Second Edition

Thinkquiry Toolkit 1

Reading and Vocabulary Strategies for College and Career Readiness

PCG Education

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Common Core edition of *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1*. First published in 2010, *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1* is a collection of teacher instructional practices, student learning strategies, and collaborative routines that improve reading comprehension and vocabulary learning in grades 4–12. To be selected as a *Thinkquiry Toolkit* tool, the practice, strategy, or routine had to be research based, high impact, multipurpose, and effective in improving student learning across multiple content areas.

These tools are tried and true. Our consultants and classroom teachers have been using them for the past 20 years in multiple settings including high schools, career and technical education centers, middle schools, elementary schools, rural schools, urban schools, suburban schools, and digital academies. These tools support the reading comprehension and vocabulary development of all students.

A lot has happened in the past 6 years. In 2009, at the same time the first edition of *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1* was nearing publication, a sweeping initiative was under way that would change the face of English language arts and literacy instruction across the United States—the development of the Common Core State Standards. Launched in 2009 by state leaders, including governors and state commissioners of education from across the country, the development of the standards was intended to ensure that “all students, regardless of where they live, are graduating high school prepared for college, career, and life” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2015a). The Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CCSS ELA & Literacy) were released in June 2010 and over

the course of the next 2 years were adopted and implemented by the majority of states and territories.

In this newest edition of *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1,* we explain the implications of the CCSS ELA & Literacy for ELA and content literacy instruction, and we affirm the strategies and approaches in *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1* that can help implement the needed shifts in literacy instruction. As ELA teachers and teachers of literacy in other disciplines begin to align their instruction with the CCSS ELA & Literacy, they will continue to need tools, approaches, and strategies to support their students—and they will continue to use *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1* for those resources. In this edition of *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1,* we have added a new section that provides an overview of the CCSS ELA & Literacy and related instructional shifts, and we have explained how the research-based, experience-tested strategies and approaches in *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1* continue to provide a strong resource for helping students and teachers achieve the literacy requirements of the Common Core.

What Has Changed, and What Remains the Same in *Thinkquiry Toolkit* 1?

In 1999, we were asked what the next most important issue was going to be in education—that is, what needed to be addressed to ensure that students had the opportunities to be successful in college, in the workplace, and as citizens. Our answer: content area literacy.

We did not mean “basic reading skills”—although these are certainly necessary. We meant the ability to read, write, speak, listen, and think well enough to learn whatever one wanted to learn, demonstrate that learning, and transfer that learning to new situations.

Clearly, there were literacy skills that applied across all content areas and literacy demands specific to each content area. The Common Core affirms this vision. The standards recognize that literacy does not reside solely in the ELA classroom. In order for students to be ready for college and career when they graduate high school, they need to be proficient in the literacy skills of each discipline. The CCSS were not written just for ELA but for literacy in the disciplines as well.

In order to write *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1,* we compiled strategies and approaches that taught students how to read, write, discuss, and think in each content area. Teachers across the country began using these tools with their students in grades 4–12 and gave us feedback as to what worked well, how they used the tools, and the challenges they faced while teaching the strategies. We developed the materials in *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1* to provide directions, templates, examples, and scenarios based on teacher requests.

The purpose of the teacher instructional practices and collaborative routines included in this book is to help students develop the skills they need to be excellent readers, learners, and thinkers. The goal of teaching the learning strategies is for students to be able to use the strategies appropriately and independently when reading and learning new content. Similarly, in the Common Core, independence with grade-level text and skills is the ultimate goal.

We believe that *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1* will be an increasingly valuable tool for individual teachers, teams, departments, and whole schools. This edition of *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1* includes nearly all of the strategies, routines, and tools from the original. However, we have updated some of the examples to be more illustrative of Common Core practices, and we have added “Common Core Connections” to the

strategies to help link the instructional shifts and key elements of the standards. The biggest change in this edition is the addition of a substantive Common Core section as Part 1 of this book. The intent of Part 1, Overview of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy and the Related Instructional Shifts, is to frame teachers' use of *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1* as a Common Core resource. If teachers collaboratively take on these instructional practices, student learning strategies, and routines, teach them to students, and use them regularly across content areas, students will develop confidence and competence as readers, writers, and learners.

