The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have validated what you as a librarian have known for a long time: in order to be successful in college and beyond, students must be able to gather and synthesize information from a variety of sources and share the information, as well as their opinions about it, with others. In short, students have to be able to research and present their findings.

The architects of the Standards had a vision of what students should know and be able to do in order to be prepared for college or the workforce. They knew that research and media skills are embedded in every aspect of a worker’s life. Therefore, these skills are not listed in a separate section of the Standards, but rather woven throughout. The architects envisioned a workforce that could “gather, comprehend, evaluate, synthesize, and report on information and ideas; conduct original research in order to answer questions or solve problems; and analyze and create a high volume and extensive range of print and nonprint texts in media forms old and new.” (www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/introduction/key-design-consideration)

Research and media skills are featured prominently in the CCSS. They are found throughout the strands of Reading, Writing, Language, and Listening & Speaking. The Standards describe two types of research: long-term research, which is most commonly found in schools, and short-term projects. According to the Standards, “Research—both short, focused projects (such as those commonly required in the workplace) and longer term in depth research—is emphasized throughout the standards but most prominently in the writing strand since a written analysis and presentation of findings is so often critical.”

Historically, schools have concentrated on longer term, in-depth research—the infamous research report: five paragraphs (or more) on Mexico or kookaburras or some other subject. Studying a topic in depth requires students to think critically about it and sift through a great deal of information to synthesize the right details to support a thesis or opinion in their reports. Research projects, however, do not really mirror real-world research experiences. In our adult lives, most of us do “mini-research”—quick investigations focused on precise topics that take a few minutes to a day or two, from start to finish. For example, last week my refrigerator died. I spent a few hours online researching different brands on consumer websites, looking at features and reliability and comparing prices. Research done, I set off to “present my information” to the salesperson to purchase my new appliance. Similarly, in the workplace, we often are called upon to research a topic and share our findings quickly with the boss or our team. The Common Core and AASL standards recognize that we need to prepare our students for these brief research opportunities as well as for longer, more developed projects. This means many more opportunities for students to ask...
Strengthen Your Core

Diwali is the Hindu “Festival of Lights,” which celebrates the victory of the forces of light over darkness. It occurs in late October or early November and lasts five days. Diwali is an official holiday in India and is also celebrated by people around the world. Families decorate their houses with colorful garlands of jasmine flowers. Colorful chalk designs on floors welcome visitors to homes. People dress in their finest new clothes to go to Temple and visit family and friends. There is a lot of celebrating—wonderful food and even presents for children. Many cities and towns also show spectacular fireworks. Diwali is certainly a special time for Hindi people around the globe.

Paraphrase, Please!

The Internet explosion has made it so much easier for students to copy and paste than to read, ponder, and then retool the information in their own language. This has led to a plagiarism boom. It’s not that students are natural cheaters; often they don’t know what else to do—how to rephrase or quote a source—so they end up simply copying. Therefore, the skills of paraphrasing and citing sources are emphasized throughout the Standards.

As teachers, we know that paraphrasing is one of the most difficult skills for students to master. Learning this skill is important not only because it teaches students how to borrow information from a source, but also because it helps them link the information to their own understandings and firm up their memories.

Library Lens: Paraphrasing Lesson

Before beginning this lesson, you may wish to introduce plagiarism and paraphrasing through Brainpop® video clips. Also, remind students to use quotes if they use exact language, including specific data.

1. Display an original text on the document camera.
2. Read the text to the students. Have them help you highlight or underline key ideas presented by the author. (Shown below in red.)
3. In a different color, highlight or underline distinctive phrases or specific data that the author included that are unique to this piece of writing. (Shown below in blue.)
4. Discuss synonyms for some of the key words and phrases.
5. Have students work in small groups to paraphrase the original text.
6. Compare students’ paraphrased versions to the original.

Sample Text for Paraphrasing Lesson

Diwali is the Hindu “Festival of Lights,” which celebrates the victory of the forces of light over darkness. It occurs in late October or early November and lasts five days. Diwali is an official holiday in India and is also celebrated by people around the world. Families decorate their houses with colorful garlands of jasmine flowers. Colorful chalk designs on floors welcome visitors to homes. People dress in their finest new clothes to go to Temple and visit family and friends. There is a lot of celebrating—wonderful food and even presents for children. Many cities and towns also show spectacular fireworks. Diwali is certainly a special time for Hindi people around the globe.

Note-taking Tools

Try these websites to help your students gather notes for their research:

Notetaker from ReadWriteThink: An outlining tool to help students take and organize notes while reading or writing (www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/readwritethink-notetaker-30055.html).

