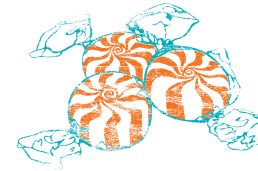


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## Introduction

# My First Taste of LDC

When I was first introduced to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), I reacted as many teachers probably do: I was overwhelmed. As I began to read through the standards, I felt conflicted. Part of me believed that my curriculum already addressed many of the standards. I also thought that there was no way I could cover all of the literacy standards and teach my social studies content. I needed guidance on using the CCSS to support my instruction and make a difference for my students.

After agreeing to try out the method being developed by the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC), I came away inspired, excited, and relieved. I'd found a simple and universally applicable framework, and educators were only just beginning to tap its potential. Over the past few years I've seen LDC and my own teaching evolve as teachers learn more about how to create common high standards using literacy skills as a base.

I love LDC because its strong link to the CCSS also encourages my creativity and personal teaching style. LDC zeroes in on template tasks that I affectionately call “teacher candy.” They make my life easier and support my teaching by providing structure without dictating my content. The template tasks have also given teachers a common language for talking about how to develop curricula driven by the CCSS.

As a result of LDC, I have seen enormous growth in my students' learning. They are more confident approaching reading and writing assignments. Using LDC tools helped me to eliminate my assumptions about their literacy skills and to teach in a way that supports and challenges all types of learners. Watching my students' reading and writing skills improve would have been enough to convince me of LDC's benefits, but they have extended even further. By engaging more deeply in their reading and writing work, my students are learning the social studies content on a more sophisticated level. Though I was initially concerned I wouldn't have enough class time to cover content, I have been blown away by their engagement in the topics. Some of my students have even had better attendance because they say they don't want to miss anything!



By working with the LDC framework, I have learned that there is a way to support teachers with an effective curriculum structure while also respecting their creativity and intellectual talent. Teaching is a challenging profession. We work hard to provide students with a meaningful learning experience, and the more collaboration and support we have in this, the better. LDC has brought a welcome change to my professional growth and to my students' learning. I hope this guide is helpful as you venture into the world of LDC.

### LDC WORDS TO DESIGN BY

**Template task:** A “fill-in-the-blank” sentence “shell” built off of the Common Core State Standards in reading and writing that can be used to create assignments or assessments.

**Template task collection:** A series of template tasks. The prototype incorporated in this book is organized by writing type—argumentation, informational/explanatory and narrative—and text structure (also called “modes of discourse such as definition, description, and so forth).

**Teaching task (or plain old “task”):** A “completed” LDC template task in which teachers include the content/issue to be addressed, specify the text they will teach and identify the product to be produced. A full teaching task also includes background information that introduces students to the assignment and an optional “extension” in which the students exhibit or present their product publicly.

**Rubric:** An explicit set of criteria used for assessing a particular type of work. LDC has developed rubrics for Argumentation template tasks and for Informational/Explanatory template tasks.

**Student work:** Exemplar student work is an essential companion to the rubric. Exemplars are being developed locally by LDC partners. Ultimately the exemplars will come from multiple partner agreements and will be informed by emerging assessment systems.

## 1. Content and Planning

### “Where Do I Put This?”

Where to start? Before you select a template and write a task, you need to figure out where in your curriculum you want to put them. Choosing a topic, theme, or unit in which to base your module is the first step in the LDC journey. There are several ways to do this.

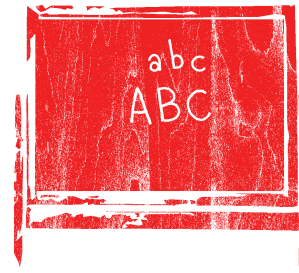
**1. Play favorites.** If this is your first LDC module, try starting with your favorite content unit. By choosing a unit or topic that students tend to find engaging, you will make it easier for them to respond to the new reading and writing process. This is also a great way to incorporate activities and lessons that you have found to be successful. One of the great features of LDC is that you don't have to abandon a curriculum that you are passionate about; instead, you can reframe it with a strong literacy base. For example, I used my favorite unit on economic systems to create my first module for my Economics class. My students enjoy debating and discussing different economic models, and I already had a number of texts and activities to weave into the module. Knowing that my students would engage in the content increased my confidence in writing a task and instructions for the module.