Format of the Toolkit

Thinkquiry Toolkit 1 includes five parts: Overview of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy and the Related Instructional Shifts, Selecting the Right Tools for Maximum Learning, Laying the Foundation *before* Reading/Learning, Building New Knowledge *during* Reading/Learning, and Expanding and Deepening Understanding *after* Reading/Learning. Part 1 provides a description of the instructional shifts and key elements of the CCSS ELA & Literacy and makes connections between the shifts and *Thinkquiry* strategies. Parts 2–4 each correspond to one of three phases of reading instruction—before, during, and after—and provide tools that students and teachers can use to develop the habits and skills needed in that phase. The following is a brief overview of the contents of each part of *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1*.[1]

Part 1: Overview of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy and the Related Instructional Shifts

In Part 1, we provide an introduction to the origin, purpose, and structure of the CCSS ELA & Literacy and an explanation of the instructional shifts teachers are required to make in order to fully implement the standards. We provide detail about each shift, the rationale for the shift, and how it relates to the standards. We also provide a more thorough explanation for several key elements shared by the instructional shifts: text complexity, academic language and vocabulary, and close reading.

Part 2: Selecting the Right Tools for Maximum Learning

In Part 2, we provide information that is key to using the *Thinkquiry* tools effectively. The tools are powerful but they have to be carefully selected and explicitly taught for students to use them to their greatest advantage. Part 2 includes topics such as:

- Why content teachers are key to literacy learning
- Why strategies matter
- The literacy engagement instruction cycle
- The literacy demands of different content areas
- The connection between vocabulary development and reading comprehension
- The research about vocabulary learning and reading comprehension
- The *gradual release of responsibility model*
- Matching the right tool to the type of text students are reading
- Differentiation—what to do when there are students at different reading levels in the same class

- Designing lesson plans that support vocabulary development, improve reading comprehension, and increase content learning

Part 3: Laying the Foundation before Reading/Learning

The tools in Part 3 focus on preparing students for reading and learning by

- Considering what students already know about a topic
- Setting a purpose and generating questions for learning
- Attending to text features, graphs and charts, appendices, and other text structures that contribute to the student's understanding
- Adjusting understanding about text as new information is presented

Part 4: Building New Knowledge during Reading/Learning

The tools in Part 4 help students comprehend content information and construct concepts and relationships by

- Questioning to clarify and deepen understanding
- Monitoring understanding and using fix-up strategies, such as rereading, reading on, or examining a word more closely
- Making connections with other texts and integrating knowledge of world issues to make sense of text
- Inferring to get a deeper understanding of text and making valuable connections with the text
- Drawing conclusions and refining them in light of additional information

- Analyzing story structure and informational text structures and using these structures as supports for building meaning

Part 5: Expanding and Deepening Understanding *after* Reading/Learning

The tools in Part 5 help learners reflect on, analyze, and synthesize the content by

- Reflecting on what they read
- Reviewing information, ideas, relationships, and applications to real life by rereading, summarizing, and discussing with others
- Synthesizing by combining ideas and information within and across texts
- Presenting concepts learned through the informal and formal written and spoken word, including small-group classroom venues and authentic audiences

Each section's tools are listed in the section introduction. Note that many of the *Thinkquiry* tools can be used to support student learning at more than one phase of the reading process. How and when you and your students use the tools will depend on your teaching and learning goals, the needs of your students, and the specific demands of the text or content being read or learned.

The Tools of the Toolkit

Parts 3–5 of the Toolkit describe three types of tools: student learning strategies, collaborative routines, and teacher instructional practices.

Student learning strategies are strategies that we want students to be able to use independently in school and

beyond. These strategies have the capacity to improve students' literacy habits and skills with ongoing use. For example, when students go to college and career, we want them to be able to use **Coding/Comprehension Monitoring**, **Two-Column Note Taking**, or **Sum It Up** strategies if these would be helpful to the task.

Collaborative routines support the social nature of literacy and learning by providing protocols for pair and group work. These help students use one another as a resource for learning. Collaborative routines shift the responsibility for learning to students and help students to improve their reading comprehension and vocabulary development when regularly engaged as part of teaching and learning.

