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# **Core Implementation Practices**

A Guide to Effective Implementation of Core Knowledge



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## Summary

*Core Implementation Practices: A Guide to Effective Implementation of Core Knowledge* is part of a suite of tools that is essential for schools wishing to implement Core Knowledge with a high degree of fidelity. These tools are designed to guide planning, implementation, development, and evaluation of Core Knowledge programs.

- What it means to be a Core Knowledge school is articulated in **section II, *Core Implementation Practices***.
- An outline of the various levels of commitment to Core Knowledge appears in **section III, *Becoming a Core Knowledge School***
- The process of how schools achieve and maintain Core Knowledge School of Distinction designation is outlined in section **V, *The Application Process***.
- The measures used to evaluate a school's Core Knowledge implementation are described in **section VI, *Core Knowledge Implementation and Observation Tools***.
- Templates for creating curriculum plans, domain maps, unit and lesson plans, are available on our website (<http://www.coreknowledge.org/curriculum-planning-tools>).



## I. Introduction

The idea behind Core Knowledge is simple and powerful: knowledge builds on knowledge. It's not merely nice for kids to "know stuff," it's essential. A broad base of knowledge directly contributes to language growth and your ability to learn even more. This insight, well-established by cognitive science, has profound implications for teaching and learning. Nearly all of our most important goals for education—greater reading comprehension, the ability to think critically and solve problems, even higher test scores—are a function of the depth and breadth of our knowledge.

By outlining the precise content that every child should learn in language arts and literature, history and geography, mathematics, science, music, and the visual arts, the *Core Knowledge Sequence* represents a first-of-its kind effort to identify the content and skills that comprise the foundational knowledge every child needs to reach these goals—and to teach them, grade-by-grade, year-by-year, in a coherent, age-appropriate sequence.

The Core Knowledge Foundation is dedicated to the mission expressed in our motto—*educational excellence and equity for all children*. We believe that every person in a diverse democratic society deserves equal access to the common knowledge base that draws together its people, while recognizing our differing traditions and contributions. We believe that offering universal access to this shared knowledge is a primary duty of schooling, critical to literacy, and to the closing of the achievement gap between ethnic and racial groups. Most important of all, we believe that shared knowledge and shared ideals of liberty and tolerance are indispensable ingredients for effective citizenship and for the perpetuation of our democratic institutions.

### ***Effective Implementation of Core Knowledge***

Successful implementation begins with interested schools understanding and embracing the ideas and insights behind the *Core Knowledge Sequence*:

*For the sake of excellence, greater equity, and higher literacy, schools need to teach a coherent, cumulative, and content-specific core curriculum. This curriculum, informed by the firmly established connection between language, background knowledge, and reading comprehension, makes productive use of the language arts block to immerse students in each subject matter context (scientists call it a "domain") long enough for them to become familiar with its concepts and vocabulary.*

Effective implementation of Core Knowledge is also guided by a set of practices, detailed in subsequent sections of this document, and outlined below:

- Effective implementation of Core Knowledge is guided by the Core Knowledge curriculum and philosophy.
- Effective implementation of Core Knowledge requires planning and communication.
- Effective implementation of Core Knowledge is an ongoing process.
- Effective implementation of Core Knowledge depends on effective teaching.
- Effective implementation of Core Knowledge must be coupled with strong leadership.
- Effective implementation of Core Knowledge is strengthened by community involvement.
- Effective implementation of Core Knowledge requires resources and support.

## ***Collaboration versus Compliance***

We strongly believe that the role of the Core Knowledge Foundation is not to evaluate individual teachers or school administrators. Our goal is to work collaboratively with schools to continuously improve and refine the quality and fidelity of their Core Knowledge implementation, within the context of their unique environments and challenges. Thus, the *Core Implementation Practices* do not represent a “compliance checklist.” Rather, they are presented to demonstrate ideals toward which each school should continuously strive.

## II. Core Implementation Practices

### *The Core Knowledge Curriculum and Approach*

The Core Knowledge philosophy is informed by the **undeniable connection between language, background knowledge, and reading comprehension**. This connection, well-established by cognitive science, is described in detail in many works of the Core Knowledge Foundation, including *The Knowledge Deficit* by E. D. Hirsch, Jr., Appendix A of the *Core Knowledge Sequence*, and the *Core Knowledge Overview* presentation.

In summary, the connections are evidenced by the following research-based understandings:

- **A rich base of background knowledge is required for reading comprehension** (Dochy, Segers, & Buehl, 1999; Hirsch, 2006; O'Reilly & McNamara, 2007).
- **Oral language precedes written language development** and instruction should be informed by the milestones associated with both the development of oral language (listening and speaking) and the development of written language (reading and writing).
- **Most vocabulary is acquired implicitly**, in the early grades through hearing words spoken in context and later through reading words in context (Stanovich, 1993).
- Oral speech tends to use a smaller, less rich vocabulary than written speech, i.e., texts (Ahyes & Ahrens, 1988; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Stanovich, 1993).
- **Listening comprehension outpaces reading comprehension** until middle school age (Sticht, 1974).
- **Vocabulary acquisition is an inherently slow and gradual process**, but the process can be facilitated by frequent exposure to related words within the context of a related topic, or domain, of study (Miller, 1999).
- **Knowledge builds on knowledge**. A rich base of factual knowledge facilitates additional learning and enhances cognitive processes like problem solving and reasoning (Willingham, 2006).

These understandings inform instruction in Core Knowledge classrooms as articulated by the curriculum implementation practices on the following page.

## 1. Curriculum Implementation Practices

- 1.1 The school implements a content-specific, coherent, cumulative curriculum in accordance with the *Core Knowledge Sequence*.
- 1.2 The school implements 100% of the Core Knowledge content and skills outlined for each grade level in the *Core Knowledge Sequence*.
- 1.3 The school implements Core Knowledge in each grade level (P–8) served by the school.
- 1.4 Teachers present Core Knowledge topics within the context of coherent domain-based units.
- 1.5 Teachers impart broad, rich content knowledge through a system of coherent domain-based units that frequently employ read-alouds and related discussion to promote listening comprehension and language skills.
- 1.6 Teachers immerse students in each domain-based unit long enough for them to become familiar with its key concepts and vocabulary (usually 2 weeks or more).
- 1.7 There is a clear and intentional focus on developing language skills, including but not limited to vocabulary.
- 1.8 Instructional units are designed with context and cross-curricular connections in mind.
- 1.9 Core Knowledge serves as a “mast” to which other curricular initiatives linked.

### What Curriculum Implementation Practices Look Like in Action

A school is successful in demonstrating these practices when Core Knowledge serves as the foundation of all curricular activities. Successful schools work to integrate all of their instructional initiatives with Core Knowledge because they recognize that too many and/or disparate curricular initiatives dilute focus and effects.

Successful schools implement the *Core Knowledge Sequence* at each grade served by the school. Successful schools focus selectively and coherently on the knowledge that is going to be the most productive for gaining proficiency in language—the content and skills outlined in the *Core Knowledge Sequence*. There is a demonstrated understanding of the progression of language development, particularly with regard to the foundation provided by listening and speaking for later reading and writing. Successful schools use frequent, content-rich read-alouds to leverage students’ listening comprehension in the early grades as a means of imparting the broad rich content knowledge that drives vocabulary growth and language skills while facilitating reading comprehension. Successful schools make sure that students stay immersed in each domain long enough for them to become familiar with its concepts and vocabulary.

Successful Core Knowledge schools recognize that both content and skills are essential; teachers in these schools embed the teaching of critical skills within the content they share with their students. The skill objectives are most effectively targeted when they are anchored to content in the context of a domain of knowledge.

