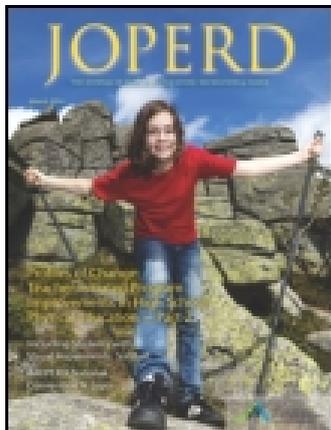


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# *Integrating the English Language Arts* **Common Core State Standards** *into Physical Education*

ALISA R. JAMES  
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**T**he Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were established in 2010 in an effort for states to implement the same set of educational standards for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics (Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSSI], 2010a).

The rationale behind the CCSS is to ensure that students are prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce (CCSSI, 2010a). Teachers in technical subjects are responsible for incorporating literacy into their subject matter and physical education is considered a technical subject in the CCSS (CCSSI, 2010b). Therefore, physical education teachers need practical ways to incorporate CCSS into their instruction. The purpose of this article is to present strategies and developmentally appropriate examples of how to incorporate ELA CCSS into physical education. Although there are also many opportunities to integrate mathematics into physical education, this article focuses solely on ELA.

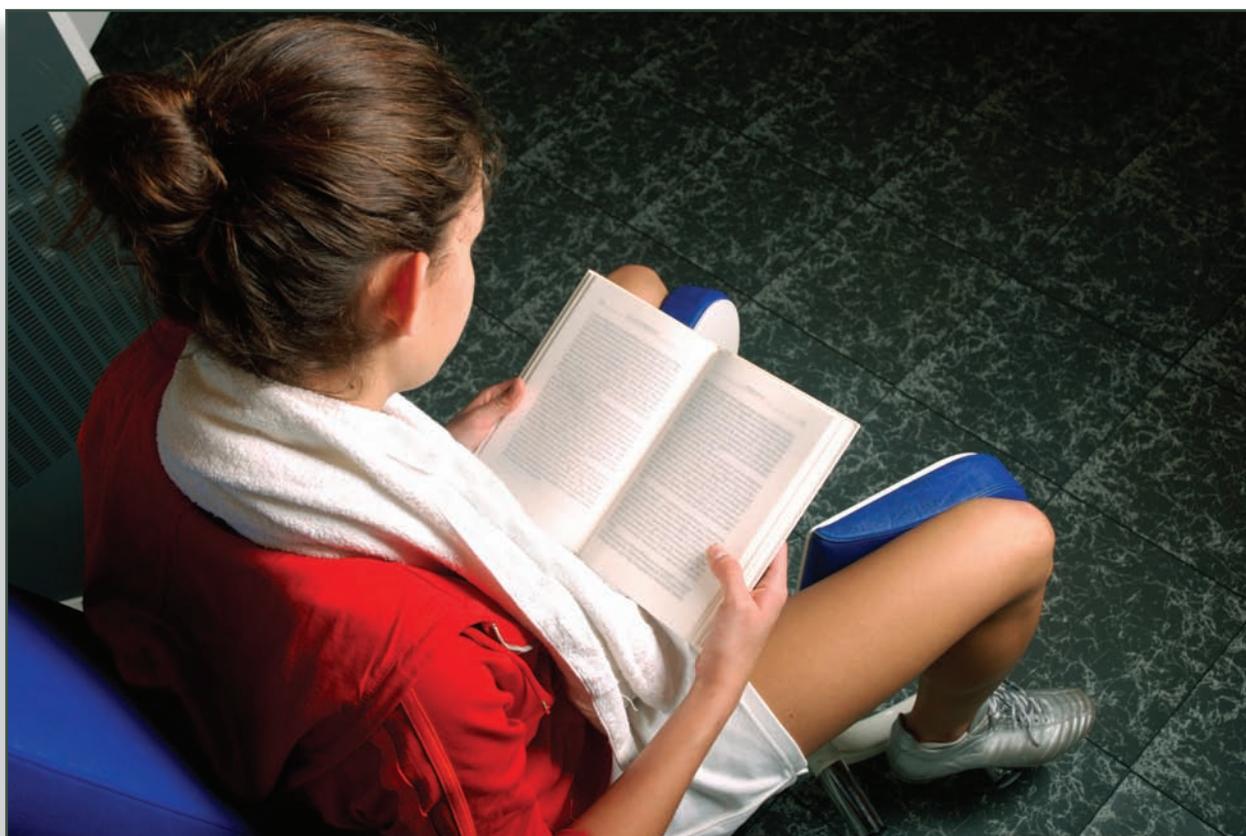
## **Developing Content Literacy**

To begin the discussion on how physical education teachers can integrate the ELA CCSS, it is important to describe the concept of content literacy, and what it means to become literate in physical education content. One central tenant in the construct of content literacy is that it is specific to the content of an academic subject. A student who is content literate in physical education is not just able to perform skills and implement the knowledge in physical education but also able to write and read about those skills and knowledge. Consequently, students who read and write about physical

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education content are able to think about what they are learning in more depth, which leads to enhanced student understanding (Buell & Whittaker, 2001). For example, students are taught tactics of a game through playing the game; however, they may learn more about those tactics if they had to select three tactics from a list and explain in writing what each tactic is and how it contributes to successful game-play.

In addition to helping students become literate in physical education content, physical educators can help to support students' general literacy by incorporating developmentally appropriate opportunities for students to practice the literacy skills they learn in other classes, including the ability to explain, analyze, design, interpret, compare and contrast, record and interpret, graph and interpret, evaluate, synthesize, persuade/write arguments, summarize, and describe verbally and in writing.

