

TRANSCRIPT

Transforming Teaching and Learning

SPEAKER	Jonathan Raymond
EVENT TITLE	Moving Forward: Common Core State Standards Implementation and Assessment
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Good morning everybody, and thank you for that wonderful introduction. I wanted to just sort of double-down on that offer—if you make it through the two days...if you actually make it through my presentation, I'm going to give you my iPad. It's filled with photos of my kids, but it ... the offer still stands.

I think the best part of being a superintendent—and Glen, you really hit on this—was that you can change the conversations; you can begin to push things in a different direction. You can't do it by yourself ... and I'm really pleased that our colleague, Dr. Iris Taylor, is here—our assistant superintendent for curriculum. She's been one of the chief architects of our journey, so if you have any really detailed, important questions about our journey, or if you just want to make a great contact with someone who is just so brilliant and smart, and such a team player, and very humble, please talk to Dr. Taylor. And could you just raise your hand so they know who you are? Thank you.

So I'm reminded of today ... you know, I got in last night, and I had plenty of time this morning to prepare and to have breakfast, and I didn't—I had a lot of preparation, but I didn't have breakfast. So it reminds me of a story—so you get to bear the brunt of this, and we have plenty of time to get to my journey with the Common Core, so bear with me—of a pastor who was looking at a job opportunity. So, of course, they invited him to give a Sunday sermon, and he arrived the night before—just like me, in plenty of time—had a good night's sleep. And he got up early, and he came down that morning ... and he was staying with one of the local parishioners in this wonderful farmhouse and, of course, the Mrs. had made him a wonderful fresh-made, home-made country breakfast, which he declined because he said he was much too nervous to eat. I'm not nervous; I just ran out of time. So off they went, and he delivered his sermon, and he came back and the farmer's wife asked her husband, "So how did he do?" At which point the husband said, "Well, he shoulda ate." So I hope I have a better ... I fare a little bit better today.

My journey ... and I want to share a little bit of my own personal journey, because it's really relevant to what we're going to talk about today, this tremendous opportunity with the Common Core standards to transform teaching and learning in the United States—began just outside of Boston, Massachusetts, where I was born and raised. I was the middle of three children, all boys. My dad was in a family business; my mother had been trained as a school

teacher, although she was a stay-at-home mom. And early in the sixth grade year for me, my parents got a phone call from school. They said, “You know, young Johnny is not doing well in school, you know; we think young Johnny needs to stay back, stay back a year. And, you know, he can’t read; we think he’s dyslexic, and he needs to go back to fifth grade.” So, my mother—who, again, trained as a teacher—this didn’t make much sense to her. So they brought me out and I was tested for two days by a psychologist. It was the best two days of school I’d ever had up to that point. We played so many different games, and we did all sorts of fun things, and at the end of the two days, you know, this psychologist just said, “There’s nothing wrong with Johnny. Johnny’s just bored, right. Johnny just needs a more structured, a more rigorous ... he needs to be pushed.” Does that sound familiar?

So again, with the guidance and support of my mother and my father, I was able to find a school that worked for me. And in my very first class, my very first week, I was in a geography class. Now, I thought that geography was the study of rocks, let alone the world and maps. And my teacher in this class was a man by the name of Harry Boyage, and Harry had been born in Turkish Armenia, had survived the Armenian genocide, and moved to then-Palestine as a young boy, where he was raised. And as a young man, he was an international soccer star, but trained as a teacher. He started to teach, and then ended up later on becoming the headmaster of a boys’ school, St. George’s, and at the age of 55 he immigrates to the United States. And then, you know, young Johnny ends up in his class, part way through the sixth grade year. And I remember in that first week, I had to take a test. You know, we had a test, and Mr. Boyage would come around to every student, and he would always have something positive to say. And when he approached my desk, you know, he just shook his head and he just said, “Young Raymond,” he said, “I just can’t believe it,” he said. “You even knew where Mesopotamia was, and you’ve only been here a week,” and he gave me back my test. I had a 72, but you would have thought I had a 92, just by the way ... You know, I still think about him, because up until that point I don’t remember any of my teachers. You know, my wife and I grew up in the same hometown, and although we didn’t know each other, and we went to the same school, and she remembers Mrs. Foster and Ms. Weatherall, Ms. Clancy, and Ms. Cahill. I remember those names, but I don’t remember if I had them in first grade or fourth grade. But I remember every teacher from Harry Boyage through high school, through college, through graduate school, and through law school—every one of my teachers. And that’s just showed me the power of a great teacher. You know, he turned the light bulb on for me, and he taught me the power that a great teacher can have—a love of wanting to learn. And that, I think, is part of the important transformation that we have an opportunity to really do, is to reignite teaching and learning in this country. And to do something really powerful, which is to ... to excite, and our teachers, perhaps about why they got into this profession to begin with, and to really give our children the tools that they need to be successful in today’s world.

So off and back to our journey. And again, I just want to emphasize this is our ... this is our story, this is our journey, and it may or may not be completely relevant to the work that you are doing, that you’ve already undertaken, or that you will. But we want to offer it and we want to share it. We think it’s part of our place to not only be out doing this work, but to be offering and supporting and helping others. So please take it with that context. Of course, what we’re really talking about as we talk about our journey and implementing the Common

Core standards is, we're talking about change, and how change can be sustainable, and how change in an organization has to occur, right, in a school district with many, many moving parts. Parts, as many of you know, by the way, aren't always moving in the same direction.

