
Introduction

When I wrote *Teaching Early Writing and Reading Together* in 1997, I knew from my success in the classroom that the connection between reading and writing was important. I knew that the writing/reading connection went much deeper than assigning a read-aloud followed by students writing a letter to the main character or changing the ending of a book.

Reading as a writer and writing as a reader meant more. The mini-lessons in this book support this connection, and the lessons still supply a relevant and solid foundation for connecting writing and reading in authentic ways.

What has changed in an exciting way since 1997 is that we have new standards that celebrate and further strengthen the bridge between writing and reading. The Common Core State Standards, adopted by 48 states as of this writing, call for reading, writing, speaking, and listening instruction to happen *together*, in tandem.

While many classroom educators have known about the relevancy of teaching literacy in an integrated way, we finally have been given the green light to do so. In fact, we're being pushed to change how we teach literacy in a fundamental way. No longer should we have to examine our flow of the day and make sure that we have the correct amount of minutes for teaching reading—only reading! We no longer need fear repercussions for having students write during their 90-minute, uninterrupted reading block.

The Common Core Standards recognize that writer's workshop instruction can support the reading work for reading response journals, for example. Students can turn and talk in partnerships, be pulled into talk circles, and challenge each other orally, all in the service of comprehension and literacy instruction.

The Common Core Standards recognize that students need multiple engagements with text. Working on the same literacy muscles but in different forms will allow our students to grow stronger and faster. Teaching the skills and strategies associated with comprehension in isolation is no longer deemed a best practice. We know from research that the brain seeks patterns when learning anything new. Providing the opportunity for students to engage with the same text but in various ways will allow for flexibility in practice. Students can be taught to recognize how speaking, listening, reading, and writing are all pathways to comprehension. When introduced to the standards, I found myself thinking about how the standards have instructional implications that parallel my circuit training sessions at the gym.

While I would like to say I am a regular at the gym, I really can't. I do seem to find myself seeking out a personal trainer about every January, however, as I try to get in shape for a new year. My assigned trainer walks me through

weight rituals and talks me through several resistance machines. I commit to the routine and follow it religiously. Usually I see a big difference in my stamina and strength after the first three weeks. I notice that I am no longer gasping for breath or sore from the neck down.

Things go well until I meet with my trainer on that fourth week. Then she switches things up, and I am sore all over again! When I ask why I can barely walk once again, my trainer explains that while I am working the same muscles, it's in a different way. The soreness tells me that the muscles are adapting to my new workout, becoming stronger and more flexible. If I kept my workout the same, she explains, my muscles wouldn't be as strong. Instead, they would adjust to the same workout and not be forced to grow and strengthen.

I think the Common Core State Standards function for educators like a change-up workout. They remind us that, as educators, we have to continue to work our literacy muscles in a variety of ways. Sometimes we need to have our students read, then write, then talk. Other times we should ask them to write, follow it with reading, and then talking. Then there will be times when we want our students to read, respond, read some more, and then respond.

We educators are being asked to “mash it up!” Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are the anchors of the Common Core State Standards, but no one anchor takes precedence. They are all integrated and essential elements needed to become literate.

In the first edition of *Teaching Early Writing and Reading Together*, I wrote that “the connections between reading and writing will remain invisible unless we expose them to our students.” The skills and strategies that students practice to become proficient writers will also nudge them closer to becoming proficient readers. The lessons in this book still do that.

Several questions that I posed in the original introduction remain relevant today.

- How can I connect the conversations in reading and writing workshop?
- What can I learn about the readers in my classroom through their writing?
- What can my students learn about reading through writing?
- How can I teach young writers to support their readers?
- How can I teach readers how to intentionally use a writer's supports?

Now, in 2013, I would like to add a couple more questions.

- How can we integrate speaking and listening instruction with reading and writing?
- How do we help our students to go deeper in their thinking using supports from the texts they are reading as well as the texts they are writing?

The Common Core State Standards: A Quick Overview

From the mission statement of the CCSS: *The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy.*

What we know is that the standards have 10 reading standards for reading narrative and informational text; 10 writing standards for writing opinion, informative/explanatory, and narrative text; four foundational reading standards; six speaking and listening standards; and six language standards. All are text-based. We are reminded that the Common Core State Standards tell districts *what* is to be taught but not *how* it should be taught.

