Common Core in the Commonwealth: A Research Imperative for Kentucky Communication Scholars

Michael G Strawser, University of Kentucky
Common Core in the Commonwealth: A Research Imperative for Kentucky Communication Scholars

Michael G. Strawser, Ph.D.

Abstract
As Communication scholars we must sharpen our instructional focus, identify our learning outcomes, and build the argument that Communication education has significant interdisciplinary implications in K-12 curricula. The Common Core State Standards emphasize communication, specifically public speaking and listening in K-12 learner outcomes and the Commonwealth of Kentucky was the first state to adopt the Common Core Standards. This position paper establishes a broad framework for research and advocacy opportunities to develop the connection between the interdisciplinary implications surrounding K-12 Communication education, the Common Core, and relationships to current standards. This essay offers a foundation for Communication scholars seeking a research entry into K-12 schools through curriculum development, assessment, and professional development, especially in Kentucky.

Keywords: Common Core, Communication, Assessment, Public Speaking, Listening

The American public education system continues to rapidly change. Among these changes have been various attempts to implement nation-wide curricular standards. One of the most significant educational developments in the United States today is the adoption of Common Core Standards by 43 states and the District of Columbia. The implementation of Common Core has implications for classroom climate, pedagogy, and student learning.

The new standards emphasize college and career readiness, defined as success in entry-level credit-bearing college courses and workforce-training programs (ACSD, 2014), for students in several subjects including speaking and listening (Mathis, 2010). To establish consistency in public education the new standards for elementary and secondary students, in some form, have been adopted by over forty states including Kentucky (Rothman, 2013). The number of Common Core adopters has seen fluctuation in recent years even with Ohio pursuing a repeal of the standards as recently as
November, 2014. Some states have discussed abandoning the standards; however, there has still been widespread adoption which presented an opportunity for state and national collaboration (Rothman, 2014). For students to become college and career ready it is imperative that K-12 schools and higher education institutions work together to ensure student achievement.

National standards for education have far-reaching implications. To clarify potential outcomes the evidence-based Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (ACSD, 2014) define what students should know at each grade level (Kenning, 2014). Mastery, or achievement of certain skills, like those outlined in the Common Core State Standards, could ultimately lead to a higher level of preparedness in higher education and the workplace (ACSD, 2014). Originally, Common Core developers promised that the standards would fundamentally change teaching and learning (Butrymowicz, 2013), and to a certain extent they have. The revised instructional emphases include understanding key content and cognitive skill development (ACSD, 2014) that will, hopefully, lead to content application and creative problem-solving. The content application premise is especially important within the discipline of Communication and for Communication scholars.

The standards are supposed to be common, meaning critical-thinking, problem-solving, and the use of technology is the same from state to state (Brown, 2014), at least in regards to states that have adopted the standards. Despite commonalities, states are also granted some freedom to decide how to teach (pedagogy) and test (assessment) the standards. The public speaking and listening standards, while rather general, do address holistic components of effective listening and speaking. In regards to listening, the standards emphasize comprehension and collaboration as important distinctions of effective listening. Similarly, public speaking is described in the standards as the presentation of knowledge and ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Comprehension and Collaboration</strong></th>
<th><strong>Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.</td>
<td>Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.</td>
<td>Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The anchor standards correspond to College and Career Readiness standards and are concerned with student demonstration of a certain level of skill and understanding. In terms of praxis, the standards encourage active participation for students through rich and structured conversations. Conversely, in terms of range and content, the Common Core briefly touches on digital texts but focuses primarily on speaking and listening in terms of the provision of accurate content and a thorough response and analysis to what has previously been shared.

To illustrate the importance of the Common Core and Communication connection an article was recently published in Spectra, the National Communication Association magazine (Weintraub, 2014). Throughout this article Communication scholars were reminded of the importance and necessity of active involvement with K-12 educators regarding implementation of the Common Core. It is absolutely true that the public speaking and listening standards in the latest edition of national K-12 curriculum standards are important for Communication scholars nationally, as the standards could lead to a K-12 disciplinary resurgence, but Kentucky researchers should also take a proactive interest in the standards due to the prominent position the Commonwealth has as the first state to adopt Common Core initiatives.