So let me start with a little story about change. A Zen master was visiting New York City, and he goes up to a hot dog vendor and he says, "Make me one with everything." The hot dog vendor fixes the hot dog just the way he asked, and he hands it to the Zen master, who pays him with a \$20 bill. The vendor puts the bill on the cash box and he closes it. "Excuse me, where is my change?" says the Zen master. The vendor responds, "Change must come from within." And that's true, change must come from within. Externally, you can call for change, as the California Board of Education did when they adopted the Common Core State Standards in August of 2010—that's almost three years ago; we stand here now. But implementing those standards requires our principals and our teachers to change the way they practice, and requires our students and our families to change what they expect to do and what they expect to learn from school. And it requires what we call *shifts*, deep fundamental shifts. In fact, when I thought about making this presentation today, we thought about titling it, *Making Shift Happen*—but you see, I feared, Glen, that there would be a tragic mispronunciation with my East Coast accent, and I'd end up on YouTube along with some other interviews I've done.

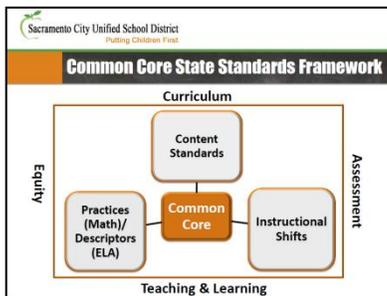
So in Sacramento, we laid these—the ground-breaking and the fundamental foundations for these shifts—when we wrote our strategic plan in the spring of 2010, even before those standards were officially adopted by the Board of Education. And we based it on three foundational pillars: college- and career-ready students; family and community engagement; and organizational transformation. And the Common Core standards were absolutely essential to our first pillar, so let's start there.

When we decided to commit to prepare every one of our students for college and careers, we knew we had to take a hard look at our current practice; and after all, only about 50% of our kids were reading at grade level with English language arts, and just slightly more in mathematics, and we had been an Open Court district for over a dozen years. So you get where I'm going with that, right? We had to ask ourselves, "Are we giving all of our kids the 21st century skills that they need to compete in today's world, to propel the regional and national economy, and be able to fundamentally and, most importantly, participate in our democracy?" We had to ask ourselves, "Are our kids learning to solve problems? Can they think independently? Can they analyze rich text and information? And most importantly, can they apply what they're learning to real-world situations, and can they work well with others?"

Was this kind of teaching and learning systemic? Are all our kids getting, in addition to the core academic competencies, the social, emotional, and cultural competencies that they need to be successful in college and careers? See, Sac City is a high-poverty school district—72% of our children come from families that are at or below the federal poverty guidelines; 25% of our students are English language learners; and almost 13% are children that have special needs. So you see, for our population, for our children, college and career readiness isn't a goal—I mean, it's a *must*, if we're to give our kids a different trajectory. I like to talk that one of the most powerful economic engines in the world is about two-and-a-half hours from Sacramento, right? Drive a little bit southeast and you land in Silicon Valley. Yet, until recently, for most of our

kids, that was never a place that they were going to wind up. I mean, think about that—two-and-a-half hours away; what’s the disconnect?

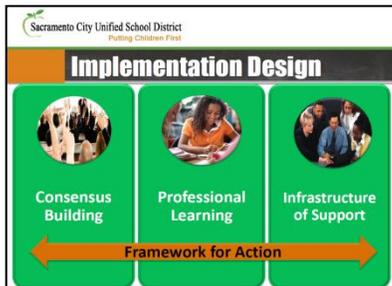
So we needed a new true north, right? We needed to move off of this No Child Left Behind and its focus on proficiency, and we needed to point it in a new direction. And that’s what a superintendent can do—he can shift that conversation and create a new true north. And for us, the conversation’s about college and career readiness. We decided that for us, again, for our journey, and where we were in Sacramento, that we could do better, and that doing better had to start with teaching and learning, and curriculum. That’s where we needed to start making improvements. We knew that collectively, together, using our own brain power in our district, that we could provide a much more robust, rigorous, relevant, and engaging education for our students. And for this reason, our district chose to move forward with an early adoption of the Common Core standards, designed to truly and fully prepare our students for college and career opportunities beyond high school.



We started our work with a conceptual framework that includes the three major components of the standards that you know so well: practices and descriptors, content standards, and the instructional shifts. Our framework also encompasses four critical leverage points, and I want to start with the first one that Glen spoke a little bit about, which is equity; which is having high expectations for every one of our students, having access and critical supports. And I want to emphasize this idea of supports, because for many of our students—and you need to spend time with them and hear their stories to understand this—but the fact that they make it to school every day is a huge accomplishment, but they made it to school. So what are we going to do beyond that? That’s where the supports are so absolutely critical and key. Curriculum, with this focus on ensuring that it’s coherent; that it’s focused and aligned. Assessments—and here we looked at taking a much more balanced approach, having both formative and summative assessments, and I’ll talk a little bit more about that later—but it’s making sure that our teachers and our parents have useful information. And, of course, right, the most important: teaching and learning. And our goal here, again, was to give our students the most rigorous, relevant, and engaging learning experiences that could both transform teaching and learning, and create lifelong learners.

As we moved forward with our decision and the reality of how we’re going to implement these standards, we spent some time thinking about what we didn’t want to do, based upon some of the things that haven’t worked too well in education. We didn’t want to do a simple gap analysis, right, to identify the topics and the areas that we currently teach, and where those topics exist in the Common Core, and you know, add and subtract, and try to fill in the gaps.

Easy, but not the right approach. We wanted to make sure that we had room and opportunity for much more robust learning. And as you know, gap analysis wouldn't do anything to help us address the key conceptual understandings, the fluency, and this idea and expectations around rigor. Another important thing to note is that these standards, right, don't particularly dictate an order or a sequence. I mean, yes, there is alignment and coherence, but it's not about simply getting our students at the starting line at the beginning of the year, firing the gun, and marching them right straight to the end over the course of a school year. It's about going much deeper, and ensuring that our students can master the concepts that they're working so hard at.



