Understanding & Implementing Common Core Standards

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Introduction
Welcome to Understanding & Implementing Common Core Standards, an interactive computer-based instruction course designed to give you a deeper understanding of the rationale for and structure of this particular standards-based framework. In this course you will learn a number of factors that contributed to the overall design of the Common Core Standards as well as practical pedagogical approaches that will support practitioners working toward deeper implementation. We will reflect on the instructional “shifts” emphasized throughout the Common Core Standards and contextualize the shifts based on the diverse population of students course participants serve. Understanding & Implementing Common Core Standards will also provide connections to a variety of instructional considerations that will support implementation regardless of educational context. Practitioners will be provided opportunities to reflect on current practice and the degree to which they align with the Common Core Standards as well as with colleagues across a wide range of settings implementing these standards.

This computer-based instruction course is a self-supporting program that provides instruction, structured practice, and evaluation all on your home or school computer. Technical support information can be found in the Help section of your course.

Course Materials (Either Online or CD-Rom)
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Academic Integrity Statement
The structure and format of most distance-learning courses presumes a high level of personal and academic integrity in completion and submission of coursework. Individuals enrolled in a distance-learning course are expected to adhere to the following standards of academic conduct.

Academic Work
Academic work submitted by the individual (such as papers, assignments, reports, tests) shall be the student’s own work or appropriately attributed, in part or in whole, to its correct source. Submission of commercially prepared (or group prepared) materials as if they are one’s own work is unacceptable.

Aiding Honesty in Others
The individual will encourage honesty in others by refraining from providing materials or information to another person with knowledge that these materials or information will be used improperly. 

*Violations of these academic standards will result in the assignment of a failing grade and subsequent loss of credit for the course.*

**Level of Application**
This course is designed for anyone working to implement the Common Core State Standards with a diverse learning population across the K-12 spectrum. While the information presented may have relevance to any student-centered educational setting, it will have the most relevance for K-12 mixed ability classrooms.

**Expected Learning Outcomes**
As a result of this course, participants will demonstrate their ability to:
1) Understand the major shifts in English and Language Arts/Literacy (ELA) and Mathematics reflected in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)
2) Learn about the design features of the CCSS (what to teach) and implications for professional practice (how to teach it)
3) Explore research-based pedagogical strategies that align with what is emphasized in the CCSS
4) Appreciate the importance of mapping any implementation gap that may exist between current personal practice and what research indicates aligns with the CCSS
5) Self-reflect on the degree to which a "CCSS mindset" has been developed that supports the "what" (CCSS), the "how" (instruction), and the "who" (ALL learners) required for implementation
6) Develop a plan of action with implementation strategies designed to deepen student learning as well as generate evidence of your actions
7) Recognize the connection between the creation of equitable learning conditions and developing a "Common Core Mindset" that integrates a number of dimensions
8) Distinguish between "rigor" and "difficulty" and understand the implications for teachers
9) Articulate the difference between a "fixed" and a "growth" orientation and implications of each view for students and teachers
10) Self-assess the priority level to teach students that ability is expandable
11) Learn a seven-step process for teaching students that ability is expandable
12) Learn a four-step process for articulating standards and increasing student ownership over learning outcomes
13) Recognize the ways that student and teacher self-efficacy are interconnected
14) Learn the purpose of and a process for providing effective prescriptive feedback
15) Understand the significance of the emergence of educational neuroscience as it relates to implanting the Common Core Standards
16) Understand the importance of explicitly teaching academic language and methods for increasing student ownership of learning
17) Delineate the difference between a teaching strategy and a learning strategy
18) Articulate the rationale for using the compare and contrast learning strategy when implementing Use web-based tools designed to simultaneously engage students with primary source documents and in higher order thinking skills
19) Learn strategies to increase comprehension and problem-solving skills
20) Develop an understanding of the role of reasoning and argument in the CCSS
21) Recognize why writing in numerous formats is an essential cross-cutting strategy
22) Provide evidence of professional context and learning within a course using a reflection strategy for further planning implementation of the CCSS the Common Core Standards

**Course Description**
This course, *Understanding & Implementing Common Core Standards*, has been divided into four chapters. The organization of the course covers the rationale for and design of the Common Core State Standards, the "Common Core Mindset" practitioners need for successful implementation, and what specific actions can be taken for deeper implementation across settings.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Shifts Resulting From CCSS Implementation
Chapter 2: Developing a CCSS Mindset
Chapter 3: Common Core Mindset in Action
Chapter 4: Thinking Through the Core

Course Overview

In Chapter 1, we will outline the rationale for and structure of the Common Core State Standards. The major shifts in English and Language Arts/Literacy (ELA) and Mathematics reflected in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will be covered. An overview of design features of the CCSS (or “what to teach”) will be connected to the practical implications for providing instruction (or “how to teach”). Research-based pedagogical strategies aligned with what is emphasized in the CCSS are highlighted. The importance of mapping any implementation gap between current practice and what is needed to deeply implement the Common Core Standard will also be explored.

