

Framing Teaching for Common Core Literacy Standards

Strategic Observation And Reflection
(SOAR Teaching Frames™ for Literacy)



California's public education system opened the door to two significant innovations during 2009 and 2010 with ramifications for the professionalization of teaching. First, in 2009 the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) and the California Department of Education (CDE) set forth expectations for California teachers by way of six standards grounded in a "developmental and holistic vision of teaching," standards which apply to teachers of all grade levels and all disciplinary backgrounds (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2009). Throughout the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) document, terms like "learning communities" and "professional communities" are reiterated, highlighting the essential role of collaboration, communication, and shared understanding among teachers and other stakeholders in effective schools. In addition, pointing out the necessity of "...a common language and a vision of the scope and complexity of the profession by which all teachers can define and develop their practice" (p. 1). A core assumption in California's vision of teaching is the idea that "...teachers are never 'finished' as professional learners" (p. 2), that individual development unfolds in a professional community with experience and is profoundly, reciprocally shaped by self-assessment and reflective analysis and by the values, expectations, and beliefs of that community.

The second innovation in California, namely the State Board of Education's adoption of the California Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010, has taken center stage in the day-to-day work of professionals in schools with unparalleled force. These standards articulate what students should be able to do by the end of high school, in order to be college and career ready. For example, the ELA Standards demand a greater balance between reading informational and literary texts, and stress the use of text-based evidence to support argumentation in writing and speaking. The Anchor Literacy Standards require students to engage in disciplinary discussions, identify and use evidence to support claims, and develop and use appropriate disciplinary language. Just as the CSTPs emerge from a view of teachers as reflective professionals obligated to make their own decisions about how they will teach in light of the needs of their particular students, the CCSS purposefully did *not* prescribe what teachers should say or do or enact or assign in their classrooms or schools.

The intersection of the vision of professional teaching in the CSTPs and the expectations for teachers as reflective practitioners in the CCSS is plain to see. But where can any educational professional find answers to questions like these: What does the practice of a particular teacher at an initial level look like in *engaging and supporting all students in learning* (CSTP 1) to develop arguments to support claims using relevant and sufficient evidence (CCSS Writing Anchor 1)? How does the practice of this particular teacher at the initial level differ from that of a highly developed teacher? How do these signature practices change as they emerge across the continuum of teaching? What do they look like concretely once they have developed through sustained reflective analysis and professional development? We believe that questions like these are at the heart of successful CCSS implementation.

We adopt a multi-tier strategy for supporting implementation of Common Core State Standards through systems of professional growth. This multi-tier strategy is aligned with a research based theory of change and attends to three key design principles for building instructional capacity: target the instructional shifts needed for CCSS to provide a laser-like focus for the work and drive learning outcomes for all students; cultivate local teacher community in driving instructional change; and create the conditions necessary for continuous improvement through systems of professional growth.

The Essential Practice Frames (EPFs)™ and associated rubrics described in this research brief are the result of more than six years of research and development. The purpose of the frames is to offer teachers, coaches and administrators, who are currently implementing new College and Career Readiness Standards including the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), a suite of tools that can be used for a variety of purposes: 1) informal or guided self-assessment of teaching practices; 2) site- and district-based professional growth initiatives; 3) formative assessment of teaching practices; and 4) teacher evaluation. Our research and development suggest that these frames are powerful tools for driving both teacher and student growth. Our team of educational researchers and practitioners engaged in systematic research to identify the essential practices that teachers can use to drive language and literacy learning across disciplines as articulated in the CCSS ELA and Anchor Literacy Standards.

Identifying Essential Teaching Practices

The practices articulated in the *SOAR Teaching Frames™ for Literacy* emerged from analyses of data from Delphi Panel studies of expert consensus on disciplinary literacy instruction across content areas (Brisk & Proctor, 2012; Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Chinn, & Ratleff, 2011; Grossman, Loeb, Cohen, & Wyckoff, 2013), video observations of classroom instruction (O’Hara, Pritchard, & Zwiars, 2014; O’Hara, Pritchard, & Zwiars, in press), existing instructional practice rubrics with established reliability and predictive validity (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014; Danielson, 2013; Grossman, Cohen, & Brown, 2014; O’Hara, Pritchard, & Zwiars, in press), and an extensive review of the research literature on effective literacy instruction (Baker et al, 2014; Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2012; Nagy & Townsend, 2012; Uccelli, Galloway, Barr, Meneses, & Dobbs, 2015). The SOAR™ Teaching Frames for Literacy is a 21-item scoring protocol evaluating ten essential practices critical to

