

Elementary Constructing Meaning: Connections to the Common Core

The Common Core State Standards place an unprecedented emphasis on language. They recognize that students must use formal English in their writing and speaking and make informed, skillful language choices to express themselves. Students will be held accountable for comprehending and responding to complex texts and demonstrating their understanding of content through discussions, presentations, and written performance tasks. Yet, identifying supports for English learners is “beyond the scope of the Standards” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010b, p. 6).

Constructing Meaning provides teachers with the process and tools for weaving explicit language instruction into content area teaching. Based on backward design and a gradual release of responsibility model, the Constructing Meaning process prompts teachers to:

- Understand the role language plays in content learning
- Decide what language knowledge students need to access content and express understanding
- Provide appropriate, explicit oral and written language instruction and practice

Constructing Meaning offers an accelerated approach to instruction that emphasizes both academic English and critical literacy skills, thereby supporting English learners in acquiring the analytical language necessary to meet the demands of the Common Core.



<p>Knowledge of Language (Anchor L.3) Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts to make effective choices for meaning or style.</p> <p>Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (Anchor L.4) Determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words/phrases by using context clues and analyzing word parts. Accurately use a range of appropriate general academic and domain-specific words/phrases.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explicitly teaches language needed to comprehend more fully when reading, writing, listening, or speaking in different contexts for a range of purposes ▪ Develops metalinguistic awareness for flexibility in making language choices ▪ Builds awareness of language skills and sound/letter relationships that are transferrable from primary language, especially Spanish/English ▪ Teaches strategies for building phonemic awareness and phonics skills, with the specific needs of ELs in mind
<p>Text complexity (Anchor R.10) Read and comprehend grade-level appropriate complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides a process for analyzing text to identify target language (for ELs and grade level) needed to understand and express understanding of grade-level text ▪ Includes planning and teaching tools for teaching reading comprehension
<p>Range of Writing (Anchor W.10) Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides a process for analyzing writing tasks to identify features of text structures and target language (at each English proficiency level, including grade level) needed to complete them ▪ Includes planning and teaching tools for informal and formal writing tasks ▪ Includes tools for reflection and metacognition
<p>Comprehension & Collaboration (SL.1) Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integrates structured, targeted oral language practice into every lesson ▪ Provides guidelines for facilitating small-group and whole-class collaborative learning