## Coherent Domains are the Key to Successful Implementation

The differences between a successful Core Knowledge implementation and one that is emerging or developing can be subtle. A school, for example, may address Core Knowledge content but not in domain-based units, or with insufficient attention to cross-curricular connections. The duration of instructional units may not last long enough to foster student familiarity with the content, concepts, and vocabulary of the domain or planning may be insufficient to maximize language development during instruction.

The key to understand the difference between optimal and less-than-optimal implementation is in understanding both what a domain is and isn't and the concept of coherence.

### What is a Domain?

A domain is an area of study that has a related set of language and vocabulary. Domains, like traditional units of study, are comprised of related topics. However, domains differ from *themes* or *concepts* in a few important ways.

First, domain sub-topics are related to one another and build coherently. Second, domain knowledge often builds within and across grade-levels. Third, the vocabulary of domain sub-topics is also related and builds coherently. Finally, overarching conceptual knowledge is built within the context of the domain content. It is precisely this building of content and repetition of vocabulary that provides the benefits of domain-based instruction. Consider the following examples:

Domain: <i>Human Body</i>	Theme: <i>Community Helpers</i>	Concept: <i>Energy Transformation</i>
<p>Students study the human body <b>across multiple grades</b>. Students first learn parts of the body, then about the body systems, then use that prior knowledge to develop an understanding of germs, diseases, and illness prevention. They use their knowledge of body systems, germs, and diseases to understand Edward Jenner's role with the small pox vaccine.</p> <p><b>Both the content of the topics and the related vocabulary build coherently.</b> Understanding of what an <i>immune system</i> and an <i>antibody</i> are support understanding of what a <i>vaccination</i> is. These understandings enable students to grasp the significance of Edward Jenner's work.</p> <p><b>Domains also provide a vehicle for addressing a variety of concepts in context</b> (e.g. concepts demonstrated through study of the human body include change, interdependence, cycles, and systems).</p>	<p>Students learn about a variety of helpers in the community. These helpers, although all part of the community, are not related to one another. The librarian and the police officer are not related. <b>There is little repetition of the vocabulary associated with each sub-topic. What students learn about one sub-topic (librarians) doesn't support their understanding of another sub-topic (police officers).</b></p> <p>Finally, <b>themes are not likely to be repeated across the grades to enhance and extend understanding.</b></p>	<p>Students learn about energy transformation in the context of a variety of situations including photosynthesis, digestion, and fuel combustion. <b>There is little repetition of the vocabulary associated with each sub-topic.</b> Content is addressed to provide an example of the concept. Although each sub-topic demonstrates the concept of energy transformation, <b>there is little relationship between subtopics allowing students to build their knowledge of plants, humans, and engines throughout the unit.</b></p>

Domain-based instruction provides for acquisition of content and repetition of vocabulary that are essential to reading comprehension.

*Research repeatedly shows prior domain knowledge to be a far stronger predictor of students' ability to comprehend or to learn from advanced texts. Of course, students' comprehension and learning is also influenced by their reading skills (such as decoding and fluency). But even the advantage of strong reading skills turns out to be greatest for students with strong domain knowledge.*

-Marilyn Jager Adams, *Advancing Our Students' Language and Literacy, The Challenge of Complex Texts*

### **What is Coherence?**

A coherent Core Knowledge implementation provides for a logical, orderly, and aesthetically consistent relationship of its parts, moving from one idea to the next, one unit to the next, in a logical fashion. Coherent planning and implementation typically include several of the following elements:

- A key consideration for coherence is whether students have the **pre-requisite knowledge and vocabulary** to understand a domain.
- When possible, addressing content, particularly history, in **chronological order** supports coherence. For instance, before students can discuss the importance of the Constitution, they should understand the events that led to its creation.
- Effective units or a sequence of units typically build upon content and concepts containing **prior knowledge** students have previously learned, helping them build on what they already know.
- **Moving from specific instances to general concepts** or vice versa supports coherence. For example, units move from micro to macro when studying the earth first, then the solar system. When studying the human body, units might progress from macro to micros, from body to cells.
- Planning for coherence also means integrating content to support understanding and retention. These **meaningful connections** also maximize instructional time. For example, by integrating geography with the events that occur in an area; integrating *Science Biographies* with the science concepts; and integrating *Sayings and Phrases* where they have a context or relevance in literature or non-fiction text, we are supporting learning and saving time.

### **Why Read-alouds Matter**

Domain-based read-alouds provide an ideal vehicle for teaching content knowledge and fostering language skills.

- A student's ability to read and absorb information from print doesn't catch up to their listening comprehension ability until, on average, the late middle school years. Read-alouds leverage listening comprehension to expose children to both language and content.
- Written text, read aloud, exposes students to more rich and complex vocabulary and syntax than the more casual language of conversations, lectures, and class discussions.

- A coherently sequenced set of read-alouds about a particular domain of study provides repeated opportunities for exposure to domain-specific vocabulary and a wider variety of syntax and sentence structures.
- Using a domain-based unit format, content knowledge can be taught while simultaneously building listening comprehension and language skills.

The use of domain-based read-alouds is particularly helpful for imparting content knowledge in the early grades. However, because listening comprehension exceeds reading comprehension through the middle school years, read-alouds are an appropriate vehicle for lessons in all Core Knowledge grade levels. As students progress through the grades, the frequency of read-aloud based lessons decreases, but doesn't disappear completely.

## **Learn More**

The ideas and insights underlying Core Knowledge are simple; however they have far-reaching consequences for how educators plan and execute teaching to support student learning. Developing a thoughtful and coherent implementation to maximize the benefits of Core Knowledge requires commitment and rigor on the part of an entire school community. The Core Knowledge Foundation assists schools in this process in a variety of ways.

### ***Professional Development***

*Core Knowledge Overview*

*Getting Started with the Preschool Sequence*

*Getting Started with the K8 Sequence*

*Core Knowledge and the Reading Crisis: Overview of Support for CKLA*

*Domain-based Unit Writing*

### ***Reading***

*Advancing Our Students' Language and Literacy, the Challenge of Complex Texts* by Marilyn Jager Adams (*American Educator*, Winter 2010)

*Appendix A of the Core Knowledge Sequence: Why Listening and Learning Are Critical to Reading Comprehension*

*Beyond Comprehension: We Have Yet to Adopt a Common Core Curriculum That Builds Knowledge Grade by Grade—But We Need To* by E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (*American Educator*, Winter 2010)

*The Case for Bringing Content into the Language Arts Block and for a Knowledge-Rich Curriculum Core for all Children* by E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (*American Educator*, Spring 2006)

*The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3* by Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley (*American Educator*, Spring 2003)

*Envisioning a Common Core Curriculum* (*American Educator*, Winter 2010)

*How Knowledge Helps: It Speeds and Strengthens Reading Comprehension, Learning—and Thinking* by Daniel T. Willingham (*American Educator*, Spring 2006)

*The Knowledge Deficit: Closing the Shocking Education Gap for American Children* by E. D. Hirsch, Jr.

*The Making of Americans: Democracy and Our Schools* by E. D. Hirsch, Jr.

*Reading Comprehension Requires Knowledge – of Words and the World* by E. D. Hirsch, Jr.  
(*American Educator*, Spring 2003)

**Other**

<http://www.coreknowledge.org/philosophy>

See <http://www.coreknowledge.org/visit-a-core-knowledge-school> to find a Core Knowledge School of Distinction near you.

## ***Planning and Communication***

Successful implementation of Core Knowledge doesn't just happen. It is the product of careful planning and open communication. Crucial to a successful implementation is a well-coordinated set of documents that include the curriculum plan, domain maps, and instructional plans for domain-based units including individual lesson plans. These documents are frequently consulted and guide teaching and learning on a daily basis.