### Incorporating ELA Standards

In order for physical education teachers to reinforce literacy in physical education, it is important for them to understand the organization of the ELA CCSS. The standards are made up of three main sections: K–5 integrated literacy standards; 6–12 standards

for ELA; and 6–12 standards for literacy in history, social studies, science, and technical subjects. The K–5 integrated literacy standards include expectations for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language applicable to a range of subjects, including but not limited to ELA. The grades 6–12 standards are divided into two sections, one for ELA and the other for history, social studies, science, and technical subjects. This division reflects the position of ELA teachers in developing students' literacy, while at the same time acknowledging that teachers in other subject areas have a role in this development as well (CCSSI, 2010c). Each section is broken down into anchor and grade-level standards. The anchor standards for ELA are broad standards that constitute the structural framework of the ELA CCSS and are identical for all grade levels (CCSSI, 2010b). There are 10 anchor standards for reading and 10 anchor standards for writing as outlined in Table 1. The anchor standards are the foundation for the grade level standards and allow for them to have clear vertical alignment from kindergarten to 12th grade.

Upon examining the anchor standards, one might conclude that the writing anchor standards may be easier to achieve because it is common to have students write in physical education through journaling, written exams, exit slips, or homework assignments. One aspect that may confuse some individuals is the word “text” as it is referenced in the reading anchor standards. In physical education, students do not typically read texts in the sense of reading a book. However, students could read a story about an aspect of physical activity outside of class or could learn to interpret physical activity–related charts and graphs. Although the idea of using text in teaching physical education may be somewhat unfamiliar, there are several textual pieces available on the Internet, as well as in print, that can be used in the physical education setting. Examples include select paragraphs from different books that focus on activity, skills, and/or health-related fitness; newspaper and magazine articles; target heart-rate charts; ratings of perceived exertion charts; posters with national and state physical education standards; signs (e.g., a labeled diagram); task cards; written instructions; rules and procedures for games and activities; and sample fitness or practice plans.

When applying the anchor standards in physical education, it is necessary to include physical education content that is aligned with state standards and the recently revised national standards (SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators, 2014). The following process should be considered when planning for the application of the CCSS in physical education.