#### TASK 2. ARGUMENTATION/ANALYSIS L1, 2, 3

[Insert essential question] After reading \_\_\_\_\_ (literature or informational texts), write a/an \_\_\_\_\_ (essay, report, or substitute) that addresses the question, and support your position with evidence from the text(s). **L2** Be sure to acknowledge competing views. **L3** Give one or more examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

What combination of market and command systems do you believe creates an ideal mixed economy? After reading informational and opinion texts, write an essay that addresses the question, and support your position with evidence from the texts. Be sure to acknowledge competing views. Give one or more examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

**2. Consider timing.** It's helpful to consider the timing and placement of the module within your semester-long or year-long curriculum. If you choose a unit or topic that takes place early in your curriculum, you can continue to build on the skills gained during the module process throughout



the semester or year. This also provides an opportunity to create additional modules. I teach the first module in the second unit of the school year, so I've gotten to know my students' personalities as well as their reading and writing skills before using the module, and I can adjust my instruction accordingly.

If you want to create and teach multiple modules or design a full course using LDC as a base, it is essential to carefully plan out the timing and placement of each module. You need to give yourself enough time to process the results of each module, to determine the module's impact on students, and to decide how to adjust future LDC modules and your curriculum based on these considerations.

**3. Conquer weaknesses.** If you have a unit or topic that is a little weaker than others, LDC might be a perfect way to improve it. You can build the unit using LDC tools as the base. Not only can this approach result in a new literacy-based unit in your curriculum, but it might inspire new approaches to the content as well. The LDC tools are also structured yet flexible enough to create a base for an entirely new unit or topic.

I used this approach in my Government class for the topic of voting. Many of my students aren't interested in learning about the voting process and lack motivation to vote when they turn eighteen. I struggled to create lessons and projects that sparked their enthusiasm. So I decided to try using LDC to bring new life to this topic in my classroom. I ended up creating an argumentation task that asked students to identify barriers to voting and come up with solutions to improve voter turnout. My students' attitude transformed. The topic became personal for many of them. They weren't just regurgitating memorized facts but were engaging in a discussion about history and coming up with ideas for the future. They researched and read a variety of texts and wrote essays that reflected their research and opinions. LDC not only helped me use this topic as an excellent way to teach literacy skills, it also connected my students to thought-provoking and important social studies content.

**4. Utilize your strengths.** Another way to decide where to place an LDC module is to consider your teaching strengths. Choose a unit or topic for which your curriculum already includes reading and writing about com-

plex texts. The LDC tools will sync well with your original curriculum and will help you strengthen the scaffolding of literacy skills that ensures students are meeting the Common Core State Standards.

I used this approach when creating modules for my Advanced Placement (AP) U.S. History classes. Almost every unit for these classes is based on preparing students for the AP exam, which requires reading primary sources and writing essays based on evidence from these texts. I thought turning one of my AP units into an LDC module would be easy; it is less time-consuming to create a module using a unit that already has a strong literacy base. But the process made me rethink about scaffolding my literacy instruction.

Incorporating LDC tools into my AP curriculum undoubtedly made me a better AP teacher. The pacing of the AP U.S. History curriculum is intense. Throughout my years of teaching the course, I gradually found myself sacrificing depth for breadth in both content and literacy. Using the LDC helped me stop my frantic race to prepare students for the exam and instead inspired me to reevaluate how I teach reading and writing skills. I began to take more time to scaffold literacy instruction and worried less about cramming in a wide range of content. The results? Last year my students' scores on the AP exam were among the highest in my career.

**5. Use realistic pacing.** Teachers are always in a crunch trying to fit an extensive curriculum into a limited amount of time. Being explicit about the number of days you have available to teach an LDC module will determine your limitations as you design the module's instructional portion. There are a couple of questions I ask myself when pacing a module.

- **Where do I want to place my module within my selected curriculum or unit?** There are two strategies teachers usually take when determining where to place a module. The first is to replace an entire unit with the LDC module. In this approach, students learn the content entirely through the reading and writing process of the module. The second is to preface the module with traditional content-specific activities and then connect the module to that content. The pacing plan will vary depending on which approach you choose. There is no right or wrong way to teach the LDC module. We know what works best with our own teaching style and students' needs.
- **How familiar am I with teaching literacy and with the literacy skills of my students?** If you are not used to including a significant amount of literacy instruction in your curriculum, or if you

plan to try out some new strategies, try to be generous in the pacing of the module. When I taught my first module, I realized that I needed to add a couple of buffer days to revisit or continue some of the literacy instruction that I had not originally planned into the module.

Teachers will often have an immediate idea about where to place a module in their curriculum. Based on my experience, I suggest taking the time to consider this decision. The happier you are with your content choice, the more enjoyable the rest of the LDC process will be!

