With the emergence of the Common Core State Standards and new legislation overhauling the teacher evaluation process in many states, schools are confronted with two important measures that must be integrated effectively—and quickly. So, are Common Core State Standards and new calls for teacher effectiveness related? Or are schools being pulled in two different directions?

At first glance, it may seem like teacher effectiveness and the Common Core have little to do with one another. After all, the Introduction to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (CCSS for ELA) states outright that “[t]he Standards define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how teachers should teach” (p. 6). The same idea is made clear in the Introduction to the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSS for Math): “These Standards do not dictate curriculum or teaching methods” (p. 2).

In other words, the Common Core State Standards are outcomes; they do not define the instruction teachers use to reach those outcomes. So, perfect alignment between the Common Core and an instructional framework is neither possible nor advisable. That being said, our teacher effectiveness framework—The Thoughtful Classroom Teacher Effectiveness Framework—was developed with the Common Core in mind, and a significant number of the indicators found in this Framework have been designed to address critical themes found in the Common Core.

**Figure 1: The Five Instructional Episodes of the Framework**

At the heart of the Framework is a series of five instructional episodes (shown in Figure 1 at right). These episodes are based on the best research on instructional design, representing good teaching as a complete process, from beginning to end. Teachers use this five-episode approach to design, sequence, and implement lessons and units aligned with the Common Core. The diagram on the next page (Figure 2) illustrates how the individual episodes—and the process as a whole—support Common-Core-based teaching and learning.
Figure 2: The Five Instructional Episodes Support Common-Core-Based Teaching and Learning

**Preparing Students for New Learning**
In this episode, teachers select relevant state standards and Common Core State Standards (see indicator 5.1). Teachers “unpack” these standards by converting them into clear learning goals that drive instruction and assessment (see indicator 5.2). Teachers also assess students’ background knowledge and skill levels relevant to the selected goals and standards.

**Presenting New Learning**
The focus of this episode is on students learning new content relevant to selected standards and goals. Information can be acquired by students in various ways (e.g., presentations, demonstrations, rigorous readings, and multimedia). As recommended in the Common Core, teachers work with students to develop the thinking and literacy skills needed to process new content.

**Deepening and Reinforcing Learning**
As students work toward relevant learning goals and standards, the teacher uses a variety of formative assessments to help students assess their progress and refine their thinking.

**Applying Learning**
In this episode, students complete summative assessment tasks that are aligned with Common Core State Standards. However, teachers do more than design rich and authentic tasks—they help their students develop the planning, thinking, and self-assessment skills needed to analyze and address these tasks.

**Reflecting on and Celebrating Learning**
In this episode, teachers help students “lock in” their learning by looking back on their accomplishments and acquired knowledge in relationship to the learning goals and standards.
How Does the Framework Address Critical Themes Found in the Common Core?

The table that follows highlights nine central themes found in the Common Core and shows how specific indicators from the Framework address these themes.

1. Higher-order thinking
2. Use of evidence to support positions and justify conclusions
3. Integrating rigorous texts and helping students process them
4. Collaboration, dialogue, and student presentations
5. Regular writing in all content areas as a tool for learning, demonstrating understanding, and formal communication
6. Research and media skills
7. Technology and digital media
8. Mastery and use of academic vocabulary
9. Content has structure

**Figure 3: Thematic Connections Between the Common Core and the Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Core State Standards: Key Themes</th>
<th>The Thoughtful Classroom Teacher Effectiveness Framework: Specific Indicators that Address Key Themes in the Common Core</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme:</strong> Higher-order thinking</td>
<td><strong>Specific Indicators that Address this Theme:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Support for Theme:** The Common Core State Standards were designed with an intense focus on the development of students’ higher-order thinking skills. This emphasis on higher-order thinking is evident throughout the Common Core. All eight Mathematical Practices embody higher-order thinking, while the English Language Arts and Literacy standards are filled with the language of higher-order thinking—*inference, evidence, justify, analyze, compare, evaluate, integrate, adapt, make strategic use of*, and so on. | - **3.1:** Engaging students in diverse forms of thinking (e.g., practical, analytical, creative, exploring feelings and values)  
- **4.2:** Engaging students in extended, higher-order thinking challenges (e.g., inquiry, investigation, problem-based learning, action research projects)  
- **4.4:** Probing, extending, and clarifying student responses using effective questioning techniques  
- **4.8:** Teaching students how to use strategies on their own, as tools and frameworks for thinking and learning (e.g., moving from using Compare & Contrast to teaching students how to conduct their own comparative analyses)  
- **5.3:** Using essential questions to guide learning and promote deep thinking  
- **8.2:** Designing culminating assessments that require students to transfer their learning in meaningful ways |
**Theme:** Use of evidence to support positions and justify conclusions

**Support for Theme:** This theme is found throughout the Common Core, starting with the description of college and career readiness: “Students cite specific evidence when offering an oral or written interpretation of a text. They use relevant evidence when supporting their own points in writing and speaking, making their reasoning clear to the reader or listener, and they constructively evaluate others’ use of evidence” (CCSS for ELA, p. 7).