First, which physical education standards define what students must know and/or be able to do? The first example that appears in Table 2 from kindergarten lists standard and grade-level outcome S3.E1.K, which stands for Standard 3, Elementary Outcome 1, Kindergarten. The corresponding Common Core Standard is RI.K.1, which stands for Reading — Informational Text, Kindergarten, Standard 1. Second, educators must begin with the end result and identify their objectives. The objective for this first example in Table 2 is, “Students will identify active play opportunities outside of physical education class.” Third, teachers should determine the “lesson application,” which involves identifying the CCSS skills (e.g., reading, writing, speaking and/or listening) that will enhance students' learning and understanding of the physical education content and skills, deciding what resources will be necessary for the lesson (e.g., an appropriate text for the first example in Table 2 would be *The Busy Body Book: A Kid's Guide to Fitness*, which is a story about physical activity that includes pictures of a variety of activities), and determining how the objectives will be



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**Table 1.**  
**ELA Reading and Writing Anchor Standards**

| Reading Anchor Standards   | Writing Anchor Standards  |
|--|---|
| 1. 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. | 1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.   |
| 2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.  | 2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.         |
| 3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.  | 3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective writing technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.                                |
| 4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning and tone.                                     | 4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience.   |
| 5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (section, chapter, etc.) relate to each other as a whole.                             | 5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting or trying a new approach.   |
| 6. Assess how the point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.   | 6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.  |
| 7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.  | 7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.  |
| 8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.  | 8. Gather information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.                       |
| 9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.   | 9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.  |
| 10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.   | 10. Write routinely over extended timeframes (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter timeframes (a single sitting or day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. |

Source: *Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010b)*. © Copyright 2010. National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers. All rights reserved.

assessed. To assess the objective in the example from Table 2, using details from the text, students could circle pictures on a worksheet of activities that they could participate in outside of school.

Table 2 provides specific ideas for the application of the CCSS in physical education that were designed following the process described. The application of the CCSS is provided for kindergarten through 12th grade, identifying appropriate physical education objectives at each level. The examples are aligned with national standards, as well as Common Core standards. Table 3 identifies how to read the abbreviations for the national standards and which are aligned with the anchor standards and the CCSS that are included in Table 2.

## Conclusion

The process of applying CCSS to physical education content and the examples included in Table 2 provide a framework for integrating ELA CCSS into physical education. It is essential for physical educators to continue to build literacy into physical education content in order to provide the literacy support that is expected by the CCSS initiative. However, it is imperative that physical education teachers do not sacrifice the content that is tied to the national standards and individual state standards for physical education. In addition, although physical educators should make an effort to integrate literacy into physical education, moderate-to-vigorous

**Table 2.**  
**K–12 Examples of the Application of ELA CCSS in Physical Education**

| Grade | National Standard and Grade-level Outcome(s)   | Common Core Standard  | How can we apply the CCSS in our teaching practices  |
|-------|--|---|--|
| K     | <i>S3.E1.K</i><br>Identifies active play opportunities outside of physical education class   | <i>RI.K.1</i><br>With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text   | <i>Objective:</i><br>Students will identify active play opportunities outside of physical education class.<br><br><i>Lesson Application:</i><br>During station work, students read <i>The Busy Body Book: A Kid's Guide to Fitness</i> (Rockwell, 2004). This is a story about physical activity that includes pictures of a variety of activities. Students are asked to identify the types of activities they can participate in outside of school, using details from the text.   |
| 1     | <i>S3.E1.1</i><br>Discusses benefits of being active and exercising/playing  | <i>RI.1.7</i><br>Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas  | <i>Objective:</i><br>Students will describe the benefits of being active.<br><br><i>Lesson Application:</i><br>Students read <i>Feeling Fit, That's It!</i> (Nelson, 1995). During the warm-up, students summarize the main ideas of the text with their peers using a cooperative learning structure called mix-pair-share. During this structure, students move around the gym using different locomotor movements while the music is playing. When the music stops, students pair up with the student who is closest to them and each partner shares a main idea and detail from the text.  |
| 2     | <i>S1.E11.2</i><br>Combines balances and transfers into a three-part sequence, i.e., dance or gymnastics   | <i>W.2.3</i><br>Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events; include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings; use temporal words to signal event order; and provide a sense of closure | <i>Objective:</i><br>Students will develop a three-part sequence that combines balances and transfers.<br><br><i>Lesson Application:</i><br>After instruction and practice of a variety of balances and transfers, students develop their own three-part sequence combining balances and transfers. Before performing the sequence, students must also draw the sequence and describe the sequence and how they will transition between the balances in writing.   |
| 3     | <i>S1.E14.3</i><br>Throws overarm, demonstrating three of the five critical elements of a mature pattern, in non-dynamic environments, for distance and/or force | <i>W.3.2a</i><br>Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.<br><br>a. Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension   | <i>Objectives:</i><br>Students will throw overarm, demonstrating the critical elements of a mature pattern. Students will explain how to throw overarm with a mature form.<br><br><i>Lesson Application:</i><br>Students recall the key cues of the overarm throw after the teacher models and from reading task cards throughout the lesson. Students practice the overarm throw throughout the class through station work. One station asks students to write, responding to the prompt below.<br><br><i>Writing Prompt:</i><br>Your best friend wants to learn how to play baseball but does not know how to throw a ball. Explain how to throw a ball using proper overarm form. Make sure to include as much detail as you can. You may use pictures if you like. |