Teacher instructional practices are approaches that teachers can use to support all students to develop the reading, vocabulary learning, and thinking skills of strong readers, writers, and thinkers.

Each tool is described with steps for implementation and tips for how to deepen student learning or maximize effectiveness. Templates are provided where applicable. For each tool, there is a set of examples of what the tool might look like “in action” in grades 4–12 in various content areas. Finally, at the end of each section, there are more extended classroom scenarios.

Professional learning and use of *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1* can take many different forms:

- *Individual teachers* of students in grades 4–12 can use *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1* to improve their students' reading, writing, vocabulary development, and content learning.
- *Professional learning communities, grade-level teams, teaching teams, or departments* can use the Toolkit by discussing student literacy needs and selecting

strategies, collaborative routines, or instructional practices that address specific learning goals. Then teachers can try the approach in their classrooms. When they meet, they can discuss how they used the strategy, routine, or practice, how students responded, and how they would improve their instructional use of the tool next time. Teams can examine student work resulting from use of the tool to understand the impact of the tool on learning, related to the targeted standards.

- *School literacy leadership teams, departments, grade-level teams, or teaching teams* can select a common set of *Thinkquiry* strategies to teach students, thereby developing a set of common experiences and language for talking about literacy and learning. Students would see the applicability of the tools across content areas and strengthen their literacy habits and skills.

We hope that teachers find *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1* to be helpful in supporting their efforts to improve students' academic language and vocabulary, reading comprehension, and learning across the content areas.

Note

1. Content about how to support students before, during, and after reading/learning is adapted from the Council of Chief State School Officers (2010) *Adolescent Literacy Toolkit*. Available from http://programs.ccsso.org/projects/adolescent_literacy_toolkit/.

PART 1
OVERVIEW OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY AND THE RELATED INSTRUCTIONAL SHIFTS

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CCSS ELA & Literacy or "the standards") have been widely adopted or adapted in the majority of states across the country. This research-based set of standards raises the bar for what students will learn in each grade and sets the expectation that all students can and will achieve college and career readiness. As schools and districts begin to align curriculum and instruction with the CCSS ELA & Literacy, they review and reconsider the instructional activities, tools, protocols, and materials they currently use. In this same spirit, we revisited the tools, strategies, and instructional approaches in *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1* to confirm its alignment with the rigor of the CCSS ELA & Literacy and its accompanying instructional shifts. This trusted collection of high-quality, research-affirmed strategies, tools, and approaches continues to be a valuable resource for teaching and learning in the Common Core era both for current users of *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1* and for those who are seeing it for the first time. This new section of *Thinkquiry Toolkit 1* describes the instructional shifts required by the CCSS and connects them to the *Thinkquiry* strategies, tools, and approaches.

In this section, we provide an overview of the instructional shifts as well as what they mean for teachers, students, and

instruction. Understanding the instructional shifts will help you most effectively choose the right *Thinkquiry* tools.

Introduction to the CCSS ELA & Literacy

The CCSS ELA & Literacy is a clear set of college and career-ready standards for kindergarten through twelfth grade. Published in 2010, the standards were developed under the auspices of state education chiefs and governors in 48 states; teachers, parents, school administrators, and experts from across the country provided input into the development of the standards. The standards are based on research and evidence and are built on the strengths of previous state standards. They are “based on rigorous content and the application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills” (Common Core State Standard Initiative, 2015c). The intent of this new set of high standards was to provide consistent, clear expectations across the states and to ensure that all students would have the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college and career.

Thirty-two College and Career Readiness anchor standards (CCRA) form the basis for all of the standards. They are organized in four domains: Reading (10), Writing (10), Speaking & Listening (6), and Language (6). Grades K–5 also include a set of standards for Reading Foundational Skills. At each grade level (elementary) and grade band (secondary), a detailed set of standards is built backward from these anchor standards. Reading standards are further divided into Reading for Literature and Reading for Informational Text. Additionally, the Reading standards (informational only) and Writing standards are made more specific for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.

Each domain of the standards contains clusters of standards with a similar focus.