Specific language in the Common Core further supports this theme:
- “...justify their conclusions, communicate them to others, and respond to the arguments of others.” [Mathematical Practice 3 (MP3)]
- “...cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.” [Reading Anchor Standard 1 (R.CCR.1)]
- “Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.” [Writing Anchor Standard 1 (W.CCR.1)]
- “Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.” [Writing Anchor Standard 9 (W.CCR.9)]

**Specific Indicators that Address this Theme:**
- 4.3: Encouraging and challenging students to support their written and spoken ideas with evidence
- 4.4: Probing, extending, and clarifying student responses using effective questioning techniques
- 8.3: Designing tasks around the kind of writing required for college and career readiness (argument, informative/explanatory, narrative)
- 8.5: Challenging students to present their findings and defend their ideas
**Theme:** Integrating rigorous texts and helping students process them

**Support for Theme:** "One of the key requirements of the Common Core State Standards for Reading is that all students must be able to comprehend texts of steadily increasing complexity as they progress through school" (CCSS for ELA – Appendix A, p. 2).

In general, Appendix A to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts presents the case for why text complexity matters and explains how and why the Common Core are raising the difficulty of recommended readings across all grade levels. Rigorous, complex, and challenging literary and nonfiction texts are clearly central components of the Common Core.

The Framework indicators to the right address complex texts in two ways: first, in terms of integrating challenging texts into the curriculum (indicators: 4.1, 6.2) and second, in terms of how to help students process and make sense of challenging texts (indicators: 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 4.6, 5.6, 6.8, 7.7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Indicators that Address this Theme:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1: Challenging students’ minds with rigorous texts and content and equipping them with the skills they need to handle rigorous content</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.3: Encouraging and challenging students to support their written and spoken ideas with evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4: Probing, extending, and clarifying student responses using effective questioning techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5: Encouraging discussion, dialogue, and debate around important ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.6: Requiring students to use critical academic vocabulary in their speaking and writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.6: Introducing students to the key vocabulary terms they will need to know and understand to successfully learn the content</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.2: Incorporating multiple sources of information, including multimedia resources, into lessons to help students acquire new knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.8: Helping students assemble big ideas and important details through notemaking, summarizing, graphic organizers, and/or other forms of linguistic and nonlinguistic representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7: Providing students opportunities to process new knowledge deeply through questions, discussion, and critical thinking activities</td>
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</table>

**Theme:** Collaboration, dialogue, and student presentations

**Support for Theme:** The ability to communicate and work with others effectively is crucial to college and career success. While this theme is supported by numerous standards, it garners particular attention within the Speaking and Listening strand: “Students must learn to work together, express and listen carefully to ideas, integrate information from oral, visual, quantitative, and media sources, evaluate what they hear, use media and visual displays strategically to help achieve communicative purposes, and adapt speech to context and task” (CCSS for ELA, p. 8).

Specific language in the Common Core further supports this theme:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Specific Indicators that Address this Theme:</th>
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<tr>
<td>2.4: Building a classroom community that insists on respect and mutual support for each student’s learning and provides opportunities for students to become familiar with each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5: Designing learning experiences that call for high levels of collaboration, discussion, and interaction among students</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.5: Encouraging discussion, dialogue, and debate around important ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3: Demonstrating high-quality communication skills (e.g., expressive language, rich vocabulary, proper use)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7: Providing students opportunities to process new knowledge deeply through</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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| **Theme:** Regular writing in all content areas as a tool for learning, demonstrating understanding, and formal communication |

**Support for Theme:** While specific content standards are not addressed for all disciplines, writing for different purposes and audiences is an important theme in all content areas: “Students establish a base of knowledge across a wide range of subject matter by engaging with works of quality and substance... They refine and share their knowledge through writing... Students adapt their communication in relation to audience, task, purpose, and discipline... They also know that different disciplines call for different types of evidence (e.g., documentary evidence in history, experimental evidence in science)” (CCSS for ELA, p. 7).

As far as more formal writing goes, Writing Anchor Standards 1, 2, and 3 (W.CCR.1, W.CCR.2, and W.CCR.3) highlight three critical types of writing for college and career readiness: argument, informative/explanatory, and narrative.

| **Specific Indicators that Address this Theme:** |

- **4.3:** Encouraging and challenging students to support their written and spoken ideas with evidence
- **4.6:** Requiring students to use critical academic vocabulary in their speaking and writing
- **5.7:** Helping students develop insights into the products they’ll be creating, performances they’ll be delivering, and/or tasks they’ll be completing to demonstrate what they’ve learned (e.g., providing models of high-quality work, rubrics, checklists, etc.)
- **6.3:** Demonstrating high-quality communication skills (e.g., expressive language, rich vocabulary, proper use)
- **6.8:** Helping students assemble big ideas and important details through notemaking, summarizing, graphic organizers, and/or other forms of linguistic and nonlinguistic representation
- **7.2:** Engaging students in regular content-based writing that helps them clarify their thinking and deepen their understanding
- **8.3:** Designing tasks around the kind of writing required for college and career readiness (argument, informative/explanatory, narrative)

| • “...justify their conclusions, communicate them to others, and respond to the arguments of others.” [Mathematical Practice 3 (MP3)] |
| • “Mathematically proficient students try to communicate precisely to others.” [Mathematical Practice 6 (MP6)] |
| • “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.” [Speaking & Listening Anchor Standard 1 (SL.CCR.1)] |
| • “Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.” [Speaking & Listening Anchor Standard 4 (SL.CCR.4)] |
| • “Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.” [Speaking & Listening Anchor Standard 6 (SL.CCR.6)] |

