

# MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION & THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

**NAMLE**  
An Educator's Guide

NAMLE Statement on the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.

The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) believes that media literacy education—the process of teaching how to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and communicate using media in all of its forms—supports many of the most challenging goals of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Media literacy engages in the thoughtful understanding of all texts in our media environment, including print, visual, audio, interactive, and digital texts. Media literate students are able to decode and comprehend texts, which allows them to analyze and evaluate texts for credibility, point of view, values, varying interpretation, and the context in which they are made, including institutional and economic contexts.

Incorporating media literacy education into, specifically, English Language Arts (ELA) practices, supports the focus of the CCSS on analysis, digital creation, and the use of nonprint texts.

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## Understanding Media Literacy Education and the Common Core

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have been widely adopted in the United States, and are currently the most sweeping attempt to align the assessment objectives of K-12 schools across the United States.

In NAMLE's Educator's Guide to Media Literacy and The Common Core State Standards, we will discuss the Common Core standards in English Language Arts (ELA) & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, and provide several foundational connections to media literacy education with examples and discussion questions for educators. The range of subjects covered in this standards document encompasses a huge diversity of practitioners in- and out-of-school who engage with media literacy's expanded conceptualization of what it means to be literate in the 21st century.

The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) and its membership has been following the Common Core debate very closely. We are listening to the conversations among educators and state education departments about aligning curriculum to the CCSS. We are also listening to youth media and media literacy enrichment educators as they try to better understand and implement the CCSS into their

practice. We recognize that the CCSS are controversial, and new assessment standards will play a major role in determining whether and how the CCSS are implemented at the district and state levels.

Here's the good news: media literacy education can thrive in both highly-structured environments and in informal learning environments where assessment is more project-based and less focused on academic outcomes. We are optimistic about the successful connections media literacy educators have made when addressing the CCSS. Our scholars and practitioners continue to make great strides with recognizing and developing media literacy education strategies for educators. We know there is more work to be done as we proceed to study and use the CCSS in the development and assessment of media literacy education.

This document is designed to outline some of the key connections between media literacy education and the CCSS. It is work that will continue to evolve, as we believe that the CCSS, like all frameworks for education, comprise "living documents" in need of adaptation, improvement, and feedback.

## Literature and Resources

Media literacy education is already being integrated into CCSS, particularly those in English and Language Arts. Media literacy scholars Frank W. Baker, Richard Beach, and William Kist have written about the ways in which competencies in new literacies—including the use, analysis, and composition of visual, audio, and interactive texts using digital tools—are built into the CCSS.<sup>1</sup> Film educators have persuasively argued that visual analysis of popular culture goes hand-in-hand with the CCSS, which encourage teachers to include nonprint texts for analysis alongside print texts, as when English teachers compare Hollywood films to their source novels or show films that are thematically similar to assigned reading.<sup>2</sup>

NAMLE takes a more expanded view of the possibilities of using media literacy education to engage in teaching and learning with the CCSS.

Former NAMLE President Faith Rogow and former NAMLE board member Vanessa Domine have created a comprehensive resource that maps connections between Common Core and NAMLE's Core Principles of Media Literacy Education. Documents on their website, **A Media Literacy Tour Thru the Common Core** (<http://commonmle.blogspot.com>), map some of the strongest connections between key ideas in media literacy education and the language of the CCSS ELA standards. At the 2013 biennial NAMLE conference, Rogow noted that the document's introduction, i.e., the first seven pages of the CCSS ELA & Literacy standards, make the integration of media literacy education not just useful, but essential to teaching with the Common Core.

1. Beach and Baker 2011; Kist 2012; 2. Heiten 2013

## Media Literacy Education Connections to the CCSS

In the following pages, you will learn about important connections between the CCSS and important concepts of media literacy education. We provide an overview of some of these connections and several specific standards that can be used or adapted when you engage in these general concepts and practices.

Collectively, these general concepts address 19 out of 32 of the Anchor Standards from which all other grade-level standards (over 350 of them) are built. We will provide these anchor standards in relevant sections. Keep in mind that you may find ways to adapt other standards—including ones we mention and ones we do not—to many different media literacy education practices.

## A Quick Guide to Reading CCSS

Before you explore specific standards, familiarize yourself with the “Introduction of the Common Core Standards.” There are dozens of ideas that are clearly aligned with media literacy education practices as well as research, theory, and writing in the media literacy field. For more information on specific connections, see Faith Rogow’s Common Core and media literacy education intersections worksheet at:

[http://www.kidsplay.org/NAMLE13/intersect\\_grid.pdf](http://www.kidsplay.org/NAMLE13/intersect_grid.pdf)

### How to read CCSS code:

The prefix refers to the content type. “**RL**” stands for **Reading Literature**.

