

School-Connect and Common Core State Standards

School-Connect shares a commitment to preparing young people for College and Career Readiness (CCR) as recommended by the Common Core: State Standards Initiative. At the heart of Common Core and School-Connect are essential skills necessary for success in school, the workplace, and adult life. Students need to be able to demonstrate independence, build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and respond to the varying demands of their audiences, tasks, and purpose. School-Connect uses social and emotional learning (SEL) strategies and skills to practice listening and communication, have thought-provoking collaborative discussions, and respond to writing prompts that require critical thinking. Through class activities, Literature Links, writing reflections, and lesson extensions, School-Connect directly addresses many of the Common Core English Language Arts/Literacy and Speaking and Listening standards:

Speaking and Listening Standards (6-12): School-Connect delves into Speaking and Listening Standards within the first four lessons (Lessons 1.1 – 1.4). Students start by practicing public speaking skills by interviewing a classmate and then introducing him/her to the rest of the class. Throughout the lesson, students circulate to different pairs of students to introduce themselves and find out more about their classmates. In the second lesson, students practice eye contact, a professional handshake, and making a positive first impression. Next they are introduced to the core skill-sets of social and emotional learning (SEL) – self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationships skills, and responsible decision-making. In a national survey of employers, the majority of employers valued variations of these “soft skills” as the “top skills” they look for in employees (e.g., teamwork collaboration, professionalism/work ethic, oral communication). In the fourth lesson, *Creating a Social Contract*, students work together to craft a list of guidelines they will use to govern their class and create a supportive learning community.

After a series of academic skill-building lessons, students return to directly address Speaking and Learning Standards in Lessons 1.10 – 1.12. In *Lesson 1.10: Tuning Into Others*, they practice reading facial expressions, voice tone, and body language to estimate others’ emotions. Next they practice a four-step strategy for active listening: making eye contact, asking appropriate questions, reflecting feelings, and paraphrasing the speaker. This strategy becomes the foundation for building future conversations and relationships throughout the course. In the next lessons, students discuss the essentials of effective communication and collaboration: 1) providing equal opportunities to speak, 2) presuming positive intent, 3) being open-minded to the opinions of others, 4) speaking your truth, and 5) disagreeing without being disagreeable. Most School-Connect lessons include think-pair-share and group work activities, which continue to draw on these effective listening and collaboration skills throughout the curriculum.

In *Module 4: Preparing for College and the Workforce* students practice essential job interview skills and effective problem-solving in the workplace to prepare them for on-the-job communication skills needed in real life situations.

COMMON CORE

Range and Content of
Student Speaking and
Listening

To become college and career ready, students must have ample opportunities to take part in a variety of rich, structured conversations—as part of a whole class, in small groups, and with a partner—built around important content in various domains. They must be able to contribute appropriately to these conversations, to make comparisons and contrasts, and to analyze and synthesize a multitude of ideas. Whatever their intended major or profession, high school graduates will depend heavily on their ability to listen attentively to others so that they are able to build on others’ meritorious ideas while expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards for Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Every School-Connect lesson includes writing and reflection prompts within the lesson. Most lessons start with a “Bell Ringer,” a question or self-assessment designed to trigger curiosity about the lesson topic (e.g., “Think back to a class, team, or club in which you had a sense of community – you felt known and valued and you liked being there. It may have been in any grade, at any age. *What are two things about that class, team, or club that gave you this feeling?*”) After a series of interactive activities and class conversations the lesson usually wraps up with a self-reflection writing prompt (e.g., Reflect on a recent conflict. *Which conflict response style did you use? What were the effects of using that style? What might you have done differently?*).

To help prepare students for the college application process, School-Connect provides in-depth guidance in navigating the college application process (Lesson 4.4) and using research and personal experience to craft persuasive personal essays for their college applications (Lesson 4.5).

School-Connect Lesson Extensions: In addition to the core lesson, there are “Lesson Extensions” for every lesson designed to take learning to the next level and directly address Common Core English and Language Arts standards (see sample standards in side bars). The themes of the Lesson Extensions are **READ – WRITE – RESEARCH – CREATE – PRESENT – COLLABORATE** and include “Literature Links,” “Writing Windows,” and research projects/experiments as well as creative and artistic activities.

“Literature Links” utilize common high school literature, many of which are designated on Common Core reading lists, to apply SEL principles and practices to literary characters and situations. For example, throughout *Module 2: Developing Self-Awareness and Self-Management*, teachers can choose to assign William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* and apply “lessons learned” from School-Connect to the main characters’ conflicts, reactions, and dilemmas. The Literature Links also tap into historical events from literature or social studies to apply SEL skills across disciplines. (See next page for examples.)

