

## **Implementing District Standards**

My district—and state, for that matter—has just transitioned to the Common Core State Standards, which represents a nationwide effort to provide high quality and engaging classroom practices for all students. The English Language Arts Common Core is delineated in five key standards, or strands: reading, writing, speaking and listening, language, and media and technology. The Common Core represents a shift in expectations, because all students are to meet the rigorous standards as outlined in 2012-2013.

This unit meets the criteria for the Common Core Standards in several ways. First, one of the Anchor Standards for Reading is to “Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.” This is an essential part of this curriculum unit because students must be able to not only comprehend the plot of the text, but to engage in class discussions with both small and large groups, which will be based on providing textual support for their opinions and explaining their interpretations and conclusions. This is a presumptive skill as a part of this unit, so it is one that we will work on explicitly in class leading up to it. Students will have to demonstrate on a regular basis that they have read closely and they will have to provide direct quotations and analysis when they discuss their theoretical frameworks. Another Reading Standard is to “Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.” Students will be evaluating the theme of the American Dream in a novel and in a film; in their group presentations, they will have to integrate content independently using diverse media and technology.

Regarding the Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening, students must “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.” This will be an essential component for the theory-based small groups, especially as they prepare their presentations for the class. Collaboration can sometimes be challenging, but project grades will be given to groups, not individuals. With this understanding, students will have to engage each other and work together to ensure comprehension and to build their analysis skills.