

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 instruction and practice in oral and written language

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><b>Language knowledge</b> Students apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts to make effective choices for meaning or style. (52)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Teaches language and an understanding of how to use it in different contexts for a range of purposes</li> <li>▪ Develops metalinguistic awareness for flexibility in making language choices</li> <li>▪ Explicitly teaches language to help students comprehend more fully when reading or listening</li> </ul>
<p><b>Text complexity</b> Students can, without significant scaffolding, comprehend and evaluate complex texts across a range of types and disciplines. (7)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provides process, tools, and models for deconstructing text to identify target language</li> <li>▪ Includes note-taking tools and reading strategies for comprehension of complex texts</li> </ul>
<p><b>Emphasis on informational text</b> Part of the motivation behind the interdisciplinary approach to literacy promulgated by the standards is extensive research establishing the need for college- and career-ready students to be proficient in reading complex informational text independently. (4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incorporates journalistic articles, source documents, reference materials, and tables into sample lessons and instructional materials</li> <li>▪ Calls out features of text structures and functional language for high-leverage text types</li> <li>▪ Offers content-specific tools, lessons, and strategies for ELA, Math, Science, and History</li> </ul>
<p><b>Focus on writing arguments</b> Students write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (45)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provides a process, tools, and functional language for citing text and building an argument</li> <li>▪ Includes tools for reflection and metacognition</li> </ul>
<p><b>Collaborative discussions</b> Students 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. (48)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Integrates structured, targeted oral language practice into every lesson, every day</li> <li>▪ Provides guidelines for facilitating small-group and whole-class collaborative learning</li> </ul>