High-Impact Practices	Acquisition of Disciplinary Language CSTP 3		
	Disciplinary Thinking Processes CSTP 1; 3		
	Disciplinary Perseverance CSTP 3		
	Disciplinary Communication CSTP 2; 3		
	Disciplinary Discussions CSTP 1; 3		
	Disciplinary Uses of Evidence CSTP 1; 3		
Cross-Cutting Practices	Promoting a Culture of Disciplinary Learning CSTP 2; 3	Fostering Metacognition for Disciplinary Learning CSTP 3	Monitoring and Guiding Disciplinary Learning CSTP 1
	Designing Instruction for Disciplinary Thinking and Understanding CSTP 1; 3		
	Designing Instruction for Disciplinary Thinking and Understanding CSTP 1; 3		
Foundational Practice	Designing Instruction for Disciplinary Thinking and Understanding CSTP 1; 3		

the teaching of CCSS ELA and Anchor Literacy Standards. The results of our research revealed both a set of practices essential for CCSS, as well as a framework for how these practices are interconnected during instruction, which we call Essential Practice Frames.

Essential Practice Descriptions

At the top of each of the six Essential Practice Frames are high-impact practices that our research identified as having high potential to drive student learning as articulated in the CCSS ELA and Anchor Literacy Standards. The six high-impact practices that we have identified are:

- *Acquisition of Disciplinary Language.* This practice focuses on structuring, strengthening, and supporting the acquisition and use of the language needed to participate in knowledge construction and disciplinary tasks. Disciplinary language has three distinctive features: vocabulary, syntax, and discourse (Nagy & Townsend, 2012; Cook, Boals & Lundberg, 2011; August et al, 2014).
- *Disciplinary Thinking Processes.* This practice focuses on structuring, strengthening, and supporting disciplinary thinking skills to practice and deepen comprehension, content knowledge, and disciplinary language (Schoenfeld, 2011; Fogo, 2011; Murphy, Rowe, Ramani, & Silverman 2014).
- *Disciplinary Perseverance.* This practice focuses on structuring, strengthening, and supporting students' ability to persevere, which includes setting long-term goals, accepting ambiguity, sustaining stamina, and adjusting approaches (Beers & Probst, 2013; Marzano & Heflebower, 2011; Zwiers, O'Hara, & Pritchard, 2014b).
- *Disciplinary Communication.* This practice focuses on structuring, strengthening, and supporting the quantity and quality of students' oral and written output using academic language (Bernabei & Reimer, 2013; Zwiers, O'Hara, & Pritchard, 2014a; Zwiers, O'Hara, & Pritchard, 2014c).
- *Disciplinary Discussions.* This practice focuses on structuring, strengthening, and supporting students' ability to engage in student-to-student disciplinary discussions. Disciplinary discussions can consist of face-to-face interactions, online dialogues, and written conversations (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011; Kazemi & Hintz, 2014; Zwiers, O'Hara, & Pritchard, 2014d).
- *Disciplinary Uses of Evidence.* This practice focuses on structuring, strengthening, and supporting uses of multiple forms of evidence in disciplinary writing and speaking (Fisher & Frey, 2014; Kibler, Walqui, & Bunch, 2015; Cummins, 2013).

High-impact practices are not effective without the three cross-cutting practices. These include Promoting a Culture of Disciplinary Learning, Fostering Metacognition for Disciplinary Learning, and Monitoring and Guiding Disciplinary Learning.

- *Promoting a Culture of Disciplinary Learning.* This practice focuses on the process of developing and enacting norms of interaction that promote a culture of disciplinary learning and intellectual rigor as well as on how the teacher establishes high expectations and fosters in all students the willingness to participate in tasks and take risks (Finley, 2015; Jennings & Greenberg, 2008; Brophy, 2010).
- *Fostering Metacognition for Disciplinary Learning.* This practice focuses on the degree to which a teacher visibly enacts and deconstructs metacognitive processes and strategies that foster students' metacognitive knowledge. Examples of metacognitive processes include: self-monitoring, self-assessing, self-questioning, and selection of strategies (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, & Murphy, 2012; Marzano & Heflebower, 2011).
- *Monitoring and Guiding Disciplinary Learning.* This practice focuses on how effectively a teacher monitors and guides the disciplinary learning throughout each task and the lesson as a whole as well as adjusts and supports disciplinary tasks to meet the current needs of all students in the classroom. This practice also includes providing feedback and gradually removing supports to foster students' ability to work flexibly and independently (Marzano, Yanoski, Hoegh, & Simms, 2013; Wiggins, 2012).

The cross-cutting and high-impact practices are not effective without the foundational practice.

- *Designing Instruction for Disciplinary Thinking and Understanding*. This practice focuses on the design of lessons and learning tasks to promote disciplinary learning and support the target, high-impact practice. This practice also focuses on how clearly and directly the teacher aligns disciplinary learning targets with the lesson's texts and tasks, and enables students to meet the disciplinary concepts and language demands of tasks and texts (Marzano et al, 2013; Wilson Sztajn, Edington, & Myers, 2015; Zwiers, O'Hara, & Pritchard, 2014b).