A year-long **curriculum plan** is designed to provide an overview of the school's use of domain topics across the year. The plan, arranged by month or grading period, documents Core Knowledge topics taught at each grade level. The curriculum plan is important because it

- provides a tool for verifying the Core Knowledge content that is addressed;
- guides the coherent sequencing of domains to ensure that knowledge is building on knowledge;
- encourages consistency and communication among the school community;
- creates a basis for communication between the school, parents and the community.

For each domain on the curriculum plan, a more detailed **domain map** serves as the basis for design of lessons and units by defining what will be taught in each domain. For each domain, the map includes content and skill guidelines from the *Core Knowledge Sequence*, associated state practices, cross-curricular connections, and other vital instructional information. This is a starting point for daily lessons. The domain maps are important because they:

- guide decisions regarding the depth of coverage for each domain;
- define learning and assessment goals for instruction and grade-level lesson planning;
- document cross-curricular connections and Core Knowledge titles (poetry, books, works of art and music, etc.) for each domain;
- explicitly define vocabulary associated with each domain;
- familiarize new teachers with Core Knowledge content.

**Domain-based units** are designed to maximize the connections between language, background knowledge, and reading comprehension by defining interactive units of study on a foundation of content-rich read-alouds in the earliest grades, increasing amounts of independent student reading over time, and related classroom discussion. Domain-based unit and lesson plans are important because they:

- detail comprehensive units that address the objectives of a particular domain of study;
- enable teachers to design lessons that build knowledge and foster language skills;
- include at least eight lessons so students focus on one topic long enough to build knowledge and acquire domain vocabulary.

Schools can increase the effectiveness of staff and instruction by conducting the curriculum planning supported by these tools in the context of collaborative planning, in which the teachers and administrators seek opportunities for continuous improvement, to share learning, and for collaboration on solutions. When constructed collaboratively by all teachers at a grade-level, domain-based units take advantage of many minds to craft the best possible products

and provide for **common objectives, assessments, and criteria that ensure an equitable and equally rigorous experience in every classroom at the grade-level.**

Regularly scheduled collaborative planning time within and across grade levels supports successful and effective creation of these planning documents (see “2. Resources and Support Practices”).

<b>2. Planning and Communication Practices</b>	
2.1	The school has developed a year-long curriculum plan, documenting monthly domain topics for each grade level, aligned with the <i>Core Knowledge Sequence</i> .
2.2	The school has developed domain maps that document specific content addressed for each domain.
2.3	Written unit overviews and lesson plans translate domain map content into measurable objectives.
2.4	The curriculum plan, maps, and units demonstrate how student learning builds coherently and cumulatively.
2.5	Teachers use the curriculum plan and maps to guide their planning of classroom lessons and experiences.
2.6	Teachers develop domain units, comprised of individual lessons, to put the domain maps into action.
2.7	There is a transparent and immediate correlation between the year-long curriculum plan at each grade level with written maps, domain-based units, daily lesson plans, and what actually takes place instructionally in each classroom.
2.8	An intentional focus on language and vocabulary development is apparent in the planning documents and classroom practices.

### **What Planning and Communication Practices Look Like in Action**

A school is successful in establishing these practices when teachers have collaborated on the planning documents and each teacher’s instructional activities are guided by them on a daily basis.

Teachers and staff in successful Core Knowledge schools have access to—and are able to articulate—the contents of their curriculum plan, domain maps, and domain-based units. Classroom lessons and experiences reflect the content and pacing of the documents.

Additionally, teachers and staff demonstrate a deliberate focus on language and vocabulary development through their instructional plans and classroom practices.

### **Learn More**

The ideas and insights underlying Core Knowledge are simple; however they have far-reaching consequences for how educators plan and execute teaching to support student learning. Developing a thoughtful and coherent implementation to maximize the benefits of Core Knowledge requires commitment and rigor on the part of an entire school community. The Core Knowledge Foundation assists schools in this process in a variety of ways.

## **Professional Development**

*Core Knowledge Overview*

*Getting Started with the Preschool Sequence*

*Getting Started with the K8 Sequence*

*Oral Language Skills (preschool)*

*Curriculum Mapping for Continuous Improvement (consultation)*

*Core Knowledge and the Reading Crisis: Overview of Support for CKLA (recorded webinar)*

*Domain-based Unit Writing*

## **Reading**

*Appendix A of the Core Knowledge Sequence: Why Listening and Learning Are Critical to Reading Comprehension*

*Beyond Comprehension: We Have Yet to Adopt a Common Core Curriculum That Builds Knowledge Grade by Grade—But We Need To* by E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (*American Educator*, winter 2010)

*The Case for Bringing Content into the Language Arts Block and for a Knowledge-Rich Curriculum Core for all Children* by E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (*American Educator*, spring 2006)

*The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3* by Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley (*American Educator*, spring 2003)

*Envisioning a Common Core Curriculum* (*American Educator*, winter 2010)

*How Knowledge Helps: It Speeds and Strengthens Reading Comprehension, Learning—and Thinking* by Daniel T. Willingham (*American Educator*, spring 2006)

*The Knowledge Deficit: Closing the Shocking Education Gap for American Children* by E. D. Hirsch, Jr.

*The Making of Americans: Democracy and Our Schools* by E. D. Hirsch, Jr.

*Understanding by Design, Expanded 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe

## **Other**

*The Core Knowledge Domain Planner*

<http://www.coreknowledge.org/curriculum-planning-tools>

<http://www.coreknowledge.org/lesson-plans>

## ***Implementation as an Ongoing Process***

Sustaining Core Knowledge implementation is an ongoing, school-wide effort. Effective Core Knowledge schools take steps to continually improve, motivate, and focus their Core Knowledge staff and community.

<b>3. Continuous Improvement Practices</b>	
3.1	The school revisits each of the curriculum planning documents on an annual basis to improve instruction and incorporate changes or revision to the <i>Core Knowledge Sequence</i> and supporting Core Knowledge publications.
3.2	The school routinely addresses administrative and staff transitions, so that newcomers receive immediate and in-depth training and support in Core Knowledge implementation.
3.3	The school actively participates in the Core Knowledge community.
3.4	The school maintains an active relationship with the Core Knowledge Foundation.

### **What Continuous Improvement Practices Look Like in Action**

A school is successful in establishing these practices when they approach each new school-year with the same excitement, level of commitment, attention to detail, and planning as their initial implementation. Successful schools document, throughout the year, opportunities for improvement in their presentation of Core Knowledge. They discuss successes and challenges on a weekly basis, and meet annually to refine their curriculum plan, based on their implementation experience.

Successful schools also participate actively in the larger community of Core Knowledge schools, using networking opportunities (Core Knowledge conferences and regional events, Core Knowledge blog, etc.) to learn from peers, share ideas, and advocate for Core Knowledge.

Finally, successful schools maintain an active relationship with the Core Knowledge Foundation, submitting an annual profile update, participating in professional development, collaborating with regard to implementation concerns, and sharing news of their school, staff, and student successes.

### **Learn More**

The ideas and insights underlying Core Knowledge are simple; however they have far-reaching consequences for how educators plan and execute teaching to support student learning. Developing a thoughtful and coherent implementation to maximize the benefits of Core Knowledge requires commitment and rigor on the part of an entire school community. The Core Knowledge Foundation assists schools in this process in a variety of ways.