The Common Core is certainly a debated topic of political and practical interest. In light of the national and local implications of the CCSS this essay, unlike “anti” or “pro” Common Core pieces, emphasizes the relationship between communication content and the Common Core and establishes connections between the current standards and research opportunities. Kentucky Communication scholars can contribute to the strategic vision of K-12 public speaking and listening implementation by focusing on three challenging areas: curriculum, assessment, and professional development. Communication researchers, especially those with a background in instructional communication, experts in curriculum development, assessment, and impact, are uniquely suited to contribute to the national discussion but we must narrow our focus, identify our outcomes, and build the argument that Communication education has significant interdisciplinary implications in K-12 curriculum.

**Standardized Knowledge: Historical Development of Public Education**

**Early Developments**

To understand the historical context of the Common Core it is appropriate to navigate past curriculum recommendations in order to understand the current educational landscape. The evolution of public education, especially benchmarks for success, has been significant. For instance, subject-area organizations, like the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), have often been included in discussions revolving around curriculum recommendations.
In 1989 the NCTM published a new set of standards for mathematical instruction based on feedback from subject-matter experts. The council was not a governmental endeavor rather it was an initiative by mathematicians and instructors. In essence the group established a standards precedent. Resulting conversations in the House and Senate emerged as did the creation of additional programs (Barton, 2009). Despite initial excitement, instruction and student performance ultimately showed mixed results (Barton, 2009).

In 1994, federal standards for public education were revisited. Tests in fourth grade reading and eighth grade math were created under the Clinton administration and were executed and established by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB). Ultimately, amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 soon followed (Barton, 2009). Eventually, states were required to create content-related standards to ensure reliable instruction. During this time the Improving America’s Schools Act outlined ongoing school improvement around specific standards measured by state assessments (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014). Additional efforts paved a way prior to No Child Left Behind as the standards attempted to move public education toward equal outcomes.

No Child Left Behind

No Child Left Behind (NCLB), enacted as a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) under the administration of President George W. Bush, signified yet another step for federal involvement in the creation of consistent public education. The main goal of NCLB was the attainment of proficiency (Barton, 2009). No Child Left Behind required participating states to adjust curriculum standards for student performance with an increased focus on assessment (“No Child Left Behind”, 2008). Within NCLB, the major subjects addressed were mathematics, reading/English language arts and science. Standards and assessments were required to increase effectiveness and address achievement gaps based on race, disability status, and free/reduced lunch status. NCLB emphasized equitable outcomes and a commitment to well-qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014). Assessment results were made public as states were granted report card grades of student achievement (“No Child Left Behind”, 2008). In 2010, states could adopt more rigorous standards and many decided to implement the Common Core.

Common Core State Standards

To establish consistency in public education numerous states adopted new standards for elementary and secondary students (Rothman, 2013) called the Common Core State Standards. The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State Officials collaborated to
develop the Common Core in 2009-2010 (Butrymowicz, 2013). The standards were developed because of a concern that the United States was falling behind internationally in terms of student achievement and was stagnate regarding certain benchmarks for success (Butrymowicz, 2013). The Common Core State Standards have been defined as “a national curriculum in mathematics and English-language arts and reading (ELAR) that offer several benefits including shared expectations, focus, efficiency, and quality of assessments” (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011, p. 103). Studies found that students learn best with clear expectations for learning, therefore the curriculum standards present the knowledge and skills that students need to achieve success in college and at work (Rothman, 2013). Different from previous initiatives, the Common Core added an emphasis on oral communication behaviors including public speaking and listening.

With the inclusion of public speaking and listening in national recommendations the discipline of Communication, and therefore Communication research, can contribute to the national education conversation. The study of the inclusion of oral communication curriculum standards at the national level is a research imperative. These restructured educational recommendations can be used as a platform for emphasizing the value and necessity of multimodal communication education in the 21st century.

**Common Core in the Commonwealth**

Despite recent challenges, Kentucky has been a recognized leader of the Common Core since inception (Nelson, 2013) as the Commonwealth was the first state to adopt the CCSS. Kentucky voluntarily accepted the Common Core State Standards in hopes of building on the long-term goals of the revolutionary Kentucky Educational Reform Act (KERA) which introduced dramatically new standards for instruction and assessment in 1990. In many ways the KERA was an educational overhaul.

