FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

International Reading Association Issues Guidelines For Implementing the ELA Common Core Standards

October 9, 2012, Newark, DE—The International Reading Association (IRA) today announces the release of a set of Reading Guidelines for the successful implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

“Reading instruction remains at the core of any successful education reform,” IRA president Carrice Cummins explained. “The Standards set a foundation for focusing curriculum and instruction, and IRA’s Reading Guidelines will serve as a lens to link them together and empower teachers to focus on what is needed to make a difference for their students.”

Brenda Overturf, co-chair of the committee that drafted the guidelines said, “The statement we are now releasing helps to clarify a number of literacy issues that have caused confusion or challenges in implementation of the ELA standards.”

Timothy Shanahan, the other co-chair, agreed, observing that the Common Core is asking teachers to teach in different ways than in the past. “Frankly, many educators are confused by the changes,” he noted, “and IRA’s guidance should help teachers and principals to better understand what the new standards really do require.”

Copies of the IRA guidelines can be downloaded at www.reading.org/ccssguidelines.

Support for Thoughtful Implementation

The IRA guidelines address the need for a link between reading instruction and the Standards. They provide teachers and educational leaders with recommendations on how to integrate many of the central ideas of the standards into effective practice. They represent a consensus of the thinking of literacy leaders in the field who support thoughtful implementation of the standards for student literacy achievement.

The guidelines capture the most pressing issues in clear language, point out their significance for those responsible for implementation, and then offer clear guidance on accomplishing the task at hand. Seven specific issues are addressed, including: challenging texts; foundational skills; comprehension; vocabulary; writing; disciplinary literacy; and diverse learners.

Text Complexity and Other Concerns

With respect to challenge of increasing text complexity, the guidelines note that the Standards only call for assigned text levels to be raised for grades 2 through 12. Since cracking the alphabetic code is a primary reading goal for beginning readers, the guidelines recommend that the levels of text used in reading lessons in kindergarten and grade 1 not be increased.

Likewise, while acknowledging that the CCSS specify the levels of text that students must read effectively by the end of school years, the guidelines note that this imperative does not mean that all assigned texts should be at those levels. To get
students to the desired goal, teachers will need to establish “an ambitious itinerary of rich and varied narrative and informational texts, including some texts that are easier than the Standards specify.”

Implementers of the ELA components of the CCSS will also find helpful ideas and suggestions in the IRA guidelines on such matters as how foundational skills should be approached, why comprehension strategies will still be critically important, what’s confusing about the CCSS treatment of vocabulary, why access to digital and online writing tools will be needed for students to meet the CCSS writing goals, and what it will take for content area teachers to achieve the CCSS disciplinary literacy goals.

**Diverse Learners**

Lauding the aspiration of college and career readiness for all which the Standards embody, the IRA committee members recognized nevertheless that “there will be great differences among children and in what it will take to get them to achieve these goals.” Noting that equal outcomes do not require equal inputs, the statement recommends that teachers vary the amounts and types of instruction provided to students to ensure high rates of success.

Cummins concluded, “As reading instruction is the cornerstone for learning, these guidelines will bring this instruction to the center of the Standards movement. We look forward to helping teachers to effectively use the standards to help bring reading instruction to all grade levels where it is needed.”

**Make Up of the IRA CCSS Committee**

The members of the IRA CCSS committee that drafted the implementation guidance statement were: Brenda Overturf, Literacy Perspectives, LLC, Co-Chair; Timothy Shanahan, University of Illinois, Chicago, Co-Chair; Les Burns, University of Kentucky; Lori DiGisi, Senior Literacy Associate at Public Consulting Group; Elfreida Hiebert, Text Project, Inc.; Sarah Fleming Mahurt, Virgin Island Department of Education; Lesley Morrow, Rutgers University; Dorothy Strickland, Rutgers University; Carrice Cummins, President of IRA, Louisiana Tech University; Maureen McLaughlin, President-Elect of IRA, East Stroudsburg University of PA; William Teale, IRA Board Member Liaison, University of Illinois, Chicago; and Rich Long, IRA Government Relations Director, Ex Officio.

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**About the International Reading Association**

The International Reading Association is the world’s foremost expert on literacy. A non-profit global network dedicated to advancing the quality of literacy instruction and research worldwide, the International Reading Association supports reading teachers and other literacy professionals by providing professional development resources, advocating for policy and practices that benefit all teachers and students, and conducting research that promotes informed decision-making about literacy practice in the classroom. Additional information is available at [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org).

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