

# A Partnership for High-Quality Lessons

“BUILDING BETTER CLASSROOMS,” a three-year effort in Cleveland, Ohio, has enabled teachers in grades K–12 to take the lead in preparing high-quality instructional materials aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

The partnership between the Cleveland Teachers Union (CTU) and the Cleveland Metropolitan School District has produced about 280 lessons, which have been viewed 141,000 times on [ShareMyLesson.com](http://ShareMyLesson.com). And that’s just for students in grades K–2 and 3–5. More lessons written for grades 6–12 will be completed in spring 2015 and then posted on the site.

The key to Building Better Classrooms’ success—both locally and across the nation on Share My Lesson—was the vetting of each teacher’s lessons to ensure they were aligned to the instructional goals of the Common Core.

The Cleveland project, funded by the AFT Innovation Fund, included reviewers who were trained on the EQuIP rubric (Educators Evaluating the Quality of Instructional Products), a tool used by educators across the nation to align lessons and units to the standards. This tool was developed by Achieve Inc., a Washington, D.C.-based education nonprofit.

As they submitted their lessons, Cleveland teachers received individualized feedback from these reviewers—their peers—based on the rubric. Then, the union and district planned targeted professional learning opportunities to help teachers more deeply understand the new standards and how best to polish their lessons to meet the EQuIP criteria. So, in addition to yielding great lessons that have been downloaded nationwide, the project

helped the school district by building teachers’ expertise on the Common Core.

Mark Baumgartner, a high school English teacher and director of professional issues for the CTU, says the work hasn’t always been easy—but it’s been worthwhile and has yielded great insight into what’s needed to implement the standards correctly. For its part, the district has contributed part of the salary of Debbie Paden, a middle school teacher on assignment who manages Building Better Classrooms.

As a bonus, several of the project’s lessons have been classified as “exemplars” and are available on the website of Achieve. For more information, go to [www.achieve.org/EQuIP](http://www.achieve.org/EQuIP).

Here are a few examples of the lessons this group has produced:

## Compare and Contrast

<http://go.aft.org/AE115sm1>

In this second-grade English language arts unit, students will compare and contrast details of folktales and fairytales from around the world.

## Addition and Subtraction

<http://go.aft.org/AE115sm2>

This first-grade unit focuses on helping students learn to solve addition and subtraction problems.

## Number Partners

<http://go.aft.org/AE115sm3>

In this kindergarten unit, students work with small numbers to understand how pairs of numbers



form larger numbers, including the number 10.

## Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing

<http://go.aft.org/AE115sm4>

Use this comprehensive unit to teach a classic Judy Blume text to your fourth-graders.

