Across the Content Areas, Common Core Writing Skills

W.CCR.4: The 4th College and Career Readiness anchor standard within the Writing strand of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for ELA / Literacy reads as follows:

“Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

TAP: Task, Audience, and Purpose

Task: Time is a crucial element in the writing process. The writing needed for a multi-day, extended piece is very different from a timed writing assignment, or writing for a standardized test, or composing quick email to a peer. Each has its own time commitment and students need to understand this to not waste time or short-change the writing task.

Audience: Different stylistic choices must be made depending for whom the student is writing. Is it for peers? (If so, it can be more informal.) A Letter-to-the-Editor will be written for public consumption. A research paper needs to follow APA or MLA formatting rules with references and citations. The language needs to be much more formal. The student must be able to adapt their writing style between these styles quickly and easily.

Purpose: This is the why of writing. How can students show the value of their writing in an efficient manner? Students need to pick the evidence and language that conveys precisely the reasons for which they are writing.

In sum: If a students knows how to choose the appropriate kind of writing that needs to be done using the TAP scheme, she will compose pieces with better communicative value.
W.CCR.5: The 5th College and Career Readiness anchor standard within the Writing strand of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for ELA / Literacy reads as follows:

"Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting or trying a new approach.

**Plan:** Rarely can a writer sit down and immediately construct the first, perfect paragraph. She needs to plan a piece of writing before carrying it out.

There are three modes of writing that live in the Common Core universe: an Argument, an Informative / Explanatory, or a Narrative piece. Each kind of writing requires answers to a different list questions. (See below.)

For an Argument piece:

- What is the central claim of your argument?
- What evidence will you use to support your argument?
- How will you explain the connection between your evidence and your claim?
- What arguments might your naysayers use?
- Is there any validity in your naysayer’s claim? How might you acknowledge this validity while still refuting their claim?

For an Informative or Explanatory Piece:

- What is the central idea, concept, event, or process that you’re trying to explain?
- What details might you include to help illustrate your idea, concept, event or process?
- What details might you leave out to help keep your piece focused and on-point?

For a Narrative:

- What are the key events or scenes of your narrative?
• How can you tie the scenes together?
• What event will your narrative build toward? What is its climax?
• How and when will you describe your characters? How and when will you describe your setting?

Revise:

Revise literally means to re-see. It’s about making thorough, big-picture changes, as well as the small – but important – ones. College and career-ready writers do not do “one and done” kinds of writing. They know that to be coherent, writing has to be reread and rewritten more than once.

Ask these questions about revising:

For an Argument piece:

• Is your claim clear? Is it fully supported with evidence?
• Do you accurately summarize your opponent’s arguments?
• Do you convincingly refute the arguments of your opponents?

For an Informative or Explanatory piece:

• How could you structure your piece to make it clearer to your reader?
• Are there any paragraphs the do not help to explain your concept? What information could you replace them with to increase your reader’s understanding of the topic?

For a Narrative:

• Does your story drag in places?
• Does your dialogue seem natural and genuine? Or does it stilted?
• Do your descriptions blend well with the writing? Or are they clunky and sound artificial?

Edit:

It’s difficult to make students see the need to edit. Even surface editing is tough to do despite the digital help she may have in the form of spell and grammar checkers built
into most text creation software. It takes concentration, motivation and self-reflection to edit one’s own words. *(And self-confidence – who knows if she can create superb writing again?)*

Writing for a classroom grade can seem inauthentic to students. Sometimes, however, if the student can see their peers as an audience, she may decide to make her writing better by editing. Story sharing, small group readings, and other ways to collaborate with peers may prompt her to want to edit and revise.

A student needs to be convinced that she is on a mission to become a better editor and reviser – each and every time she writes. And in that journey becomes a better communicator.

**Rewrite; or try a new approach:**

Check the Introduction and Conclusion of the piece. Often, these two parts of the writing process are echoes of each other…but not identical. They need to be written with a light touch. And often they are rewritten to reflect what the student has “discovered” during the writing process. Sometimes a writer doesn’t know what she’s writing about until, well, she writes about it.

Watch for clunkiness. That is, writing that becomes mired in wordiness, awkwardness and repetition. Students reading aloud in small groups can sometimes detect this defect and allow improvement.

These things taken together will sometimes make necessary a completely new approach or viewpoint to get the writing to be excellent.

(It might be good for the teacher to show student how she corrects/edits/changes class documents. A good way to do this is to turn on the Review or Track Changes concurrently as the writing and editing process takes place. Tracking Seeing changes can make the process transparent and open to student learning.)

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**W.CCR.6:** The 6th College and Career Readiness anchor standard within the Writing strand of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for ELA / Literacy reads as follows:
Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Within the Common Core standards, there are very few that mandate the use of technology. This is one of them. It leverages technology to produce and publish student writing.

Because much of college writing is used on web-based discussion boards and digital collaboration, students need experience writing in these situations to develop an easily understood style.

But this standard also mentions that the writing needs to be published. There are many ways to do so: blogs, social media, websites, and other online platforms. Collaboration is another piece of this standard. Email is a simple form of collaboration. Google Docs is another. Twitter and Facebook can be used to facilitate peer-to-peer communication.

In the end, good writing is good writing. It doesn’t matter if it’s online, produced by Microsoft Word, or written by pen.

The Common Core writing standards cherish clear writing. It is a difficult set of skills that needs time, help, and constructive criticism, no matter the venue.