

Britannica

WHITE PAPER SERIES

**TRANSITIONING
TO COMMON CORE
STANDARDS**

WITH BRITANNICA SCHOOL



B

knowledgeable

INTRODUCTION



The Common Core standards have had a game-changing impact on the nation's schools, compelling educators from coast to coast to take a long, hard look at their curriculum and teaching approaches to ensure alignment to these new performance expectations. An important element of this self-examination process involves determining how effectively existing teaching and learning materials map to the new standards and address the diverse student populations and abilities present in every classroom. Sadly, many districts are finding sizeable gaps between the curriculum support they have and what they really need.

NEW STANDARDS REQUIRE NEW QUESTIONS

Despite the millions of dollars already invested in books and technology of all kinds, school administrators, classroom teachers, librarians, technology specialists, and others are realizing that they will likely need to incorporate additional resources. What's more, they'll need to modify their existing evaluation criteria to determine whether these new resources under consideration will actually do the job.

This white paper provides answers to these questions and others for educators who are evaluating *Britannica School*, a new digital information resource from Britannica Digital Learning for grades PreK-12. *Britannica School* brings together the largest and broadest array of trusted nonfiction and multimedia content in one convenient and accessible product tailor-made for the Common Core.

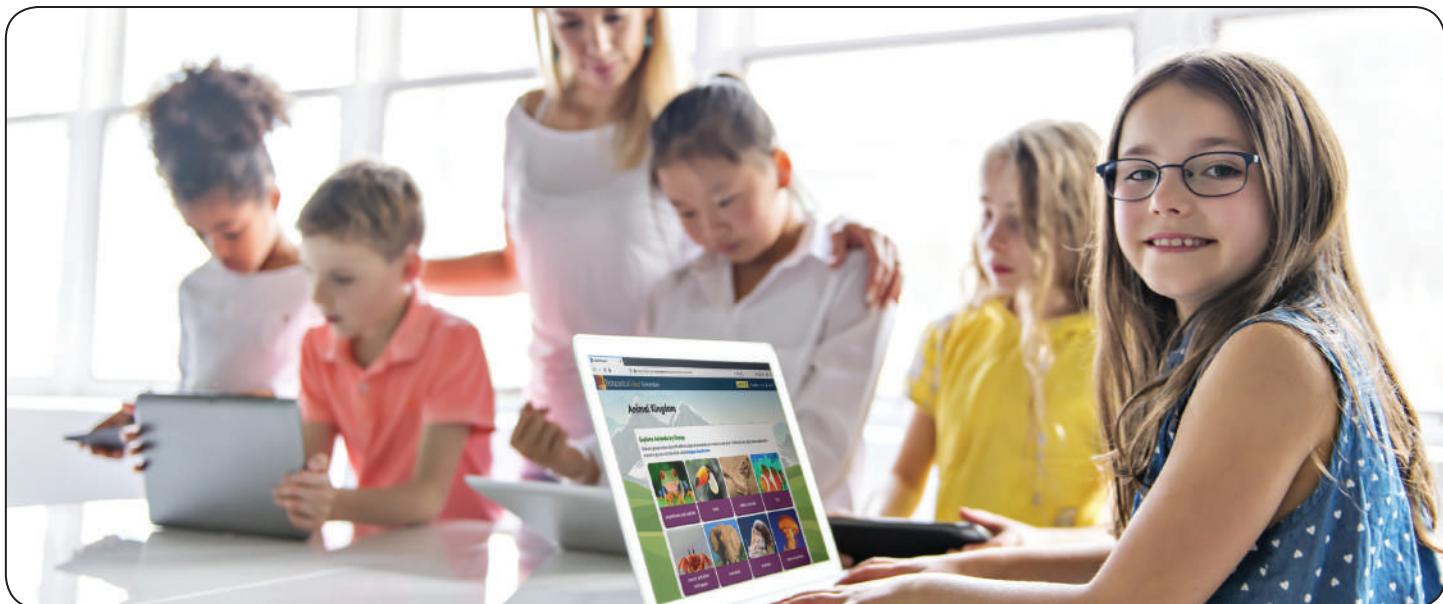
The product enables educators and students at all levels of reading proficiency to access authentic informational text

PRODUCT EVALUATION QUESTIONS RESULTING FROM THE TRANSITION TO THE COMMON CORE

- How will this product help us transition to the Common Core and its intensified focus on reading informational text across the content areas, comprehension, vocabulary, higher-order thinking, and research skill development?
- In what ways does the content incorporate greater rigor and text complexity yet support students in a developmentally appropriate way?
- How does the product use technology to strengthen instruction and provide a better learning experience for students?
- How strong is the emphasis on developing 21st century skills so students are college- and career ready?



