

Preface

Why Is This Book Essential at This Particular Time in Education?

Educators today are facing two major shifts—transitioning to the Common Core Standards and increasing pressure to teach students with the technology they’ll be expected to use in their lives beyond high school. Both seasoned educators and those new to the teaching profession must confront these daunting challenges, which demand fundamental changes in the way teachers teach and students learn.

In my own budget-strapped district, the conversations about the Common Core Standards rarely include mention of technology. I believe this is a missed opportunity. Technology is woven throughout the fabric of the Standards, just as it is increasingly woven throughout the fabric of our lives. This is no mistake. Students today *must* be capable and proficient users of technology to pursue a degree or apply for a job after high school. In fact, most college applications and job applications are completed online now.

The Standards attempt to honor these new realities, but districts must support teachers with dedicated, ongoing professional development. Educators must learn how to integrate technology into their teaching practice to cultivate the skills necessary for success in college and careers. Technology cannot be a frill or an afterthought. It must be integrated thoughtfully and with purpose. Unfortunately, many teachers do not get to decide how district money is spent and what the focus of their professional development days will be. My hope is that this book will be useful to educators who want to further their own understanding of both the Standards and technology integration. I’ve included lesson ideas, technology suggestions, and concrete strategies for creatively teaching the Common Core Literacy Standards with technology.

Most of the conversations about technology on my campus are focused on the hardware needed for the Smarter Balance Assessment. Teachers in other states may be hearing about PARCC, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers—the alternate assessment aligned to the Common Core Standards. The irony is that the assessments are designed to test student achievement in relation to the new Standards, but how can students be successful on these exams, both of which are computerized assessments, if they are not regularly using technology in their classes? Instead, I want the conversation to focus on how

educators can use the latest Web 2.0 technology to engage higher-order thinking, foster collaboration, develop communication skills, encourage exploration through research, and drive dynamic problem solving. That is the goal of this book.

In my own work outside of the classroom as a professional development facilitator and blogger, I've realized teachers are hungry for concrete information on both the Common Core Standards and technology integration. Many teachers have told me how grateful they are that I combine practical strategies for using technology with a discussion of the Common Core Standards in my trainings and blog posts. Their positive feedback and request for more information led me to write this second book.

Although this book is focused on how teachers can use technology to teach the Common Core Standards, I want to be clear that I do not believe technology alone will transform education. Excited, creative, eager-to-learn educators leveraging the newest tools available to actively engage students in learning will change education and blaze the path toward preparing our students for success in a rapidly changing global economy.

What Will You Get Out of This Book?

Most teachers are treading water to stay on top of their massive workloads, but the new Standards require change. As a teacher myself, I know how valuable it is to have resources and strategies that I can use with students *today*. The most valuable professional development is immediately applicable to my work with students. I've written this book with that in mind. The ideas in this book are not based on theory or pedagogy alone. They are grounded in my own trial-and-error experience over the last 5 years, working to integrate technology in a meaningful way with my own students.

This book will

- provide teachers with a clear explanation of the Common Core Literacy Standards;
- identify key points of emphasis in the Standards;
- highlight tech tools that can be used to effectively cultivate the skills identified as necessary to success beyond high school;
- embed ideas for using technology to differentiate learning, provide scaffolding, and support students at different skill levels; and
- share concrete strategies and lesson ideas that leverage Web 2.0 technology to encourage students to be active and engaged participants in the learning process.

In addition to being a practical book for teachers, I hope this text supports the work professional development instructors, instructional designers, curriculum and IT specialists, administrators, and credential programs are doing to help support middle school and high school teachers in effectively shifting to the Common Core Literacy Standards using technology.

Although the aim of this book is to provide simple, easy-to-understand explanations about the Standards and creative ideas for using technology to improve learning, my focus as an educator is always to create a student-centered classroom. The theme of the student-centered classroom is an undercurrent throughout this text. I believe powerful learning begins when we put students at the center of the learning process, so my approach values autonomy, choice, collective construction, and creativity.