Common Core Questions to Discuss with CTE Teachers

Listed below are frequently asked questions regarding Common Core and the impact it will have on CTE. For additional questions, please contact, Heather.Justice@tn.gov.

1. So Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are just for academic teachers, right? I mean nothing will change for me...
CCSS are not only college ready standards but also career readiness standards. Reading, writing, communication, and math reasoning are all skills needed for success in careers, the workplace, as well as post secondary. All disciplines can help students develop, deepen, and refine these core skills. CCSS provides the opportunity to better align academics and CTE.

2. Well we are already working with students with contextual (real world) application so we are already doing this, right?
CTE does do a great job with exemplary real world connections, problem based learning and the application of content; however, CCSS calls for building knowledge through content rich informational text and reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from complex text and its academic language.

3. I heard there are common core standards for CTE [English Language Arts (ELA) technical standards]. What does that look like in my classroom?
Reading is critical to building knowledge in all disciplines. Career ready reading requires an understanding of domain specific words and phrases; an attention to precise details; and the capacity to evaluate intricate arguments, synthesize complex information and follow detailed descriptions of events and concepts. For example, students need to be able to gain knowledge from challenging texts that often make extensive use of elaborate diagrams and data to convey information and illustrate concepts. For example, diagrams in auto mechanics or electricity. Students must be able to read complex informational texts and cite specific examples from the text in the CTE fields with independence and confidence because the vast majority of reading in workforce training programs will be sophisticated nonfiction/information text. The CCSS literacy standards for technical subjects are intended to complement the content area not replace it.

4. How will I have time to go deeper?
Integrating Common Core State Standards in a CTE classroom will not take any longer than current instruction. Students in CTE classes currently read for content. CTE teachers will take a deeper look at the reading material in their content area to insure the appropriate text complexity.
Many Common Core strategies found in math are already used in CTE such as using appropriate tools, reasoning abstractly and quantitatively, constructing viable arguments and critiquing the reasoning of others.

Building strong collaborative groups between academic and CTE teachers might take a little longer in the beginning but the benefit to teachers and students will be worth the time involved.

5. What does implementation look like for CTE?
One of the most significant changes in CTE is the English Language Arts (ELA) standards for Literacy in Science and Technical Subjects. These standards describe what students should be able to do at each grade level in reading and writing as related to the specific content for the CTE courses. This means teachers focus on helping students develop deeper reading comprehension within their content. CTE teachers need to work with complex informational text in their classroom and ask students to provide evidence from the text they read in their writing and speaking assignments. A good example of this can be having the students read the manuals before demonstration by the teacher or having students report what they covered in the lab during that day and how it connects to previously learned material.

CCSS mathematics can be integrated into the CTE classroom through the math practices. The eight math practices are:

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
4. Model with mathematics.
5. Use appropriate tools strategically.
6. Attend to precision.
7. Look for and make use of structure.
8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning

6. How can I reinforce common core standards in my classroom?
Using the standards for ELA Literacy in Technical Subjects and the eight math practices in classroom instruction will help to reinforce CCSS. Having students read informational text in the content area as well as writing with supporting evidence from the text. Students need to be able to construct viable arguments and be able to critique the work of other students. Participating in professional development and collaboration with academic teachers will help build the skills needed to support CCSS in the CTE classroom.

7. What can I do to prepare?
Read the Common Core State Standards for both mathematics and ELA, specifically the ELA
Literacy in Science and Technical Subjects. Appendix B has exemplar texts and sample performance tasks for technical subjects.

Study the eight mathematical practices and determining how to best use these practices in the CTE classroom. These practices are not only good for solving math tasks but also for solving many CTE related tasks.

Make sure CTE is a part of cross disciplinary teams for planning and implementation of the CCSS.

Provide professional development activities to help CTE teachers integrate literacy and math strategies in their classrooms.

8. Where are places I can find good resources that I can use in my classroom?

Tennessee's Common Core website http://tncore.org
To access videos and PowerPoint from the training, go to “Resources” on the home page.
Click on Tennessee’s Common Core Implementation plan for the PowerPoint
Click on Comprehensive Implementation Plan video to view the video

The Electronic Learning Center http://www.tnelc.org/
Common Core Series
  Videos from training

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) http://www.parcconline.org
To access the PARCC Model Content Frameworks click on the “In the Classroom” tab
Click on PARCC Model Content Frameworks

Achieve http://www.achievethecore.org
Click on “Steal These Tools” for resources
Click on “You’ve Got to Read This” for articles and sites
Click on “By Teachers for Teachers” for testimonials from teachers

New York Website http://www.engageNY.org
On the home page, scroll down to Featured Resources on the left hand side
Click on Common Core Video Series