#### ***Professional Development***

*New Teacher Orientation*

*Follow-up Visits*

*Curriculum Mapping for Continuous Improvement (consultation)*

*Addressing Implementation Challenges (consultation)*

*Core Knowledge Conferences and Regional Events*

**Reading**

*The Baldrige Program: Self-Assessment for Continuous Improvement* by Sandra Byrne and Christine Schaefer (*Principal Magazine*, March/April 2006)

**Other**

<http://www.coreknowledge.org/professional-development>

<http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/enter/education.cfm>

## ***Effective Teaching***

An effective curriculum is wholly dependent upon effective teaching. A wide array of literature and tools are available defining characteristics of effective teaching. Best practices for teaching excellence include:

- **Mastery of subject matter** (Danielson, 2010; NBPTS, 1987; Saphier, Haley-Speca, & Gower, 2008)
- Holding **high-expectations** for all students (Danielson, 2010; Dweck, 2007; NBPTS, 1987; Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2008; Saphier, Haley-Speca, & Gower, 2008)
- **Intentional support of language development** (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2008)
- **Use of assessment to inform instruction** (Danielson, 2010; NBPTS, 1987; Saphier, Haley-Speca, & Gower, 2008; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000)
- **Scaffolding instruction** to meet individual needs, including provide **targeted feedback** to students to further **shape their learning** (NBPTS, 1987; Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2008; Saphier, Haley-Speca, & Gower, 2008; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000)
- Ability to construct lessons that provide **opportunities for students to apply knowledge in higher order situations** (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2008; Saphier, Haley-Speca, & Gower, 2008; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000)

## 4. Effective Teaching Practices

- 4.1 Teachers demonstrate mastery of Core Knowledge subject matter.
- 4.2 Teachers demonstrate knowledge of language development.
  - 4.2a Teachers recognize the importance of, and their lessons demonstrate attention to, the connection between language, background knowledge, and reading comprehension.
  - 4.2b Instruction in oral language (listening and speaking) precedes instruction in written language (reading and writing)
  - 4.2c Instruction demonstrates an intentional focus on vocabulary development through repeated implicit exposure
- 4.3 Teachers use pedagogical practices generally associated with quality instruction.
  - 4.3a Teachers use assessment to inform instruction.
  - 4.3b Teachers provide scaffolding to meet individual students' needs.
  - 4.3c Teachers provide feedback to shape and guide students' learning.
  - 4.3d Instruction includes opportunities for students to demonstrate higher-order thinking
  - 4.3e Instruction supports engagement of students.
  - 4.3f Instruction provides opportunity for student practice.
  - 4.3g Instruction sets high expectations for all students.
- 4.4 Early literacy instruction includes the teaching of specific, sequential phonics based decoding skills.
- 4.5 Instruction in mathematics is guided by a program that emphasizes computational mastery as well as a systematic approach to building deep conceptual understanding of mathematics topics.

### What Effective Teaching Practices Look Like in Action

A school is successful in meeting these practices when there is clear demonstration of effective, age or grade-appropriate teaching strategies and professional development plans and actions designed to refine teacher practices in these areas. Successful teachers recognize that Core Knowledge implementation goes beyond mere coverage of Core Knowledge topics and requires a focus on effective language and vocabulary development. These teachers proactively and intentionally plan to meet both content objectives and language development objectives in a manner that builds conceptual knowledge and uses the content as the basis for critical thinking and problem solving opportunities.

Additionally, effective Core Knowledge teachers use pedagogical practices that are generally associated with quality instruction. These include, but are not limited to, ongoing use of assessment to guide instruction, scaffolding instruction to differentiate for individual learner needs, providing feedback that goes beyond praise to guide student learning, and the use of

engaging activities that provide opportunities for students to demonstrate higher-order thinking.

Finally, effective teachers recognize that the *Core Knowledge Sequence* calls for attention to both reading and mathematics skills in a manner that is both specific and sequential. These teachers further recognize that not all commercial classroom products and materials are organized with the specificity and coherence called for by Core Knowledge. These teachers implement coherent reading and math programs of proven effectiveness.

## **Learn More**

The ideas and insights underlying Core Knowledge are simple; however they have far-reaching consequences for how educators plan and execute teaching to support student learning. Developing a thoughtful and coherent implementation to maximize the benefits of Core Knowledge requires commitment and rigor on the part of an entire school community. The Core Knowledge Foundation assists schools in this process in a variety of ways.

### ***Professional Development***

*Teaching, Learning, and Assessment: Meaningful Instruction*

*Domain-based Unit Writing*

### ***Reading***

*A Framework for Teaching: Components of Professional Practice* by Charlotte Danielson

*Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (K-3)*, by Robert Pianta, Karen LaParo, and Bridget Hamre

*Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (preschool)*, by Robert Pianta, Karen LaParo, and Bridget Hamre

*Developmentally Appropriate Practice, Third Edition*, by Carol Copple and Sue Bredekamp

*The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners* by Carol A. Tomlinson

*Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale Revised (ECERS-R)* by Debby Cryer, Thelma Harms, and Cathy Riley

*Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dweck

*The Skillful Teacher: Building Your Teaching Skills* by Jon Saphier, Mary Ann Haley-Speca, and Robert Gower

*Teach Like a Champion* by Doug Lemov

*What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do* by the National Board for Professional Teaching Practices®, available at [http://www.nbpts.org/UserFiles/File/what\\_teachers.pdf](http://www.nbpts.org/UserFiles/File/what_teachers.pdf)

*Why Don't Students Like School?: A Cognitive Scientist Answers Questions About How the Mind Works and What It Means for the Classroom* by Daniel T. Willingham

### ***Other***

*Core Knowledge Conferences & Regional Events*

## ***Strong Leadership***

Effective school leadership ensures that there are a clear vision and concrete plans for organizational growth and success. Using the vision and plans, with a results oriented focus, strong leaders set direction, develop human capital, and thoughtfully consider how internal and external processes and relationships can be improved.

<b>5. Leadership Practices</b>	
5.1	The school has established and disseminated a clear and focused mission.
5.2	The school's mission is consistent with the philosophy and mission of Core Knowledge.
5.3	School administration, staff, and community can articulate the school's mission.
5.4	School administration and staff demonstrate high expectations for all students.
5.5	The school has a plan in place to advance its vision and make continual improvements to its practices.
5.6	The school has appointed a Core Knowledge coordinator.
5.7	School administration provides resources and support to allow the Core Knowledge coordinator to perform the responsibilities of the role.
5.8	School administration and the Core Knowledge coordinator provide strong instructional leadership.
5.9	The school has a system for assessing, recording, and analyzing student learning and school effectiveness.
5.10	The school uses assessment data to improve instructional practices, student outcomes, and teacher effectiveness.
5.11	The school has a system/plan for evaluating and fostering the professional growth of its staff.
5.12	The school provides support for professional communities and collaborative teams.

### **What Leadership Practices Look Like in Action**

A school is successful in demonstrating these practices when the mission and vision that guide the school and its activities are aimed at ensuring educational excellence and equity for all children.

The plans and actions of these schools demonstrate a focus on continuous improvement of instructional practices, by all staff, for all students. A well-formed and integrated system of assessment and data collection guides planning, instruction, student intervention and professional development of staff.

Instructional leadership, as modeled by both the Core Knowledge coordinator and the principal, is apparent throughout the staff. These schools have in place resources, tools and processes that guide and support instructional improvements. These include, but are not limited to, collaborative planning time for teachers at each grade level, professional growth plans for each teacher, and opportunities for teachers to benefit from coaching and modeling.

## **Learn More**

The ideas and insights underlying Core Knowledge are simple; however they have far-reaching consequences for how educators plan and execute teaching to support student learning. Developing a thoughtful and coherent implementation to maximize the benefits of Core Knowledge requires commitment and rigor on the part of an entire school community. The Core Knowledge Foundation assists schools in this process in a variety of ways.

