



presents...

**TEACHING COMMON CORE:
17 Ways Teachers Can Take Back
the Classroom and Have a Blast
Teaching Common Core!**

GALLOPADE

Dear Teachers,

I recently wrote a book—*FIRST CLASS: The Evolution of American Schoolrooms*. Doing the research, I had to laugh. The problem was that it seemed like every five minutes over the last hundred years of my research there was another, then another, then yet another set of “New Standards” or other curriculum method of perfect education. Hmm...

A few years ago, I was asked (in an urgent way) to write some new curriculum workbooks to correlate with the state of Virginia’s “new” state standards. I hopped in the car and drove to Williamsburg. I went to the library there and discovered about eight running feet of “standards” going back to, well, I forget how far back, but the books just got thinner and dustier. So it was not the “standards” that were new; no, indeed, what was new was that students would now be tested on them!

You know how that story goes. So here you are again with the latest and greatest newest (and as I’m about to suggest—oldest) solution to educational standards: COMMON CORE.

I’m not trying to be snide; I’m just trying to say I’m on YOUR side! It seems clear that there will always be *new new* standards, and that teachers will always be the last to know, the first to be expected to figure it all out “in time for back to school,” yet left in the lurch, generally, of not enough time, information, input, training, tools, and whatever else you want and need.

Well, ok, then. We won’t know for a while if Common Core works, if you like it, if students get it, all the ins and outs of testing and assessment, etc. But I’m here to be encouraging—VERY ENCOURAGING...read on...

Keep calm and
carry on, y’all!



COMMON CORE—GOOD OR BAD?

Who knows? What we do know is that in 45 states (I believe, as I write this) it is mandated. I have read editorials, pro and con. But that is neither here nor there. Every new flavor of standards from plain vanilla to super-duper strawberry yogurt has good and bad. (When they come out with chocolate peppermint standards, I'll definitely be on board!)

Frankly, I think there are two exciting things about Common Core, no matter where you stand (or stomp, kick, or swear) on them:

1. I think they just might be something that talented teachers are very familiar with and in favor of—read on.

And...

2. I just feel in my not so scrawny little bones that they might give you a chance to showcase your **creativity**, **passion**, and **personal teaching style**; wouldn't that be wonderful?

I could be wrong, but...read on...

IS WHAT'S OLD NEW AGAIN???

When I was in high school in the mid-1960s, I had a great school experience and some great teachers. We wore togas in Latin, learned the rules of football to kick off our civics and ethics class, and immersed ourselves in current events.

I have no idea what the “teaching standards” were back then; I never heard them mentioned. But I do know that school was exciting, eclectic, highly participatory, creative, compelling, and yes, this was a public school!

I think that era was a real teaching heyday because teachers got to use their teaching style, imagination, creativity, and more. Students were the beneficiaries. I sincerely believe that all that “compare and contrast,” “discuss and debate,”



and other Common Core things were things we did automatically, organically. They just did not need quotation-bracketed buzzwords. After all, these are things we do in real life all the time!

So perhaps now that what is old is new, and as long as you are “correlating” to Common Core, can’t you—*maybe*—do some things your way, your style—especially if doing so engages students and works?

The Queen’s fingers are crossed!

How to Teach Common Core With Pizzazz!

(These are just a few tips! Enjoy!)

1. Explain Common Core to your students!

They will hear the term, and perhaps the discussion (big ears and all that!), including the negative. Don’t let them get turned off! Help them embrace Common Core!

Ideas: Let students create a Common Core logo for your classroom, a Common Core mascot, a Common Core poster, rap song, slogan, or anything else that strikes their fancy. Explore synonyms for the word “common” that have positive connotations; same for the word “core”, so they can visualize and bring to life this new educational concept. Remember what the Queen says: “What they choose, they use!”

2. Bring those Common Core (boring-sounding?) concepts to life!

Go ahead; make a list of things like “Discuss & Debate,” “Compare & Contrast,” “Analyze Data,” “Use Original Primary Sources,” etc. Yank them out of the boring box and make them less intimidating for your students by looking at each concept and explaining how we already do these things *all the time*! For example: “How many of you debated over what to wear to school today?” “Did you ever compare this cereal to that cereal to decide which was best?”

Students need to see that none of these concepts are boring or

There is no bore...
in Common Core!



hard, they are just “thinking things” that we do organically. Again, students can create humorous posters or other materials to remind them that “Thinking Critically” (for example) is just having a Hot Brain! That’s cool!

3. Remember: what kids choose, they use!

Whenever possible, let your students have a choice (after all, how do you think critically if the teacher makes all the decisions?): “Do you want to study why we had the Civil War first, or do you prefer to read a story to set the stage for what life was like for a slave child before the Civil War?” See my Common Core Concept Signs! Turn your desk and other resource centers into “YOU CHOOSE!” Common Core options. Maybe your students are just rip-roarin’ to debate whether or not to take off across the Oregon Trail...or are more in the mood to explore an original resource document such as an old, dusty map!