So architecture of standards matters a lot; that was one thing we discovered. The domains and the cluster headings of these standards were very purposely organized. For example, with the math standards, we decided that we needed to take every opportunity to build an understanding, and to develop math proficiency, rather than just going over and covering a list of math topics. So our implementation design, as you can see in front of you, has three buckets: consensus building, professional learning, and infrastructure of support, which I'd like to explain a little more thoroughly.

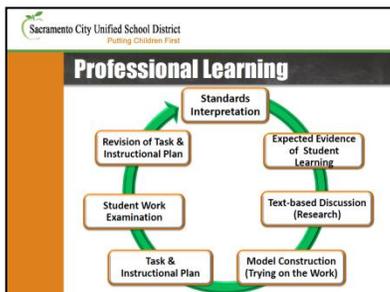
Huge—consensus building—time, painful, not always not what we want to do, but it's absolutely critical, right. You can't expect a journey to happen without anybody going with you. So here we had to spend a lot of time, and we still spend a lot of time, and it's a place where we've made a lot of mistakes, but it requires commitment from all levels of a system and an organization. It's not good enough just that the curriculum or academic shop be involved in this; can't do it alone. It's not enough just to get our parent and community engagement teams. But what about our students, right? After all, if it wasn't for our students we wouldn't be here today.

We ... and I spent a lot of time, and have a great respect for Michael Fullan, and when it comes to change, Mr. Fullan likes to talk about re-culturing. It's the name of the game when it comes to change. So we have to change what people in our organization value. And for that change to be deep and long-lasting, Mr. Fullan says it requires, as Glen put so beautifully, mobilizing the energy and the capacity of our teachers—fundamental. The great thing, the really great thing about the Common Core, and we have seen this, is that once our principals and our teachers start to dig into the standards, and they overcome that initial, "Whoa, this is really, really difficult," they also get really excited. And they start to think about the possibilities that these standards present in terms of improving the lives of their students, and that's powerful. And

parents, too, when they dig in, and they grasp, they know that this is going to better prepare their kids to chase the challenges of the future.

And it reminds me of a story, when I was still back in Massachusetts, about a parent who came before—then the state board in Massachusetts—they were talking about their newer standards, or their assessment. It’s called the MCAST. Some of you probably heard of it, it’s a ... it’s one of the more rigorous state assessments. And at the time, they were debating whether or not they were going to implement that new assessment, or whether they were going to delay it—sounds like it could be a familiar topic pretty soon. And this parent came up, and she said, “Do you mean to tell me that this new assessment is going to be harder and more challenging, and it’s going to really determine whether or not, you know, my child is prepared for college or for a life?” And she said, “You’re talking about maybe delaying it, and how’s that going to help me? How’s that going to help my child? Is that really fair, to be sending my child off and to be giving him a high school diploma and, you know, moving him off, maybe if they’re lucky, into college? I’ve never been to college; you know, how dare you. How dare you make that decision about my child’s life?”

So it shows you that, you know, parents ... as I like to say, “Look, they don’t leave their best kids behind, at home, right?” They give us our very best every day, and they want what’s best for them, maybe if they don’t quite understand what best is. So that faith and confidence, it’s a big responsibility. I think there’s great consensus. I’d like to think so, and you’ll hear more about this from Phil Daro, about the potential that these standards have to dramatically improve education. That’s why I love the word *transformation*. And I don’t talk about the word *reform*; I don’t like the word. You know, we ... because we’ve had so much reform and so little change; so now it is about transformation. Next slide, please.

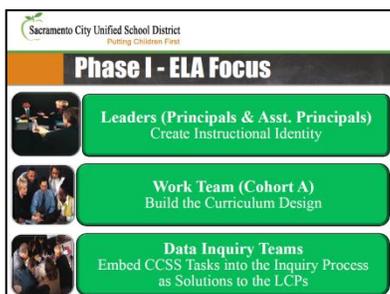


So our professional learning journey is—and again Mr. Fullan calls in his book *professional capital*—utilizes an inquiry-based design methodology that intentionally begins with unpacking, right at the very top here, that true north of the identified standards from which the focus of the learning will be determined. Again, this is the learning methodology we’re using with our principals and our teachers. We begin with the end in mind, which is the expected evidence that will demonstrate students’ understanding of the standards. That way, the focus of our learning is established along with the appropriate assessments—which, by the way, we are having to develop—that will yield the intended results.

Next, to deepen our teachers’ knowledge of the content, and to expand their repertoire of instructional strategies, we next examine the research that/s aligned with this focus of

learning, and engage collaboratively in a rich, text-based discussion. And at this point, our teachers are then able to begin crafting, or modifying, assessments. And then, as we like to say, trying on the work. And if you come to one of our training sessions—and we certainly invite any of you to come; Dr. Taylor can take care of that—you’ll see tables, just like we are here; tables of third-grade teachers and fourth-grade teachers next to second-grade teachers, and they’re working collaboratively and they’re working near each other, so they can look over their shoulder and say, “Hey, you know what, what are you expecting kids in third grade to be able to do? Because we’re in fourth grade, we’re really interested; or we’re in second grade, and we need to know.” And then they put all of that work up, and you can trace the journey. It’s really powerful, but this idea of trying the work on puts our teachers in the role of one of their students, and they’re actually taking their own assessment, trying the test on to see what the results will be.