Reliability and Validity

To establish reliability, two procedures were used. We trained raters to score 40 videos on classroom practice using the newly developed SOAR™ protocol. The pilot data was analyzed and showed high generalizability ($E \sigma^2 = 0.90$), and high inter-rater reliability correlations, $r > 0.91$. The *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (APA, 1999) defines validity as “the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of test scores” (p.9). Three critical elements are established with this definition: theory, evidence, and interpretations. To establish the validity of a measurement tool, there must be a theoretical foundation. The Essential Practice Frames purport to reliably and accurately identify teacher practices that foster student practices related to the CCSS ELA and Anchor Literacy Standards. However, claims such as those outlined in the literature and stated here are merely claims, albeit research-based. Evidence is required to instantiate these claims (Kane, 2001). Data from Delphi studies of expert consensus, together with a series of expert convenings, were collected to support the validity claims made in support of the SOAR™ Teaching Frames.

Operationalizing the SOAR™ Protocol

We intend for this protocol to be used in several ways. First, we believe that it will support teachers in improving their teaching of disciplinary literacy and implementation of the CCSS. Having identified the practices that are most predictive of student growth, our team has developed a corresponding set of videos and materials to illustrate what these practices look like at different levels of enactment. In partnership with *Teachscape* and *EPF for teaching* we have developed a calibration platform designed around the SOAR™ Teaching Practice Frames. This new calibration platform:

- provides a much needed nexus between the CCSS and CSTP;
- helps teachers and administrators drive student learning by focusing on a set of effective, integrated instructional practices for CCSS ELA and Anchor Literacy Standards;
- scaffolds professional learning opportunities for teachers in different grade spans (TK-2, 3-8 and 9-12) and across content areas (ELA, Math, Social Studies, Science).

We are currently using the protocol and corresponding support materials in professional growth programs for teachers, coaches and instructional leaders in partner districts and schools across the state of California. A calibration tool for the SOAR Teaching Frames for Math is currently under development.

References

- APA. (1999). *The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*. Washington, D.C.: Author.
- August, D., Branum-Martin, L., Cardenas-Hagan, E, Francis, D., Powell, J, Moore, S., & Haynes, E. (2014). Helping ELLs meet the Common Core State Standards for literacy in science: The impact of an instructional intervention focused on academic language. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 7, 54-82.
- Baker, S., Lesaux, N., Jayanthi, M., Dimino, J., Proctor, C. P., Morris, J., Gersten, R., Haymond, K., Kieffer,

- M. J., Linan-Thompson, S., & Newman-Gonchar, R. (2014). *Teaching academic content and literacy to English learners in elementary and middle school* (NCEE 2014-4012). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications_reviews.aspx.
- Beers, K., & Probst, R. (2013). *Notice & Note: Strategies for Close Reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Bernabei, G., & Reimer, J. (2013). *Academic Writing for Serious Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Literacy.
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. (2014). *Building trust in observations: A blueprint for improving systems to support great teaching*. Seattle, WA: Author.
- Brisk, M.E. & Proctor, C.P. (2012). Challenges and supports for English language learners. In K. Hakuta, & M. Santos (Eds.), *Understanding language: Language, literacy, and learning in the content areas* (pp. 115– 122). Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University.
- Brophy, J. (2010). *Motivating students to learn* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Commission on Teacher Credentialing. (2009). *California Standards for the Teaching Profession*. Sacramento, CA: Author.
- Cook, H. G., Boals, T., & Lundberg, T. (2011). Academic achievement for English learners: What can we reasonably expect? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 93(3), 66-69. Retrieved from <http://intl.kappanmagazine.org>
- Cummins, S. (2013). *Close Reading of Informational Texts: Assessment-Driven Instruction in Grades 3-8*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Danielson, C. (2013). *The framework for teaching evaluation instrument*. Princeton, NJ: The Danielson Group.
- Echevarria, J., Richards-Tutor, C., Chinn, V., & Rattleff, P. (2011). Did they get it? The role of fidelity in teaching English learners. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 54(6), 425-434. Doi: 10.1598/JAAL.54.6.4.
- Finley, T. (2015). The science behind classroom norming. *Edutopia*, Retrieved from: <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/establishing-classroom-norms-todd-finley>
- Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2014). *Close Reading and Writing from Sources*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Lapp, D. (2012). *Text Complexity: Raising Rigor in Reading*. International Reading Association: Newark, DE.
- Fogo, B. (2011). Making and measuring the California history standards. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(8), 62-67.
- Grossman, P., Cohen, J., & Brown, L. (2014). Understanding instructional quality in English Language Arts: Variations in the relationship between PLATO and value-added by content and context. In T. Kane, K. Kerr, & R. Pianta (Eds.). *Designing teacher evaluation systems: New guidance from the Measures of Effective Teaching project*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Grossman, P., Loeb, S., Cohen, J., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). Measure for measure: The relationship between measures of instructional practice in middle school English Language Arts and teachers' value-added scores. *American Journal of Education*, 119(3), 445-470.
- Jennings, P., & Greenberg, M. (2008). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 491-525.
- Kane, M. (2001). Current concerns in validity theory. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 38(4), 319-342.
- Kazwmi, E., & Hintz, A. (2014). *Intentional Talk*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Kibler, A., Walqui, A, & Bunch, G. (2015.) Transformational opportunities: Language and literacy instruction for English language learners in the Common Core era in the United States. *TESOL Journal*, 6(1), 9-35. DOI: 10.1002/tesj.133