The Kentucky Educational Reform Act paved the way for Common Core acceptance. For Kentucky legislators, the CCSS arose out of a response to Senate Bill 1. Senate Bill 1, proposed in 2009, called for a revision of assessment and accountability procedures specifically for the purpose of improving college and career readiness (Brown, 2014). In 2010, the state board of education voted to adopt the standards despite not being completed (Butrymowicz, 2013). Kentucky, as the first state in the nation to adopt the standards, led the way in terms of the creation and distribution of Common Core assessment, especially standardized testing (Brown, 2014). Students in the Commonwealth first took the tests in 2011-2012 (Brown, 2014) and recently results of the third testing year have been released.
As the first adopter, Kentucky is a legitimate testing ground for Common Core assessment as stakeholders across the nation are trying to understand the legitimacy of the standards while preparing for a transition to a new system if the standards prove ineffective (Pearson, 2014). Despite hopeful exuberance second year test results in Kentucky did not reveal a substantial increase in scores (Butrymowicz, 2013). Kentucky is still searching for testing and evidence-based confirmation that the standards are effective.

Kentucky’s experience since 2010 demonstrates that the road to Common Core enlightenment may be frustratingly painful (Butrymowicz, 2013). The standards emphasize testing as a measure of success and some argue that test scores in Kentucky, comparatively, are still too low and that the rate of improvement is not fast enough (Butrymowicz, 2013). The first round of testing in Kentucky (Spring 2012), in general terms, produced results 30 percentage points lower than the year before although the second year did produce slightly higher scores (Butrymowicz, 2013). Third year scores, released in the fall of 2014, revealed that elementary school students showed the highest improvement rate in reading and math with middle school students also recording improvement (Ujifusa, 2014). High school student performance decreased in reading and increased in math, although by a small percentage (Ujifusa, 2014).

In an effort to increase overall effectiveness, the state of Kentucky has engaged educators in faculty development. Kentucky, unlike some states, has regionally developed and implemented materials and teacher support (Rothman, 2014). Regional trainings were conducted in 2010 but no extra funding, at least as of 2013, has been allocated to help districts prepare for and implement the standards (Butrymowicz, 2013). Despite a lack of resources, some Kentucky school districts have been nationally recognized for innovative pedagogy and Common Core implementation. The Kenton County school district, for example, developed the Literary Design Collaborative (LDC) and the Math Design Collaborative (MDC) models, both of which are currently used by other states (Brown, 2014). Additionally, several districts, like Knox County, have received grant money to compare the Common Core to previous state standards, revise the curriculum, and complete the assessment cycle by identifying next steps (Butrymowicz, 2013). As a whole, Kentucky schools have relied on creativity to implement and assess the Common Core.

In order to establish innovation among districts, Kentucky has implemented a system that utilizes Districts of Innovation, or school systems that serve as a research lab for innovative pedagogy. Danville, a Kentucky District of Innovation (DoI), has integrated measures like the Performance Standards Consortium, rigorous performance tasks that must be met in order to reach a standard (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014). According to Darling-
Hammond, Wilhoit, and Pittenger (2014) the hope is that Kentucky Districts of Innovation will incorporate performance-based assessment and accountability as well as statewide summative assessments. Kentucky, a “research lab” for the nation, should continue to establish innovative and creative pedagogy, assessment, and curriculum development.

Kentucky districts have implemented other measures to enhance Common Core instruction and some statewide initiatives have gained national recognition. Once a month, educators from across the state of Kentucky meet to discuss the standards by proposing lessons, developing assessments and measures, and assessing materials related to the Common Core (Rothman, 2014). In terms of statewide innovation, the Kentucky Department of Education created an online hub, called Kentucky’s Continuous Instructional Improvement System (Rothman, 2014). The portal contains materials like tests, assignments, and other measures. Additionally, some higher education institutions, are already actively involved in assessment and teacher-training program revision (Rothman, 2014).

Kentucky is seen as something of a bellwether in terms of curriculum implementation and K-12 and higher education collaboration (Nelson, 2013) especially in regards to professional development. Some higher education faculty were involved in drafting and reviewing the Common Core State Standards in Kentucky and faculty have also worked with the Kentucky Department of Education to establish a collaborative definition of a college ready student (Barnett & Fay, 2013). Additionally, Kentucky colleges and universities recognize college-readiness indicators, or cutoff scores on various exams, to let students skip remedial work in college and enroll in credit-bearing entry-level courses (Gewertz, 2012). Kentucky is a promising collaborative example and educators and administrators alike recognize the importance of a working partnership between K-12 teachers and higher education instructors.