## 2. Selecting and Creating the Task “It’s Getting Easier!”

Most of us love anything that makes our jobs as teachers easier, from grading to lesson-planning to photocopying. The template-task bank is the spine of the LDC system. Not only has it made me a better teacher but it has also made my job easier. The templates are essentially fill-in-the-blank prompts designed to enforce the Common Core. I love these templates. They provide a structure for writing high-quality prompts that meet the Common Core State Standards without sacrificing your content, creativity, or teaching style. It’s like ordering from a menu. What type of essay do I want my students to write: argumentation, informational, or narrative? Do I want to include an essential question as part of the prompt? What topics and content do I want my students to study or research? Just choose from the bank to find the perfect template for your style, content, and student needs.

That isn’t to say that creating a teaching task is easy. There is a lot to think about when writing one, and it often takes some trial and error before finding a template and wording that align with your goals for the module. But the template tasks provide an incredible base for effective curricula and instruction aligned to the Common Core.

A good place to start when choosing a template is to ask yourself: “What do I want my students to learn from this module?” Write some notes, keeping in mind both literacy and content goals. There are several steps to choosing a template.

**1. Choose a mode of writing.** Do you want students to write an argumentation, informational/explanatory, or narrative essay as the final outcome of the module? Which of these models works best with learning both the module’s content and literacy skills? This is an important choice. I have made the mistake of selecting an argumentation mode and then, in the middle of writing my module, realizing that it would have worked much better with an informational mode. If your subject is content-heavy (for example, social studies and science), it’s helpful to check in with your school’s English Language Arts (ELA) teachers to align the mode of writing with what students are learning in their ELA classes.

**2. Select the right fit.** The template bank offers many great choices. Take the time to read through all the templates and think about what could work well with your curriculum. I typically choose a few different templates and then play around with the content to see which is the best fit. Also consider whether you want to provide students with supporting texts or whether

they will find their own. This decision is important, as it will affect the skills learned in the module and might add a research element to their work.

**3. Fill in the content.** There are a few strategies I use to make filling in the template blanks a bit easier while also ensuring that the task meets my content goals. First, try using your state’s content standards to generate ideas. This is a great way to create a task that meets both the literacy demands of the Common Core and the content requirements of your particular state.

### OREGON STATE CONTENT STANDARDS IN SOCIAL STUDIES

HS.19: Evaluate how differing points of view, self-interest, and global distribution of natural resources play a role in conflict over territory.

**LDC template task 5 (argumentation/evaluation):** After researching \_\_\_\_\_ (informational texts) on \_\_\_\_\_ (content), write an/a \_\_\_\_\_ (essay or substitute) that discusses \_\_\_\_\_ (content) and evaluates \_\_\_\_\_ (content). Be sure to support your position with evidence from your research.

**Filled-in LDC template task:** After researching informational texts on the conflict in Sudan, write an essay that discusses the conflict in the African region of Darfur and evaluates how the distribution of natural resources and self-interest of various groups play a role in the conflict. Be sure to support your position with evidence from your research.

My school district, like many others, emphasizes the use of learning targets and essential questions to drive curricula and student learning. This is another great resource to use when creating your task. As with the state content standards, learning targets often fit perfectly into the template banks.

### EXAMPLE FROM MY AP U.S. HISTORY CLASS

**Learning target:** I can analyze the effectiveness of the United States in containing communism in various regions of the world during the Cold War.

**LDC template task 6 (argumentation/evaluation) L1, L2, L3:** [Insert essential question] After reading \_\_\_\_\_ (literature or informational texts), write an/a \_\_\_\_\_ (essay or substitute) that

discusses \_\_\_\_\_ (content) and evaluates \_\_\_\_\_(content). Be sure to support your position with evidence from the text(s).

How effective was the U.S. government in its attempt to halt the spread of communism in Europe and Asia between the years 1945 and 1975? After reading primary-source documents, write an essay that discusses the Cold War and evaluates U.S. strategies and their level of success in containing the Communist influence throughout the eastern hemisphere. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the texts. Be sure to acknowledge competing views. Give examples from historical events to illustrate and clarify your position.

**4. Choose a written product.** Depending on your goals for the skills and knowledge you want students to gain, there are many options for written products. Here are some ideas generated by teachers and members of the LDC design team.

- article
- biography
- critical review
- editorial
- essay
- lab report
- letter
- manual
- narrative account
- proposal
- report
- speech

**5. Identify an appropriate challenge level.** There are three challenge levels for students in most of the LDC templates. You can vary the expectations for an entire class or for individual students. In selecting the task level, consider your students' skill levels, how you would like them to interact with and use the text(s), and the depth of writing you expect. I often use different task levels to adapt to the specific needs of struggling or advanced learners.

**Final word:** Don't get discouraged if you are having trouble writing a task. The best advice I can give is—don't force it. If you are trying too hard to make a chosen template work, maybe it isn't the right choice. Play around with different templates until you find the best fit. In my experience, the wording falls into place fairly easily once you find the right template.