NEW STANDARDS REQUIRE NEW QUESTIONS (cont'd.)



articles, videos, images, maps, primary sources, and editor-recommended Web sites that support lessons and activities in every core subject. In addition to its classroom value, *Britannica School* offers an opportunity for teachers to strengthen collaboration with their colleagues in the library and instructional technology area to make sure the district-wide transition to the Common Core is efficient, timely, and successful.

How will *Britannica School* help us transition to the Common Core and its intensified focus on reading informational text across the content areas, comprehension, vocabulary, higher-order thinking, and research skill development?

As the standards shift instruction and learning toward greater use of informational, complex text across the subject areas of English/language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science, *Britannica School* provides a rich content set from which to draw. In fact, *Britannica School* reduces, if not eliminates, the need to assemble and integrate multiple kinds of books and content sources to meet these standards, a process which can be time-consuming and expensive for most educators and schools.

The product provides thousands of nonfiction articles at three distinct levels of text complexity from multiple sources

(encyclopedias, primary sources, journals, and magazines). Also included are vast collections of multimedia resources connected to the searches and text students are already looking for. All of these resources can be used for lessons, research, and activities supporting the Common Core standards which ask students to analyze, use, and compare multimedia elements and text, and to read and evaluate multiple sources, including foundational documents.

In what ways does the content incorporate greater rigor and text complexity yet support students in a developmentally appropriate manner?

Britannica School makes it easy for all students to access developmentally appropriate content within an age-appropriate interface. Students can choose content that best suits their needs within the interface that corresponds to their grade level (Elementary, Middle, or High School). Then, based on their decoding and comprehension proficiency, students can select a reading level in which the content is most accessible or challenging.

The specially designed Elementary interface provides students with a streamlined and engaging learning environment featuring a wide variety of content and multimedia that can be easily searched and retrieved. This interface also includes

NEW STANDARDS REQUIRE NEW QUESTIONS (cont'd.)



reading support tools and the option of moving up to a more challenging reading level presenting more complex text.

Reading and research experiences at the middle school and high school levels challenge students to apply their growing proficiency in reading comprehension, critical thinking, and digital literacy to content requiring a higher level of skills, such as gathering and presenting information for classroom projects and reports.

Similar to the Elementary interface in which two different reading levels are available for each article, middle and high school students can select from three reading levels within these interfaces to find the one that most closely matches their current reading proficiency or challenge level. Changing from one interface or reading level to another can be accomplished with a simple click so striving readers, students reading on grade level, and more advanced readers all can benefit, and teachers can be sure that they are meeting the requirements for rigor and text complexity that the Common Core demands.

Britannica School also offers *Learning Zone*, an activity-centered, interactive learning environment for grades PreK-2 covering letters, words, numbers, time, sounds, geography, and other areas important to reading and math readiness, language arts, science, and social studies.

How does the product use technology to strengthen instruction and provide a better learning experience for students?

Britannica School can be used anytime, anywhere — in school or at home — and on any device with an Internet connection and a Web browser, including laptops, tablets, smartphones, and interactive whiteboards. This represents a boon to schools that are implementing Bring Your Own Device programs or considering whether to move in this direction.

It provides students with a well-organized, accurate, up-to-date online resource that supports them as they interactively explore content, read informational text, conduct independent research, and practice the many skills required by the Common Core. These skills include finding main ideas, building subject- and domain-specific vocabulary, and comparing items on various dimensions.

The multimedia features in *Britannica School* strengthen teaching and learning by providing photographs, images, audio clips, and videos which can be analyzed, compared to texts, and used in presentations. These features, along with the informational text content, make it easy and efficient for students and teachers to use the technology purposefully and incorporate it into lessons and projects during the school day. 24/7 access also makes it available for homework and parental involvement, so that the home-school connection is strong.

NEW STANDARDS REQUIRE NEW QUESTIONS (cont'd.)

In addition, *Britannica School* includes primary sources, editor-selected Web sites, and a variety of lesson plans, interactive lessons, manipulatives, and other educator resources that leverage technology to promote effective instruction in all areas and at all levels. Its interactive environment and user experience encourage discovery, deeper exploration, collaboration, and sharing of information and ideas among teachers as well as students.