*(continued)*

**Table 2.  
(Continued)**

| Grade | National Standard and Grade-level Outcome(s)  | Common Core Standard   | How can we apply the CCSS in our teaching practices  |
|-------|---|--|--|
| 4     | <i>S4.E2.4</i><br>Reflects on personal social behavior in physical activity   | <i>W.4.9</i><br>Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research   | <i>Objective:</i><br>Students will evaluate personal and social behavior during activity.<br><br><i>Lesson Application:</i><br>Following a lesson, students are asked to reflect on their personal and social behavior. Each student must compare his or her behavior during the activity to the expectations that were set (using a rubric provided). The reflection should include detailed examples of behavior that support his or her position aligned with the rubric.   |
| 5     | <i>S3.E5.5a</i><br>Analyzes results of a fitness assessment, comparing results to fitness components for good health<br><i>S3.E5.5b</i><br>Designs a fitness plan to address ways to use physical activity to enhance fitness | <i>W.5.4</i><br>Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience  | <i>Objectives:</i><br>Students will compare personal fitness assessment results to fitness components for good health. Students will design a fitness plan to address ways to use physical activity to enhance fitness.<br><br><i>Lesson Application:</i><br>Following fitness testing, students compare their fitness assessment results to “good health” results for each fitness component. In writing, students identify areas that they would classify as “good health” and set goals for those that are not yet “good health.” Each student designs a basic fitness plan, addressing ways they can use physical activity to become healthier in the identified fitness area(s).  |
| 6     | <i>S1.M13.6</i><br>Strikes with a mature overarm pattern in a non-dynamic environment for net/wall games such as volleyball, handball, badminton, or tennis   | <i>RST.6-8.3</i><br>Follow precisely a multistep procedure when carrying out experiments, taking measurements, or performing technical tasks   | <i>Objective:</i><br>Students will strike a tennis ball with mature form for the following skills: forehand, backhand, serve.<br><br><i>Lesson Application:</i><br>Task cards can be used as an instructional tool to teach mature form of skills. Task cards should include visuals, text, and procedures that are used to perform the skill (Iserbyt & Byra, 2013). Students must read the cards and perform the skill as identified on the card.  |
| 7     | <i>S5.M1.7.</i><br>Identifies different types of physical activities and describes how each has a positive impact on health   | <i>WHST.6-8.5</i><br>With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed<br><br><i>WHST.6-8.6</i><br>Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently. | <i>Objective:</i><br>Students will identify different types of physical activities and describe how each has a positive impact on their health.<br><br><i>Lesson Application:</i><br>Students use technology to write a response to the following prompt 3–4 times throughout the year.<br><br><i>Writing Prompt:</i> Identify different types of physical activities that you can perform to stay healthy and active. For each type of activity describe how it can positively impact your health.<br><br>Students receive feedback from peers and their teacher to continue developing their writing and revisit the prompt throughout the year. They will have opportunities to edit and rewrite. Their final writing will be posted as a blog on the classroom web page. |

(continued)

