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## ***What Does it Mean for History-Social Studies Teachers? California Adopts the Common Core State Standards***

by

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The Common Core State Standards Initiative led by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) reviewed the fundamental mission and goal(s) of K-12 education across our nation and led the development of a set of standards based on critical knowledge, skills, and dispositions critical for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects and the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics were designed to provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn. They are considered robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need in preparation for college, career and citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A number of organizations including Achieve, ACT, Inc., American Federation of Teachers, College Board,

Education Trust, National School Boards Association and the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills support the Common Core State Standards Initiative with its focus on providing rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order thinking skills.

This state-led initiative called for states to adopt the Common Core State Standards in their entirety but also allowed states to add up to 15% to meet local needs. In June and July 2010, the California Academic Content Standards Commission (ACSC) met in Sacramento to review the CCSS for alignment to California standards and developed recommendations for standards to supplement the CCSS in California. On August 2, 2010, the California State Board of Education joined 33 other states and the District of Columbia in adopting the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics. As of March 1, 2012, forty-six states have adopted the Common Core State Standards.

To access the California Common Core State Standards, go to: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cc/>

## **SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium**

As stated on the California Department of Education web site: “On June 9, 2011, California joined the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) as a governing state. The SBAC is a national consortium of 27 states that have been working collaboratively to develop a student assessment system aligned to a common core of academic content standards. Of those, California is one of 21 governing states, which allows decision-making participation. The remaining six are advisory states. The SBAC focus is on assessing students annually in grades three through eight in English-language arts and mathematics and once in grades ten through twelve under current federal requirements.”

At the time of this publication, field test development and pilot testing is scheduled to take place in 2012–13. Field testing will take place 2013–14. Beginning with the 2014–15 school year, the Consortium’s tests will be operational and ready to use as federal accountability assessments. Updates are available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalanced.asp>.

## **AB 250**

Assembly Bill (AB) 250, also known as the Curriculum and Reform Act was signed into law in July 2011. It modified California *Education Code (EC)* to address the development and adoption of new curriculum frameworks, instructional materials, professional development practices, and high-quality assessments. The law’s intent is to focus on integrating 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, including critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, and innovation, as a competency-based approach to learning in all core academic content areas, including English language arts, mathematics, history-social science, science, health education, visual and performing arts, and world languages. AB 250 also requires the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI) to develop recommendations for the reauthorization of the statewide pupil assessment system.

## **Implications for English Language Arts Teachers**

Notable differences between the Common Core State Standards for English-Language Arts and the English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools include a) an increased attention to reading informational text and expository writing, b) a new focus on media technology, and c) a call for increased text complexity. For English Language Arts teachers and K-5 teachers, the message is clear: acquisition of English Language Arts skills is dependent upon the constructs of content and a knowledge-based curriculum. According to E.D. Hirsch, “Reading proficiency isn’t in and of itself the magic key to competence. It’s what reading enables us to learn and to do that is critical...The idea that reading skill is largely a set of general-purpose maneuvers that can be applied to any and all texts is one of the main barriers to our students’ achievement in reading. It leads to activities that are deadening for agile and eager minds, and it carries big opportunity costs. These activities actually slow down the acquisition of true reading skill. They take up time that could be devoted to gaining general knowledge, which is the central requisite for high reading skill.”<sup>1</sup> This approach calls for teachers to be intentional about the use of informational text in teaching students to read and expository writing to strengthen writing skills of students.

## **Implications for History-Social Science Teachers**

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts set requirements not only for the English Language Arts curriculum but also promotes literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. At first glance, this is welcome news to content area teachers. Asking students to cite evidence and analyze information from primary and secondary sources speaks to the heart of the social studies

discipline. We recognize that proficiency in reading, writing, speaking and listening impacts students' ability to acquire and retain content information, understand key ideas and concepts and apply knowledge in meaningful ways.

Therefore, just as English Language Arts teachers should reach out to content area teachers to provide context for acquiring literacy skills, the social studies teacher needs to embrace literacy as an important pedagogy to acquire and demonstrate disciplinary critical thinking in preparation for citizenship in a democratic society. According to Sam Wineburg, Professor of Education at Stanford University,

“Literacy is the key word here, because the teaching of history should have reading and writing at its core. Years ago, this may have been the case, but that time is long gone. In some underfunded schools, teachers struggle to cope with low reading levels by reading the textbook aloud to students so they at least “get the content” (Schoenbach, Greenleaf, Cziko, & Hurwitz, 1999)<sup>ii</sup>. In other classrooms, writing in social studies is increasingly being replaced by PowerPoint assignments, complete with bullet points and animation. But we can no more defend an argument on why the USSR disintegrated using bullet points than we can journey to Moscow on the wings of a Frommer travel guide. Working through successive drafts of the cause-and-effect essay—making sure that paragraphs reflect a logical procession of ideas and that assertions are backed by evidence—is hard and inglorious work, but there are no shortcuts...Skits and posters may be engaging, but leaving students there—engaged but illiterate—amounts to an incomplete lesson that forfeits our claim as educators...This means teaching students to be informed readers, writers, and thinkers about the past as well as the present—a goal all parties should be able to embrace. Our democracy's vitality depends on it”<sup>iii</sup>.