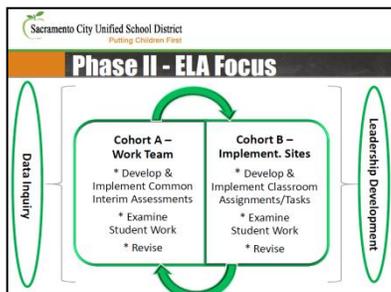
Our premise is that this will help inform the creation of our performance tasks and lessons plans, and also our assessments. Teachers will implement the instructional plan, and then they’ll return back to those same tables to join their colleagues to share the examples of their student work. Using collectively designed criteria—again, that they’ve done collaboratively—they examine their students’ works, they calibrate their findings, they align the results to the expected evidence, right; we call it triangulating the work. And then they generate questions, again collaboratively, that will help inform the instructional moves or shifts that are needed to help elevate their students’ thinking, and provoke their students to dig deeper, and to revise their work. And, of course, throughout this, our teachers are engaging in reflective practice to determine if a revision to their performance tasks or their instructional plans are needed and warranted. From there, they either do revise those plans or tasks that they’ve been working on, or they move on and start another cycle on another standard. To paraphrase Dr. Richard Elmore, this approach calls for our teachers to learn the work by doing the work. And, you can imagine, it takes a lot of time. You can’t simply drive by in a seminar or two and expect to have deeply mastered and understood the Common Core. That’s why it’s so important to begin this work, to begin the journey no matter where we are, but to also understand it requires resources—requires people, it requires time, and it requires money.



Our implementation timeline encompasses three phases, so let me give you a little outline of that. Phase 1, which focused on English language arts for us, began in the 2010/11 school year. In this first phase, we asked our principals and our assistant principals to create an instructional identity for their schools. We then invited our teachers to come and learn the Common Core standards with us. That initial cohort, I think, was about 60 teachers. It was interesting—we started it again in the spring, January, February time frame. And every month

when those teachers came back, they brought colleagues with them, voluntarily. And by the end of May, after just four months, the size of our cohort had doubled, with more and more teachers coming voluntarily, because they had heard from their colleagues about the journey that had begun.

We then created data inquiry teams using the Harvard Datawise Improvement Model. The teams searched for solutions, and this was at every school, for learner-centered problems, using tasks that are related to the Common Core standards. During our Phase 1 implementation, it became real apparent to us that to have a maximum impact, we had to cultivate what we called *communities of practice*, as well as to create safe and collaborative learning environments for our teachers at our school sites.



So in Phase 2, which was in the 2011/12 school year, we created a Cohort B, and this was a group of 20 schools that were our early adopters, where all of their faculty throughout the school were working on implementation—again, English language arts. The work at these schools consisted of creating and implementing a comprehensive assessment plan using data, again through our data inquiry process and methodology, to inform instruction, and again, engaging in that collective inquiry and dialogue within and amongst colleagues and pushing and engaging our students in rigorous learning experiences. Remember that part from Michael Fullan about change? You’ve got to change the culture. So for us, the big change was about getting more collaboration, getting our teams of teachers to work together.

And as a result of these generative and organic processes at our school sites, our theory of action began to materialize, and we discovered the following elements—again, that through collaborative inquiry, we could collectively engage in professional learning, which was powerful. It could help identify the common challenges, and they could help test, right, test instructional approaches, which is absolutely key, because not all the approaches are going to work. Looking at developing multi-dimensional assessments—embedded teacher-created and generated classroom-based constructive responses and performance tasks can be powerful. Our teachers enjoy developing instructional modules; it gets them back, I think for many, to why they got into the profession. It’s liberating, particularly when you know there’s no curriculum coming, despite what our publishers may say—no offense to any publishers out in the audience. Our data inquiry process, this idea of deeply examining student work and focusing on student work, begins to move us out of that cycle of just looking at annual test scores. And we know that in California, right, we take these assessments in April and we don’t get them back till August, so they’re not very useful. And that’s probably the nicest thing I’ve said in a long time

about them. And, of course, reflective practice—looking at evidence-based problems to identify how we change our practice.

Sacramento City Unified School District Putting Children First			
Phase III - ELA, Math, & English Learners			
	ELA	Math	English Learners
Data Inquiry	Cohort B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading & Writing Informational/Explanatory Texts • Instructional Shifts: Text Complexity & Text-based Answers • College-Ready Descriptors • Units of Study 	Elementary & Middle Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gr. 3-8 • Math Practices • Instructional Shifts • Content Domains • Units of Study 	EL Focus Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-12 • Complex Text • Collaborative Conversations • "Juliy" Sentences
	Leadership Cadre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading & Writing Informational/Explanatory Texts • Instructional Shift: Text-based Answers • College-Ready Descriptors 	High Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathway Selection (Integrated) 	
			Leadership Development

So moving on to Phase 3, which we began this past fall. And in this phase we continued with our work in English language arts, but we added math, and we also added a focus on our English language learners. Teachers and school leaders from all of our schools throughout the district have worked on implementing our English language arts Common Core standards through their involvement in one of two cohorts. Cohort B—again, those 20 schools that I just mentioned representing all of our grades pre-K through 12—these again are our early adopters or early implementers. And they’ve been working together for the past two years, and that’s powerful, and that perspective that they give us ensures and reassures us that we’re on the right track. Each school site sends five to seven teachers to engage in these cross-collaborative learning opportunities that I talked about earlier, coming around the round tables. This year our Cohort B has been engaged and learning about two instructional shifts, text complexity and text-based answers, and the college- and career-ready descriptors outlined in the introduction to the English language arts Common Core standards. And in addition, they are developing aligned units of study that are focused on the standards for reading and writing informational texts. We have also a leadership cadre, which we again have implemented in this school year 12/13 for all of our remaining schools outside of those 20. The group is comprised of two teacher leaders and a school-site administrator. This group has been introduced to the standards for reading and writing informational text, and they have focused on the same instructional shifts as our Cohort B, as well as the college- and career-ready descriptors. Both groups have met four times throughout the school year for a whole day of engaged deep learning, as well as two days of full release time at their school sites.