**Table 2.**  
**(Continued)**

| Grade              | National Standard and Grade-level Outcome(s)   | Common Core Standard   | How can we apply the CCSS in our teaching practices  |
|--------------------|--|--|--|
| 8                  | <i>S2.M9.8</i><br>Varies the speed, force, and trajectory of the shot based on location of the object in relation to the target  | <i>WHST.6-8.1a</i><br>Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.<br><br>a. Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically | <i>Objective:</i><br>Students will describe effective strategy/shot selection in badminton.<br><br><i>Lesson Application:</i><br>As part of a lesson on shot selection in badminton, students write to a partner describing how effective strategy/shot selection will help them to be more successful. In their writing, students should include a claim about effective strategy and specific reasons related to varying the speed, force, and trajectory of a shot in badminton.  |
| 9–10<br>(Level 1)  | <i>S2.H3.L1</i><br>Creates a practice plan to improve performance for a self-selected skill  | <i>RST.9-10.1</i><br>Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts, attending to the precise details of explanations or descriptions   | <i>Objective:</i><br>Students will create a practice plan to improve performance for a self-selected skill.<br><br><i>Lesson Application:</i><br>Students read a sample practice plan for basketball (Gels, 2013) and identify evidence (specific details) that supports an effective strategy or plan. Students then use this information to create their own practice plan to improve performance for a self-selected skill.   |
|                    | <i>S3.H4.L1</i><br>Evaluates, according to their benefits, social support networks, and participation requirements, activities that can be pursued in the local environment                            | <i>WHST.9-10.9</i><br>Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research   | <i>Objective:</i><br>Students will evaluate local physical activities according to their benefits, social support network, and participation requirements.<br><br><i>Lesson Application:</i><br>Students answer the research question: What physical activities are best for me to continue with after graduating from high school? To answer the question, students gather advertisements from a variety of physical activity resources. They evaluate the usefulness of each and identify supports, barriers, and benefits of each. This information is then integrated into an argument where they identify, in writing, a resource that would be most appropriate for their needs, citing specific evidence from the advertisements. |
| 11–12<br>(Level 2) | <i>S3.H5.L2</i><br>Analyzes the impact of life choices, economics, motivation, and accessibility on exercise adherence and successful participation in physical activity in college or career settings | <i>RST.11-12.2</i><br>Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; summarize complex concepts, processes, or information presented in a text by paraphrasing them in simpler but still accurate terms   | <i>Objective:</i><br>Students will describe the impact of life choices, economics, motivation, and accessibility on exercise adherence and successful participation in physical activity in college and career settings.<br><br><i>Lesson Application:</i><br>Students read <i>Selecting and Effectively Using a Health/Fitness Facility</i> (Williford & Olson, 2011) during their fitness unit. During the reading students identify key pieces of information related to the factors of life choices, economics, motivation, and accessibility. Students summarize the key ideas of the text, specifically discussing how each of the factors could impact physical activity throughout life.   |

**Table 3.**  
**Interpreting the Abbreviations of the National Grade Level Outcomes and the Common Core Standards**

| National Grade Level Outcomes  | Common Core Standards  |
|--|--|
| <p><i>Format of the standard:</i><br/>           Standard Number. Level and Outcome. Grade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are 5 standards</li> <li>• Levels include elementary (E), middle school (M), and high school (H)</li> <li>• Grades include K–8 and L1 (9–10)–L2 (11–12)</li> </ul> <p><b>Example:</b> S3.E1.K</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S3 refers to Standard 3</li> <li>• E1 refers to Elementary Outcome 1</li> <li>• K refers to kindergarten</li> </ul> | <p><i>Format of the standard:</i><br/>           ELA Strand. Grade. Standard Number</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELA strands include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ RL - Reading: Literature</li> <li>◦ RI - Reading: Informational Text</li> <li>◦ RF - Reading: Foundational Skills</li> <li>◦ W - Writing</li> <li>◦ RST - Reading Science and Technical Subjects</li> <li>◦ WHST - Writing History, Science and Technical Subjects</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Grades include K–12</li> <li>• There are 10 grade-level standards for reading and 10 grade-level standards for writing that are aligned to the anchor standards</li> </ul> <p><b>Example:</b> RI.K.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RI refers to Reading: Informational Text</li> <li>• K refers to kindergarten</li> <li>• 1 refers to Standard 1</li> </ul> |

physical activity should still be a priority. Strategies such as out-of-class projects, homework, and the use of exit slips and summary paragraphs are excellent ways to support literacy while maintaining a high level of moderate-to-vigorous activity. By doing this, students will become more literate in physical education by developing a deeper understanding of physical education content through reading and writing about the content, as well as by performing it.

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