In Chapter 2, we will move past the "what" of standards to identify the underlying principles teachers need to understand when implementing the CCSS. Teachers who take time to re-examine their operating principles are in the best position to know how well their approach aligns with what the authors of the CCSS had in mind when developing the standards. This is what is referred to in this course as developing the “CCSS Mindset.” Clarification will be made between “rigor” and “difficulty” and the implications will be discussed for teachers as they work to create equitable learning conditions. We will also articulate the difference between a “fixed” and a “growth” orientation and the implications of each view for students and teachers. A self-assessment tool will be used so course participants can determine the priority level to which course participants and their students believe that ability is expandable. A seven-step process for directly teaching students that ability is expandable is also provided.

In Chapter 3, the emphasis will be on designing accessible learning conditions in partnership with students. We do this in partnership with learners in ways that will accelerate their growth toward college, career, and citizenship. The various ways in which student and teacher self-efficacy are interconnected will be discussed. In light of these interconnections, a four-step process for articulating standards and increasing student ownership over learning outcomes will be outlined. Additionally, the purpose of and a process for providing effective prescriptive feedback will be provided. As it pertains to the implementation of the Common Core Standards, the significance of the emergence of educational neuroscience and corollary strategies will be outlined. The importance of explicitly teaching academic language and methods for increasing student ownership of learning across settings will also be outlined. Participants will be supported to think through how they will approach students who struggle when implementing the Common Core Standards and the role of differentiation.

In Chapter 4, we will further explore how implementation of the Common Core Standards is aimed at deepening student comprehension and higher order thinking skills. The difference between a teaching strategy and a learning strategy will be discussed in conjunction with a particular implementation strategy, compare and contrast. Specific web-based tools for designing engaging learning activities using primary source documents and for engaging students in higher order thinking skills will be provided. The importance of student use of reasoning and argument in writing across the CCSS is addressed. Course participants will be provided a tool for further reflection on their own implementation of the standards and support in planning for any changes identified through reflection.

Each chapter contains additional handouts that cover specific topics from the chapter in greater depth. They are provided for you to read, ponder, and apply to the setting in which you work. Some of the handouts are directly related to the concepts and content of the specific chapter, but also included are handouts indirectly related to provide extended learning connections.

Student Expectations

As a student, you will be expected to:

- Complete all information chapters, showing a competent understanding of the material presented.
- Complete all chapter exams, showing a competent understanding of the material presented.
- Complete a review of any chapter on which your examination score was below 70%.
- Retake any examination, after completing an information review, to increase that examination score to a minimum of 70% (maximum of three attempts). *Please note: Minimum exam score requirements may
vary by college or university; therefore, you should refer to your course addendum to determine what your minimum exam score requirements are.

- Complete all course journal article and essay writing assignments with the minimum word count shown for each writing assignment.
- Complete a course evaluation form at the end of the course.

Examinations
At the end of each course section, you will be expected to complete an examination designed to assess your knowledge. You may take these exams a total of three times. Your last score will save, not the highest score. After your third attempt, each examination will lock and not allow further access. The average from your exam scores will be printed on your certificate. However, this is not your final grade since your required writing assignments have not been reviewed. Exceptionally written or poorly written required writing assignments, or violation of the academic integrity policy in the course syllabus, will affect your grade. As this is a self-paced computerized instruction program, you may review course information as often as necessary. You will not be able to exit any examinations until you have answered all questions. If you try to exit the exam before you complete all questions, your information will be lost. You are expected to complete the entire exam in one sitting.

Writing Assignments
This course has two required writing components. ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE REVIEWED. Exceptionally or poorly written assignments, or violation of the academic integrity policy noted in the course syllabus, will affect your grade.

It is highly recommended that you write and save all writing assignments in an external word processing program (such as Word or Notepad), and then copy and paste these into the course program so that you will have backup copies.

**TO SAVE YOUR ESSAYS:**

When you select the question or article you wish to respond to, ‘Simple Text’ or ‘Text Edit’ will launch automatically. When you are finished entering your response, simply click SAVE.

**You must SAVE before you write another essay or move on to another part of the course.**

1) **Essay Requirement: Critical Thinking Questions**

There are four Critical Thinking Questions that you must complete. You will do research on the questions and write brief essay responses relating it to the course content (and your personal experiences, when possible). To view the questions, click on REQUIRED ESSAY and choose the Critical Thinking Question that you are ready to complete; this will bring up a screen where you may enter your essay. You must write a minimum of 500 words (maximum 1,000) per essay. You may go back at any point to edit your essays, but you must be certain to click SAVE once you have completed your edits.