Little bit on math—the implementation of the Common Core standards for mathematics began with an emphasis on our district in grades 3 through 8, and preparation work at grades 9 through 12. Regarding our grades 3 to 8 implementation, we focused on learning the three major components of the standards: the standards for mathematical practice, instructional shifts, and the content standards. Emphasis here was placed on the integration of the subset of the standards for mathematical practices, practices 1, 4, and 6—an explicit inclusion—as well as the six instructional shifts. Since deep learning and conceptual understanding are absolutely essential and key levers, we have a strategy that we like to call “go slow to go fast,” meaning we focused on only one or two of the domains in a learning progression of the content standards, with an understanding that once we can deeply know those, it will accelerate our work going forward. For high schools, the focus has been primarily on studying and selecting the pathway, a pathway design for implementation. I mean, let’s be honest; high school’s hard.

Unlike the K-8 standards, the 9-12 standards are catalogued in seven conceptual categories which portray a coherent view of high school mathematics. And as such, the organization of courses is often determined by each high school, or within each school district, and among school districts. This year we formed a committee of both high school and middle school teachers, and they've been charged to thoroughly study and analyze both pathways by meticulously examining the learning progressions of the standards in each one of these categories and their correlation to the middle school standards, as well as comparing and contrasting the two pathways against the standards. And this extensive examination has led our committee of teachers to recommend the integrated approach, which better aligns with the K-8 design. And I can't emphasize enough—if I could make one explicit recommendation—that you take the time to do this, because not getting it right could set you back for a long time.

Moving forward, the same inquiry-based collaborative design methodology being used at the K-8 level that we have talked about, will be utilized to guide our grade 9-12 professional learning, ensuring that we have a preK-12 aligned implementation of the Common Core math standards. The Common Core standards poses—excuse me, pose—unique challenges for our English language learners, due to the increased emphasis on students reading, and writing, and constructing increasingly more complex text. And it demands a disciplined use of academic language, right; that's just obvious about these standards. So last year, our district partnered with Dr. Lily Wong Fillmore—many of you know her, I hope; professor emeritus from UC Berkeley—to learn about a set of instructional practices to support our English language learners with access to the Common Core standards. In our district, this work is being concentrated in 11, what we're calling our focus schools, which represent grades K-12. The emphasis in these schools—again, these are our pilot schools—is on helping students understand how academic language works by engaging them in a close reading of what we like to call, and I think Dr. Taylor coined this phrase—or maybe Dr. Fillmore, and you stole it—“juicy,” or grammatically and syntactically complex sentences found in the science, social science, and language arts texts that they are expected to read while they are in class. So if you don't remember anything I've said today, remember that word “juicy.”

Focusing on a single sentence, teachers can use a conversational style of question and dialogue to provoke inquiry and curiosity about the meaning of that sentence from their students, and how this meaning can be conveyed through the very parts of a sentence—words and phrases—and how they are ordered and combined. Just a single sentence can be the topic of a good portion of that class experience during that day. Students study the meaning of key words and how they're used in that sentence, and then they explore other words that the author may have chosen, and how these choices work and can impact the meaning of a sentence. And when you think about that, think about the possibilities as a teacher to use any kind of text you want, or to ask your students to choose a text or a meaningful topic that they are interested in exploring, and then you can dig in deeply. We don't need an expensive curriculum to help us on that journey.

So our teachers have already begun to notice a difference in the complexity of their students' writing and in their speaking. And Dr. Taylor can share with you a little bit about just some of

the early successes, the tremendous growth that we saw just last year in 9 of our 11 focus schools in the performance of our English language learners on the California standards test.

So if we go back and reflect on where we started down this road, it's important that we return to our three pillars of our strategic plan to give students the most options for college and career. Again, we needed to make shifts with our instruction and our assessment, and, again, that's our first pillar—college- and career-ready students. To build the support for our work and to deepen our consensus, we needed to have our stakeholders buy into these values of college and career readiness, and that's where our second pillar, family and community engagement, came in. And to lead this work, we had to motivate and reenergize and strengthen and fortify our principals and our teachers, and that's where organizational transformation comes in. And even though some may have said we've jumped to the front in California with the adoption of these standards, we're still very early in this process and in the process of making deep and lasting change. But so far we've seen some of this change, and that's reason to be excited. We've seen changes in our teachers. They're collaborating more, and they want to work more with their colleagues and peers. They're developing more of their own curriculum and experiencing a real pride in the ownership of the material. They're finding more ways and exciting ways to engage their students with more relevant topics and subjects in class. And they're expecting more from their kids, because not only are they demanding more, but they're seeing what their kids can do. And what's most exciting, we're seeing the impact reflected in our students' work, and this is reflected in feedback from teachers and parents. So what are some of our teachers saying? Here are some examples; you can read them.



Teachers...In Their Own Words	
I Used to Think...	Now I Think...
The Common Core Standards weren't doable.	My students are writing on a level I never would have believed.
This is complicated. If I'm confused, how will I teach my students effectively?	This is an approach to teaching that includes specific, goal oriented outcomes and provides for my own creativity and craft.
Common Core was similar to the current State Standards.	Common Core Standards delve deeper & allow students to develop strategies to become critical thinkers & more self-sufficient readers & writers.
I was meeting the standards in all areas.	I plan lessons with a better focus, higher expectations, and a clearer

We have a little video we want to show you, produced by our teachers.