### 3. Common Core State Standards “Read Them!”

The purpose of LDC is to support teachers in designing curricula that meet the literacy demands of the Common Core. The template tasks ensure that your module addresses the standards for college- and career-readiness in reading and writing.

Because the Common Core State Standards are incorporated into the template tasks, it is easy to overlook the standards as you're creating a module. I appreciated when a fellow educator urged me to spend some time reading and thinking about the Common Core early in the LDC process. There is still work to be done as professionals to ensure that our instruction aligns with the depth of thought the new standards require.

Template Task Collection 1 is designed to work for grades 6 through 12, so you will see broad anchor standards used in that document, that correspond to the more specific grade-level Common Core State Standards. When you begin to design your module, it's important to identify the specific grade-level standards, which will make your instruction more intentional and detailed. In addition, the Common Core documents themselves are helpful for building strong teaching tasks.

Before using the Common Core and LDC in my classroom, I incorporated literacy into my social studies content by asking my students to read various texts and reflect on and analyze them by responding to questions. Although my AP students regularly wrote formal essays, only occasionally did I have other classes write more-formal text-based written products. I felt I did a good job building student literacy, and there was always a significant amount of reading and writing going on in my classroom. But after utilizing the Common Core and LDC to guide my teaching, I realized that there is a more purposeful way to support my students' literacy development and critical thinking.

By narrowing my focus to the specific literacy skills required by the Common Core State Standards, I significantly raised my standards for teaching literacy. I no longer ask students to complete reading and writing assignments without directly addressing the specific skill they require. For example, in the past I might have had students read a text and then answer a set of comprehension and reflection questions about the topic or the author's perspective. Now I keep in mind standards such as the following for reading informational texts in the Common Core for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.

**Key ideas and details #1 – Grades 9–10:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

By keeping a specific standard in mind, your instruction becomes more focused and students are expected to engage with the text on a deeper level. Instead of demonstrating their comprehension with vague or generalized responses, students must provide textual evidence for their inferences and conclusions. Students can't fake comprehension, because they are required to cite the text. I now use more-specific questions to guide classroom discussion. "Why do you think that?" has become "On which part of the text are you basing that opinion?" This Common Core reading skill also has a clear impact on the writing process, as students continually practice identifying and analyzing evidence from texts to support their opinions. By the end of the year or semester, almost all students write essays by basing their reasoning on specific textual evidence.

I also find that even though Common Core standards such as this ask students to interact with the text on a sophisticated level, both struggling and advanced students are able to find pieces of the text that they can connect ideas to and use to demonstrate their comprehension of the content. I find that students are more likely to participate in discussions and respect each other's opinions when they make direct references to the text, and my classroom feels like a safer place for sharing ideas.

My understanding of what it means to teach literacy has become much richer because of the Common Core and LDC. I feel confident that I am empowering my students with literacy skills that will support them on any path in their continuing education and careers. Teaching with the Common Core and LDC takes significant thought, planning, and practice. But the changes I have seen in myself as a professional and in my students motivate me to continue using these tools purposefully in my teaching.

**Where can you find the Common Core State Standards?**

[www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)

## 4. Selecting Texts "The Heart of the Matter"

Finding the right texts for a task can be the most important and also the most time-consuming part of the LDC process. The stronger the texts are and the more directly they correspond to the task, the more positive the students' reading and writing experience will be. The texts will guide students in building and organizing their evidence and thoughts. You can also ask students to research and gather some (or all) of the texts themselves. In my experience, this means setting clear expectations, instructing them on research skills, and setting guidelines for acceptable texts.

This is another place where I found it helpful to consider my goals for students.

**1. What types of text/s are appropriate for the task?** Articles, editorials, primary sources, multimedia, data—the list could go on! When choosing texts, take into consideration what will both engage and challenge students.

**2. How many texts are necessary to accomplish the task?** Some experts support the deep reading of a single complex text to engage students in critical thinking, while others support using a variety of texts to help generate ideas and increase understanding. Ultimately it's your own decision based on the goals of the task and what you believe is best to support your students.

**3. What levels of text are appropriate for your students?** Choosing texts that meet the needs of your students' skill levels is essential to a successful LDC module. Consider the reading level of your students, the complexity of the texts, and the content. A perfect balance of accessibility and challenge is not easy to find, but it is possible, and has a significant impact on learning. As students' literacy skills improve, I gradually increase the complexity of texts to ensure that they continue to be challenged. Throughout a course or year, I adjust each module to match their growth and to allow them to demonstrate their literacy skills with increased independence.

