

The “What”: Key Content Shifts in the CCSS

Three Shifts in English Language Arts/Literacy:

1. **Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction** Building knowledge through content rich non-fiction plays an essential role in literacy and in the Standards. In K-5, fulfilling the standards requires a 50-50 balance between informational and literary reading. Informational reading primarily includes content rich non-fiction in history/social studies, science and the arts; the K-5 Standards strongly recommend that students build coherent general knowledge both within each year and across years. In 6-12, ELA classes place much greater attention to a specific category of informational text—literary nonfiction—than has been traditional. In grades 6-12, the Standards for literacy in history/social studies, science and technical subjects ensure that students can independently build knowledge in these disciplines through reading and writing. To be clear, the Standards do require substantial attention to literature throughout K-12, as half of the required work in K-5 and the core of the work of 6-12 ELA teachers.

2. **Reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational** The Standards place a premium on students writing to sources, i.e., using evidence from texts to present careful analyses, well-defended claims, and clear information. Rather than asking students questions they can answer solely from their prior knowledge or experience, the Standards expect students to answer questions that depend on their having read the text or texts with care. The Standards also require the cultivation of narrative writing throughout the grades, and in later grades a command of sequence and detail will be essential for effective argumentative and informational writing. Likewise, the reading standards focus on students’ ability to read carefully and grasp information, arguments, ideas and details based on text evidence. Students should be able to answer a range of *text-dependent* questions, questions in which the answers require inferences based on careful attention to the text.

3. **Regular practice with complex text and its academic language**

| K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9-10 | 11-12 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------|-------|
| Foundational Skills | | | | | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print concepts and alphabetic principle • Phonological awareness • Phonics and word recognition • Fluency | | | | | | <i>Although foundational skills are addressed prior to grade 6, students who struggle in these areas will need further support.</i> | | | | |
| Reading Literature and Informational Texts | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Focus on teaching students reading skills to engage with rigorous texts across a broad spectrum of content; balance the types of texts students read. *Percentages represent comprehensive use (teaching, learning, and student production) across a school year.</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance grades K-5 = 50%* literature; 50%* informational text | | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance grade 6-8 = 45%* literature; 55%* informational text • Balance grades 9-12 = 30%* literature; 70%* informational text | | | | |
| Literacy (Reading and Writing) in History/Social Studies, Science, and Other Technical Subjects | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Focus on teaching key ideas, details, using evidence from text to support conclusions, contextual vocabulary acquisition, and point of view.</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Writing Standards | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Focus on teaching the processes of writing, including a balance of text types and the role of argument in History/ social studies, and science *Percentages represent comprehensive use (teaching, learning, and student production) across a school year.</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Balance of writing types, including writing in the content areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By grade 4—opinion =30%; information = 35%; narrative =35% | | | | | | Balance of writing types, including writing in the content areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 8 – argument = 35%; information = 35%; narrative = 30% • Grade 12 – argument = 40%; information = 40%; narrative = 20% | | | | |
| Speaking & Listening Standards | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Focus on teaching use of rhetorical and critical thinking in speaking, listening, and collaborative study and work</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehension and collaboration • Presentation of knowledge and ideas • Evaluate speaker’s point of view | | | | | | | | | | |
| Language Standards | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Focus on teaching conventions of standard English, knowledge of language in different contexts, and vocabulary acquisition.</i> | | | | | | | | | | |