Tim Shanahan, in his blog “Shanahan on Literacy,” helps to make the connections among those standards pop so that educators can shine a spotlight that shows students what muscles they are building. His explanation informs my thinking below.

The 10 **Reading Standards** are articulated in multiple ways according to text type. They are also divided into four themes or categories. The first category, “Key Ideas and Details,” asks the reader to consider what the author is saying. For all text types, students are asked to summarize the information gleaned from the text, cite the place in the text that validates the summary, and then support any conclusions derived from the text.

The second category, “Craft and Structure,” asks the reader to explain how the author says the message. To answer this question, the reader must know how to interpret meanings of words and phrases, examine the way the text is put together, and figure out how this structure affects the meaning and the tone of the text. The point of view of the author will highlight the purpose and must be recognized. The content and the style of the author will shape the reader’s interpretation of the text, thus it must be determined by the reader. Readers enter a text with background knowledge that informs how they will interpret a piece of literature. An author will strive to influence the reader’s opinion about the characters, theme, or mood of the story. The reader will need to examine the text with the intent to interpret what the author wants him or her to take away from the story.

The third category, “Integration of Knowledge and Ideas,” asks the reader to evaluate what the author has said and how the reader can take that message further. Readers are asked to compare information across books and/or digital media and be able to evaluate the reasoning citing multiple sources. The ability to compare and contrast information has always been a research-based strategy with a lot of bang for the buck.

The fourth and final category, “Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity,” calls for students to do all of the work above in challenging and varied text. Students must be able to read multiple types of text for a variety of purposes.

Now let’s take a look at the **Writing Standards**. We see that there are also four different categories for the Common Core State Standards in writing. The first category, “Text Types and Purposes,” lays out the three different text types that students should be instructed to compose in: opinion, informative/explanatory, and narrative.

For the first type, or genre, students should be able to write an effective argument that includes staking a claim, providing reasons with examples to support that claim, and then crafting a concluding statement.

The good news is that this type of writing can take multiple forms that will excite and engage K-2 students. Writing an argument in new forms like a letter, review, or brochure will appeal to young writers.

Students probably are more familiar with informative/explanatory and narrative writing. Writing to inform or explain is not a new type of writing, and narrative is probably the type that K-2 students have practiced most.

The second standard for writing, “Production and Distribution of Writing,” asks that students write texts that are appropriate to different demands and purposes. Here young writers must consider and write to a specific audience and work through the writing process ending with publication. The standards promote technology as an important source for publishing writing of all types.

The third category, “Research to Build and Present Knowledge,” calls for students to conduct research, gather information from multiple sources, evaluate the credibility of the source, and then use that information when composing.

The fourth and final category, “Range of Writing,” which does not begin until third grade, requires students to write routinely over extended time frames.

The **Foundations of Reading Standards** reflect the same standards for phonemic awareness and phonics that we have always followed. Print concepts like left to right and top to bottom, letter/sound correspondence, fluency, and decoding skills remain an important part of reading and writing instruction.

The **Language Standards** and **Speaking & Listening Standards** require that all students write and speak with appropriate grammar and sentence structure and choose words effectively. Spelling and punctuation are considered at all grade levels. Students are expected to participate in conversations by listening and speaking while continuing a conversation through multiple exchanges. They are expected to speak in complete sentences audibly and with coherence.

As you read through the breakdown of the K-2 Common Core State Standards, I know you were already envisioning the connections. These connections are not a stretch; they are there front and center.

Writing contributes to both language development (Speaking & Listening) and growth in spelling (Foundations of Reading).

Speaking with appropriate words and text structure will allow for writing to narrate an event in the sequence that it happened (Writing).

Writing to stake a claim and provide reasons to support that point of view will assist students when reading to decipher how another author shaped his or her opinion and swayed them as readers (Reading).

The Common Core State Standards co-mingle reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language even though they are presented as separate standards. This second edition of *Teaching Early Writing and Reading Together* reminds you of the connections and includes new lessons to support writing for opinion. We have added opportunities for practicing the standards of Speaking & Listening, Language, and the Foundations of Reading to each of the lessons when appropriate. The conversational stems found on page 49 will provide the verbal discourse called for in the “Comprehension and Collaboration” section of the Speaking & Listening Standards for kindergarten, first, and second grades.