- Marzano R., & Heflebower, T. (2011). *Teaching & Assessing 21st Century Skills*. Centennial, CO: Marzano Research.
- Marzano, R., Yanoski, D., Hoegh, J., & Simms, J. (2013). *Using Common Core Standards to Enhance Classroom Instruction and Assessment*. Centennial, CO: Marzano Research.
- Murphy, P.K., Rowe, M., Ramani, G., & Silverman, R. (2014). Retrieved from: <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10648-014-9281-3#page-2>
- Nagy, W. & Townsend, D. (2012). Words as tools: Learning academic vocabulary as language acquisition. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 47(1), 91-108. DOI: 10.1002/RRQ.011
- O'Hara, S., Pritchard, R., & Zwiers, J. (2014). The Academic Language Development Program: A Capacity-building Approach to Supporting Secondary Teachers of English Learners. *Proceedings of the Adult Education Research Conference*, 2014, (pp. 349-354), Harrisburg, PA.
- O'Hara, S., Pritchard, R., & Zwiers, J. (in press). Academic language and literacy in every subject (ALLIES): A capacity building approach to supporting teachers in grades 4-8. In P. Proctor, A. Boardman, & E. Hiebert (Eds.), *English Learners and Emergent Bilingualism in the Common Core Era*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- O'Hara, S., Pritchard, R., Pitta, D., and Webb, J. (in press). Implementing new technologies to support social justice pedagogy. In Papa, R., Eadens, D. M., & Eadens, D. M. (Eds). *Social Justice Instruction: Empowerment on the Chalkboard*. Springer Publishing.
- O'Hara, S., Zwiers, J. & Pritchard, R. (2012). Framing the teaching of academic language: A research brief. [Webinar] National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. Retrieved from: <http://www.tqsource.org/webcasts/2012ELL/>
- Pritchard, R., O'Hara, S., & Zwiers, J. (2014). Using new technologies to engage and support English learners in mathematics classrooms. In D. Polly (Ed.) *Cases on Technology and Common Core Mathematics Standards* (pp. 145-163). IGI Global. Hersey, PA.
- Pritchard, R., O'Hara, S., & Zwiers, J. (in press). Framing the teaching of academic language to English learners: A Delphi study of expert consensus. *TESOL Quarterly*.
- Schoenbach, R., Greenleaf, C., & Murphy, L. (2012). *Reading for Understanding: How Reading Apprenticeship Improves Disciplinary Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Schoenfeld, A. (2011). Education: Learning to think in a discipline. Retrieved from: <http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/learning-theory-research/think-discipline/>
- Uccelli, P., Galloway, E., Barr, C., Meneses, A., & Dobbs, C. (2015). Beyond vocabulary: Exploring cross-disciplinary academic-language proficiency and its association with reading comprehension. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 50(3), 337-356. DOI: 10.1002/rrq.104.
- Wiggins, G. (2012). Seven keys for effective feedback. *Feedback for Learning*, 70(1), 10-16.
- Wilson, H.W., Sztajn, P., Edington, C., and Myers, M. (2015). Teachers' Uses of a Learning Trajectory in Student-Centered Instructional Practices. *Journal of Teacher Education* May/June 2015 vol. 66 no. 3 227-244.
- Zwiers, J., & Crawford, M. (2011). *Academic Conversations*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Zwiers, J., O'Hara, S., & Pritchard, R. (2014a). *Common Core Standards in diverse classrooms: Essential practices for developing academic language and disciplinary literacy*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Zwiers, J., O'Hara, S., & Pritchard, R. (2014b). Cutting to the Common Core: Changing the playing field, part 1. *Language Magazine: The Journal of Communication & Education*, 13(5), 24-27.
- Zwiers, J., O'Hara, S., & Pritchard, R. (2014c). Cutting to the Common Core: Changing the playing field, part 2. *Language Magazine: The Journal of Communication & Education*, 13(6), 26-27.
- Zwiers, J., O'Hara, S., & Pritchard, R. (2014d). Conversing to fortify literacy, language, and learning. *Voices from the Middle*, 22(1), 10-14.