## **Tips and Strategies for Social Studies Teachers**

Think of the very best social studies strategies and programs you know – the ones that provoke high level critical thinking and analysis of complex issues. The ones that spark debate about controversial issues and evoke innovative problem solving. The ones that call upon students not to memorize or recite information, but to apply and utilize knowledge in meaningful ways. Document Based Questions, History Day, the Econ Challenge, Model UN, mock trials and congressional hearings, service-learning, to name a few – it is important to become intentional about developing reading, writing, speaking and listening skills throughout.

An example of this integration can be found in a newly published guide developed by the Los Angeles County Office of Education in collaboration with the Trinity County Office of Education and the California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, **Preparing Students for College, Career and CITIZENSHIP: A California Guide to Align Civic Education and the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects**. Available at no cost at [www.lacoe.edu/historysocialscience](http://www.lacoe.edu/historysocialscience), the guide is intended to achieve a dual purpose: to provide English-Language Arts teachers a civic education context for improving literacy skills and, to provide social studies teachers a pedagogical framework for building literacy competencies needed for civic life.

For example, the “K-2 Reading Standards for Informational Text” calls for students to identify key ideas and details, understand how craft and structure of text contribute to comprehension, integrate knowledge and ideas, and comprehend complex text. The Civic Education Connection example prompts teachers to

utilize informational text about different Founding Fathers as a context for developing these literacy skills. Specific questions and prompts guide discussions about George Washington and Thomas Jefferson to help young learners acquire a basic understanding of who they were and what they believed in. Activities lead to a discussion about the importance of rules and laws, the responsibility of government to protect rights cherished by the Founding Fathers, and the responsibility of citizens in a democratic society. Even young children can understand principles of equality, fairness and justice and begin to develop a framework for understanding how these values informed the development of our national democracy. Students engage in writing, speaking, and listening activities to build content knowledge, develop civic skills and dispositions, and meet Common Core State Standards needed for civic competency.

When students struggle with text, they struggle to grasp key concepts from the social studies curriculum. Out of sheer frustration, we often cast aside the textbook or seek out modified (easier) text to enable our students to comprehend primary and secondary sources. And though many believe most textbooks are written “above grade level,” research from Achieve 3000 tells us that the lexile scores of today’s textbooks are far below the readability level needed for success in the military, community college, university, or the workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>1</sup>. Text in the real world is becoming more complex, college and career is more challenging, and the role of the classroom teacher continues to evolve to meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners.

## Conclusion

Now, more than ever, it is important for *all* teachers to introduce and sustain practices that strengthen reading, writing, language, speaking and listening skills in all content areas. But it is important to note: the primary intent of including history/social studies, science and technical subjects in the Common Core State Standards is *not to supplant* the content, knowledge and skills identified in the California History-Social Science, Science and other subject area frameworks, but to emphasize the need to utilize the discipline of each content area to provide a meaningful context for students to become proficient readers, writers and speakers. Content teachers, therefore, play a critical role in meeting this goal. By contextualizing English Language Arts skills within the content of their subject area with intentionality, students are able to strengthen their subject matter knowledge *and* literacy skills in meaningful, purposeful ways. In this way, educators can truly prepare all students to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions to become effective, engaged citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

<sup>i</sup> Hirsch, Jr., E.D., (2006). *The knowledge deficit Closing the shocking education gap for American children*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company

<sup>ii</sup> Schoenbach, R., Greenleaf, C., Cziko, C., & Hurwitz, L. (1999). *Reading for understanding*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>iii</sup> Wineburg, S., Martin, D. (2004), pages 42-45. “Reading and Rewriting History,” *Educational Leadership*: ASCD

<sup>iv</sup> Achieve 3000 Believe, <http://www.achieve3000.com>



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**A LOOK AT THE STANDARDS ...**

**California’s Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects:**

[http://www.scoe.net/castandards/agenda/2010/ela\\_ccs\\_recommendations.pdf](http://www.scoe.net/castandards/agenda/2010/ela_ccs_recommendations.pdf)

The following is an excerpted, partial look at the "Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects." Standards for K–5 reading in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects are integrated into the K–5 Reading standards. Content specific Reading and Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies begin at grade 6. The College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards and high school standards in literacy work in tandem to define college and career readiness expectations—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity. The standards offer a focus for instruction each year and help ensure that students gain adequate exposure to a range of texts and tasks. Rigor is also infused through the requirement that students read increasingly complex texts through the grades. Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year’s grade specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades.

