Meeting Common Core State Standards with Visual Learning
The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers have created a unified set of clear and consistent research-based standards outlining the knowledge and skills students need for success – the Common Core State Standards. The standards currently set requirements for English Language Arts and Mathematics. The standards for History & Social Studies and Science are currently under development.

Let’s take a closer look at the standards.
The English Language Arts standards are divided into the strands of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language as they apply to English Language Arts curriculum.
Also, within the English Language Arts standards, there are requirements outlined for literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects. The idea is that students must learn to read, write, speak and use language effectively in a variety of content areas to develop their college and career readiness. These literacy requirements are intended to complement the upcoming content standards for these subjects, not to be used instead of them.
For each of the strands, there is a robust set of detailed requirements outlined. Here we can see the overarching expectations the standards set for students.
And there is a unified set of requirements for Mathematics as well, defining what students should understand and be able to do to be mathematically proficient.
As you review this diagram summarizing the key requirements of both the English Language Arts and Mathematics standards, would you agree that if your students had or could develop these abilities, they would be able to learn and master many, if not all, of your content standards? The question then becomes how?
How can we help students achieve academic success? And how can we ensure that our students are truly college and career ready?

To help answer these questions, let’s take a look at how visual thinking and learning strategies are among the best methods for teaching students of all ages how to think critically and how to learn.
With visual thinking, learning and outlining tools, students can create concept maps, webs, mind maps, graphic organizers and outlines that help students:

• Make abstract ideas visible and concrete
• Make connections and see relationships between ideas
• Organize thoughts, analyze and clarify information
• Connect prior knowledge and new concepts to build understanding
• Develop clear writing through the planning and drafting to editing, revising and publishing stages
• Communicate, share and present knowledge effectively

These skills provide a solid thinking and learning foundation for student to develop the skills emphasized in the new standards.

Let’s zoom in for a closer look at one example…
Can you see how all of the highlighted elements in the standards are addressed in this concept map?

The topic is clearly introduced, ideas and the concept are organized with facts, definitions and concrete details. Graphics are being used and transitions and relationships are being demonstrated clearly...helping students better understand the content being studied.
The overlap between the standards and the concept map make sense as the roots of visual learning are deeply anchored in Learning Theory and Practice:

**Dual Coding Theory:** Learning improves dramatically when verbal and visual information are combined.

**Cognitive Load Theory:** Our working memories are limited; visual learning significantly reduces demand on our working memories.

**Schema Theory:** Our prior knowledge is interconnected in our brains; visual learning can help us fully tap that knowledge to solve problems and learn new information.
Additionally a wide body of scientifically-based research provides empirical evidence that visual learning improves classroom instruction and facilitates student learning leading to higher student achievement, particularly reading comprehension, retention & recall of information and critical thinking skills.
Let’s take a closer look now, at the reading strand and how visual thinking and learning helps students develop their reading skills.
Students can apply visual learning to literature and informational texts from all subject areas. By pairing images and words and connecting ideas, students can organize information in a meaningful way to better discern meaning and understand text.
Graphic organizers can be used in various ways to support students at all learning levels.

For example, a younger student can be prompted by their teacher as to what they should be thinking about when reading a story.
The student can then focus on adding details and citing examples to draw conclusions about what they’ve read. By doing this, students learn a method on how to analyze literature and informational text.
Which they can then apply to more complex readings as they progress through their grade levels, including those found in other subject areas, like we see in this science example.
For writing, let’s look at the writing process students go through using visual thinking and learning tools to meet this requirement.
Students can use visual thinking and outlining tools in each stage of the writing process – those being planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing.

For example, a student writing a report on Christopher Columbus, can start the planning process by brainstorming ideas about what they already know, which helps them determine what else they need to know and figure out what they need to research.
As students gather relevant information, they expand their knowledge. By visually mapping out the information, they convey that knowledge clearly.

Visually mapping out information also helps students clarify and structure their thoughts as they progress through the drafting phase of the writing process…and it helps teachers see how a student understands or misunderstands information, which allows them to provide feedback and guide students’ learning more effectively.
Although the reading and writing strands are outlined separately, they are meant to be integrated in practice. A key writing standard requires that students be able to write about what they read.

Inspiration Software supports this seamlessly with the integrated Outline and Writing Views. Students can create a visual summary of their reading and with one click transform their diagram into a structured outline for their writing. Students can easily organize their ideas in the outline to convey their ideas clearly and they can add notes to offer more relevant information about their topics and support their analysis, reflection and research.
Also, by mapping ideas visually, students are able to analyze and synthesize information, discuss and debate, and communicate their understanding effectively. In short, they are encouraged to think critically.
Inspiration® Software products; Kidspiration®, Inspiration® and Webspiration Classroom™ all make visual learning easier and more versatile because of their sound instructional technology design based on over 25 years of experience and their focus on K-12 education.
Overall, Kidspiration, Inspiration and the new Webspiration Classroom help students learn to think and learn to learn....
We hope you will take away three key points from this presentation:

1. Visual thinking and learning techniques are based on sound educational principles and practices that can improve instruction and facilitate learning.
2. These techniques will help meet the Common Core State Standards; and, finally,
3. Inspiration Software programs make visual learning easier and more versatile because of their sound instructional technology design based on over 25 years of experience.
If you are interested in learning more about anything you have seen here today, please contact us to schedule time for a personalized webinar.