Common Core and higher education collaboration, generally, has occurred through several national initiatives. The College Readiness Program (CRP), Core to College and Common Core Postsecondary Collaborative (CCPC) are all examples of current partnerships (Barnett & Fay, 2013). Within our own discipline, the National Communication Association has supported high school Communication education as a graduation requirement and has prepared supporting materials for K-12 distribution. These initiatives prove that collaboration is possible and often welcomed by K-12 educators and higher education institutions.

**Historical Development of Instructional Communication**

The oral communication emphasis in the Common Core represents a potential research direction especially for instructional scholars. Instructional communication centers
on communication processes in teaching and training (McCroskey & McCroskey, 2006) in a variety of instructional contexts. One context of interest for instructional scholars is K-12 education. Primarily, instructional researchers study the “role and impact of communication in the instructional process across all disciplines and contexts” (McCroskey & McCroskey, 2006, p. 35). Instructional communication is a sufficient vehicle to study communication in and through instruction, especially in the K-12 domain.

Active research within K-12 public education, focusing on public speaking and listening instruction as well as instructional processes, may offer instructional scholars a substantial research platform. It is true that “effectively integrating all content areas into instruction is essential for students to receive a comprehensive education” (ACSD, 2014, p. 2) and Communication education should be present in public school curricula.

**Communication in the Common Core**

The communication-based standards are also important for higher education. The Common Core will have an impact on student classroom preparedness, job placement and retention (Weintraub, 2014). In light of potential ramifications, higher education institutions, especially Communication departments, should not ignore the national standards. As a pillar of the new national recommendations public speaking and listening, consistently underdeveloped in previous standards (Weintraub, 2014), are now foundational subject areas for K-12 teachers.

Several national organizations have already developed and distributed preparation materials for educators. The U.S. Department of Education awarded the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), an organization from which Kentucky withdrew (Berry, 2014), and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), $330 million to design assessment measures that are aligned to the Common Core (Rothman, 2014). The development of additional assessment measures that accurately align to the CCSS is one issue to consider as the curriculum takes root (ACSD, 2014). In addition to assessment instruments, the SBAC also created a digital resource library that includes assignments, instructional tools, and formative assessment measures (Rothman, 2014). PARCC will continue to develop additional materials in the future (Rothman, 2014). These organizations are actively involved in the broad range assessment development but Communication scholars, especially in Kentucky, may be able to have a more local or regional impact.

The Common Core, in many ways, is a dramatic shift from previous recommendations. Specifically, the standards are concerned with critical reasoning and analysis grounded in textual
analysis as well as inquiry-based learning (Butrymowicz, 2013). Rather than rote memorization the standards call for evidence-based responses and critical thinking, traditionally a more difficult standard for learning (Butrymowicz, 2013; Brown, 2014). This literary and informational focus can be accomplished through a variety of instructional activities. Thankfully, teachers across the country, especially Kentucky, have focused on new concepts and are being trained in new teaching methods (Butrymowicz, 2013) but there is still work to be done, even in our own backyard.

Discussion

Despite certain political challenges, the Common Core is presently alive and well. States can supplement the standards with an additional 15% of “state-specific” standardization (ACSD, 2014), but critics argue that states should be allowed to develop their own standards rather than succumb to a federal curriculum (Brown, 2014). Even with those challenges Kentucky remains pro-Common Core; however, backlash has increased in the Commonwealth as opponents decry the funding necessary to train teachers and revamp materials (Kenning, 2014). Recently, the Kentucky Education Commissioner called for a review of the standards and a potential revision in accordance with the Kentucky Core Academic Standards Challenge (Kenning, 2014). This invitation was made not out of a consideration for removing the standards, but rather an effort to increase overall effectiveness.

Effective CCSS implementation presents three discipline-specific challenges for Kentucky Communication scholars: communication as part of English-language arts (ELAR) curriculum, assessment, and professional development. Communication researchers are perfectly suited to address the current concerns while Communication educators have an opportunity to engage public education and incorporate Communication education in K-12 classrooms across the nation (Weintraub, 2014). Services that address a lack of speaking and listening training for teachers and school districts are necessary. Current challenges are substantial but Kentucky Communication scholars can, and should, rise to the challenge and present data-driven research based solutions to the problems at hand.