**4. How do I adapt texts and curricula to support the diverse learning needs of my students?** It can be challenging to find the appropriate level of texts for your students when you have a wide range of academic and language skills in your classroom. I often have students



who are English Language Learners (ELL), students with Individualized Education Programs, and AP or honors students in the same classroom. There are several ways to ensure that all students have a positive learning experience. First, try using additional instructional support materials and strategies, such as sentence frames, to support students as they read challenging text. Second, you might modify the length and vocabulary of the text itself to support students who are below grade level in their reading skills. Finally, you can reduce or increase the number of required texts based on the needs and abilities of different students.

**5. Will students be able to develop a complete response to the task with the selected texts?** A good test is to actually complete the task yourself to determine whether the texts are appropriate and sufficient. I have done this with all of my modules, and several times it has saved me from choosing texts that weren't quite right for the task. This also helps you anticipate areas where students might struggle when using the text to support their arguments.

**6. Is there any bias in the texts?** As a social studies teacher, I am especially conscious of presenting issues fairly. In an early version of one of my modules, I chose the same number of texts to support each side of the issue students were asked to argue. When I began reading their rough drafts, I noticed that more essays supported one side of the argument than the other. There are probably several reasons for this, but I went back to the texts and read them again more closely. I realized that the texts for one argument were slightly more engaging and accessible. I hadn't noticed that when I'd vetted the texts the first time. Now I am even more careful about my text selections and make sure I design my instruction to compensate for any bias.

## 5. What Skills? “Get Specific About Abilities”

If the teaching task is the spine of an LDC module, the skills are its vertebrae. The skills define how you will structure the teaching of the module and help students reach the task's goals. You can use the skills of the LDC module template as a guide for building your own skill list. The only requirements of the LDC are that the skills align to your task, begin with the words “ability to,” and are organized strategically. Teachers may cluster the skills as they see fit, but in my experience the clusters used in the original LDC module template are the most logical: preparing for the task, the reading process, the transition to writing, and the writing process. The modules I have created are greatly influenced by the skill cluster set and mini-tasks suggested in this template, with a few changes specific to my task and students. However, the beauty of the LDC tools is that you are not restricted to this version. You can create your own skills list based on your preferences and expertise. Below are some sample skills that have been used in other LDC modules.

### 1. PREPARING FOR THE TASK

- **Pre-test.** Ability to read and respond to a prompt.
- **Task engagement.** Ability to connect the task and new content to existing knowledge, skills, experiences, interests, and concerns.
- **Task and rubric analysis.** Ability to understand and explain the task's prompt and rubric.
- **Project planning.** Ability to plan a project so the task is accomplished on time.

### 2. THE READING PROCESS

- **Reading strategies.** Ability to identify essential reading strategies for text comprehension.
- **Active reading.** Ability to develop an understanding of a text by locating words and phrases that identify key concepts, facts, or information.
- **Introduction to research methods.** Ability to understand tools available for research and how to find appropriate sources.

- **Text-based discussion.** Ability to make meaning of the text collaboratively.
- **Organizing notes.** Ability to prioritize and narrow down notes and other information.

### 3. THE TRANSITION TO WRITING

- **Bridging conversation.** Ability to transition from the reading or researching phase to the writing phase.

### 4. THE WRITING PROCESS

- **Controlling idea.** Ability to establish a controlling idea and consolidate information relevant to the task.
- **Planning.** Ability to develop a line of thought and a text structure appropriate to an informational/explanatory task.
- **Development.** Ability to construct an initial draft with an emerging line of thought and structure.
- **Revision and editing.** Ability to refine text, including refining the line of thought, and to proofread it to make it more effective.

The skills set up a clear process for students to follow as they respond to the task. All teachers know, however, that no matter how precise our planning is, our students' responses to the instruction can be unpredictable. The LDC framework is designed to encourage teachers to adjust their instruction based on the results of student work on specific mini-tasks. Be prepared to repeat or adjust a skill while teaching the module. I often have to do this during the writing process, because my students typically have a wide range of writing skills. For example, toward the end of the writing process, when students have a much stronger grasp of the content, it is helpful to have them go back and reread some of the texts, as they will often connect with the material more deeply than they had during the first read. They can then work these insights into their writing. A strong outline of skills to guide student learning sets unambiguous expectations, allows for teachers to adjust instruction to meet these expectations, and helps students gain awareness of their accomplishments at each step.

## 6. What Instruction? “Putting It All Together”

Using specific lesson plans or mini-tasks, I help students achieve each of the skills outlined in the module. Essentially, this is when you pull everything together to create a literacy module with the depth and continuity to meet the Common Core State Standards. The task won't teach itself! Achieving student learning and growth through the LDC process depends on the quality of your instruction. Keep in mind that you can change any part of the instructional piece of the LDC template to make it work for your specific content, teaching style, task, and students.