<b>READING STANDARDS FOR INFORMATIONAL TEXT K-2</b>		
<b>KINDERGARTEN</b>	<b>1<sup>ST</sup> GRADE</b>	<b>2<sup>ND</sup> GRADE</b>
<b>Key Ideas and Details</b>		
3. With prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.	3. Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.	3. Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.
<b>Craft and Structure</b>		
5. Identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book.	5. Know and use various text structures (e.g., sequence) and text features (e.g., headings, tables of contents, glossaries, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text.	5. Know and use various text features (e.g., captions, bold print, subheadings, glossaries, indexes, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text efficiently.
<b>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</b>		
7. With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person, place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts). 8. With prompting and support, identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text. 9. With prompting and support, identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., in illustrations, descriptions, or procedures).	7. Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas. 8. Identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text. 9. Identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., in illustrations, descriptions, or procedures).	7. Explain how specific images (e.g., a diagram showing how a machine works) contribute to and clarify a text. 8. Describe how reasons support specific points the author makes in a text. 9. Compare and contrast the most important points presented by two texts on the same topic.
<b>Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity</b>		
10. Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding. a. Activate prior knowledge related to the information and events in texts. b. Use illustrations and context to make predictions about text.	10. With prompting and support, read informational texts appropriately complex for grade 1. a. Activate prior knowledge related to the information and events in a text. b. Confirm predictions about what will happen next in a text.	10. By the end of year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the grades 2–3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

<b>READING STANDARDS FOR INFORMATIONAL TEXT 3-5</b>		
<b>3<sup>RD</sup> GRADE</b>	<b>4<sup>TH</sup> GRADE</b>	<b>5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE</b>
<b>Key Ideas and Details</b>		
3. Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.	3. Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.	3. Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.
<b>Craft and Structure</b>		
6. Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author of a text.	6. Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic; describe the differences in focus and the information provided.	6. Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.
<b>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</b>		
7. Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur). 8. Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence). 9. Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.	7. Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears. 8. Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text. 9. Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.	7. Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently. 8. Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s). 9. Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.
<b>Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity</b>		
10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, at the high end of the grades 2–3 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	10. By the end of year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the grades 4–5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.	10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, at the high end of the grades 4–5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

<b>READING STANDARDS FOR LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES 6-12</b>		
<b>6<sup>TH</sup> – 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADES</b>	<b>9<sup>TH</sup> – 10<sup>TH</sup> GRADES</b>	<b>11<sup>TH</sup> – 12<sup>TH</sup> GRADES</b>
<b>Key Ideas and Details</b>		
3. Identify key steps in a text’s description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).	3. Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.	3. Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.
<b>Craft and Structure</b>		
4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.	4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.	4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines <i>faction</i> in <i>Federalist</i> No. 10).
<b>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</b>		
8. Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text. 9. Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.	8. Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author’s claims. 9. Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.	8. Evaluate an author’s premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information. 9. Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.
<b>Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity</b>		
10. By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	10. By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	10. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.



<b>*WRITING STANDARDS FOR LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE, AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS 6-12</b>		
<b>6<sup>TH</sup> – 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADES</b>	<b>9<sup>TH</sup> – 10<sup>TH</sup> GRADES</b>	<b>11<sup>TH</sup> – 12<sup>TH</sup> GRADES</b>
<b>Text Types and Purposes</b>		
<p>2. Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.</p> <p>a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories as appropriate to achieving purpose; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.</p> <p>b. Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.</p> <p>c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.</p> <p>d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.</p> <p>e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone.</p> <p>f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.</p>	<p>2. Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.</p> <p>a. Introduce a topic and organize ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.</p> <p>b. Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic.</p> <p>c. Use varied transitions and sentence structures to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.</p> <p>d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic and convey a style appropriate to the discipline and context as well as to the expertise of likely readers.</p> <p>e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.</p> <p>f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).</p>	<p>2. Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.</p> <p>a. Introduce a topic and organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.</p> <p>b. Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience’s knowledge of the topic.</p> <p>c. Use varied transitions and sentence structures to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.</p> <p>d. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic; convey a knowledgeable stance in a style that responds to the discipline and context as well as to the expertise of likely readers.</p> <p>e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation provided (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).</p>
<b>Production and Distribution of Writing</b>		
<p>6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently.</p>	<p>6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology’s capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.</p>	<p>6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.</p>
<b>Research to Build and Present Knowledge</b>		
<p>8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources (primary and secondary), using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.</p>	<p>8. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources (primary and secondary), using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.</p>	<p>8. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.</p>
<b>Range of Writing</b>		
<p>10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.</p>	<p>10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.</p>	<p>10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.</p>

*\*Note: Students’ narrative skills continue to grow in these grades. The Standards require that students be able to incorporate narrative elements effectively into arguments and informative/explanatory texts. In history/social studies, students must be able to incorporate narrative accounts into their analyses of individuals or events of historical import. In science and technical subjects, students must be able to write precise enough descriptions of the step-by-step procedures they use in their investigations or technical work that others can replicate them and (possibly) reach the same results.*