Communication as ELAR

The first challenge is a matter of curriculum identification. The Common Core State Standards for English-language arts include standards for reading, writing, language, and speaking and listening (Rothman, 2013). As previously stated, the broad descriptions of the speaking and listening standards correspond to comprehension and collaboration and presentation of knowledge and ideas. These standards are loosely translated as listening and public speaking.
One problem is that these definitions do not specifically identify each skillset. Future endeavors to solidify a more appropriate definition of public speaking and listening are needed. Some believe that the subject of communication should be removed from the ELAR curriculum and established as separate content. It is true that instructors must establish an opportunity for students to practice and master effective communication skills but this could be achieved as stand-alone course offerings or interdisciplinary subject matter. Even if included long-term in English-language arts these communication skills can be integrated into various disciplines to achieve active experimentation and behavioral learning. It will be interesting to see if Communication scholars and education practitioners can come to an understanding regarding the public speaking and listening emphasis in the Common Core.

In the past, Communication departments in higher education institutions have argued for communication content as a separate and distinct core-curriculum which assumes K-12 institutions could do the same. Even if separation does not occur, Communication scholars should be willing to aid in the implementation of effective public speaking and listening skills training and instruction in the K-12 classroom as it will serve the discipline at large and the effectiveness of university courses. The soft skills emphasis in the Common Core should confirm the subject of communication as a legitimate content area in K-12 and as such Communication scholars can be active training practitioners and research participants. Communication researchers could begin to reach out to the Kentucky Department of Education and articulate the differences between Communication and ELAR. Assessment of communication learning outcomes and recognition that multimodal communication learning has occurred, as opposed to just broader ELAR learning outcomes, are necessary discussions that Communication faculty must embrace.

Communication curriculum, and acknowledgement of the discipline, may be advanced by reaching out to local K-12 institutions and inviting students to universities for communication skills workshops, presented by higher education instructors. Western Kentucky University and Shelby County, for example, engaged in a similar initiative that addressed reading comprehension in 8th and 10th graders. Bringing local students to campus can help reinforce the necessity and relevance of our discipline while increasing K-12 public speaking and listening competency and college readiness.

Assessment

Once curriculum is solidified, classroom assessment measures should also be created to determine how well instruction has adhered to the standards. Assessment of the Common Core has been identified as a crucial next step in establishing consistency in public education but listening
and speaking assessment continue to pose challenges (Rothman, 2013). Common Core assessment is lacking partly because of the newness of the standards (Brown, 2014). Support has occurred, but is continually needed, in terms of classroom assessment and determining student mastery of skill; the development of engaging curricula; and the creation of lessons that align (ACSD, 2014).

Program assessment should align to university admission standards however, individual course outcomes, especially speaking and listening objectives, can be developed, or at least aided in development, by Communication educators. This means that Communication scholars should seek participation in assessment discussions (King, 2011). In essence, Communication scholars could contribute by helping K-12 teachers create lesson plans, rubrics, and other materials and distribute these through the online electronic curriculum hub (Kentucky’s Continuous Instructional Improvement System).

In public education, equality of student learning outcomes is an issue of primary concern and, as a result, assessment of learning outcomes is a central focus. Higher quality assessment should include “authentic performance tasks that assess and encourage the development of the full range of higher order skills” (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014, p. 6). Over $330 million has been dispersed to various organizations in an attempt to establish clearer and more consistent Common Core assessment and the money is a primary indicator of the importance placed on assessment. Communication scholars can help with the development of assessment measures and rubrics specifically related to Communication education.

Professional Development

Once curriculum has been solidified and assessment measures created, teachers should be trained to address public speaking and listening in the classroom and implement interdisciplinary instruction. Certified teachers, if trained effectively and with a communication-centered perspective, can teach across disciplines and purposefully integrate public speaking and listening into a variety of subjects. Teachers need not be subject-matter experts but it could be argued that college programs should instruct future teachers in purposeful integration of multimodal communication. Additionally, professional development that focuses on communication instruction should be offered to current and future K-12 educators. Education majors in a university setting are a viable audience for courses related to communication instruction and pedagogy.

Veteran and future teachers will need adequate preparation and training to most effectively implement the new standards (ACSD, 2014). Through communication-based pedagogy, instructors can enhance student skill in public speaking and listening. Organizations
have identified the importance of Common Core based faculty development even specifying that “educators will need targeted professional development to help them understand the standards, develop new lesson plans, deliver effective instruction, and utilize assessments that are aligned with them” (ACSD, 2014, p. 2). This is especially true in regards to public speaking and listening. According to the Common Core, listening and public speaking are behaviors or skills that must be taught, learned and practiced. Therefore, instructors should receive specialized instruction.