4. Enrichment Rules!

Wow, do you think it’s actually possible we might be able to use the E-word again? It hurts my queenly heart anytime I hear, “We don’t have time for enrichment; we have to teach to the test.” I hope those days are over. I sincerely believe that, although the term Common Core Concepts sounds like a tombstone, all this renewed business of really delving into a subject, looking at all aspects of it, exploring and analyzing, reading, writing, debating, and hopefully having fun doing so just leads to using enrichment materials! Dust ‘em off and drag ‘em out! Gallopade materials are focused on enrichment; I’m especially fond of our Enrichment Packs (on various subjects) and our *American Milestones* series because these books include stories and poetry. Surely, surely, Common Core includes enrichment!

5. Think Big!

Students always think things are more fun if they are oversized! Work with Common Core concepts to try to make them big and bold, whether it’s a giant timeline, or an oversized Emancipation Proclamation. What is GIANT looks interesting, important, and worth studying. The same object in small print looks like work! Besides, parents may quickly become enamored with Common Core when



they visit on that first Come to Class night and see all these things on the wall, and their children not only excited, but knowledgeable (building that “core”) about them!

6. Jazz Things Up!

A “debate” may sound boring, but not if you can instantly turn your classroom into a courtroom: gray paper wigs, a black cape for the “judge,” a gavel, and cards to draw to draw names for the jury? Keep it simple or ham it up, but debating things is the American way, so this ties into the real world, which I also hope Common Core allows!

7. Restock Your Classroom Library!

My local new/used bookstore would make me a deal on books, maps, etc. that would be great for a new Common Core library, even videos and such. You’ll know what you need when you see it. Check out Gallopade’s amazing new catalog of Queen of Common Core products (online at gallopade.com), and push all your trusted educational material suppliers to help you identify and locate useful Common Core materials, in all formats.

8. Write of Passage?

Well, Common Core says we gotta write, so why not make it fun? Sorry to make another sales pitch so soon, but see my new Writer’s Blocks—we have stretched our brains here at Gallopade to try to create Common Core manipulatives and digital products, as well as text. Who says writing has to be so serious? How about a resource center of quill pens, parchment, sealing wax (stickers, perhaps?), and other writing tools of various eras?

9. Primary Source Documents?

Now, we know what the Common Core folks mean, but join the old with the new. Students come to my workplace unable to use a telephone book or a directory. Let’s not let them think that “primary source” always means a dusty old document. Your local Chamber of Commerce, for one, probably has a wealth of attractive brochures, booklets, magazines, reports and other “Hey, it’s

I’m a primary source
frog, but please,
no dissecting!



about us!” info to share. Maps, too! (Also see gallopade.com for some primary source materials, such as *American Milestones* with text from the U.S. Constitution.)

10. Make a Common Core Quilt, Scrapbook, or Other!

Sometimes when you embark on a new adventure, you want to record it for posterity. Students may love the challenge of Common Core if you portray it as a current, real-world, new adventure in learning. Whether it’s a collage, a true quilt of fabric scraps, a scrapbook, or something digital (your own Common Core Pinterest-type thing?), let students weave what they learn into something they can show and tell and keep (via a DVD?) of their first year in Common Core land.

11. Don’t Forget the Digital Doo-dahs

Let Common Core be a springboard for teaching students to use as many digital devices, ways, and means as you can. An original resource document may be less boring if the class recites it aloud with passion (in full dress mode or with added sound effects, or both?) on video! The possibilities are endless! Build your own Classroom Common Core Cloud!

12. Food Always Sits Well!

If you can, cook in class to bring Common Core to life! Whether it’s pemmican or peanut brittle, let’s not teach to the test; let’s teach to the five senses. Again, what kids choose, they use, and original resource documents include historic recipes that are often easy to make (they didn’t have all that many ingredients to work with, after all!), and you can chow down while you discuss and debate. I didn’t read anything in the standards that says you can’t, so there!

13. Honestley

Yes, I spelled that wrong on purpose! As you teach Common Core, please do focus on spelling and vocabulary. I interview more young people who can’t correctly spell the name of their county or multi-syllable towns in their state. A great common educational



“core” is to be able to spell words that you will encounter in a work place; 99% of those are ordinary words, and the rest are often geography related. Don’t get me started!

14. Can’t Current Events Count as Common Core?

I certainly hope so, because I have found that the more aware and engaged students of any age are in their community, state, nation, and the world, the more their “studies” seem to make sense. Sure, there’s a lot of bad news we hate to even touch on, but there is also good news, art news, culture news, sports news, career news, wildlife news, and so much more! Tie Common Core to local events for maximum impact!