I usually start this process by estimating how many class periods I will need to teach each skill. I consider the number of texts students will be reading and how much scaffolding is needed based on their skill levels and experience. For example, when I teach the reading process in my sophomore AP U.S. History class, it takes more time to teach active reading and note-taking skills, because the primary sources we use can be challenging to break down.

Once I have an estimate, I design a mini-task that students complete for each skill. I also determine the pacing, specific prompt or product I want students to produce, the instructional strategies I will use to support students, a scoring guide (if applicable), and a list of materials needed. This structure has been very helpful for my instruction because it keeps me focused on the skills and central teaching task. Below are a few aspects of what can be called an instructional ladder.



**1. Skill or mini-task.** You can take these directly from the skills list you created at the beginning of the module design. Just make sure they match! I have caught myself tweaking a skill and forgetting to change it in both the “What Skills?” and “What Instruction?” sections.

**2. Product and prompt.** List the specific products that you want students to create. Also record any prompts, questions, learning targets, or other supports that will guide students through the mini-task.

**3. Scoring.** Scoring conveys your expectations and feedback to students

throughout the module. You don't have to provide scoring and feedback for every aspect of the module, however. I try to keep this step as manageable as possible with simple rubrics, checklists, or peer-review strategies to ensure that students get sufficient feedback without giving myself an unrealistic amount of grading.

**4. Instructional strategies.** These are the detailed lessons and instructional activities you will use to support students in accomplishing the mini-task. If you don't have a strong background in teaching literacy skills, I suggest you reach out to a literacy coach or an ELA teacher at your school for support and advice, which will ensure that your literacy activities and routines are aligned with students' ELA classes.

Emphasizing the teaching of literacy skills does not have to mean sacrificing content. LDC has helped my students deepen their ability to comprehend the content through its emphasis on literacy skills and the Common Core. When I first taught a module in my Economics class, I replaced the traditional unit with the LDC module. At the end of the unit, I asked my students to take the same multiple-choice and short-answer exam I usually give at the end of the unit. My students performed better on the exam after learning the content through the LDC process than they had through the traditional curriculum. This immediately sold me on what I already suspected: engaging students in more-complex reading and writing supports more-sophisticated mastery of content.

**This is an example of one skill from the instructional ladder of my Economic Systems module.**

**PACING**

1 class period

**SKILL & DEFINITION**

**Organizing Notes**

Ability to prioritize and narrow down notes and other information.

**PRODUCT & PROMPT**

**Notes and Graphic Organizer**

Prioritize relevant information in the "organizing notes" section of your Writer's Notebook.

**SCORING**

Creates a prioritized set of notes that categorizes evidence.

Suggests implications drawn from information about the economic systems.

Writes in readable prose.

**INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES**

Students prioritize the information in the graphic organizer by identifying which pieces of evidence they will use in their essay.

**Extra Support.** Provide students with specific examples of what kinds of information belong in each section of the graphic organizer. Create a list of "leading questions" to help guide students in the process. Example: "What is one fact you learned from the health-care article that supports a market system?"

## 7. Scoring Student Work “Everyone Uses the Rubric”

Though not every teacher loves grading papers, it is part of the job, and I have found that teaching with LDC has actually made the grading process more effective and efficient. In order to provide relevant and effective feedback, I try to make sure that throughout the module, students have many opportunities to engage with the LDC rubric and use it to evaluate their classmates’ work as well as their own. When it is time for me to do the final scoring, they are already familiar with the rubric’s language and understand what the rubric’s categories look like through sample writing. At this stage I usually need to highlight only the rubric itself and provide a few questions or comments for students to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their work.



The LDC rubric allows teachers to score student work analytically as well as holistically. When I teach the first module of the semester or year, I have students discuss the rubric categories and translate them into their own words. This helps them take ownership of the rubric and also allows me to reference different rubric categories throughout the teaching process. Students can measure their growth in different areas of the rubric, and I can pinpoint where they need more support and where we need less scaffolding.

### USING MODULE CREATOR

Module Creator ([www.modulecreator.com](http://www.modulecreator.com)) is a simple and user-friendly online program developed by MetaMetrics to help teachers use the LDC framework for building modules. Here are just some of its benefits.

