



COMMON CORE
STATE STANDARDS

DELAWARE



A GUIDE TO THE SHIFTS IN THE ELA COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies,
Science, and Technical Subjects

Introduction

Building on the strength of Delaware’s current state standards, the ELA Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are designed to be: focused, coherent, clear and rigorous; internationally benchmarked; anchored in college and career readiness; evidence and research based. The ELA Common Core State Standards follow a framework that begins with College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards for the four component strands in ELA: *Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening*, and *Language* which are further defined by grade-specific standards. These overarching CCR standards, for each strand, are broken down into grade-level standards for K-8 and in grade bands for 9-10 and 11-12. To emphasize the need for literacy across the content areas, grades 6-12 include *Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects*; these standards are embedded at grades K-5.

The ELA Common Core State Standards signify the *need to change practice* in the areas of content, instruction, and assessment. In order to ensure these new standards prepare Delaware’s students to be college and career ready, educators need to focus on the “big” shifts that affect English Language Arts: a) building knowledge through content-rich literary nonfiction and informational texts; b) reading and writing grounded in evidence from text; and c) regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary. Delaware educators value the relationship between instruction and assessment knowing that each learner brings various experiences and expertise to our classrooms. This Guide divides the “big” shifts into six instructional shifts* and assessment shifts in order to provide greater support for educators.

Instructional Shifts	Assessment Shifts
PK-5, Balancing Informational & Literary Texts	A balance of authentic informational and literary texts
6-12, Building Knowledge in the Disciplines	Knowledge-based questions about discipline-specific, informational text
Staircase of Complexity	Higher level of text complexity appropriate to grade level
Text-Based Answers	Evidence from text, including paired passages, to make an argument, inform or explain; short, focused research
Writing from Sources	
Academic Vocabulary	Tier Two words which can be discerned from the text

*Adapted from engage^{NY}

The Guide is further organized to include instructional and administrative implications and resources. The instructional and administrative implications encourage such questions as: “What should be evident in instruction?”, “What can be done to prepare teachers for the shifts?” and, “What should administrators see in our classrooms?” While these questions are not exhaustive, they are a place to start to help us internalize the shifts and focus priorities. The resources include a video and organizational tool for each shift from *engage*^{ny}, along with other pertinent videos and articles, evidence from *the Common Core State Standards* and *Revised Publishers’ Criteria*. Below are helpful links to introductory videos on the ELA Common Core State Standards and The Six Shifts:

- ▶ [Common Core in ELA Literacy: An Overview](#)
- ▶ [Introductory Overview of The Six Shifts](#)

This document can be utilized by curriculum developers, administrators, and teachers individually or for group study and discussions of the shifts that affect the Delaware ELA Common Core State Standards. A suggested companion document is the [Delaware Department of Education Content Frameworks](#) which was designed to assist educators with ELA curriculum development and planning.

ELA Shift #1: PreK-5, Balance of Informational & Literary Texts

Instructional Shift:

Students should read a true balance of informational and literary texts. Elementary school classrooms are places where students access the world – science, social studies, the arts and literature – through text. At least 50% of what students should read is informational.

Assessment Shift:

Students need to be assessed with a balance of authentic informational and literary texts. CCSS-ELA emphasizes comparisons between informational and literary texts; this will have a direct impact on student success on assessments. (Liebling and Metzler, 2011)

Instructional Implications

- ▶ Provide students with equal exposure of informational and literary texts in the elementary grades (across disciplines)
- ▶ Increase exposure of literary nonfiction (across disciplines)
- ▶ Explicitly teach strategies for informational texts
- ▶ Teach through and with informational texts
- ▶ Explicitly teach reading comprehension skills in a similar manner across informational text and literature
- ▶ Build background knowledge to increase reading skills
- ▶ Provide opportunities for coherent instruction about content

Administrative Implications

- ▶ Provide the appropriate amount text types to ensure a balance of literary and informational text in classrooms
- ▶ Provide professional development and collaborative planning opportunities around the use of literary nonfiction and informational texts in instruction to include a coherent body of knowledge across grades
- ▶ Look for informational and literary text being used in instruction within the same unit
- ▶ Look for teachers building content knowledge through text
- ▶ Look for students confidently reading, discussing, and gathering evidence from informational text

Resources:

[Shift 1: PK-5 Balancing Informational Text and Literature](#)

(Video and Discussion Organizer)

[Balance of Informational and Literary Text](#) (Video)

CCSS with Appendices

The Standards aim to align instruction with the NAEP framework so that many more students than at present can meet the requirements of college and career readiness. In K-5, the Standards follow NAEP's lead in balancing the reading of literature with the reading of informational texts, including texts in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. (CCSS p.5 – includes NAEP Reading Framework)

Informational and Literary Nonfiction Text Types (Appendix B pp. 28, 53 and 70 for Grades K-5)

