Tools for Teachers: Engaging in Academic Writing
Implementing Key Shifts in the Common Core State Standards—Part Four

The Tools for Teachers series of professional learning modules are open educational resources designed to meet the needs of teachers, schools, and districts working to make the key instructional shifts in the CCSS ELA & Literacy a reality for teachers and students. All Tools for Teachers resources can be downloaded from the Aspen Digital Resource Library at www.AspenDRL.org/toolsforteachers

For more information on Tools for Teachers, contact Joaquin Tamayo, Assistant Director of the Aspen Education & Society Program, at joaquin.tamayo@aspeninst.org.
Tools for Teachers: Implementing Key Shifts in the Common Core State Standards

Part 1: Text Complexity. Educators studying this module will...
- Review the major elements of text complexity in the context of the CCSS ELA & Literacy.
- Learn how to employ a structured process for evaluating text complexity and choosing complex texts for instruction.
- Understand the importance of implementing the new balance between literary and informational texts demanded by the CCSS ELA & Literacy.
- Understand the importance of providing access to all learners, regardless of ability, to complex texts and rich instruction aligned to them.

Part 2: Close Reading & Text-Dependent Questions. Educators studying this module will...
- Learn about the reading strategy called “close reading” as a means of teaching complex text.
- Examine the characteristics of text-dependent questions and how to employ a structured process to create them at the word/phrase, sentence, and paragraph/passage levels.
- Understand the connections between effective close reading and the CCSS Anchor Reading Standards.
- Learn how to employ a structured process to evaluate and revise existing reading comprehension questions in current curriculum.

Part 3: Designing Close Reading Instruction. Educators studying this module will...
- Learn how to support rigorous CCSS-aligned reading instruction with close reading exemplars that embody key shifts in the CCSS.
- Examine the guiding principles and characteristics of close reading exemplars.
- Learn about the importance of a systematic focus on academic vocabulary within CCSS-aligned instruction.
- Understand best practices for creating close reading exemplars.
- Explore methods for delivering effective close reading instruction that cultivates students’ interest in the text, responsibility for leading discussions and performing analysis, and the confidence and stamina necessary for gradual release to independence and proficiency.

Part 4: Academic Writing. Educators studying this module will...
- Understand the importance of several key design considerations of the CCSS that highlight the importance of academic writing, research, and aligned research projects in all grades and across the curriculum.
- Explore the three types of academic writing required by the CCSS.
- Understand the role of evidence in the CCSS and how students are required to employ evidence from text to support their argumentative, informative/explanatory, and narrative writing.

Each Tools for Teachers module includes a Power Point presentation, a Facilitator’s Guide, and a suite of ready-to-use tools and resources to support professional learning.