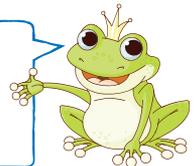
15. Speaker Up!

I know we don’t know all about Common Core quite yet, but we do know that speaking and writing are an essential and powerful part of everyday life, especially when you eventually strike out for your first job—no matter what age. Turn all Common Core essential requirements into oral presentations of all kinds, whenever possible. That may mean interviewing an “original resource” (say, a war vet), or reading the Bill of Rights aloud. Invite speakers into class and then have students analyze how well they did (um, after they leave!) and compare and contrast speaking styles. No one learns to speak well by magic, or by staying silent! Let them practice, ham it up, and dish out plenty of applause.

16. Turn it into a treasure hunt!

Maybe your students don’t like research, but if you create an original scavenger hunt of 10 things for them to find in various documents, then it’s a game, and therefore fun, competitive, and worth doing. Give it a try! (Even queens do this: “Hey, Sir Walter Raleigh, get outta here and go find a New World, please, say thirteen colonies or so?”)

Sir Walter and I
go way back...



17. Do it yourself?

If kids find some things from yesteryear boring, then let them try it for themselves. Can they write a better U.S Constitution preamble? Go for it! Can they draw a more interesting map of the thirteen Original Colonies? Do so! How about a “Join the Confederacy” poster? Or Revolutionary War political cartoon? Let them immerse themselves in the roles of yesteryear and they may have more appreciation for what was done and written and said, and more understanding as well.

Ok, it’s time for the queen’s nap—I wish! My goal in this short booklet is just to be encouraging. I’ve peeked into classrooms while we were “teaching to the test.” I can just imagine peeking into your class when Common Core is going full bore (that’s bore, not boring!)...and things are a tad messy, noisy, wild, fun, and LEARNING RUNS RAMPANT! At this point, we have nothing to lose and everything to gain. After all, if we don’t go for it full speed ahead, the new *new* learning thing will come along, right?

Let’s take Common Core by the horns and wring all we can out of this opportunity! Do me a favor and share your successes, needs, concerns, problems, issues, and, hopefully, enrichment joys!

The Queen has spoken.
Thanks for listening,



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Common Core Products are available from Gallopade International, www.gallopade.com, Amazon.com, and most school supply and teacher stores.



Writer's Blocks

Hands-on, cube-shaped manipulatives that “prompt” students to start writing and encourage critical thinking, creativity, and coherent writing.

5 different cubes

- Historical Narrative Writer's Block
- Opinion Piece Writer's Block
- Informative Report Writer's Block
- Creative Narrative Writer's Block
- Mystery Narrative Writer's Block

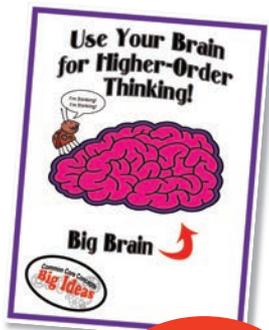


Wake Up the Class

These “mini quizzes” initiate discussion, debate, and collaboration while helping students think fast and learn that their opinions, contributions, and ideas are valued.

24 cards per pack

- Two Minute Quick Quiz! – Common Core Question Pack
- The Bible! – Common Core Question Pack
- Black History! – Common Core Question Pack
- Critical Thinking Skills! – Common Core Question Pack
- Exciting Writing! – Common Core Question Pack
- Good Golly Geography! – Common Core Question Pack
- American History Challenge! – Common Core Question Pack
- STEM Challenge! – Common Core Question Pack
- "Who Is It?" Biography! – Common Core Question Pack



2-sided

Common Core Concept Signs

Six visual cues to lead the learning experience with different approaches to new concepts and content.

6 different signs per set

The queen is taking a nap, but I'm here to take your order!



COMMON CORE IS COMMON SENSE!

COMMON CORE DOES NOT HAVE TO BE BORING!

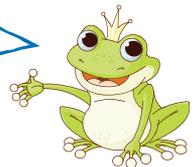
COMMON CORE DOES NOT HAVE TO BE INTIMIDATING!

COMMON CORE IS LIKE PILATES FOR YOUR BRAIN—GIVES YOU A GOOD, STRONG CORE FOR LIFE!

WHAT KIDS CHOOSE, THEY USE!...SO LET'S HELP THEM HAVE COMMON CORE CHOICES THEY LOVE!

TEACHERS ARE THE REAL QUEENS AND KINGS OF COMMON CORE!

Remember: You are the queens (and kings!) of Common Core! Kids are counting on you!



**KEEP CALM
AND
CARRY ON!**

GALLOPADE