### ***Professional Development***

*Core Knowledge Leadership Institute*

*Quarterly Principals and Coordinators Update*

*Addressing Implementation Challenges (consultation)*

*Follow-up Visit*

### ***Reading***

*The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You* by John C. Maxwell (2007)

*Correlates of Effective Schools: The First and Second Generation* by Lawrence W. Lezotte

*The Daily Disciplines of Leadership: How to Improve Student Achievement, Staff Motivation, and Personal Organization* by Douglas B. Reeves

*Leadership for Differentiating Schools & Classrooms* by Carol Ann Tomlinson and Susan Demirsky Allan

*Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dweck

*The Skillful Leader: Confronting Mediocre Teaching* by Alexander D. Platt, Caroline E. Tripp, Wayne R. Ogden and Robert G. Fraser

*What We Know About Successful School Leadership* by K.A. Leithwood & C. Riehl

### ***Other***

*Core Knowledge Conferences & Regional Events*

## ***Community Involvement***

Community involvement is a fundamental factor of successful schools. Continued growth and success relies upon common vision and mission. When parents are engaged in their child's education and home-school connections are strong:

- students are **more likely to graduate** from high school (Englund, Egeland, & Collins, 2008);
- students are **more likely to remain engaged in their education** as they progress through the middle and high school years (Furger, 2008);
- there are **positive effects on achievement** in math, reading, and science, attendance, behavior, homework completion, course credits earned, parent-child discussions about postsecondary education plans, and other indicators of success in school (Catsambis, 2001; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004; Sheldon 2004; Simon, 2004).

### **6. Community Involvement Practices**

- 6.1 The school community demonstrates an understanding of and commitment to the Core Knowledge philosophy.
- 6.2 The school ensures that the curriculum plan and domain maps are available to teachers and parents.
- 6.3 School administration and staff foster positive home-school connections.
- 6.4 School administration and staff solicit feedback from teachers, parents, students and the community.
- 6.5 The school fosters effective communication and relationships with and among its community members.
- 6.6 The school fosters effective communication and relationships with other area schools, particularly those that feed into or out from the Core Knowledge school.

### **What Community Involvement Practices Look Like in Action**

Successful schools are proactive in fostering a shared understanding of vision and mission that fully integrates Core Knowledge within the school, students' homes, and the community at large. Within effective schools, teachers, staff, and students share responsibility for advancing the vision and mission. Effective schools seek appropriate partnerships with businesses, social service agencies, and other organizations whose purposes are consistent with the school's mission.

### **Learn More**

The ideas and insights underlying Core Knowledge are simple; however they have far-reaching consequences for how educators plan and execute teaching to support student learning. Developing a thoughtful and coherent implementation to maximize the benefits of Core Knowledge requires commitment and rigor on the part of an entire school community. The Core Knowledge Foundation assists schools in this process in a variety of ways.

## ***Professional Development***

*Core Knowledge Leadership Institute*

*Core Knowledge Conferences and Regional Events*

## ***Reading***

*School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools by Joyce Epstein (2010)*

*What Your \_\_\_\_ Grader Needs to Know (Core Knowledge Foundation)*

## ***Other***

*National Network of Partnership Schools: <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/index.htm>*

*<http://www.coreknowledge.org/parents>*

## ***Resources and Support***

Effective schools provide the resources and support teachers need to be effective in the classroom.

<b>7. Resources and Support Practices</b>	
7.1	The school acquires and maintains <i>required</i> resources as documented by the Core Knowledge Foundation.
7.2	The school allocates funding for classroom resources to support Core Knowledge topics.
7.3	The school allocates funding for library resources to support Core Knowledge topics.
7.4	The school has a system/plan for storing and cataloging shared resources that support Core Knowledge topics within and across grade levels.
7.5	The school allocates funding to implement its school improvement plan.
7.6	The school allocates funding to ensure that teachers and administrators receive Core Knowledge professional development.
7.7	School administration ensures and protects regularly scheduled collaborative planning time within and across grade levels.

### **What Resources and Support Practices Look Like in Action**

A school is successful in meeting these practices when they acquire and maintain both required and supplemental resources for the implementation of Core Knowledge. Successful schools budget annually for both new and replacement materials to support their Core Knowledge implementation.

Instructional materials are selected for their quality, factual accuracy, rich domain-specific vocabulary, complex language, and diversity.

Ongoing support for instructional staff is evidenced by collaborative planning time that allows teachers to work within and across grade levels and content areas to plan and align Core Knowledge instruction.

### **Learn More**

The ideas and insights underlying Core Knowledge are simple; however they have far-reaching consequences for how educators plan and execute teaching to support student learning. Developing a thoughtful and coherent implementation to maximize the benefits of Core Knowledge requires commitment and rigor on the part of an entire school community. The Core Knowledge Foundation assists schools in this process in a variety of ways.

### ***Other***

<https://www.coreknowledge.org/books>

[http://www.coreknowledge.org/mimik/mimik\\_uploads/documents/394/Catalog\\_Small.pdf](http://www.coreknowledge.org/mimik/mimik_uploads/documents/394/Catalog_Small.pdf)

**Required:**

*Core Knowledge Sequence*

*Core Knowledge Teacher Handbook (P-5)*

**Recommended:**

Core Knowledge Grade-Level Starter Kits (P-5; includes *Sequence* and Teacher Handbook)

Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) for Preschool-Grade 5

Refer to the [Core Knowledge Resource Guide](#) for grade-specific recommendations

**Additional Resources by Content Area:**

<http://books.coreknowledge.org/home.php?cat=304>

**Mackin Middle School Resources:**

<http://www.mackin.com/CURRICULUM/COREKNOWLEDGE.aspx>

**Core knowledge Lesson Plans:**

<http://www.coreknowledge.org/lesson-plans>

### III. **Becoming a Core Knowledge School**

Schools implementing Core Knowledge commit to the following goals:

- To teach all of the topics included in the *Core Knowledge Sequence*
- To teach the topics to all students whenever possible, at the *Sequence* grade level, moving topics only when necessary to meet explicit state expectations
- Exemplify the *Core Knowledge Implementation Practices*

Schools wishing to be recognized as Core Knowledge Schools of Distinction collaborate with the Core Knowledge Foundation to ensure that the rules, conditions and criteria outlined in *Core Implementation Practices: A Guide to Effective Implementation of Core Knowledge* are met.

#### ***Understand and Embrace the Core Knowledge Principles***

Successful implementation begins with interested schools understanding and embracing the philosophy behind the *Core Knowledge Sequence*. Become familiar with Core Knowledge and our mission, goals, and philosophy.

#### ***Levels of Commitment***

##### **Friends of Core Knowledge**

Once a commitment to Core Knowledge is made, and a school profile form is completed and submitted to the Core Knowledge Foundation, schools are recognized as a *Friend of Core Knowledge*.

*Friends of Core Knowledge* schools are those schools just beginning implementation of Core Knowledge; the degree to which *Friends of Core Knowledge* implement the *Sequence* across grade levels and in the different subject areas varies. We ask only that *Friends of Core Knowledge* schools update their profiles annually in order to remain in our database and on our website.

##### **Core Knowledge Schools of Distinction**

Core Knowledge Schools of Distinction are recognized by the Core Knowledge Foundation as offering a superior educational experience. This designation does not come easily; it must be earned and the criteria for success must be clearly demonstrated through a series of curriculum planning documents and a capstone visit by a team of Core Knowledge staff members. To apply, schools must commit to a more rigorous implementation, including meeting specific milestones established by the Foundation. It is recommended that a school hoping to achieve recognition as a Core Knowledge School of Distinction follow an implementation and professional development plan created in ongoing collaboration with the Core Knowledge Foundation. For schools that are relatively new to Core Knowledge, attaining School of Distinction status is expected to take at least three years, during which time schools and the Foundation ensure that processes, professional development, and resources are put into place to support implementation of the *Core Knowledge Sequence* at a high level of fidelity. Designation as a Core Knowledge School of Distinction is granted at the sole discretion of the Core Knowledge Foundation. Please understand that relatively few schools will attain

Distinction status. While the process of applying and working with the Foundation should be a rewarding learning experience, completion of the application process does not guarantee successful demonstration of the criteria for success.

### ***Honors***

The Core Knowledge Foundation offers School of Distinction honors for particular implementation areas, such as English language learner support, reading instruction, professional development practices, teacher collaboration, etc.