← **RL** . **5** . **1** →

The second number refers to the specific standard. In this case, the standard refers to **Key Ideas and Details**.

The first number refers to the grade level. In this case, the standard is designed for a 5th grade learner. (Note: In the following examples, “X” refers to standards that apply to all grade levels from K-12. For instance, “RL.X.1,” refers to reading literature, all grade levels, key ideas and details.)

**Content Areas:** RL – Reading literature  
 SL – Speaking and Listening

RI – Reading information  
 L – Language

W – Writing

Imagine **students as authors** of different types of media messages — how might their writing style, **purpose**, point of view, or **use of evidence** shift if they were writing a blog post versus an academic essay? A **letter to the editor** versus a “**tweet**”?



## CONNECTION #1

### Exploring the Relationships between Authors and Audiences

When we think of “authors,” we often think of print authors—the authors of children’s books, young adult fiction, or great literature. But authorship is complex, and in the 21st century we know that there are many different kinds of authors and creators—filmmakers, web designers, comic artists, and animators are also authors. Similarly, audiences differ depending on lots of contextual factors. Every reader is, in some sense, an “audience member.” But to fully understand what we are reading, we also need to have a wealth of other contextual information, like the time period of a text, how texts have been interpreted differently by different audiences, and many other inferences crucial to our full understanding.

The CCSS ask teachers to “establish a base of knowledge” (pg. 7) for students. Often this applies to issues of basic reading comprehension, including spelling, grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. But we also know that children need broader social, institutional, and other contextual knowledge to make sufficient meaning of a variety of texts. For instance, one cannot understand a news article simply by reading the words on the page. They must also understand the credibility of the source of the information, how the information is laid out to attract attention, and foundational knowledge in subject matter like civics or current events.

Students are expected to “adjust [their] purpose...for the task.” (pg. 7) When we explore the relationship between authors, audiences, and texts, we begin to understand that all authors adjust their purpose for tasks at hand—to fulfill a particular purpose for particular target audiences. Imagine students as authors of different types of media messages—how might their writing style, purpose, point of view, or use of evidence shift if they were writing a blog post versus an academic essay? A letter to the editor versus a “tweet”? How might students adjust their ideas for different audiences, different mediums, or different purposes?



#### Common Core Relevant Anchor Standards

##### Reading Literature and/or Information: Key Ideas and Craft and Structure

**RL/RI.X.1.** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

**RL/RI.X.2.** Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

**RL/RI.X.3.** Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

**RL/RI.X.6.** Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

##### Writing: Range of Writing

**W.X.10** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

##### Language: Knowledge of Language

**L.X.3.** Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

When we **expand our definition of texts** to the variety of media that we use in our everyday lives, we broaden the materials and concepts we have at our disposal in the classroom, **increase student engagement**, and **enrich learning experiences**.



## CONNECTION #2

### Expanding the Concept of Literacy

What is a “text”? In some classrooms, “text” is just short for “textbook”—the authoritative print texts being used for instruction. However, anyone who has shown a filmed version of a play in their classroom, used a website companion to a textbook, or asked students to do online research already knows that “texts” don’t begin and end with textbooks, novels, and reading packets. They extend to videos, websites, games, music, radio programs, and a number of other nonprint texts that students and teachers alike engage with on a daily basis.

The CCSS, like media literacy education, requires students to be “familiar with the strengths and limitations of various technological tools and mediums” (Intro page 7). We believe that the integration of technology and media in the classroom requires a rethinking of “what counts” as text, and that this expanded definition is necessary for fluency in print and nonprint media according to the CCSS. When we expand our definition of texts to the variety of media that we use in our everyday lives, we broaden the materials and concepts we have at our disposal in the classroom, increase student engagement, and enrich learning experiences.

Think about different ways you might incorporate a variety of texts into your instruction through media like videos, audio recordings, or websites. We bet you’ve already integrated some of these texts into the classroom yourself—so what happens when we acknowledge this broader definition of “text” in the CCSS? How do a variety of media texts align to standards established for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language?



#### Common Core Relevant Anchor Standards

**Reading Literature and/or Information:  
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas.**

**RL/RI.X.7.** Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

**RL/RI.X.8.** Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

**RL/RI.X.9.** Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

**Speaking and Listening:  
Comprehension and Collaboration**

**SL.X.2.** Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Strategies include **asking questions to assess credibility**—where do sources come from? Who made them and why? Are they intended to **entertain, inform, or persuade**? And if so, whom are they trying to reach?



