

Ten Things Booksellers Need to Know About the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Find the standards at corestandards.org

- 1. Standards aren't new.** Individual school districts and states have had learning standards since at least the 1990s. What makes the Common Core State Standards movement unique is that this is the first time that numerous states have adopted identical learning standards.
- 2. The CCSS are not a federal project.** While the U.S. Department of Education has given significant resources to states that have adopted rigorous standards via competitive Race to the Top funding, and has given funding toward the new CCSS standardized tests, CCSS was developed by the National Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers and approved on a state-by-state basis. So far, about 46 states are participating to some extent.
- 3. The CCSS are standards, not curriculum.** They represent what students should know and be able to do by the end of each K-12 grade level. They do not tell teachers how to teach, nor do they represent lesson plans. If an educator says, "I have to teach this way because of CCSS," they really mean, "I have to teach this way because this is the method my district chose for us to use to meet CCSS."
- 4. The CCSS push informational text (their term for non-fiction) into the forefront.** There has been a strong push, both in the standards and in school perceptions of implementation priorities, in informational reading *and* writing. Many publishers are pushing their non-fiction content; however, fiction still matters. Cherry Lake Publishing goes beyond merely having non-fiction texts; its Information and Language Arts Explorer (and Junior) series guide students and teachers into how to *use* their informational text skills. Keep in mind that CCSS has been adopted for English Language Arts and Math *only*. This means that curricula for Science and Social Studies remains defined at the state level and may vary by state, so collection needs *by subject topics* will vary. New science standards are currently in development, but it is unlikely that most states will adopt them without significant incentives at the federal level.
- 5. Skill development in research is very important across K-12.** These standards are woven throughout the CCSS, not siloed in a unique area. Cherry Lake's Information Explorer (and Junior) series map well to the research skills implicit in the CCSS's research-focused standards.
- 6. Text complexity is three-dimensionalized in CCSS.** Many schools use reading incentive programs that mechanically "score" the difficulty of the text based on quantitative measures (e.g., word and sentence length). Text complexity in CCSS is envisioned in a triangle: *quantitative* measures on one site (reference is made to Lexile.com), *qualitative* (human evaluations of difficulty, e.g., presence of idioms or figurative language), and *reader and task* (what does the readers already know? What does the reader need to learn from the task?).
- 7. There is a recommended reading list (see the ELA Appendices) but no required reading list.** That being said, anticipate some anxiety from educators who feel they should "teach from the list." See also #4 above.
- 8. Standardized tests are being developed, will occur multiple times throughout the year, and will be online.** This should open new conversations about the importance of developing close reading skills onscreen but is currently an under-discussed "sleepers" issue. Consider discussing how eBooks can help children develop strong onscreen reading habits in preparation for the tests that begin in 2014-2015. Also, recognize that meeting many of the CCSS standards in the classroom requires different skills from the kinds of items that can be tested.
- 9. Cherry Lake/Sleeping Bear Press are already in good CCSS shape.** The skills discussed in Cherry Lake's Information Explorer (and Junior) and Language Arts Explorer (and Junior) series, as well as CLP's Navigating the Information Tsunami: Engaging Research Projects that Meet the Common Core State Standards, K-5, give teachers, librarians, and students concrete skill development in the areas relevant to CCSS's English Language Arts Standards. Take a look at the CCSS Math Standards for connections to CLP's Math Explorer series.
- 10. Mapping your texts to CCSS and making concrete suggestions about specific texts that can meet specific standards can help potential buyers have confidence in their materials selection.** Download the Math Standards, ELA Standards, and ELA Appendix B/Text Exemplars from <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>. Look for places where CLP/SBP books correlate to the standards teachers and librarians will be trying to reach. Consider short marketing handouts that make those connections clear. Be specific about how each text will meet CCSS. does it do that? Which standards, in particular, can be met? Try to avoid Swiss Army Knife promises: no one text can meet all standards. The more focused your marketing, the more likely your claims will seem authentic.