The Common Core State Standards require students to deepen their thinking and master the challenging, nuanced academic content that will prepare them for success in college and a career. These clear and rigorous standards will change how millions of teachers approach their planning and instruction. But what does that look like in practice?

In TNTP’s 2013 edition of the Fishman Prize Series, Going Deep: Empowering Students to Take Risks, Make Mistakes and Master Difficult Material, four outstanding teachers share how they encourage their students to embrace inquiry, uncertainty and critical thinking to achieve outsized success in some of the most challenging classroom settings in the country. A resource for all teachers, Going Deep offers a starting point for useful discussion about ensuring instruction meets the fewer, higher and clearer standards set by the Common Core.

Pre-Reading and Discussion Structure

1. Propose Going Deep as a topic for discussion in ongoing meetings about instructional rigor or Common Core implementation, or suggest such a department or faculty meeting

2. Ask participants to download and read Going Deep by sharing this link: tntp.org/fishmanprizeseries

3. Assign a discussion facilitator to help guide the conversation, using this guide as a resource

4. Revisit the topic at a subsequent meeting to give teachers an opportunity to share how their classroom practice has evolved

Suggested Discussion Questions

Use these questions or add your own to spark the discussion. Encourage participants to be specific and focus on concrete examples from their classrooms.

- How do you see teachers demonstrating rigor in these essays?
  What specific strategies are the Fishman Prize winners using to help their students achieve Common Core-aligned academic goals? How could these be adapted to your classroom?

- How do you see Common Core changing your own approach to teaching?
  How will you tailor your texts or traditional instructional practices to meet the standards?

- How do you think about “rigor” in your own classroom?
  How do you know when a lesson is appropriately rigorous? What signals do you get from your students that they are tackling and mastering right-sized, challenging content?

- Which of the Common Core State Standards do you expect will be a particular “reach” for your students?
  What new strategies and skills will they need to develop to achieve success?

We invite you to join us on Facebook and Twitter to continue the discussion about rigor in the classroom and learn more about the annual Fishman Prize for Superlative Classroom Practice, which honors exceptionally effective teachers working in high-poverty public schools with $25,000 and a chance to share their expertise nationwide. If you know of a great teacher making a difference in the lives of low-income students, encourage them to apply to the 2014 Fishman Prize, at www.tntp.org/fishmanprize.