- It eliminates the work of determining what can and can’t be changed in the LDC framework; those features are built into the program.
- It presents the Common Core clearly. You can decide which standards to address in your module and include more simply by checking a box.
- Its instructional section covers the same ideas and suggestions for instruction as the LDC template does. It maintains the flexibility of LDC that allows teachers to incorporate their own creativity and strategies into the instructional plan.
- It comes with incredible resources for text selection and evaluation. It can help you search for and narrow down content-specific texts that will support your task. It also features the Lexile system for determining the readability and complexity of the texts.
- It saves time in formatting and presentation. It allows you to add resources and upload documents efficiently and does all the formatting for you.

**One bit of advice for using Module Creator:** Because it is such a convenient and efficient tool, I have found I need to be even more careful and intentional when designing the instructional plan. At least for me, it is easy to speed through the program and forget to take the time needed for a good LDC module design.

## 8. Making It Good for All Students “Strategize, Strategize”

I have developed several strategies to ensure that my teaching process, organization, and evaluation of student work are as efficient and effective as possible while using LDC. I am always searching for ways to scaffold instruction to support the learning process for all of my students while also managing the heavy workload that comes with teaching and scoring literacy-based instruction. These are some of my most useful strategies.

**1. Portfolios.** For most of my modules, students maintain all of their work in a portfolio that is kept in the classroom. It includes the texts, a Writer’s Notebook (see below), and any additional notes or work students have done throughout the module. My students stay organized and are held accountable for each step of the reading and writing process. Students can also take their portfolios home to finish mini-tasks that they weren’t able to complete in class. Because all of their work is kept in one place, my students can see their progress and feel the momentum toward their final piece of written work. A portfolio system also makes grading and providing feedback much more efficient. Instead of taking home a giant stack of portfolios over the weekend, I try to evaluate about ten to fifteen portfolios each day and give feedback using a simple rubric sheet that is placed in their portfolio. This helps me consistently track their progress and, in turn, the students feel that I am giving attention to and validating their progress, not just their final product. I can keep track of students who are struggling in specific areas, students who need more of a challenge, and where I need to re-teach or move on in the module for different classes.

**2. Writer’s Notebooks.** When I began creating LDC modules, I knew I wanted the task to be accessible for my students every day. They also needed to be consistent in their organization and note-taking. Although the portfolio system helps with that, I still cringed at the thought of students digging through a stack of loose papers in their portfolios each day to find what they needed. My solution has been to create a “Writer’s Notebook” for each student with the following sections: the task, vocabulary notes, graphic organizers, supports for note-taking, outline structure, instruction for formal citations, and the LDC rubric. During instruction, I can refer to different pieces of the notebook. When students are ready to write their rough and final drafts, all of the notes, quotations, outlines, and their thesis are in the notebook, ready to use.

### 3. Scoring.

- **Active-reading rubric.** Using a simple rubric to evaluate annotation or active reading is a great way to give students valuable feedback while also saving you from scoring every step of the module. During the reading instruction, I take time to introduce the active-reading rubric to my students, model the active-reading process, and have them practice using it on examples of past student work. As I look through their portfolios, I highlight the rubric and add one or two feedback comments.
  - **Rubric translation.** When planning a module, I include a mini-task in which students work in small groups to translate the LDC rubric into their own words and write down examples of what each piece of the rubric might look like in an essay. Students use their translated rubrics to score sample essays during the writing process of the module. Because students already have a strong grasp of the rubric and its application, the feedback you give on their final product does not have to be as detailed.
  - **Peer review.** The reality is that there are not enough hours in the week for me to give detailed feedback and score both rough and final drafts. I use peer review as much as possible to encourage support and collaboration among my students as well as to make scoring more manageable for myself. Peer review is most effective when students are given a clear structure and expectations. I created a peer-review worksheet that correlates to the categories of the LDC rubric, and students use it to provide each other with feedback on their rough drafts. The dynamics of peer reviews can be exciting, as students hold each other accountable for their understanding of the rubric and writing expectations.
  - **Comment-code system.** The more familiar students are with the rubric, the less time it takes to give them quality feedback on their writing. When it’s time to score the final product, I highlight different pieces of the rubric and provide written comments and questions. When I am in a time crunch, I use a comment-code system to make scoring even more efficient: for example, a “2” next to a section of text might translate to a comment about the focus portion of the rubric, indicating that the student is beginning to wander away from the controlling idea.
- 4. Accommodations and extra support.** LDC is an excellent framework for scaffolding instruction to meet the needs of all levels and types of learners. Making the content and literacy accessible for all these

learners is one of the most daunting challenges teachers face. The more we share our experiences with such diversity, the more we can help support our students. Here are some strategies that seem to be successful in supporting all learners.