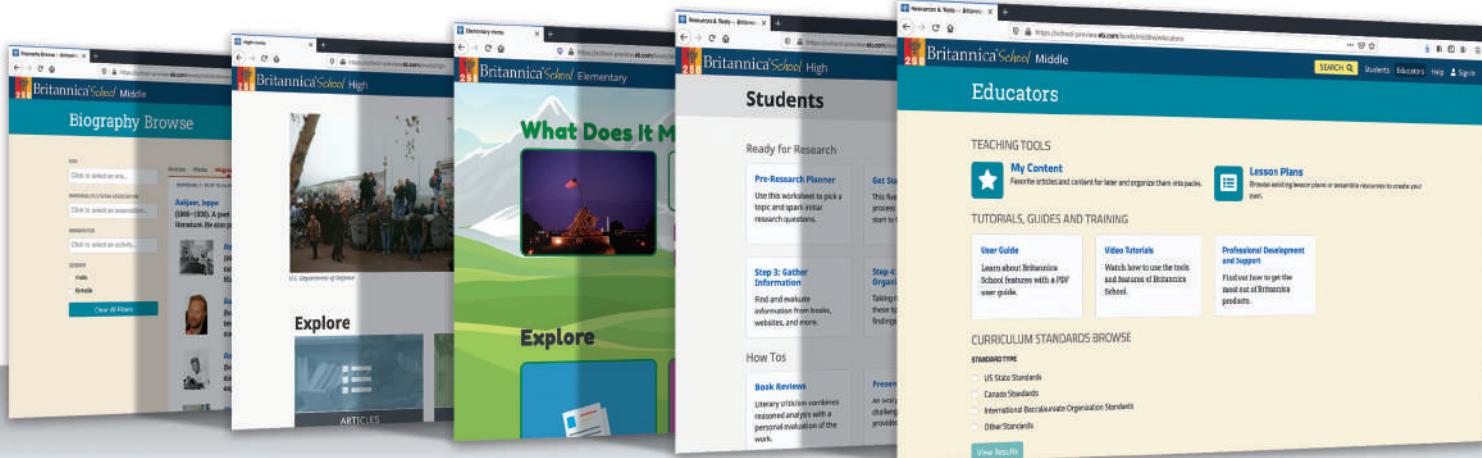
How strong is the emphasis on developing 21st century skills so students are college-and-career-ready?

Britannica School provides students with many tools to become more information-and-media-literate while also building their content knowledge. Beginning with a topic in mind, students can easily branch out into articles, magazines, videos, biographies, and primary source documents connected to their original topic. Each piece of content features a citation to assist students in documenting their research and gaining an understanding of the types of sources that can be accessed for various kinds of content. What's more, many articles include information about contributors, providing students with an

appreciation of where information comes from and the roles various people play in establishing a base of knowledge.

Britannica School also makes it easy for teachers to share lesson plans with their colleagues and also with students through the Lesson Plan share link. This allows teachers to dialog and collaborate on strategies and content that engages their students in critical thinking and other key skills. Students can add, tag, and share content with each other through the My Content feature. This feature also helps students hone their organization and editing skills; i.e., knowing what to keep, use, remove, and ignore. They can connect various pieces of content in new ways via the Explore function, find out key facts and figures about their world when they Compare Countries, peruse the Atlas, and use the Data function to become better-informed, well-rounded citizens.

Reinforcing the collaborative nature of information gathering and research, students can communicate directly with *Britannica* editors, a unique capability of the product that helps them learn first-hand how resources such as *Britannica School* are built and maintained over time.



ADDITIONAL PRODUCT EVALUATION QUESTIONS...

What are the credentials of *Britannica School's* developers?

Britannica School was developed by Britannica's renowned team of content contributors, editors, and curriculum specialists who probed for and used the extensive input of practicing educators representing the elementary, middle, and high school levels. These professionals also work with more than 4,000 specialists in their specific disciplines, including Pulitzer Prize winners, Nobel laureates, department heads, and leading scholars on the world stage. With the Common Core as a central focus, the development team honed in on specific standards that other resources may not directly address but where key achievement gaps typically occur; e.g., the building of knowledge, comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills through cross-curricular, nonfiction texts, making strategic use of digital media to express information, gathering relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, etc. The result is a resource that directly addresses the complex teaching and learning needs of educators and students all along the PreK-12 grade span.

What features are available to support students with different learning styles and ability levels?

Once students enter the Elementary, Middle School, or High School portal in *Britannica School*, search, and choose a piece of content to review, they also can select the appropriate reading level that makes the article accessible. Changing from one level to another to make the article easier to read or more challenging can be accomplished with a simple click.

Additional features of *Britannica School* that support

differentiated teaching and learning include read-aloud functionality, a font size changer, built-in translation features, and double-click dictionary in English and Spanish to support all types of learners, including ELLs. Students of varying ability levels also benefit from being able to create an individual login so they can save and organize their materials as they work.

What professional and technical support is provided to assist with product implementation?