[Begin video clip]

PEGGY CLAPPER

Hi. My name is Peggy Clapper. I teach eighth grade at Albert Einstein Middle School, and how has Common Core impacted my classroom as a teacher? Well, in a couple of ways. One, it has given me back the expertise to be able to teach the rigor that is necessary for the students. Now when I say rigor, you know, I have my definition of it is to get them to think, to get them to think outside the box. What the students find with the units of study is that they become passionate about them. We don't have to focus on Holt, so the work that they are doing are close to their hearts. For example, we are writing a unit of study on homelessness, which gets

the students involved in their community—they are writing, they are reading, they are researching, they are showing us their thoughts through their writings. So we can actually see what they are thinking, and this will go even further into persuasive. Now what this does is ... the Common Core standards respects the students' knowledge. It does not just ask them to regurgitate, but it gets them to think through the whole process. After the homelessness project, they will then go into social justice, where they will be looking at what are ... what are the needs of the community? So with Common Core, we are able to bring to them their passions—what is relevant to them today.

SHAWNA FRANZELA

Hi, my name is Shawna Franzela; I'm a seventh-grade teacher at California Middle School. I am a huge fan of the Common Core standards, and I think they have incredible value for teachers in the district. And the work that we've been doing hopefully will make it easier for other teachers to use and implement the standards as well. At Cal, I've actually taken some of the work that we've done so far back to the other teachers and shared what we've done with them. They've had ... they've given their students, I guess, the learning experience similar to what we've planned. So we've taken it more schoolwide than maybe some other sites have, and I've had nothing but positive responses from those other teachers as well. We've seen truly a dramatic increase in students' writing and critical thinking abilities, and I'm hopeful that how we're doing the planning here in these professional development sessions will, just like I mentioned earlier, make it easier for other teachers to implement as well. I truly feel that one of the hardest parts of teaching is finding the appropriate resources for what you're trying to teach. So I am hopeful that what we're doing here during these sessions, again, is finding appropriate resources so that other teachers don't have to spend the time doing that, and creating very purposeful and meaningful tasks so that other teachers can then take the work back to their own students as well.

KRISTIN O'CUDDAHY

Hi, I'm Kristin O'Cuddahy. I currently teach freshman English and AP Junior 11, which is language and composition. I have also taught sophomore English. How has the Common Core work ... how have I used that in my classroom? I think essentially the main thing that I'm noticing that I get is that I am much more intentional about what I teach and how I teach it. And having to collaborate with my peers, not necessarily so much, you know, within my school, but with people from other schools—when we're all looking at a ... at the same kind of a process, that we're teaching the same benchmark that we created together, means that I can go away and look at what I did, and did I ask for what I really wanted my students to do. I'm finding that my students are really good about giving me exactly what I ask for, and the problem is not so much ... what they do is reminding myself to ask the correct questions and Common Core is really about that—being intentional in what you teach and how you teach it, figuring out exactly what your objectives are, and the purposes for why you're teaching any one thing. So, I think that that's mainly ... that's the main benefit, is taking these assessments that we've written, bringing them into the classroom, using them, and looking to see how my students respond to that, and then also, how I can inform my own teaching practices from it.

MARIANNE PALMER

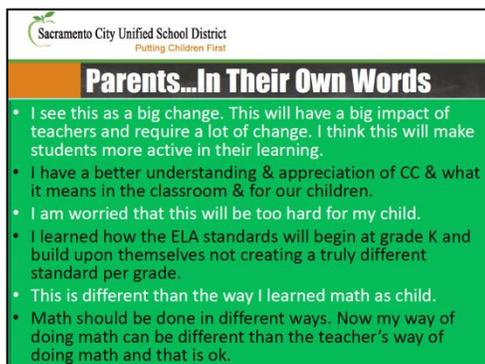
Hello, my name is Marianne Palmer. I am a resource teacher at Earl Warren Elementary; I teach students in grades K through 6. Being part of the Common Core Cohort A has been a great experience for me. I have learned a lot of new strategies that I have brought back into the classroom and use with a variety of grade levels. As a result of the cohort and the common planning, I have seen both the reading comprehension and the writing skills of students in various grade levels increase. Focusing on the Common Core standards has held a higher rigor, and the students have really risen to the occasion. They can do this—they can do this work and they can do it well. I really encourage everybody else to join in and learn the Common Core standards, because it has made me a better teacher and it has made my students enjoy school and enjoy the learning experience. Thank you very much.

OLIVIA WINSLOW

My name is Olivia Winslow. I teach at Earl Warren Elementary, currently this year a fifth-grade teacher. I've been working with the Common Core standards the last two years with the same group of students, last year in fourth, this year in fifth, and it's had a positive impact on them, especially, I would say, in two areas: their critical thinking skills and their writing skills. Really taken this Common Core concept of supporting your answers with evidence, and tried to apply it throughout our entire day. So we practice it through all subject areas, and really where I see the best improvement is their ability to critically think—think outside the box, support their answers either with evidence or through inferencing. So I have seen a change in their writing, and also in their conversations that they are able to have in the classroom with their peers.

[End of video clip]

JONATHAN RAYMOND



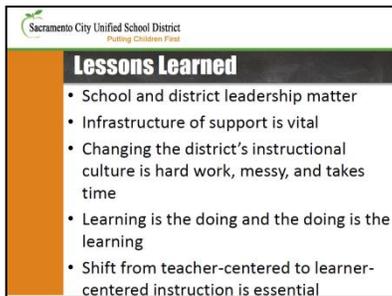
Sacramento City Unified School District
Putting Children First

Parents...In Their Own Words

- I see this as a big change. This will have a big impact of teachers and require a lot of change. I think this will make students more active in their learning.
- I have a better understanding & appreciation of CC & what it means in the classroom & for our children.
- I am worried that this will be too hard for my child.
- I learned how the ELA standards will begin at grade K and build upon themselves not creating a truly different standard per grade.
- This is different than the way I learned math as child.
- Math should be done in different ways. Now my way of doing math can be different than the teacher's way of doing math and that is ok.