- **Modeling.** One way to help students feel comfortable with the expectations and instructions of the LDC module is to model the use of the skill before asking students to do it. I model active-reading strategies for every module because it keeps my students focused. Having a visual example especially helps my ELL students feel more confident in completing the mini-tasks.
- **Sentence frames.** I use sentence frames in both reading and writing to support ELL students and those who have learning disabilities. Creating a set of sentence frames for the module is helpful for students who know what they want to say but have difficulty structuring their language, especially for quick-writes, thesis statements, topic sentences, and even reading reflections.
- **Small-group and partner work.** Collaboration is an important skill for students to learn, and it also supports struggling learners. I use small-group and partner work throughout each module. Selecting groups is a very intentional process because I want the right balance of personalities and skill levels to both support and challenge all of my students. I rarely let students select their own groups.
- **Critique of sample work.** It's helpful to give students the chance to critique a piece of sample work by another student as a class and in small groups. It always astonishes me how many students who are usually quiet or withdrawn all of a sudden become outspoken when critiquing a piece of work. Group critiques are a great collaborative activity, as students are typically willing to share at least one positive or negative critique of the work with each other. This strategy differs from the peer-review strategy in that students are not providing specific feedback for classmates but instead are developing a collective understanding of different features of the rubric and overall expectations. We evaluate samples of active reading, sample thesis statements, rough drafts, and final drafts. Students gain insight and confidence in the reading and writing process when they have the opportunity to look closely at the work of others.
- **Adaptive text selection.** Varying the number and complexity of texts is a great way to meet the needs of both struggling and advanced

students. You can reduce or increase the number of texts students must use to respond to the task. I would rather have a student read one or two texts deeply than three or four superficially. Although my first step in making texts more accessible to students is usually to increase the amount of scaffolding in the instructional plan, occasionally it is necessary to modify the texts for a specific class or student to adapt for time constraints or complexity. You might include a vocabulary key, simplify sentence structure, or reduce the length of the text. Just make sure to note on the text that it has been modified!

These are just a few accommodations and supports that I have used in my own classroom. There are many strategies for supporting diverse learners, and the more conversation and collaboration we can generate to share ideas and strategies, the better.

## 9. Designing a Full LDC Course “What a Way to Track Growth!”

I have turned my semester-long Economics class as well as my year-long AP U.S. History class into full LDC courses. This way, I can teach my state-driven content standards using the framework of literacy skills as defined by the Common Core State Standards. Here are some common issues that arise when planning and designing a full LDC course—and my solutions.

**1. How many modules should I teach and which topics/units are ideal for incorporating the LDC?** In my Economics class, not every unit is the right match for a heavy literacy element, but there are specific units that are a perfect fit. I looked at my curriculum map and outlined the best places to include LDC modules. I wanted to be especially conscious of the number and timing of my modules. I wanted avoid overwhelming my students but also to engage them in enough complex reading and writing to help advance their literacy skills. I ended up with three LDC modules, with a non-LDC-based unit in between each. My students handled the work smoothly and had enough time to reflect on their performance and writing for each module before engaging in the next one.

**2. How do I use the results from each module to help students improve specific literacy skills?** Before I started teaching the full LDC course, I knew, in order to effectively support their literacy growth between modules, I needed a simple system to keep track of skills that students struggled with. As I score each essay at the end of the module, I make a tally mark next to the two Common Core State Standards each student appears to struggle with the most. After scoring a set of essays, and before I teach the next module, I have general idea of the most challenging literacy areas for the class.

I use this information to target the Common Core State Standards in which students need the most support. For example, in one of my classes, after students completed their first module, I learned that they needed help with Reading Standard #8 for grades 9 and 10: “Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.” They had trouble identifying the validity of texts and the difference between an opinion and a conclusion based on factual data. Before teaching the next module, I created text-based assignments that incorporated the content of the next unit while helping the students practice identifying the validity of arguments and determining their relevance to a specific question.

**3. How do I adapt modules to reflect student growth throughout the course?** As students complete each module, I want them to take more responsibility for their learning and prove their independent growth in the skills. I created a gradual-release plan that describes what I wanted students to be able to do more independently by the final module. Specifically, I wanted my students to develop a controlling idea and use textual evidence to support it with little help or direct instruction from me. The decision to use a gradual-release plan depends on the specific needs of each class and can change as you observe the students’ progress throughout the course.

## Final Words



difference. The enthusiasm for LDC is contagious. I hope you catch it!

My hope is that this guide will help generate conversations about using LDC to implement the Common Core State Standards in our classrooms. My strategies and advice are just the beginning. There are hundreds of talented teachers across the country doing amazing work with the LDC tools and changing the way we educate our students. Tapping into this group knowledge is at the heart of LDC, and I continue to be inspired by it. I see the impact of LDC every day in my classroom, and I know it is making a

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