Common Core related professional development can have far-reaching effects. In speaking to the application of CCSS training Cheryl Krehbiel (2012) said that “one of the most powerful ways to support teacher planning and delivery of instruction is to engage teachers in collaborative work” (p. 9). Krehbiel (2012) argued that professional development is crucial in establishing and implementing Common Core State Standards with care and fidelity. The new standards require educators to teach using a skill set that may have not been previously developed (Krehbiel, 2012). Therefore, professional development must focus on the new standards so teachers can effectively implement and execute (Krehbiel, 2012). Eastern Kentucky University, for example, developed faculty-led professional development workshops for K-12 teachers focusing on language arts and math integration into 12th grade curriculum (Nelson, 2013). Murray State University facilitates a similar program where faculty and K-12 teachers in neighboring districts discuss college-level expectations (Gewertz, 2012). Communication departments and faculty members can be actively involved in the creation and implementation of K-12 teacher training programs as a service to the university and community.

Teacher preparation is an often overlooked (Rothman, 2014) but necessary component of such a widespread curriculum implementation. Classroom teachers must be trained and equipped to elevate the standards to improve student learning (ACSD, 2014). To date, districts have seen varying success in faculty development, teaching effectiveness, and the overall implementation of how teachers teach (Butrymowicz, 2013). Adherence to the standards and quality assurance are crucial in the development of training resources. Unfortunately, “while the common core standards are creating opportunities for the development of new materials and professional-development offerings, not all of these products and services will truly be aligned to the standards or be of high quality” (Rothman, 2014, p. 20). Therefore, it is essential that Communication scholars actively participate in development programs that address public speaking and listening.

Some educators in K-12 classrooms feel unprepared to teach the new standards (Rothman, 2013). To ease fears and encourage effectiveness, faculty development, in accordance with the Common Core, should increase content-based pedagogy (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit,
Communication educators and higher education professionals should work with school systems and state departments to collaboratively train teachers (Weintraub, 2014) in content areas that may not be a primary area of strength, like public speaking and listening. Current and future teachers will have to engage in workshops and professional development to enhance their understanding of communication-based instruction. To accomplish this goal workshops and interventions must become more strategic and include purposeful communication content implementation.

Implications

The active participation of Communication scholars in the Common Core can have far reaching implications. We must advance the discipline by continuing to validate communication content as a foundation of K-12 public education curriculum while also studying the impact of Communication education on the K-12 classroom.

Communication scholars, especially those with an instructional emphasis, are equipped to further the Communication-Common Core discussion. However, because of the discipline specific implications, all Communication scholars should be cognizant of the Common Core and be available to help bridge the college and career gap of first and second year college students. We have yet to see students in our colleges that have fully experienced the new standards but we must be prepared to address K-12 standards in an effort to establish greater holistic effectiveness.

We must also seize the research opportunities presented by the Common Core. Communication education research that centers on K-12 pedagogy and instructional methodology, revolving around the CCSS, can be submitted to interdisciplinary state and national journals and would be welcome additions to a variety of conferences. Additionally, faculty can join the discussion by taking part in panels at national forums like the Architecture for Implementing the Common Core Standards: Strategies, Partnerships, and Progress, which was hosted in Louisville, Kentucky in 2012. The time for establishing a K-12 research agenda has presented itself but we must come together, clarify the agenda, and further the discussion as scholars and practitioners.

Despite current optimism it is also important to remember that standards are typically fluid and will be revised. Rothman (2014) believed

…the organizations that created the [CCSS] need to look to the future. At some point…the standards will need to be revised, to reflect new research on student learning and evidence about their validity in predicting college and career readiness. That means that organizations need to develop and oversee a research agenda and formalize a governance structure that to guide future revision (p. 22).

As such, our inclusion in the conversation will be fluid and potentially unique but despite
obvious challenges, Communication scholars can serve the state of Kentucky, and the nation, by offering expertise in terms of curriculum, assessment, and faculty development. We have an opportunity to participate in a national conversation that directly impacts the local community and the Commonwealth. We must seize the opportunity to advance our discipline and research the communication inclusion in the Common Core.
References


