

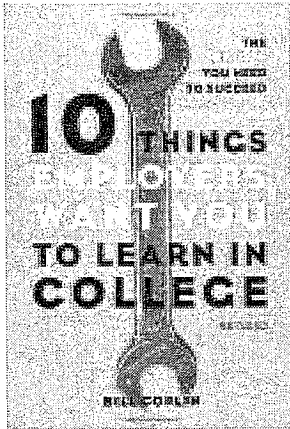
Article

12 Skills the Common Core AND Employers Want

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<http://www.teachingthecore.com/12-common-core-employer-skills/>

The Common Core is a set of goals aimed at college and career readiness. This we know.



But do the anchor standards really correlate to what employers want? Quite a bit, according to 10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College.

So what, according to Coplin, should people entering the workforce be able to do, and how do these line up with the "career and college readiness" anchor standards of the Common Core?

1. Converse one-on-one

From 10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College:

A senior human resources person writes, "I think conversing one-on-one is my main skill set. A new-hire must be able to carry a conversation—willing to learn. The training process that all our new-hires must complete can be very confusing, and we expect each new-hire to ask questions in order to grasp a full understanding. If someone cannot hold a decent conversation, I am hesitant to even place them in a lower-end job, even if they have the education and training."

Being able to carry on a conversation is the heart of the first Speaking/Listening anchor standard. SL.CCR.1.

2. Present to Groups

From 10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College:

The ability to talk to groups of people is critical in many workplace situations. Initially you will probably not be placed in front of a group but will observe how your superiors handle such presentations. A businesswoman who was interviewed for this book said that she does not expect an entry-level person to make presentations to strangers, but by the second year, that person should be able to make presentations to groups of his or her peers. Over the long run, being able to make good group presentations will catch the eye of people without your organization as well as outside of it.

In short, being able to present is like having an ace in your hand — you may not always be able to use it, but it's sure better having it there than not. Presenting is the fourth Speaking/Listening anchor standard, SL.CCR.4.

3. Use visual displays

From 10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College:

There are two related tasks that you must perform well in order to use visual displays effectively. First, you need to master and organize your content well enough to integrate a display into your actual talk. Second, you need to produce the display, which ranges from simple layouts on an 8.5 by 11-inch piece of paper to a PowerPoint presentation. The first task always precedes and defines the second.

The fifth Speaking/Listening anchor standard, SL.CCR.5, deals with strategically using visual displays.

4. Write well

From 10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College:

Writer's block is okay for starving poets and novelists; it's just part of the process. But for anyone working for a boss, writer's block is a quicker way to get fired than producing poor copy.

At the other end of the spectrum is "writer's diarrhea," where once you start you cannot stop. Clients and fellow workers do not have the time to wade through unnecessary verbiage and figure out what you are trying to say.

Being able to overcome writer's block is likely a function of writing like crazy throughout one's K-12 education. Writing widely and routinely is the 10th Common Core anchor standard in writing, and writing appropriately for a given context is the heart of W.CCR.4.

5. Edit and proof

From *10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College*:

A misspelling, which would lose you a couple of points on your paper in a course, could spell doom in the workplace. As a senior executive says, "Who wants to buy our multimillion dollar product when we can't even spell it right? Attention to detail is key in the workforce—without it, don't bother." Sound harsh? That's only because your teachers and professors have misled you with only minor point deductions for misspellings. To put the importance of editing and proofing in proper perspective, leaving a 'not' out of a business proposal is about the same as a surgeon taking out your left kidney when your right one is diseased.

Ouch. Being able to edit writing is part of the fifth writing anchor standard, W.CCR.5; having a command of grammar and usage is the first language anchor standard, L.CCR.1, and having a command of surface-level errors like capitalization, spelling, and punctuation is L.CCR.2.

6. Use Word-Processing Tools

From *10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College*:

Although word-processing skills don't seem like a big deal, they should not be taken for granted. One of my former students, who was now completing a master's degree at one of the top graduate schools in the world, wrote this to me: 'I am shocked by how many people in my program don't know how to do a lot of stuff in Word (formatting, tracking, etc.)—things I'm sure I only know because of my undergraduate experience on various projects.'

Common Core has garnered some controversy for its keyboarding requirements, but they, as well as the tech-based writing anchor standard, W.CCR.6, are designed to make graduated adults who are able to meet tight deadlines for word-processed projects.