“Writing Windows” usually have thought-provoking questions to prompt a writing and/or research project that aligns with Common Core Standards. Some Writing Windows are designed to be free-writing journal entries whereas others require outside research and a five-paragraph essay structure. (e.g., “Plan and write an essay that supports your point of view. Use examples from reading, research, experience and observation to reinforce your perspective.”)

Research Projects/Experiments align with Common Core Standards to give students opportunities to collect, organize, and analyze data and evidence. Students can choose to create and distribute surveys, conduct interviews and/or design an experiment to answer an inquiry (e.g., “Is cyberbullying a problem on this campus?”)

Critical Thinking/Problem-solving activities utilize School-Connect’s five-step problem-solving strategy and C.L.E.A.R. Critical Thinking steps. Students use the steps to investigate current and historical dilemmas to guide their decision-making process.

COMMON CORE Anchor Standards for Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

COMMON CORE Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects 6–12

Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

SAMPLE School-Connect LESSON EXTENSIONS

Literature Link: The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet

Organize a Philosophical Chairs exercise. Review the meaning of the hedonic treadmill from the lesson. Then ask students to respond to the following question by standing on one side of the room or the other:

- Was Romeo on a hedonic treadmill by continually seeking the “rush” of falling in love, OR did he truly love Juliet? [Indicate which side of the room students should stand for the respective responses. Remind students of the Rules for Philosophical Chairs.]

After students have taken their seats again, ask the following:

- What can people do if they are on a hedonic treadmill with relationships? How can you get off the treadmill?

Literature Link: “Letter from Birmingham Jail” by Martin Luther King, Jr. (1964)

Read Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” List all of the challenges Dr. King described within this letter. Then list all of the ways Dr. King exhibited or expressed curiosity and grit within this letter. You can also use examples from his biography not mentioned in this letter. Summarize what this letter indicates about Dr. King’s character and perseverance.

Writing Window

Albert Einstein once remarked:

“I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction.”

Do you feel that day has arrived? Plan and write an essay that supports your point of view. Use examples from reading, research, experience and observation to reinforce your perspective.

Crack the Nut

Did you know the human brain contains about 100 billion neurons, which forge literally trillions of neural connections? Our brains are arguably the most complicated object in the universe. Think of an interesting question about brain development and dig deeper to answer your question. Sample questions:

- How does television affect brain development?
- Why are teenagers more susceptible than children to depression?
- What can MRI studies tell us about how brains work?

Use research, reading, observations and experience to answer your question then prepare a presentation to share with the class.

Historical Problem-Solving

Choose a major event in American history (e.g., The Revolutionary War, The Civil War). Apply the problem-solving steps to this conflict. What were the needs, beliefs and dilemmas for each side? How would you construct a joint problem statement about the situation? What were possible solutions? And what were possible consequences of each solution? Do you think the end result was the best solution or not? Research the event carefully to build your case to support your perspective.

SAMPLE School-Connect LESSON EXTENSIONS

Get C.L.E.A.R

The C.L.E.A.R. Critical Thinking Steps can be adapted and applied to carefully analyzing any situation, not just advertisements. Using the adapted version below, apply the steps to studying for a history or science assignment.

STEP 1: Conclusions.

- What do you already know about this topic?

STEP 2: Look closer.

- What is mentioned in your textbook or class notes that you need to know more about?

STEP 3: Evidence.

- What evidence or factual information can you gather to gain more knowledge about the topic(s)?

STEP 4: Assumptions.

- Is there any information within your notes or knowledge base that could be incorrect?
Double check to make sure your information is factually based.

STEP 5: Re-evaluate.

- Given the new information you've gathered, what do you know about the topic and what do you still need to learn more about?

School-Connect Culminating Projects

At the end of every School-Connect module, teachers are encouraged to have students work in small groups to design and present a culminating project that delves deeper into the knowledge content of that module. Students choose their topic by reflecting on what they have learned in that module and what they want to learn more about then work together to design their project. Project options include:

- An original composition (song, rap, spoken word poem)
- Research project (data collection, surveys, interviews)
- Movie (five minutes max)
- Short story read aloud (3-5 pages with original title)
- Film or radio commercial or public service announcement
- PowerPoint presentation (max 20 slides; 5 minutes)
- An original play or skit (max 5 minutes)
- Ad campaign (2-3 billboard, magazine or poster ads)
- Tri-fold brochure with presentation
- Create and present a different, unique project idea

The Culminating Project Rubric reflects workplace skills and breaks these skills into observable accomplishments [preparation (30 pts.), presentation skills (30 pts.), final product (30 pts.), and bonus points for best effort (10 pts.)].

In Summary

Teenagers are fascinated by teen life – what their friends are doing, what's cool, what's challenging, and what they want to do when they grow up. School-Connect taps into these interests through SEL skill development and conversations then applies these same interests to reading, writing, and research projects that meet Common Core standards and prepare them for a 21st Century workforce.

COMMON CORE Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

5. Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.