## CONNECTION #3

### Research with Information, News, and Current Events

How do we harness the potential of what used to be called the “information superhighway” (and what some critics now refer to as “information overload”)? The CCSS wants students to “use relevant evidence...and constructively evaluate others’ use of evidence” (Intro page 7). But what happens when so much “evidence” is available at our fingertips? How do we teach students to sift through, evaluate, and use high-quality information online?

Media literacy practice addresses the issue of “information overload” directly by offering a number of strategies for analyzing and evaluating informational and nonfiction texts. Strategies include asking good questions to assess credibility—where do sources come from? Who made them and why? Are they intended to entertain, inform, or persuade? And if so, whom are they trying to reach? How can we find other sources of information to balance or triangulate those Google results that seem to jump to the top of the page at the expense of other sources of information?

By engaging students in a variety of informational and nonfiction texts, including the use of news and current events and persuasive messages that emulate credible news sources (as in press releases and “infotainment”), they can learn not only how to assess the credibility of a single source, but also understand sources in a complex environment of lots of sources. In media literacy teaching, students develop their ability to access credible information and also activate critical thinking about the credibility of sources, so that they can better understand what information might be relevant to a particular task, and what information might be obstructing rather than facilitating the research process.



#### Common Core Relevant Anchor Standards

**Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge.**

**W.X.7:** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**W.X.8** Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

**W.X.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**

**SL.X.5** Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

When students make **media of their own**, whether it's through filmmaking, graphic design, web design, or some other form of media production, they **connect professional media practices** to their **own opinions, ideas, questions, and values**.



## CONNECTION #4

### Empowering Students as Critical Thinkers through Media Production and Analysis

The CCSS values students as “comprehending but discerning readers and listeners.” Media literacy education holds these same values; but when we recognize the sheer number of messages that media students receive on a daily basis (young people report being engaged with media from the time they wake up to the time they go to bed, sometimes literally falling asleep with mobile devices by their side!), it becomes clear that critical thinking and analysis is necessary for much more than just traditional classroom texts.

Media literacy education empowers young people, from kindergarten to college, to apply reasoning and critical thinking to everything they read, see, hear, and interact with in complex media environments. Sometimes experiences constructing messages of their own, through filmmaking, graphic and web design, or other forms of creative and nonfiction writing, are essential to connecting the practices of professional media-makers they see online, on television, and all around them to their own opinions, ideas, questions, and values.

Through media literacy education, students learn to ask important questions about all media texts—questions about authorship, purpose, point of view, and key omissions that are all part of the media creation process. By better understanding the media that surrounds them and by making media of their own, students simultaneously develop important critical thinking skills that are essential to communication in the 21st century.



#### Common Core Relevant Anchor Standards

**Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing**

**W.X.5.** Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

**W.X.6.** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

**Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**

**SL.X.6.** Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

By reflecting on **their own values** and understanding the **values of different disciplines**, cultures, and points of view, students are **better able to communicate thoughtfully** with others who may be different from them.



## CONNECTION #5

### Reflection, Ethics, and Understanding Multiple Points of View

What responsibilities do students have to engage with multiple perspectives, points of view, and sources? The CCSS emphasize disciplinary literacy, in which students are aware that “different disciplines call for different types of evidence.” But what about the ways in which different disciplines themselves hold divergent points of view, as when a new scientific discovery is hotly contested or when a news item is reported differently in different sources?

Media literacy education emphasizes a broad understanding of point of view that is associated with norms and standards in various disciplines. But it also emphasizes an understanding of information based on reflection and ethics—pairing a rigorous understanding of “what counts as knowledge” with a connection to students’ sense of right and wrong, and their willingness to engage with ideas they may or may not agree with.

The CCSS and media literacy education ask students to “actively seek to understand other perspectives and cultures.” In media literacy education, one key question is: “How might someone else interpret this text differently?” Media literacy is an international education movement that has great success with connecting students from diverse cultural backgrounds toward the goal of intercultural understanding. By reflecting on their own values and understanding the values of different disciplines, cultures, and points of view, students are better able to communicate thoughtfully with others who may be different from them, whether in the classroom or in the wider world.



#### Common Core Relevant Anchor Standards

##### Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing

**W.X.6** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

##### Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration

**SL.X.1** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**SL.X.3** Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.