



Working with the “Instructional Shifts:” What Parents Can Do to Help their Children Learn

The Common Core State Standards ask teachers to make twelve major instructional “shifts” (or changes) in their classroom—six shifts in English language arts/literacy and six shifts in mathematics. These changes may be tough at first as students and teachers adjust to higher expectations. As a parent, you can help and learn more by talking with your child about what they are learning. Ask open-ended questions about what they learned in school each day, read their homework, and attend school events to learn about what their teachers expect.

This document explains some of the ways that your child’s classroom is changing and how you can help; for more information, visit Connecticut State Department of Education.

The “Instructional Shifts”

English/Language Arts and Literacy	Mathematics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read as much non-fiction as fiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In each grade, study fewer concepts, but in greater depth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about the world by reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build skills and knowledge across grade levels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read more challenging material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop speed and accuracy in simple calculations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about reading using “<i>evidence</i>” from what has been read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop deep understanding beyond getting the answer correct
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write about texts using “<i>evidence</i>” from what has been read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think fast AND solve problems through understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know more vocabulary words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use math to solve problems in the real world

English language arts & Literacy in other subjects: Expectations for Students & Ideas for Parents

What's the Shift?	What will students have to do?	What can parents do to help?
Read as much fiction as non-fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read more non-fiction • Understand how non-fiction is written and put together • Enjoy and discuss the details of non-fiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply more non-fiction texts (<i>information, not stories</i>) • Read non-fiction books aloud or with your child (<i>start with what interests your child - sports, hobbies, animals, space, etc.</i>) • Have fun with non-fiction in front of your child (<i>discuss information you learned from reading</i>)
Learn about the world by reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn more about science and social students through reading • Use “primary source” documents (example: a copy of the Declaration of Independence) • Get smarter through the use of texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply series of texts on topics that interest your child • Find books that explain how things work and why • Discuss non-fiction texts and their ideas • Go to the Library of Congress website http://www.loc.gov/index.html) or the National Archives http://www.archives.gov/education/research/ for “primary source” and other non-fiction materials.
Read more challenging material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-read until they understand • Read books both at and above their comfort level • Handle frustration • Keep pushing to improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know what is grade-level appropriate • Go to a website with book lists such as: http://www.readingrockets.org/books/booksbytheme/ • Provide challenging texts as well as books they can read easily • Read challenging books with your child • Show that challenging books are worth reading • Highlight new vocabulary, discuss it, and look it up if necessary.

<p>Talk about reading using evidence from what has been read</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find evidence to support their arguments • Form judgments and opinions • Discuss what the author is thinking • Make predictions about what will happen next 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about texts (simply ask a question to start a conversation about the text) • Require evidence even in everyday discussion and disagreements (“show me the evidence!”) • Read aloud or read the same book as your child and discuss • Make and discuss predictions about the text
<p>Write about text using evidence from what has been read</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make arguments in writing using evidence • Compare multiple texts in writing • Learn to write well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage writing at home or write together using evidence and detail • Review samples of excellent K-12 student writing (go to http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_C.pdf)
<p>Know more vocabulary words</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn the words they will need to use in college and career • Get smarter at using the “language of power” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk constantly with young children in either English or their native language • Talk to your children, read to them, explain what words mean, ask them questions, listen to them, sing with them, make up silly rhymes and word games • Read constantly with young children in either English or their native language • Read multiple books on the same topic • Go ahead and use complex words and explain the meaning to young children, discuss it, or look it up if necessary. • If parents speak a language other than English, continue to converse and read with your child in your native language. Oral language development in all languages makes us better readers and communicators!

Mathematics: Expectations for Students & Ideas for Parents

What's the Shift?	What will students have to do?	What can parents do to help?
In each grade, study fewer concepts, but in greater depth (FOCUS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend much more time on a set of fewer concepts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know what the priority work is for your child at their grade level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Go to this site to find out: http://www.pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583&navItemNumber=3363 • Focus your time with your child on the priority math concepts • Ask your child's teacher for reports on your child's progress • Ask your child's teacher for internet resources
Build skills and knowledge across grade levels (COHERENCE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep building on learning year after year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss math skills with your child and his/her teacher. Which are strengths and which need improvement? Last year's struggles can impact this year's learning • Advocate for your child at school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure that the support is given at school for your child's "gaps" in skills. ○ Ask what you can do at home to support your child • Whenever possible, connect the learning from the past so that your child builds new understanding onto foundations built in previous years.
Develop speed and accuracy with simple calculations (FLUENCY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't just memorize - see and learn the relationships between numbers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact fluency means children must first understand the relationships between numbers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To learn more, go to this website http://www.nctm.org/resources/families.aspx • Know all the mathematics fluencies your child should have • Like sports and arts, practice matters! Push children to know, understand, as well as memorize basic math facts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Math facts are organized into "families." Some are easier than others (example the 10's; 5's and 2's are usually learned first) Prioritize learning the fluencies your child finds most difficult (usually the 7's, 8's, and 9's). These will need more practice and greater time should be spent on understanding the relationships between these facts.

<p>Develop deep understanding beyond getting the answer correct. (DEEP UNDERSTANDING)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do lots of problems on the same concept 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students should deeply understand and be able to operate easily within a math concept before moving on. • They should learn more than the procedure to get the answer right. They should understand “why” and how to get there • Parents should not just focus on just getting to the “right answer.”
<p>Think fast AND solve problems (DUAL INTENSITY)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show equal intensity in practicing <i>and</i> problem solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents should monitor both speed and understanding, not just focus on automatic calculations. • Ask questions • Ask your child to explain their approach and their answer • Both practice and understanding are balanced and should be visible in the student’s work
<p>Use math in the real world (APPLICATION)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply math in real world situations • Know which math skills to use in which situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your child to do the math that comes up in daily life • Easy examples include cooking ingredients; mileage from place to place; prices of food, clothing, and other goods • Anytime you can with your child, use fractions, decimals, percents, or try converting measurement (inches to feet; meters to yards; miles to kilometers). • Examples for older students include area, perimeter, rates, and ratios. • Middle and high schoolers, try anything with a variable (ex. rate x time = distance)