Through these honors, schools are recognized for their areas of expertise, and parents and practitioners will be guided to visit schools that meet their particular observation objectives.

### **Information for Previous Core Knowledge Official Schools**

The Core Knowledge Foundation is no longer using the original evaluation process through which the Official School status could be attained. Therefore, no additional schools will be recognized as Official. Schools that were recognized as Official and are still implementing the *Core Knowledge Sequence* are invited to continue using their Official designation. Official Schools should continue to submit annual school profiles to inform the Foundation of their use of the *Sequence* (see *V. The Application Process* for additional details).

### ***Contact the Foundation***

Once you have determined your desired level of commitment, it is important to contact the Core Knowledge Foundation to establish a relationship and engage support from the Foundation. Involving the Foundation will allow us to:

- provide you with the benefit of our years of experience;
- assist you in creating a realistic implementation plan and budget;
- assist you in creating a professional development plan that meets the needs of your staff;
- guide you in your selection of sequential reading and math programs of proven effectiveness.

### **The Core Knowledge Foundation**

**801 E. High Street**

**Charlottesville, VA 22902**

**(434) 977-7550**

**(800) 238-3233**

## IV. Rules and Regulations

### ***Background***

The rules and regulations herein govern affiliation between schools and the Core Knowledge Foundation.

A school is permitted to represent itself as a Core Knowledge School of Distinction only if it has been awarded such designation by the Core Knowledge Foundation, is in good standing with the Foundation, and has an unexpired designation.

Please contact the Foundation to discuss the timeline for expiration and renewal of the School of Distinction designation.

### ***Copyright and Trademark***

Core Knowledge® is a registered trademark and cannot be used except by the Core Knowledge Foundation. It is important that any school that identifies itself as a "Core Knowledge School" represents a true commitment to implementation of the *Core Knowledge Sequence*, however, as a registered trademark, Core Knowledge® cannot be used as part of a school's name without the express written permission of the Core Knowledge Foundation.

### **Use of the “Core Knowledge School” Designation**

In various configurations, the Core Knowledge logo and the names “Core Knowledge School,” “Core Knowledge Official School,” “Core Knowledge Visitation Site<sup>+</sup>,” and “Core Knowledge School of Distinction” are registered as trademarks of the Core Knowledge Foundation. Right to use these terms and their accompanying logos is provided by the Core Knowledge Foundation.

Friends of Core Knowledge (schools that have not yet achieved the Core Knowledge School of Distinction designation) may use the following phrases in their promotional materials, on their website, etc.:

“Our school [or school name] uses Core Knowledge®”

“Our school [or school name] uses the Core Knowledge® Sequence”

“Our school [or school name] uses the Core Knowledge® curriculum”

“We are [or school name is] a Friend of Core Knowledge®”

“Friend of Core Knowledge®”

Schools that are "Friends of Core Knowledge" should continue to use only their school's logo until the Foundation awards the designation as a Core Knowledge School of Distinction.

Only Core Knowledge Official Schools and Schools of Distinction can use the Core Knowledge School logo, which will be provided upon achievement of the designation.



Schools authorized to use the terms “Core Knowledge School,” “Core Knowledge Official School,” “Core Knowledge Visitation Site<sup>+</sup>,” and “Core Knowledge School of Distinction” and the accompanying logo may do so only while they remain in good standing with the Core Knowledge Foundation (i.e., designation as a Core Knowledge School of Distinction has not expired or been revoked).

No one outside of the Core Knowledge Foundation is permitted to use the following trademarked Core Knowledge logos:



<sup>+</sup>See *Information for Core Knowledge Official Schools* section under III. *Becoming a Core Knowledge School*.

### ***School Composition***

Requirements of Core Knowledge School of Distinction designation must be met for each grade level served by the applicant school.

If a school is divided between multiple campuses, each campus is considered a separate “school” for the purposes of Core Knowledge School of Distinction designation.

For the purposes of Core Knowledge School of Distinction designation the Core Knowledge Foundation reserves the right to determine what comprises a multi-campus school.

### ***Changes in Leadership***

In the event of a change in school leadership at a School of Distinction, the school must notify the Core Knowledge Foundation within 3 months of the leadership change.

Within one year of the leadership change, the following must take place:

- a. The incoming school leader must participate in the *Core Knowledge Leadership Institute*.
- b. The school must schedule, at its own expense, a follow-up visit from the Core Knowledge Foundation.

### ***Addition of Grade Levels Served***

In the event of an addition to the grade levels that are served by a Core Knowledge School of Distinction, the school must notify the Core Knowledge Foundation within 3 months of the addition.

Within one year of the addition, the following must take place:

- a. The school must schedule, at its own expense, a follow-up visit from the Core Knowledge Foundation.

## V. The Application Process

### ***Conditions and Criteria***

- a. Through scheduled visits and supporting documentation, the school demonstrates a high-level of fidelity to the *Core Knowledge Sequence* and philosophy and exemplifies the Core Knowledge Implementation Practices.
- b. The school test data demonstrate student proficiency and/or student growth.
- c. The school has a structure in place to respond in a timely manner to recommendations provided as the result of scheduled follow-up or analysis of curriculum and practices visits.

### ***Terms of Core Knowledge School of Distinction Designation***

While being recognized as a School of Distinction schools commit to:

- a. Continue to meet the criteria and conditions of the Core Knowledge School of Distinction designation.
- b. Comply with the rules and regulations herein associated with the Core Knowledge School of Distinction designation.
- c. Welcome visits from representatives of the Core Knowledge Foundation as well as collegial visits from other Core Knowledge schools and those interested in becoming a Core Knowledge school, at any time, with appropriate advance notice.
- d. Maintain an ongoing relationship with the Core Knowledge Foundation, including annual submission of a school profile form.

### ***School Profile***

All Core Knowledge schools are expected to fill out annually a school profile form. Creating or updating your school profile provides the Foundation with background information that allows us to track the growing number of schools that have joined the Core Knowledge movement. More importantly, this information allows us to provide communication, resources and materials that best meet your needs.

**<http://coreknowledge.org/profile>**

Only schools that have a *current* profile are listed on the Core Knowledge website.

### ***Request for Consideration***

In order to be recognized for consideration as a Core Knowledge School of Distinction a letter of intent to achieve that designation must be submitted to the Core Knowledge Foundation after completion of Year 1 of the collaboratively developed implementation and professional development plan. Upon receipt of the letter of intent, the Core Knowledge Foundation will request that the school also prepare and submit specific materials and documentation, including but not limited to a self-evaluated copy of the school's curriculum plan and domain maps and student test data.

## ***Follow-up visit (s)***

Core Knowledge follow-up visits provide the Foundation with the opportunity to conduct a high-level review of your implementation, ensure and extend the effectiveness of Core Knowledge professional development, and provide targeted feedback and next steps in a number of key implementation areas including:

- Level of Core Knowledge content addressed
- Approach to elementary language arts instruction
- Collaborative instructional planning
- Commitment to Core Knowledge
- Coherence of content addressed
- Demonstration of high-expectations for students
- Available resources
- Community involvement
- Planning for professional growth
- Teachers' understanding of the *Sequence*
- Completion of curriculum planning documents
- School leadership
- School improvement planning

The targets of follow-up visit feedback will change based on maturity of Core Knowledge implementation, recent professional development, and previously provided combination of feedback and next steps.

When a Core Knowledge representative deems, based on follow-up visit(s), that a school exemplifies the Core Implementation Practices and demonstrates strong fidelity to Core Knowledge, a thorough Analysis of Curriculum and Practices (ACAP) will be recommended.

