

Preface

This book examines the rationale for CCSS and provides readers with the means to use them to transform their schools into world-class educational institutions. We write as proponents of CCSS who recognize many of the limitations of a common core, not the least of which is that the common core is the lowest common level of performance to which teachers and school leaders should aspire. The purpose of the CCSS and their inherent strengths and weaknesses need discussion and debate. Those who will implement the CCSS must understand their strengths and weaknesses.

We recognize that teachers, especially new and aspiring teachers, need to have a rationale and a purpose for their work with students in the CCSS. If teachers are to innovate and adapt to the learners in their classes, they must deeply understand the purpose of the common core.

We provide school leaders with a practical guide to implement the CCSS. We write in a way so that teachers and school leaders can see clearly how they must work together to implement the common core standards and prepare students to function beyond the limits of the common core standards.

In our effort to share a rationale and vision for the CCSS, we first help school leaders and teachers to understand why America needs common core standards and more rigorous curricula and how it is possible to have almost all of our students prepared to compete in a global economy. We distinguish common core standards from local curriculum and performance expectations. In our design for more effective schools, we see the CCSS as the framework for teacher and school leader development, innovation, and continuous improvement.

We provide a thorough discussion of the merger of local language arts and math curricula with the CCSS. We infuse into the discussion science and social studies curricular designs and efforts by teachers to meet the writing and comprehension expectations that high-performing nations achieve with many of their students.

We discuss challenges that school leaders and teachers face as they try to make the CCSS work in their schools. In this effort, we focus on practical methods that teachers who employ formative assessments use to guide instruction and have almost all of their students achieve mastery of their lessons. In addition, we discuss the leadership challenge to all educators, and we offer practical pathways to success.

Diversity of ethnicity, wealth, languages, schools, and culture pose exceptional challenges in the United States. We provide a winning view of diversity and multicultural issues in our schools. We show how teachers and school leaders can experience diversity as a strength and resource within their schools. We try to show how multiculturalism can become a barrier or a resource for exceptional learning in our schools. We encourage teachers and school leaders to innovate by understanding deeply the CCSS and using the common core as a “melody line” from which they can improvise to create great “jazz” and accomplished learners.

Finally, we provide a tried-and-true method to improve a school in the detailed outline that we share about joint intervention teams (JITs). We give school boards, principals, teachers, and parents a blueprint to construct their own self-renewing schools. We show them how to collaborate and discover their own pathways for children to explore and to master skills for future productive citizenship. We offer liberating principles that take school leaders and teachers beyond the common core standards, and we show them the mental models necessary for freedom and the pursuit of happiness far beyond the limits of public education policy. The simplistic legislative acts that federal and state agencies initiate to monitor schools and that state governments provide to test students and evaluate teachers only matter if we permit them to restrict our performance in our schools. We want all educators to view the CCSS and state measurements of student achievements as springboards from which they launch their gymnastic gyrations into a mastery ballet of student and teacher synchronized learning.

We hope that this book will help our readers master the intricacies of the CCSS and free them from restrictive mental models and efforts to teach to tests. We believe that our book can enable school leaders and teachers to collaborate in new ways. We believe that educators who adopt our approach to the CCSS will see themselves as the true innovators and the guiding hands that set children free to be lifelong learners.