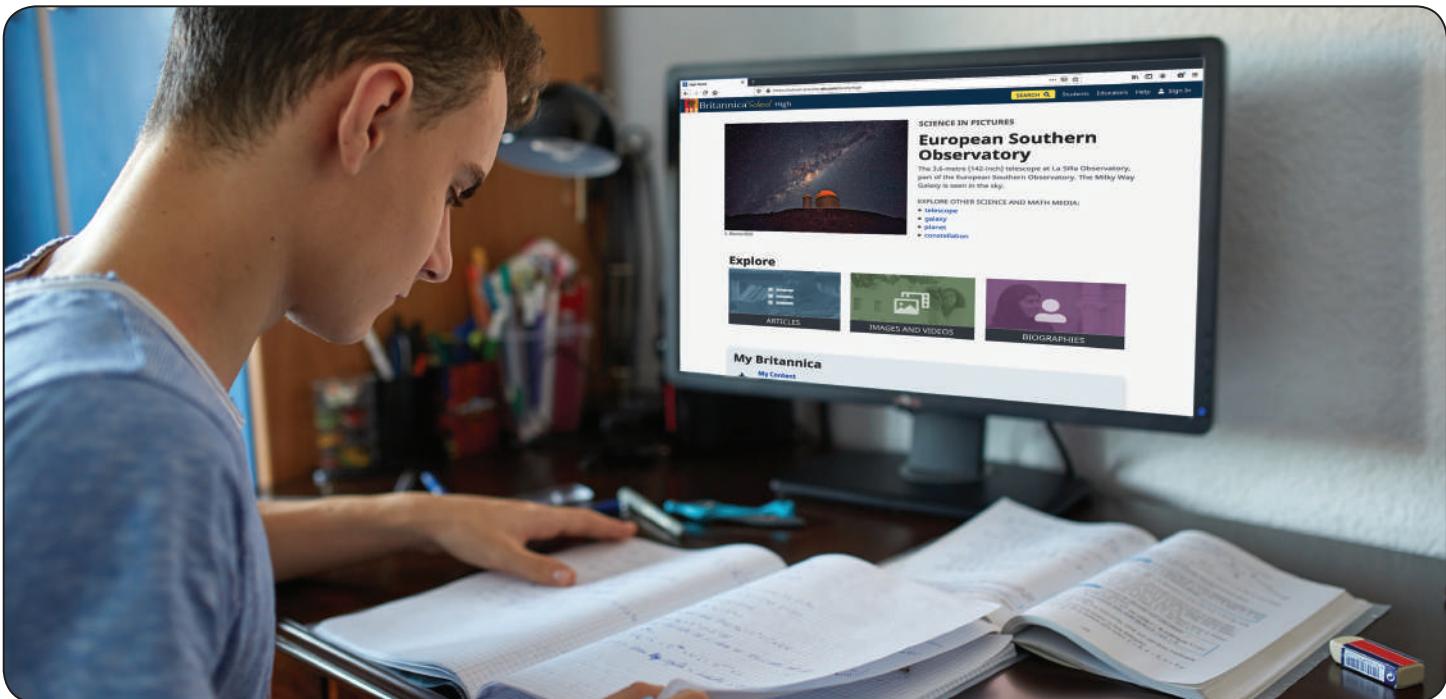
In addition to providing educators with access to its robust repository of up-to-date, accurate and engaging informational text resources, *Britannica School* also offers a wealth of searchable lesson plans, the ability to create and share lesson plans, study guides, manipulatives, and other helpful tools.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- What are the credentials of the people who developed this product?
- What features are available to support students with different learning styles and ability levels?
- What professional and technical support is provided to assist with product implementation?
- What does this product cost?



NEW STANDARDS REQUIRE NEW QUESTIONS (cont'd.)



Searchable correlations make it easy for teachers to find content that matches the standards they want to address. Teachers can also easily access the standards associated with a specific article they are interested in using for a lesson.

Through Britannica's Professional Development program, subscribers receive free monthly webinar training. This training provides a detailed walk-through of Britannica School's key functions, ongoing exploration of its many capabilities, and insights into how the product strengthens a focus on the Common Core and students' performance expectations. In addition, subscribing school districts can provide their teachers with access to Britannica's regular series of public webinars that connect Britannica's resources directly to the Common Core or to arrange for customized professional development.

What does this product cost?

Providing one student with access to *Britannica School*'s comprehensive and trusted nonfiction content for an entire year costs less than a small carton of milk. Pricing is generally based on the number of full-time equivalents related to student enrollment at the beginning of an academic year. For specific information about pricing for your state or school district or for answers to any additional questions, e-mail us at contact@eb.com.