## **Reliability**

On-site services provided by the Core Knowledge Foundation are delivered by a team of consultants, each of whom is a deeply experienced, veteran Core Knowledge educator. Whenever possible, the Foundation aims to engage the same consultant to conduct professional development for a particular school. In keeping with our implementation recommendations and practices, this enables each school to develop an ongoing relationship with a consultant, who then becomes an important member of the broader school community. However, for follow-up visits, consultants may be rotated to the site to ensure multiple perspectives are considered when feedback is provided.

## ***Analysis of Curriculum and Practices***

This rigorous review, conducted by a team of Foundation representatives, will evaluate a school's eligibility to be designated a Core Knowledge School of Distinction.

## **Goals of the Analysis of Curriculum and Practices Visit**

During the analysis visit, the Core Knowledge Foundation team will:

- assess the level of commitment to the Core Knowledge curriculum and philosophy;
- evaluate the extent to which the implementation practices have been met.

After the implementation analysis visit, the Core Knowledge Foundation will:

- provide a detailed report documenting evidence of good practice, recommendations for continuous improvement, and deficiencies that warrant attention prior to awarding of a School of Distinction designation.

## **Awarding of Core Knowledge School of Distinction Designation**

The Core Knowledge Foundation is responsible for final outcome decisions with regard to application for the *School of Distinction* designation. This decision is based on the documents submitted by the applicant school and is made in consultation with the final visitation team.

If the applicant school exemplifies the *Core Implementation Practices* and demonstrates a high-level of fidelity to Core Knowledge, awarding of the *School of Distinction* designation will be granted under the condition of ongoing accordance with the rules and regulations outlined in the *Core Implementation Practices* document. A letter of recognition will be sent from the Core Knowledge Foundation to the school notifying them of the designation. A plaque will be presented to the school and an exemplary Domain-based Unit (reviewed as part of the ACAP Visit) will be showcased by the Foundation on its website. This designation will expire after five (5) years, but Schools of Distinction that remain active in the Core Knowledge community will not have to repeat the full evaluative process to renew their designation. Please refer to *Renewal of the Core Knowledge School of Distinction* below for additional details.

Written or oral statements made by Core Knowledge representatives prior to the awarding of the School of Distinction designation shall not be interpreted as implicit or explicit guarantee that the designation will be awarded.

Designation of *Core Knowledge School of Distinction* is granted at the sole discretion of the Core Knowledge Foundation.

## **Deferred Awarding of the School of Distinction Designation**

Awarding of the *Core Knowledge School of Distinction* designation may be deferred if there are implementation refinements to be made, but the school demonstrates a commitment to remediate deficiencies. In such cases, the Core Knowledge Foundation will notify the applicant school of any matters to be resolved and will provide a timetable within which remediation must occur.

Upon meeting the necessary conditions, the school is required to submit documentation of remediation to the Core Knowledge Foundation.

In some cases, a return visit, at the school's expense, may be required to verify that remediation conditions have been met successfully.

## **Denial of Core Knowledge School of Distinction Designation**

The Core Knowledge Foundation has full discretion to deny or revoke the *School of Distinction* designation to any applicant school.

If a school's application for designation is denied, the Core Knowledge Foundation will provide a summary report documenting the reasons for denial.

Denial decisions by the Core Knowledge Foundation are final and not subject to appeal.

Reconsideration for designation may occur only if at least two years have elapsed since the previous application / denial. At this time, the applicant school must meet the current requirements for Core Knowledge School of Distinction designation.

### **Renewal of the Core Knowledge School of Distinction Designation**

Schools wishing to renew their *School of Distinction* designation before the expiration date should begin with the following steps:

1. Budget and plan for at least one follow-up visit..
2. Update and submit your School Profile.
3. Conduct a self-evaluation using the Implementation Feedback Report tool and the rubrics that have been created for curriculum planning (year-long curriculum plan, domain maps, and domain-based units).
4. Notify the Foundation of your intent to renew your Core Knowledge School of Distinction designation so that we can collaborate with you to develop a timeline and plan of action.
5. Begin to create and/or update your domain-based units at each grade-level.

### **Termination of the Core Knowledge School of Distinction Designation**

The Core Knowledge Foundation may terminate a *School of Distinction* designation if any of the following situations occur:

- a. The school does not comply with the rules and regulations associated with the *Core Knowledge School of Distinction* designation.
- b. The school no longer meets the criteria and conditions of the *School of Distinction* designation.
- c. Fees remain unpaid to the Core Knowledge Foundation.
- d. The school has not maintained an ongoing relationship with the Core Knowledge Foundation.
- e. The school has not completed the necessary renewal procedures to remain a Core Knowledge School of Distinction. (Please note that the designation will automatically expire after five years unless a timeline for renewal and a plan of action has been collaboratively developed with the Foundation.)

In cases of termination of the School of Distinction designation, the school shall be notified in writing that it has ninety days to rectify the situation before termination occurs.

## VI. Implementation and Observation Tools

### *Documentation Checklist*

#### **Annually**

- Current school profile

#### **As Requested, Prior to Analysis**

- Copy of school-wide curriculum plan
- Completed self-evaluation of curriculum plan using the Core Knowledge Curriculum Plan Rubric
- Copy of domain maps for each domain in the curriculum plan
- Completed self-evaluation of domain maps using the Core Knowledge Domain Map Rubric
- Copy of one exemplary domain-based unit, selected by the school, which demonstrates your school's approach to Core Knowledge
- Completed self-evaluation rubric for this domain-based unit
- Test data demonstrating student growth from beginning of application process / implementation through designation visit

#### **In Preparation for Analysis Visit**

- Written interview from administrator
- Teacher survey solicited from all teachers
- Parent survey distributed to all parents

#### **During Analysis Visit**

- Oral interview with administrator
- Individual classroom observations
- Oral interview with grade-level teams after being observed
- Focus group meetings with students and grade-level teaching teams

#### **After Analysis Visit, as needed**

- Written plans documenting how analysis deficiencies will be addressed

### *Sample Documents*

The following documents are designed to assist you in your implementation of Core Knowledge. The *most* recent revision of each document is available on the Core Knowledge website.

### **Implementation Feedback Report**

This tool will be used throughout your implementation to evaluate the progress of your implementation. The tool provides for the focus of feedback on various areas of

implementation, describing what each area looks like as it exemplifies the Core Implementation Practices. This tool is also an excellent starting point for schools to self-assess their implementation as a whole.

Available at <http://www.coreknowledge.org/implementation-analysis-tools>

### **Curriculum Plan Rubric**

This rubric can be used to evaluate the organization, content, coherence, and cumulative nature of your school's year-long curriculum plan.

Available at <http://www.coreknowledge.org/curriculum-planning-tools>

### **Domain Map Rubric**

This rubric can be used to evaluate the organization, components, content, and connections detailed in your domain maps.

Available at <http://www.coreknowledge.org/curriculum-planning-tools>

### **Domain-based Unit Rubric**

This rubric can be used to evaluate the domain-based units created by your instructional staff.

Available at <http://www.coreknowledge.org/curriculum-planning-tools>

### **Administrator Interview**

During the analysis process the Core Knowledge team will conduct both written and oral interviews with the school administrator. The questions below represent the content and types of questions that may be posed by the analysis team. During the oral interview, questions form the foundation for dialogue, and will vary depending on answers provided to prior questions.