The American Federation of Teachers wrote that, “...CCSS is one set of strong, consistent expectations for what all students should know and learn.” Because it is one set, we can teach in a way that supports the cohesiveness. The lessons in this book will help you do just that. The Common Core Standards have given us a new workout plan.

So, let’s get going. It is time to help our students work those literacy muscles! We need readers, writers, speakers, and listeners who are prepared for the marathon that will come. They can build muscles that are strong and tight and flexible. Ready, set, let’s go!

How to Use This Book

The mini-lessons I share in this book were created to be taught first during writer’s workshop. While the Common Core State Standards promote the interconnectedness of writing, reading, speaking, and listening, this book places the explicit instruction inside of writing.

An example: One day during writer’s workshop, my mini-lesson was to write with more specific words. One of my students was struggling with continually writing with boring words. The word in question on this day was *mad*. After a short conference around better words for *mad*, she changed the word *mad* to *furious*. We were both thrilled with the results. Later that day during

independent reading, she stalled on the word *clever*. I was able to remind her of the work she had done during writing to choose a more specific word. Then we talked about the character in her book. This particular character was not only smart but could read people very well. Using what she had learned about more specific words during writer's workshop, the student was able to make the connection and use the same strategy to read the word *clever*. This Tier Two word has now been explicitly taught, and this student can be encouraged to use both *clever* and *furious* when speaking.

Each mini-lesson identifies the connecting point to reading and speaking and listening. These Target Skills can, and should, be revisited and reinforced during your reading block. And—truly—these important skills and strategies could be practiced in any content area where it would seem natural. Making the connections explicit is the key to making students flexible with literacy.

- Identifying organization, whether in reading someone else's story, telling your own story, or writing your own story, is essential.
- The use of the word wall shouldn't come only during the writing block. Students can identify chunks of words that they know to decode unfamiliar words simply by looking up at the word wall during any time of the day.
- Writing from left to right and top to bottom should happen every time a student composes a written response to reading.
- Students practice letter-sound correspondence every time they use temporary spelling during writer's workshop.
- Students also practice telling a story or recounting details every time they share their story or retell someone else's story to a partner.
- Student pieces can become a child's first written text and can become a jumping-off point for reading. These simple published pieces should occupy a spot in independent reading. They can be orally published as well.

The connections among reading, writing, speaking, and listening are very natural and can weave in and out throughout the day. The habits and behaviors of readers are connected to the habits and behaviors of writers; in fact, many are exactly the same!

Writing contributes to both language development and growth in spelling, decoding, and phonemic awareness—all important precursors to learning to read. Writing provides an incentive for paying thoughtful attention to words. All of this will affect a child's growth in reading development. When you add the support of oral language and discourse skills, the literacy development of young children will be enhanced.

The connections among reading, writing, speaking, and listening will remain invisible unless we expose them to our students. This book shows you how to teach those connections. When a young writer makes decisions

about how to focus his piece and which details to include, he is practicing determining importance. A writer creates pictures with words, intending his reader to experience the same imagery. Using language to share your intent with a partner is the common denominator. These are the connections I am talking about.

We, ourselves, need to notice the obvious link ourselves and to make HUGE the idea that the skills and strategies students practice to become proficient writers will also nudge them closer to becoming proficient readers. Using conversation to share that growing proficiency will make your teaching stick. This book will show you how to do that.

Yes, it does sound like common sense: writing, reading, speaking, and listening are connected. But common sense does not always prevail. One day when my daughter Maddie was three years old, she exited her bedroom ready for ballet class. She had pulled her sparkly pink tights on over her even more sparkly tutu. She looked at me, tights covering her netted tutu, and sighed in frustration, “I don’t look like a real ballerina.”

“No, you don’t, honey,” I replied. “Common sense should tell you that your tights go on underneath your tutu.”

She stared at me for a moment, her brow furrowed in thought, and then retorted, “Why should I listen to him? I don’t even know who he is!”

When it comes to connecting reading, writing, speaking, and listening, let’s listen to common sense. Reading and writing can and should support each other. Oral language makes the connection visible. My hope is that this book will motivate you to begin teaching early writing and reading together, encouraging the talk that goes along with it.

How can you use writing to think about and respond to reading in a deep way? How can we teach students to have the conversations necessary for deep comprehension? Let’s begin the exploration.