Cornell Notes: A two-column notetaking format that helps students determine key ideas in their notes. The site allows students to create personalized note-taking sheets (www.cornell-notes.com/).
Strengthen Your Core

A Common Core-Friendly Research Plan

Whether you are assigning a short-term research project or something longer, these steps can help guide your students through their research. For a short-term project, these steps are often combined or abbreviated.

Here is a simple plan for a research/inquiry project in elementary grades.

1. PLAN
   a. Identify the problem or question.
   b. List information needed—what questions will the audience have?
   c. Find possible sources for needed information.

2. GATHER
   a. Conduct research.
   b. Cite sources.
   c. Paraphrase and quote.
   d. Sort and organize.

3. SYNTHESIZE
   a. Combine information from a variety of sources.
   b. Determine product (essay, slideshow, etc.).
   c. Add text features (headings, subheadings, photos, etc.).

4. SHARE
   a. Create product.
   b. Share/present it.
   c. Self-assess your work.

Beyond Research Reports

Instead of a traditional research report, try a fun way to present information that students will remember. Barry Lane wrote a delightful book about weird, wonderful ways for students to share what they have learned, *51 Wacky We-Search Reports: Face the Facts with Fun* (2003). Trading cards, cartoons, or other creative products will keep students engaged and help them express what they learned. The key is for students to not only share the information but express themselves in a unique way as well. By making the presentation fun, you make it more likely that students will retain the material.

Here are other engaging and unique ways for your students to present their information:

- Podcast or webcast: Make a recorded video or audio presentation.
- Prezi: Use this online tool to create multimedia presentations.
- Talk show: Students take the roles of host and guest; the host poses questions about the topic for the guest to answer.
Sample Lesson Plans

Diwali is the Festival of Lights
That lasts for five fantastic nights.

Colorful chalk designs on floor
And jasmine garlands around the door.

People dressing fancily
Go to the temple with family.

To celebrate victory of light over dark
Fireworks burst in cities and parks.

Happy Diwali to you!

Library Lens: Winter Holiday Research Lesson Plan

Short-Term, Focused Research Project

Winter holidays are a perfect opportunity for a short, focused research project. National Geographic on YouTube has a wealth of short videos about different holidays, and there are excellent children’s books on the subject available as well. Try this project to keep your students engaged and learning right through winter break.

1. Read aloud a book or a portion of a book about one winter holiday, such as Lights of Winter: Winter Celebrations Around the World, by Heather Conrad.

2. Model completing the Holiday Matrix graphic organizer, available at www.librarysparks.com. Don’t neglect modeling in a short-term project; students need to see concrete examples of all kinds of research.

3. Have students work cooperatively in groups to research different winter holidays, either in a book or online.

4. Allow groups to share what they learned with the class.

5. Have students create greeting cards as a fun way to present their information. Use the rubric provided above to assess their projects.

Winter Holiday Research Greeting Card Rubric—6 Points

My card includes:

 The name of my holiday
 Colorful images that represent the holiday
 Creative poem, saying, or paragraph
 Three or more specific facts about the holiday
 My original writing
 Correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation

Sample Lesson Plans

Have a Darling Diwali!
Strengthen Your Core

Library Lens: Extended Winter Holiday Research Lesson Plan

Extended Research to Present Knowledge

Winter holidays also make a great extended project in which you collaborate with classroom teachers. By looking at multiple holidays and allowing students to make choices, students can create a multidisciplinary project that meets Common Core and AASL standards.

1. Introduce the topic: winter holidays. Have students tell you things they know about various winter holidays and list them.
3. Assign students to small groups or pairs to research one or more holidays and have students complete one or more columns of the graphic organizer.
4. Have teams determine what type of project they will create.
5. Allow time for teams to create their projects.
6. Encourage teams to share their projects with the class.

Web Resources for Winter Holidays

Diwali: www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrrW3rO51ak
Hanukkah: http://people.howstuffworks.com/culture-traditions/holidays/hanukkah1.htm
Kwanzaa: www.history.com/videos/history-of-kwanzaa#history-of-kwanzaa
Saint Lucia’s Day: www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/517701/St-Lucias-Day
Winter Solstice: http://chineseculture.about.com/library/weekly/aa122200a.htm

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Resources

Brainpop: Paraphrasing www.brainpop.com/english/writing/paraphrasing/preview.weml
Common Core State Standards www.corestandards.org/resources/key-points-in-english-language-arts
CCSS for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy
Purdue Online Writing Lab http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/01/
National Geographic on YouTube www.youtube.com/user/NationalGeographic
Prezi http://prezi.com/