.

For more information, visit UnitsofStudy.com.

Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement Details

Date : Published April 19th 2012 by Heinemann Educational Books

ISBN : 9780325043555

Author : Lucy McCormick Calkins , Mary Ehrenworth , Christopher Lehman

Format : Paperback 214 pages

Genre : Education, Teaching, Nonfiction

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From Reader Review Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement for online ebook

Jen says

The words "common core" have been thrown around a lot in my district with new "units of study" being implemented, and this book was definitely helpful in really understanding what this common core IS and a basic overview of how it is implemented across the grade levels. Now when I hear people talking about this, I have a much better understanding of what is being discussed.

I think my cynicism is also hurting my approach to this book-- it's a lot of WHAT and not a lot of HOW. This is not a "how-to" book; it focuses on the theory and gives some basic examples of these standards put into practice. I felt myself wanting a more practical application book to go along with it with examples and ideas for places to get more resources. There are multiple examples from the early grades, and very few at the high school level which I found frustrating. Just like I try to model things for my students, I like to see models so I know I'm really understanding a concept, and that was hard here. I also think a lot of the ideas presented here sound amazing in theory, but I wonder how practical the expectations are in today's schools (again, me being cynical I guess) with the amount of students we have and lack of resources. But I think this is me expecting something else out of this book rather than what was intended.

Jennifer says

This book was extremely helpful to me in contextualizing and breaking down the implications for the Common Core Standards that are only currently being contemplated by my district. The organization and writing is clear, the examples are relevant, and the research-base is cited. I teach high school (11/12), and while the book is intended for K-12 and I usually skip lots of "elementary portions" in such books, there are very few parts I skimmed or considered not useful to me, and many portions I've highlighted and looked up cited resources for further consideration.

This book--in combination with Conley's books on college & career readiness--has really reshaped how my colleagues and I are structuring our curriculum for the year to come.

Beth Wheeler says

This book's optimistic approach is what kept me reading. Also, the chapter conclusions give a few teaching ideas.

Daniel Rock says

All ela literacy teachers need to read this. Yesterday.

Caroline says

Excellent guide to redirect our teaching goals to these 10 standards. Love the content emphasis..."30% literary texts and 70% informational texts at 12th grade" ..as we (teacher librarians, teachers, parents) help students excel.

Ted says

I am facilitating a book study of this book. The group of teachers, with elementary, middle, and high school all represented, seem to find the text both informative and enlightening. Each chapter digs deeply into a strand and paints a pretty clear picture of what students learning those standards should be experiencing. I attended a one day workshop with Lucy Calkins in Denver and was hooked. Trying to get a grip on the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects without this text seems impossible. I lappreciate the fact the authors are quick to state the Common Core is not perfect, and may not be the answer we have all been seeking, but this document is going to transform how business is conducted in the classroom. I hope this book becomes a part of every teachers professional library, and it is as scribbled on, highlighted, underlined, crossed-out, dog-eared and beat up as my copy.

Claudia says

OK, I read it; I highlighted; I sticky-noted...and I really need to read it again.

Calkins and Ehrenworth and Lehman have done a huge service for all teachers. They took one for the team, truly. They pored over every Standard, every nuance of this overwhelming document and they translated it for us.

I've read big chunks but alone, with no one to bounce ideas and impressions with. Just me and my overworked brain, fighting the Standards all the way.

These authors explain clearly that while educators were not involved in writing any of these Standards, we will be called upon to make sense of them, and more importantly, to make them work. They are very clear about the credentials of the authors...or those who call themselves the authors.

I tried to get my mind around the reading Standards, to see if my class and reading for pleasure will have a place in this new world order. I believe, even though Reader Response is pretty much ignored in favor of New Criticism, I believe what I do with my kids will easily fit into that analysis. I'll just ramp up students' evidence. They'll need to provide quotes and proof of their stance. Easy enough to do.

What about the rumor that longer works won't be necessary? That one drove me crazy when it first surfaced. Again...debunked. Longer works will be necessary. How else will students be able to make thematic connections? One cannot infer the theme of TKAM by reading the excerpt from the CCSS document. We will have to read the entire book. Calkins also speaks to choice in reading as well.

The examination of the writing Standards was new for me...they have carefully matched the exemplars from the document to the standards and have found some holes in the alignment. They suggest teachers use their own students' work to create exemplars. I can see that work being very useful for all concerned.

They even study the visible differences between SMARTER Balance and PARCC, the two consortia that are vying for state \$\$...they're clear that SMARTER Balance included educators in the process, including my hero, Linda Darling Hammond. PARCC, the group OK belongs to, seems to be mostly political operatives. Troubling to say the least.

This is what makes sense to me in a first reading. The work ahead of us is enormous. The support is completely missing or minimal. The stakes are incredibly high. And who's left to do the work? Not the politicians who dreamed up this mess. It's the teachers, with too many kids in their classes, too many meetings to go to, too many mandates looming over their heads.

We're the ones who will try to make something coherent out of this pile of...

bjneary says

I found so much interesting in this book, and am spreading the word in our school about the ideas. L. Calkins, etc. has written a very engaging book about the reading and common core standards and looks at each standard and helps guide in very real doable suggestions how to navigate the common core standards with what is already being done in your school. As I read the book, I felt, with the suggestions, that I would easily be able to collaborate with ELA and social studies, and science teachers and at the same time, help students enjoy reading much more by giving them choice, time to read and more writing, too! I especially liked the importance of reading informational texts. This book that should be read by all educators.