Questions, discussion, and critical thinking activities

- **8.5:** Challenging students to present their findings and defend their ideas
**Theme:** Research and media skills

**Support for Theme:** “To be ready for college, workforce training, and life in a technological society, students need the ability to gather, comprehend, evaluate, synthesize, and report on information and ideas, to conduct original research in order to answer questions or solve problems, and to analyze and create a high volume and extensive range of print and nonprint texts in media forms old and new” (CCSS for ELA, p. 4).

Specific language in the Common Core further supports this theme:
- “...identify relevant external mathematical resources... and use them to pose or solve problems.” [Mathematical Practice 5 (MP5)]
- "Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats...” [Reading Anchor Standard 7 (R.CCR.7)]
- "Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources...” [Writing Anchor Standard 8 (W.CCR.8)]

**Specific Indicators that Address this Theme:**
- 4.1: Challenging students' minds with rigorous texts and content and equipping them with the skills they need to handle rigorous content
- 6.2: Incorporating multiple sources of information, including multimedia resources, into lessons to help students acquire new knowledge
- 6.7: Making use of outside resources (e.g., field trips, guest speakers from community, interactive technology) to make learning authentic
- 6.8: Helping students assemble big ideas and important details through notemaking, summarizing, graphic organizers, and/or other forms of linguistic and nonlinguistic representation
- 7.6: Providing a wide variety of resources (e.g., manipulatives, models, learning centers, multimedia) to enhance practice and learning
- 8.4: Engaging students in research projects that capture student interest and have relevance in the world beyond the classroom

**Theme:** Technology and digital media

**Support for Theme:** This theme is found throughout the Common Core, starting with the description of college and career readiness: “Students employ technology thoughtfully to enhance their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use. They tailor their searches online to acquire useful information efficiently, and they integrate what they learn using technology with what they learn offline. They are familiar with the strengths and limitations of various technological tools and mediums and can select and use those best suited to their communication goals” (CCSS for ELA, p. 7).

Specific language in the Common Core further supports this theme:
- “...technology can enable [students] to visualize the results of varying assumptions, explore consequences, and compare predictions with data.” [Mathematical Practice 5 (MP5)]
- "[Students] use technological tools to explore and deepen their understanding of concepts.” [Mathematical Practice 5 (MP5)]
- “Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and

**Specific Indicators that Address this Theme:**
- 1.1: Organizing classroom space (e.g., seating, resources, technology, decoration) to ensure safety, maximize learning, and meet overall goals and objectives
- 4.7: Using technology as a tool for fostering critical thinking, creative expression, and problem solving
- 6.2: Incorporating multiple sources of information, including multimedia resources, into lessons to help students acquire new knowledge
- 7.6: Providing a wide variety of resources (e.g., manipulatives, models, learning centers, multimedia) to enhance practice and learning
### Theme: Mastery and use of academic vocabulary

#### Support for Theme:
A key element within the Language strand is “acquiring new vocabulary, particularly general academic and domain-specific words and phrases” (CCSS for ELA, p. 8).

Specific language in the Common Core further supports this theme:
- "...understand and use stated assumptions, definitions, and previously established results..."  
  [Mathematical Practice 3 (MP3)]
- "...use clear definitions in discussion with others and in their own reasoning"  
  [Mathematical Practice 6 (MP6)]
- "Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases..."  
  [Language Anchor Standard 6 (L.CCR.6)]

#### Specific Indicators that Address this Theme:
- **4.6:** Requiring students to use critical academic vocabulary in their speaking and writing
- **5.6:** Introducing students to the key vocabulary terms they will need to know and understand to successfully learn the content
- **6.3:** Demonstrating high-quality communication skills (e.g., expressive language, rich vocabulary, proper use)

### Theme: Content has structure

#### Support for Theme:
A deep understanding of texts, concepts, movements, and just about any other source of information requires an understanding of structure: How do big ideas relate to one another? How do specific pieces fit together to create a larger body of knowledge? Research shows that a hallmark of successful learners is their ability to make sense of the structure behind ideas and information. As such, the Common Core State Standards promote a deep understanding of structure of texts and ideas.

Specific language in the Common Core further supports this theme:
- "Look for and make use of structure."  
  [Mathematical Practice 7 (MP7)]
- "Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole."  
  [Reading Anchor Standard 5 (R.CCR.5)]

#### Specific Indicators that Address this Theme:
- **6.1:** Designing lessons and units around the way the content is organized (e.g., topic-subtopic, cycle, procedural, comparison, etc.) and breaking the content up into manageable “chunks”
- **6.8:** Helping students assemble big ideas and important details through notemaking, summarizing, graphic organizers, and/or other forms of linguistic and nonlinguistic representation