We're almost done. Big part is our parents, so here's what our parents are saying. We started this year with three regional forums. We have our district broken into East, West, and Central, and we did three informational sessions for our parents within those three regions. We also offered three seminars, both three in English language arts and three in mathematics, and giving our parents an opportunity to actually take some of the performance tasks that our teachers had created, so they can have that experience that their child would. We had

typically anywhere from 35 to 50 parents show up at these forums. One of the big lessons learned is, we held those sessions at our district office, and we think that that impacted the ability of more of our parents to attend. So next year we'll be actually taking these various seminars out more into the regions, so we can get more of our parents to be able to attend. And that's a big area that I would emphasize for you as you begin this journey, to not only focus on the learning and the shifts that are so required of our instructional leaders, but also to think about the shifts that are going to be required of our parents, and really helping to prepare them for, you know, what likely will be a great dip in the performance of their child when they take these new assessments. So that's time well spent and the time that needs to be spent now.



Some of the lessons that we have learned—again, leadership matters, both at the district and at the school-site level. We've learned that changing the culture of a school district, right—changing that true north and getting people to start working together and digging deeply and creating a learning culture—is hard, and it's messy work, and it takes resources: people, time, and money. Researching and writing lesson plans and assessments, testing them out in the classroom, taking teachers out of the classroom, reworking them and rewriting them and calibrating them in teams, is really time consuming. And that pull-and-tug that occurs when a teacher has to leave their classroom, right; it's that natural “I don't want to leave my classroom,” yet if they don't leave their classroom, how're they going to have time to learn? And we can't expect them to learn all in the evenings and on weekends and over holidays and vacations, because they need time for their families, and they need time to recharge, too. So it's a balance, and it's a challenge.

A single unit of study, for example, can take a team hours and hours of work, and days, to create, to break down, to analyze, to re-create, and then to implement. And our teachers, as I said, they don't have time often during the week, because they're busy teaching. It's a challenge that we don't have any assessments right now to map back from, right? It's just the reality. But it's not a barrier that we can't overcome and we shouldn't let us make that an excuse. I really believe that you can't just hand a teacher a textbook or a teacher's edition or a binder and say, “Start on page one,” if we're truly thinking about that new true north. Sure, we can do this to get our kids to be proficient on a bunch of current state assessments, but I don't think our track record of deeply preparing our kids to be successful in college and careers, on day one, and that means not needing a single remediation class when they get to college. The shift in our teachers toward a much more learner-centered classroom requires them to do a lot of heavy lifting.

And again, as I said, the other key lesson is the issue around resources, right? We've got to focus; we're a people business, so we've got to focus on building the skills of our people. It takes time, it can't be done overnight; it has to be done so that the work is the learning and the learning is the work. And, of course, it takes money, and so I was so pleased to be a week ago with our state superintendent in Sacramento to announce and to talk about the over one billion dollars of state monies that are going to be distributed to help implement the Common Core. Of course, I don't like this idea of one-time money, so I'm going to be a royal pain, pushing in understanding that, you know, we're going to need ongoing continued resources; again, to build that professional capital of those that are doing and leading the work. And, of course, the needs for instructional materials and technology can't be understated.



Michael Fullan also likes to talk about the importance of cohesion of everything a district does in regards to improving—teaching and learning has to hang together. Does it all make sense? Does one initiative work with another, or do these initiatives conflict with each other? You can see I like Michael Fullan. And so using Common Core as the glue, and this is really cool; we're focusing and making all of our work cohesive around messaging about preparing our children for college and careers. You can see the other initiatives that we're working hard at and making sure that they're aligned, and that they're based on the Common Core standards. And with that, we've made it, and we'd be happy ... I think we have a little bit of time for questions, and I think I'd like to have my colleague, Dr. Taylor, come up and join me.

MODERATOR

I think there are people with mikes, so if you have a question, would you raise your hand? We do have a few minutes for questions.

PARTICIPANT

Hi there. How did you address teachers that didn't want to be out of the classroom, to do all of the work that needs to be done that the video talked about?

IRIS TAYLOR

I think it's something that we are continuously addressing, so ... when we initially started, we started with those who were willing to come out. I think it was infectious that they would go back and talk to their colleagues, and talk about the value that they saw in the experience that they'd had, and so then those teachers would come. But it's not something that we've solved. We still get teachers who, you know, initially experience that, "Well, I'm out of my classroom;

I need to be in my classroom.” One of the things that we want to work on is, you know, the sub experience, so when those students ... when those teachers are out of the classroom, how can we improve the quality of the support that the sub is providing, so that teachers are reassured that while they’re out, their students are getting ... having their needs met.

JONATHAN RAYMOND

The other, the other part of that, you better make sure when you take a teacher out of the classroom that that day is really well spent. And you know, Dr. Taylor and her team, and our instructional coaches, I mean, they spend so much time preparing, and they’ll change on the fly, as we had to do last week with our English language arts module that we were doing on our high schools. The first, in fact, the first hour or so, it wasn’t going so well. So we—during a break, I mean literally, they were just ripping apart and changing on the fly—it’s like an America’s Cup team.

PARTICIPANT

Hi. You spoke of principals creating an instructional identity. What did that look like?

IRIS TAYLOR

So we asked them ... we spent a lot of time with our principals around just this idea of rigor, and really defining as a district, what did we mean when we threw out that term *rigor*? So that was part of it, and then the other part was around just the language arts, because we started with language arts. We wanted to construct a literacy identity in terms of what was it, what were the practices? What were the curricular implications? What did we want to see students doing in terms of the English language arts standards and literacy within our schools? So it was a lot of visioning and defining some things, some terms—language that’s commonly used, but everyone has a different understanding of what those terms meant. So we spent probably about a year looking at rigor and literacy with our principals.