Jaime says

Phenomenal book . . . that I need to reread! The greatest shift in implementing the Common Core that I noticed after reading this book is that teachers are the ones who need to practice and master the skills the Core outlines before they will ever be able to teach them to students. All content areas, including Math, are asked to be teachers of reading and writing, and until teachers themselves are readers and writers, how can they possibly understand what the Common Core is requiring of students?

Melissa says

I'm so glad I finally read this book! It was a gift from my school district last December, but in the mist of teaching, exhaustion, and irritation at Common Core, I set the book aside. After reading it this summer, I wish our school PLC time had been used to read and discuss this book. It would have been time well spent. The authors did an outstanding job validating my concerns about Common Core while still pushing me to see the positive possibilities of CCSS. I found the chapters on "Reading Standards" to be the most enlightening

and truly scary. There is SO much work to be done to get to the level of learning described in these chapters. The authors of Pathways used the word "ambitious" more times than I could count which makes me nervous, sad, mad, and appreciative all at the same time. I am now a Lucy Calkins fanatic and look forward to implementing her Writing Workshop program in my classroom next year.

Ken says

Already, before they've even been implemented, the words "common" and "core" have moved into our schools, unpacked their stuff, and begun to act in general like they own the joint. Where exactly did these standards come from and what do they mean to teachers, administrators, parents, and students?

Ask no more. **PATHWAYS TO THE COMMON CORE** is 197 pages of concise elucidation, making it one book you'd love to put into the hands of everyone associated with education. With its short introduction, the book claims we can bicker and carp about the new standards or we can look for the silver lining and make something of them -- something that can actually help our students. From there, Lucy Calkins, Mary Ehrenworth, and Christopher Lehman take us on a tour through the reading, writing, and speaking/listening and language standards, laying it on the line in simple terms: This is what they say, this is what they DON'T say, and this is what they mean for us if we're going to do the job right.

One interesting implication of the CCSS is how they bring us back to the heyday (30s and 40s) of the New Criticism, when text was king. Close analysis of text is back, meaning some common (and beloved) practices associated with reader response will be downgraded and outright eliminated. Included in this would be practices like connections to self and accessing students' background knowledge on a topic before starting a reading. The Common Core has little patience for such truck, instead asking students to read, retell key points in the text and, once understanding is established, move on to interpretation of key ideas and analysis of structure. Somewhat confusing still is the CCSS architects' suggested texts -- almost all classics -- which go against the authors' suggestion that children enjoy choice in reading selections -- almost all YA lit works. It appears the two can be done at the same time, but to my mind, using classics as the sole means of "increasingly complex text" might lead to additional hits for Spark Notes and sites of its ilk. More exciting is the CCSS's advocacy of contemporary journalism and feature writing, especially on topics of high interest to students. Some good writing is going on in contemporary journalism and nonfiction texts, and it is with open arms that we should be receiving these works into the classroom.

While the work of English teachers is daunting, it's nothing compared to the work of the content area teachers. In fact, this is the greatest danger lying ahead for the CCSS. It rightly promotes much more reading and writing and the in-house **DOING** of both. The trouble is, there aren't enough hours in the school day if it's to happen solely on the English teachers' watch. Instead the CCSS depend upon science, social studies, and even math teachers assuming some of the load by assigning much more informational and persuasive text as well performing more writing in their classes. Will these teachers take the task on, set aside process-writing time in their classrooms, and collect class sets of papers, thus walking a mile in the English teachers' shoes when they are already stretched to the max with their own curricula? The answer is in the question, I fear, unless there is a huge shift in educational thinking and the content area teachers take a serious look at how their teaching priorities must evolve.

Complete with examples of how the CCSS might be implemented and what it might look like in classrooms, **PATHWAYS TO THE COMMON CORE** is a bit of a no-brainer in the buy or don't buy department. If nothing else, administrators and curriculum leaders should read it, but it's really not going to have an impact

unless teachers read it and buy in, too. Informational text itself, this book is clear, concise, and a wake-up call of sorts. If you thought you understood the CCSS because, well, they seem simple and straightforward enough, read this book and think again. I did, and I feel like my eyes are open for the first time, I have a much better picture, in other words, of what to do next as I move forward.

Mary Beth says

My favorite part of this book came in the early chapters where the authors give you a choice- read the standards as a curmudgeon or as if they are gold. It's actually a great way to look at everything! Lots of food for thought and good ideas for implementation.

Shana Karnes says

Calkins et al really took one for the team here by breaking down the CCSS and presenting it in a very optimistic light. I really appreciate their efforts, but the repeated emphasis on leveling libraries and presenting leveled books to kids took this from a 5 to a 4.

Kristen says

Sooooo helpful! This book put the new standards into an educational context that really helped to illuminate the rigorous level of instruction that the standards demand. Pretty cool stuff.

Dawn Little says

This is a fantastic resource to guide teachers as they unpack the Common Core State Standards. In methodic and consistent language, the authors introduce the readers to the reading and writing standards of the Common Core. Additionally, they add many suggestions for ways educators can work collaboratively to gain understanding of the standards and to determine instructional methods.

This book will be my go-to guide for the upcoming school year as I work with teachers to unpack the standards and create instructional methods that work for our students.