A sample administrator interview form can be found at

<http://www.coreknowledge.org/implementation-analysis-tools>

*Please describe your school's mission.*

*How does Core Knowledge fit into your school's mission?*

*Do you have a school improvement plan (SIP), that is, a plan to advance the school's mission and vision?*

*Describe 3 to 5 goals that are included in the School Improvement Plan (SIP).*

*Describe how new teachers and staff are oriented to Core Knowledge and the Core Knowledge philosophy.*

*Describe how the professional growth of the staff is evaluated and fostered.*

*What percentage of the annual school budget is available for professional development for teachers and staff?*

*How do you determine what professional development is offered?*

*Does the school schedule include weekly time to plan collaboratively at the grade level? With specials teachers? Across grade levels?*

*Approximately how much common planning time does each teacher have at their grade level? With specials teachers? Across grade levels?*

*Does the school use any standardized assessments? If so, what assessments? How often are they administered? How are the results reported?*

*How is this data used to improve student outcomes?*

*How is this data used to improve instructional practices?*

*How is this data used to improve teacher effectiveness?*

*What other forms of assessment are used?*

*Does the school have a system for storing and cataloging shared resources that support Core Knowledge within and across grades?*

*What percentage of the annual school budget is available for additional and replacement materials to support implementation of Core Knowledge?*

*In the past 3 years, has the school been recognized at the local or national level? How? Describe all other initiatives at your school. How do they relate to Core Knowledge? Rank order these priorities.*

*How often do you use the Core Knowledge website?*

*Do you read the Core Knowledge blog on a regular basis?*

*What professional resources (journals, websites, books) have you referred to in the last 3 months?*

*How are the Core Knowledge domain maps used at your school?*

*What criteria do you use in evaluating a teacher's implementation of Core Knowledge?*

*Do you or another designated individual observe each of your teachers' classrooms on a regular basis? How often? For how long at one time?*

*What would you identify as your school's successes?*

*What would you identify as your school's challenges?*

*What additional support do you need from the Core Knowledge Foundation?*

*Have you appointed a Core Knowledge coordinator?*

*What are the primary responsibilities of your Core Knowledge coordinator?*

*Does this person have other responsibilities at the school?*

*What accommodations are made to allow the Core Knowledge coordinator to carry out the responsibilities of the role?*

*Why was this person selected as your Core Knowledge coordinator?*

*Have you ever attended a Core Knowledge conference or regional event? When?*

*Do you or others at your school network with other Core Knowledge schools to share ideas and support one another? If so, describe how these interactions have helped advance your school's implementation of Core Knowledge.*

*Have you ever visited / observed classes at another Core Knowledge school? If so, describe how these visits have helped advance your school's implementation of Core Knowledge.*

*Describe how you facilitate communication between your school and schools that feed into/out of your school. Do these schools use Core Knowledge?*

*Does your school have a parent advisory group?*

*Through what means do the parents learn about Core Knowledge and the Core Knowledge philosophy as it is implemented at your school?*

*Describe how and how often feedback is solicited from parents? Teachers? Students? Community?*

*What opportunities does the school provide for parental support and involvement?*

*Describe the school's involvement in the community.*

*Do you send teachers from your school to Core Knowledge conferences and/or regional events? How many per year?*

*How are instructional programs and materials selected by your staff?*

*Are you aware of the language arts and mathematics programs recommended by the Core Knowledge Foundation? Have you considered these programs? Why or why not?*

## **Classroom Observations**

As part of the analysis process the Core Knowledge team will conduct classroom observations during the analysis visit. During the observations, the team will look for evidence of the following:

*Student engagement*

*Use of domain-based instructional units*

*Intentional support for language development including:*

*Modeling grammatically correct language, a variety of syntactical forms, and rich vocabulary including domain-specific and "rare" words*

*Use of language facilitation strategies like asking open questions, repeating student responses, prompting for elaboration, etc.*

*Structuring opportunities for student responses in a manner that allows students to use domain-specific vocabulary*

*Presentation of read-alouds and lessons centered on domain-based content*

*Read-aloud and lesson procedures that include:*

*Assessment of prior knowledge*

*Setting a purpose for listening / participating*

*Follow-up discussion that includes:*

*Explicit content related questions*

*Implicit content related questions*

*Higher-order thinking questions aimed at assessing student comprehension and providing opportunities for student explanation and use of domain-specific vocabulary*

*Opportunities for students to link new content to prior knowledge*

*Use of scaffolding and support strategies*

*Use of ongoing / imbedded assessment to guide instruction*

A sample classroom observation tool can be found at

**<http://www.coreknowledge.org/implementation-analysis-tools>**

## **Teacher Interviews**

As part of the analysis process the Core Knowledge team will conduct oral interviews with each grade-level team that is observed, and solicit survey feedback from all teachers. The questions below represent the content and types of questions that may be posed by the analysis team. During the oral interview, questions form the foundation for dialog, and will vary depending on answers provided to prior questions.

A sample teacher interview form can be found at

**<http://www.coreknowledge.org/implementation-analysis-tools>**

*Describe your understanding of the relationship between language, background knowledge, and reading comprehension.*

*Approximately how many hours per week do you spend reading aloud to students?*

*Describe how you make read-aloud selections for your class.*

*Describe the context of the lesson observed today (e.g., how does it relate to the Core Knowledge Sequence? How does it relate to other lessons? Was the lesson part of a larger unit?)*

*If the lesson was part of a larger unit, describe the big idea and key objectives of the unit.*

*If the lesson was part of a larger unit, what domain-specific vocabulary are students being exposed to within the unit?*

*What prior knowledge from the Core Knowledge Sequence provided a foundation for this lesson?*

*For what future knowledge will the content of this lesson provide a foundation?*

*What cross-curricular connections are made in the unit?*

*What, if any, activities or content will specials (art, music, PE) teachers be covering during the timeframe of your unit that aligns with the content of this unit?*

*What, if any, specific features of this lesson were designed to promote listening and speaking skills?*

*What, if any, specific features of this lesson were designed to promote reading and writing skills?*

*Do you have a written assessment for the current unit? May I have a copy?*

*What unit of study preceded the current unit?*

*What unit of study will follow the current unit?*

*Please describe your school's mission.*

*Please describe any other curriculum-based initiatives in your school and rank order their importance in your view.*

*Does your school have a Core Knowledge coordinator? Who?*

*What types of support does the Core Knowledge coordinator provide to you?*

*Does this person have other responsibilities at the school?*

*What has been your biggest challenge with implementing / teaching Core Knowledge?*

*What has been your greatest success with implementing / teaching Core Knowledge?*

*Describe how new teachers and staff are oriented to Core Knowledge and the Core Knowledge philosophy.*

*Describe how your professional growth is evaluated and fostered.*

*How much time do you have, weekly, to plan collaboratively at your grade level? With specials teachers? Across grade levels?*

*Does the school use any standardized assessments? If so, what assessments? How often are they administered? How are the results reported?*

*How do you use this data to improve student outcomes?*

*How do you use this data to improve instructional practices?*

*How do you use this data to improve your effectiveness as a teacher?*

*What other forms of assessment do you use?*

*Do you or others at your school network with different Core Knowledge schools to share ideas and support one another? If so, describe how these interactions have helped advance your implementation of Core Knowledge.*

*Have you ever visited / observed classes at another Core Knowledge school? If so, describe how these visits have helped advance your implementation of Core Knowledge.*

*Describe how you facilitate communication between your school and schools that feed into / out of your school. Do these schools use Core Knowledge?*

*Through what means do the parents learn about Core Knowledge and the Core Knowledge philosophy as it is implemented at your school?*

*Describe how and how often feedback is solicited from parents? Teachers? Students? Community?*

*What opportunities does the school provide for parental support and involvement?*

*Describe the school's involvement in the community.*

## **Preschool Snapshot: Implementation and Observation Checklists**

The *Core Knowledge Preschool Snapshot: Implementation & Observation Checklists* are designed to assess how well the Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence is being implemented. This flexible tool can be used for a variety of purposes: Teachers can use the tool to setup their classrooms and evaluate their implementation of the Preschool Sequence.

The *Preschool Snapshot* tool can be purchased at <http://books.coreknowledge.org/product.php?productid=16335&cat=0&page=1>

### ***Questions?***

If you have questions about this guide, please contact the Core Knowledge Foundation to work with a representative of our Schools Department.

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We wish you the best of luck and thank you for your dedication to content-rich curriculum and instruction.