DARRYL ADAMS

Hi, yes. My name is Darryl Adams. I’m the superintendent for the Coachella Valley Unified School District. Happy to be here today with all of you, talking about this very important subject. In my school district in the fall, we’re going to provide an iPad for every student from preschool through grade 12. It took a lot of work to get our voters to pass a bond measure to do it. I think the state should be doing it, and the federal government should be doing it—every student should have the use of technology. I think along with the Common Core and professional development, we can truly transform education as we know it, and so that’s what we’re doing at our district, and happy to see that you guys are also leading the way. We’re also thankful that Tom Torlakson came down and actually endorsed our measure to get it passed, and he’s going to come and pass out the first iPad to the little four-year-olds coming to school in the fall. So it’s going to be great, and we thank you guys for doing what you’re doing.

IRIS TAYLOR

Thank you. Yes, along the same lines we have ... we are really interested in, you know, the unique ways that technology can be integrated within the Common Core. And so one of the things that we have instituted ... we have two schools that we're calling our *proof of concept* schools. We have equipped them with quite a bit of technology resources—Apple technology resources—including iPads and MacBooks and just a plethora ... and the teams have created some phenomenal units of study that integrate technology within their Common Core work, looking at within the English language arts but as well as integrated across science, social science, mathematics. And so we're seeing some very promising practices from those two sites that we think can inform the work as we try to expand the technology infrastructure and the use of technology within the Common Core.

JONATHAN RAYMOND

And those are ... they're also inclusive practice schools; in other words, we are moving towards a co-teaching model for our special education students. And it's really powerful when you see teams of students, you know, mixed in and using technology and digging deeply in the Common Core. Again that issue about ... it's, it's about all students and high expectations for all students.

PARTICIPANT

Good morning. Question for you. You mentioned examination of the high school pathways, both the traditional and integrated pathway, and the work you did behind that. Is there ... do you have messaging to stakeholders or any kind of documents that you could share to show us what work went into that, and then, where that decision was made to go with the integrated pathway?

IRIS TAYLOR

So we have ... our process was to convene a group of high school teachers from across the school sites, and so we made sure that we had representation from every high school in our district. And they met over the course of about a semester, really looking at the different pathways, and what would be the content of an integrated pathway versus a traditional pathway. There was a lot of discussion around that, and as a team they collectively decided that integrated would be the best way to go. At the same time, we were having conversations with our principals about, you know, what the implementation of either one of these—if we decided to go with an integrated pathway, in particular, because that seemed to be the way the group was leaning, what would it mean? What would our rollout be? We couldn't just go integrated overnight, so we're phasing in over the next three to four years what an integrated pathway would be. We'd be happy to share with you some of the tools and resources that we use to engage teachers and leaders in those conversations. We haven't created a toolkit yet for messaging it out to our ... to our parents, but once developed, again, we'd be happy to share that with you.

PARTICIPANT

Hi, I have a question about the professional development the teachers had; a couple of questions. One, did that take place inside schools and individual schools met, where, you know, the teachers—you talked about the expected evidence and then the teachers tried it on. And then my second question I have is, what kinds of things are you guys doing to improve the sub experience, or what kinds of things have you guys talked about?

IRIS TAYLOR

So with our professional learning, we convened teacher groups; we brought them to the central office. And so they would come, and they would work within grade-level teams, but within the room would be the spectrum, K through 12, actually preK, because we strongly believe that we need our earliest learners engaged, the teachers of our earliest learners, engaged in the work. And so we had teachers across the spectrum, from preK through 12. And so they would sit in grade-level teams and design tasks, and then examine student work. But as Superintendent Raymond said, we would post that work up around the room, so that they could see the progression of work over time, it was ... over grade levels. Very powerful for a fourth-grade teacher to say, “Oh, second graders can do that? Wow, I need to up my game on this one.” And so, that’s one space. This year we moved to kind of a hybrid, where they came to us four times throughout the school year. But they also did site-based work twice during the school year. And that was very specific to what that site was working on, and what the site needs were. With the substitutes, and so this is just ... this is new work for us. We haven’t for ... we haven’t fully developed what that substitute experience would be like. Some professional learning for our subs at this point. We have done some work with our teachers who are either laid off, who serve as subs, around helping them understand what the Common Core is all about, and some instructional practices that they can engage students in around the Common Core. So we’ve done some professional development workshops for them. But again, this is an area of work that we want to explore in more depth, because it’s such a critical need for our teachers.

MODERATOR

Last question; we’re running out of time.

PARTICIPANT

You mentioned formative assessments that your teachers were creating as formative assessments. Can you say to what degree they’re in alignment with the SBAC practice tests, and how much they tried to align those within their own formative assessments, within their own grade levels in classrooms?

IRIS TAYLOR

Most definitely. That’s been a journey. So we actually started having our teachers engage around the development of formative assessments before there was a lot of information around SBAC out there. We were really going off of what the standards were asking teachers to do. So that was our first cohort, in our second year of implementation, of engaging teachers in professional learning. Just this year we’ve gone back in and revised those assessments based on

what we now know about the Smarter Balanced assessments. We are a part of a partnership with CORE (the California Office to Reform Education), who's also ... just convened groups of teachers across the CORE districts to develop assessments. So one thing that we are learning is that as you learn more, you go back, and you see, "Wow, we need to change that." One of the things that we've added to our assessments are having students look at texts beyond print-based texts. So looking at, you know, comparing a print-based text to a video text, or comparing a print-based text to an audio text. And so we're embedding those into our assessments to develop more performance-related assessment items, and so it's very exciting work.