Interestingly, Coplin has strong feelings about using Microsoft Word, and, as a teacher like me whose students only use Google Docs, I'm intrigued by them:

Bill Gates is the man behind Microsoft and whether we love or despise him, we all need to thank him for Microsoft Word, which is the only word-processing tool you need to master. Other word-processing programs, no matter how cheap or quaint, are useless in writing for work. Most of you already know that and have some experience using Word. The rest of you need to get on board.

Intense, right? I do have to admit that, though Google Docs has grown leaps and bounds (now including features that mimic those Coplin goes on to cite, like tracking), it still lacks the robustness of Word. We will see

if that statement holds true in five years, however!

7. Master online communications

Coplin cites a host of online communications platforms and skills that employable people should be comfortable with, including Google Docs, email platforms, online calendars, syncing email with your phone, using an email signature, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and free online data storage solutions like Dropbox.

But I appreciated that part of Coplin's definition of mastery is being able to harness the downsides of these tools and skills as well. From 10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College:

Communicating electronically can have its downside also. The constant interruptions that email brings, whether you work at a desk or use a portable device, can be a major roadblock to your success. It creates distractions that can interrupt thoughts when you are trying to write something. If you have become addicted to checking for messages from email or Twitter, you might be caught at a meeting and chastised. Bosses don't like to see this addiction even if they are addicted themselves. Learn to break the habit by turning off your portable device and fixing your desktop to not alert you to incoming email messages.

Mastering online communications is part of W.CCR.6.

8. Gather information

From 10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College:

As this up-and-coming corporate type suggests below, information is an important key to advancement. He writes, 'Hunt or be hunted. The majority of my accomplishments have come as a result of having information that someone else needed. The first step is to know what someone needs and why. The second step is being resourceful enough to know where to get the data and how to get it quickly. I can't stress the quickness enough. Organizations need speed, and when you're gathering information you have to be organized.

The up-and-comer quoted above refers to skills laid out in the research threads of the Common Core, most notably the 7th reading anchor standard (R.CCR.7) and the 7th, 8th, and 9th writing anchor standards:

W.CCR.7, W.CCR.8, and W.CCR.9.

9. Search the web

From 10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College:

Finding information on the Internet may seem easy, but finding the information you need and can trust on the

Internet is much harder. Internet research can be risky and lead to poor results unless you have a solid grasp of web research.

This skill is the heart of R.CCR.7 and W.CCR.8.

10. Detect nonsense

From 10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College:

If you learn nothing else in college, learn how to see through what people say by looking at why they say it. Is it self-delusional... or is it aimed at making a sale or garnering support? ...

*Nonsense detection is critical to your job success. Whatever job you take will require getting the correct information about the tasks you need to perform and the conditions affecting your performance. This information comes from written sources as well as from statements by your boss, coworkers, those you serve, and others. **Unfortunately, information is always generated for a purpose, and that purpose often gets in the way of the truth.***

The Common Core is rife with calls to be able to evaluate the validity of arguments (R.CCR.8), assess the credibility of sources (W.CCR.8), and evaluating a speaker for BS (SL.CCR.3). (Ahem.)

11. Pay attention to detail

From 10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College:

Paying attention to detail is more important than generalizing because the effective use of generalizations depends on mastery of detail. In whatever task you undertake, get as many details as possible. You need to be like a medical doctor and piece the sequence of events together and create a pattern in your mind that helps you determine the reasons for an event. Can you create a story that explains why a patient is ill, a client did not buy your services, a student failed a course, or a person you supervise did the wrong thing?

Attention to detail a habit built through skills like close reading (R.CCR.1), editing and revising (W.CCR.5), and mastering sentence- and word-level conventions (L.CCR.1 and L.CCR.2).

12. Master in-depth knowledge of any field

This one may surprise you because the CCSS are often associated with a skills-only approach. It's common nowadays for people to say, "It's the reading skills that matter, not the book you gain them from." But both the Common Core and Coplin disagree with people who claim knowledge isn't important in an age when you

can "just look it up."

From 10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College:

If two job applicants have the same level of competence... but one is a Civil War history buff just like the boss, who do you think will get the job?... Areas of in-depth knowledge are valuable because they may possibly connect you with your boss or colleagues. In-depth knowledge will help you have bond-building conversations with colleagues.

The Common Core points out, in its introductory matter, that one skill that typifies a college/career-ready person is that they "build strong content knowledge."

Your students deserve answers to 'when will we actually use this?'

I hope this post, and this blog, help you speak positively to kids about the value of working hard in your classroom on classic skills like reading, writing, thinking, and speaking. Let me know what you're thinking in the comments. Rock on.