**You must SAVE before you write another essay or move on to another part of the course.**

2) **Essay Requirement: Journal Articles**

This task requires you to write a review of three peer-reviewed or scholarly journal articles (blogs and news articles are not acceptable) of your choice on a topic related to this course. You may choose your topic by entering the Key Words (click on the Key Words button) into a search engine of your choice (Bing, Google, Yahoo, etc.). You may also access www.scholar.google.com, www.findarticles.com or www.edarticle.com to search for relevant professional articles. Or simply type into your finder "free education articles" and numerous sites will be displayed. Choose three relevant articles and write a critical summary of the information given in each article, explaining how the information relates to, supports, or refutes information given in this course. Conclude your review with your thoughts and impressions (200 words per journal article minimum, 400 words maximum). Be sure to provide the journal name, volume, date, and any other critical information to allow the instructor to access and review that article. Grades on summaries are reduced if not properly cited.
To write your essays, click on REQUIRED ESSAY and choose the Journal Article that you would like to complete; this will bring up a screen where you can write your review. When you are ready to stop, click SAVE. You may go back at any point to edit your essays, but you must be certain to click SAVE once you are done with your edits. For more information on the features of this assignment, please consult the HELP menu.

You must SAVE before you write another essay or move on to another part of the course.

Facilitator Description
Understanding & Implementing Common Core Standards has been developed with the widest possible audience in mind because the core principles and practices of implementation need to be applied across K-12 settings. The primary goal of the course is to provide the rationale for the Common Core Standards (the why) and what research-based pedagogical approaches will help practitioners implement these standards in their unique context. The course acknowledges that practitioners are at varying stages of implementing these standards, so opportunities for self-reflection, learning about cross-cutting implementation strategies, and action planning are based on each course participant’s current practice and context.

Steve Dahl, the instructor of record, has served as a district-level administrator overseeing a variety of federal programs, such as Special Education, English Language Learning (ELL), and Title 1, for the past 10 years. He has a Master’s Degree in Special Education and has completed post-Master’s coursework to obtain a Washington State Administrator Credential which certifies him to oversee programs ranging from Preschool settings through 12th grade (as well as post-secondary vocational programs for 18-21 year old students). He has 22 years of combined experience in resource-room special education classrooms, inclusion support in a comprehensive high school, and provision of support to adults with disabilities in accessing a wide range of in-school and community learning opportunities. Please contact Professor Dahl if you have course content or examination questions.

Instructor Description
Dr. Michael Sedler has presented seminars and classes throughout the Pacific Northwest and Canada. Dr. Sedler has worked as an administrator, behavior specialist, teacher and social worker within the public school setting. Dr. Sedler is an adjunct professor for two universities in the state of Washington and has been a professor for a college in Georgia. He has been a consultant for governmental agencies and worked for a state correctional facility for juveniles and for a community mental health agency. His 15 years of public education experience combined with business experience increases his knowledge base for course delivery. He has presented in schools, hospitals, residential settings and for businesses in the public and private sectors. Please contact Professor Dahl if you have course content or examination questions.

Contacting the Facilitator
You may contact the facilitator by emailing Professor Dahl at steve_dahl@virtualeduc.com or calling him at 509-891-7219, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. PST. Phone messages will be answered within 24 hours. Phone conferences will be limited to ten minutes per student, per day, given that this is a self-paced instructional program. Please do not contact the instructor about technical problems, course glitches, or other issues that involve the operation of the course.

Technical Questions
If you have questions or problems related to the operation of this course, please try everything twice. If the problem persists please check our support pages for FAQs and known issues at www.virtualeduc.com and also the Help section of your course.

If you need personal assistance then email support@virtualeduc.com or call (509) 891-7219. When contacting technical support, please know your course version number (it is located at the bottom left side of the Welcome Screen) and your operating system, and be seated in front of the computer at the time of your call.

Minimum Computer Requirements
Please refer to VESi’s website: www.virtualeduc.com or contact VESi if you have further questions about the compatibility of your operating system.

Refer to the addendum regarding Grading Criteria, Course Completion Information, Items to be Submitted and how to submit your completed information. The addendum will also note any additional course assignments that you may be required to complete that are not listed in this syllabus.

Bibliography (Suggested Readings)


Oregon Department of Education. (n.d.). Apply the concepts. Retrieved from http://oregonliteracypd.uoregon.edu/topic/academic-language


Course content is updated every three years. Due to this update timeline, some URL links may no longer be active or may have changed. Please type the title of the organization into the command line of any Internet browser search window and you will be able to find whether the URL link is still active or any new link to the corresponding organization's web home page.

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