[Revised Publishers' Criteria K-2](#) The most notable shifts in the standards when compared to state standards include explicit preparation to read informational text and a requirement that students' reading material be substantive and linked in meaningful ways to content area learning. (p. 1) The standards call for elementary curriculum materials to be recalibrated to reflect a mix of 50 percent literary and 50 percent informational text, including reading in ELA, science, social studies, and the arts. (p. 6)

[Revised Publishers' Criteria 3-12](#) In grades 3–5, literacy programs shift the balance of texts and instructional time to include equal measures of literary and informational texts. (p. 5)

ELA Shift #2: 6-12, Building Knowledge in the Disciplines

Instructional Shift:

Literacy standards for grade 6 and above are predicated on teachers of ELA, history/social studies, science, and technical subjects using their content area expertise to help students meet the particular challenges of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language in their respective fields. (CCSS Introduction, p. 3). Content area teachers outside of the ELA classroom should emphasize literacy experiences in their planning and instruction. Students learn through domain-specific texts in science and social studies classrooms – rather than referring to the text, they are expected to learn from what they read.

Assessment Shift:

Assessments should include an expectation for students to compare and contrast information from primary and secondary sources beginning in grades 6-8; students should be expected to construct their understanding of a topic using multiple sources. Assessments will require critical thinking across texts, writing, and presentation. (Liebling & Metzler, 2011)

Instructional Implications

- ▶ All content area teachers teach content-area literacy
- ▶ Build background knowledge to increase reading skills
- ▶ Teach different approaches for different types of text
- ▶ Show students how to use text as a source of evidence
- ▶ Teach students how to locate and write about a topic using evidence from the text
- ▶ Model how to support an opinion with evidence
- ▶ Utilize primary and secondary sources in instruction

Administrative Implications

- ▶ Ensure school-wide content-area literacy; provide professional development and collaborative planning opportunities around content-area literacy
- ▶ Provide professional development, modeling, and collaborative planning of content-specific strategies vs. a generic list of strategies
- ▶ Look for teachers building content knowledge through text
- ▶ Look for students applying literacy skills with content area texts and handling primary and secondary documents with confidence

Resources:

[Shift 2: 6-12 Building Knowledge in the Disciplines](#)

(Video and Discussion Organizer)

[Literacy in Other Disciplines](#) (Video)

[Literary Nonfiction](#) (Video)

[Literary Nonfiction in Grades 6-12](#) (Video)

[Helping Students Meet the Reading CCSS in History/Social Studies and Science](#)

(PPT: Cynthia Shanahan, University of Illinois)

[Why Integrate Literacy and Social Studies](#) (Article by Emily M. Schell, Ed.D)

[Revised Publishers' Criteria 3-12](#) Students will integrate information drawn from charts, graphs, other formats, and media with information derived from texts. For additional guidance in Content Area Literacy see pp. 13-17.

[CCSS with Appendices](#) In the content classrooms grades 6-12: College and career ready reading in these fields requires an appreciation of the norms and conventions of each discipline, such as the kinds of evidence used in history and science; an understanding of domain-specific words and phrases; an attention to precise details; and the capacity to evaluate intricate arguments, synthesize complex information, and follow detailed descriptions of events and concepts. (pp. 60, 63)

[Literacy Concept Organizers for History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Texts](#): An unpacking of the Literacy Standards in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Texts.

ELA Shift #3: Staircase Complexity

Instructional Shift:

K–12 reading emphasizes text complexity as the most important factor in developing skilled readers (CCR.RL/RI.10). In order to prepare students for the complexity of college and career-ready texts, each grade level requires a “step” of growth on the “staircase”. Instruction should be centered around grade-appropriate text which requires close reading. Teachers should be patient and create more time and space in the curriculum for this close and careful reading and provide appropriate and necessary scaffolding and supports so that it is possible for all students reading below grade level to participate and learn.

Assessment Shift:

Passage and/or text selection for assessments need to be based on text complexity guidelines for each grade level. (CCSS Appendix A)

Instructional Implications

- ▶ Ensure students are engaged in more complex texts at every grade level
- ▶ K-2 need exposure to complex read alouds
- ▶ Engage students in rigorous conversations
- ▶ Give students more time on more complex texts
- ▶ Provide scaffolding; i.e., reading/thinking aloud, digital media to build background knowledge, collaborative routines such as reciprocal teaching, collaborative strategic reading
- ▶ Use leveled texts carefully to build independence; **do not** supplant opportunities for engagement with grade level complex text

Administrative Implications

- ▶ Ensure that complexity of text builds from grade-to-grade in accordance with R.CCR.10
- ▶ Review current grade level materials and resources to determine appropriate text complexity
- ▶ Provide professional development and collaborative planning to encourage the scaffolding of complex texts across a period of time
- ▶ Encourage teachers to allow students to productively struggle with complex texts
- ▶ Look for students who are productively struggling with complex texts

Resources:

[Shift 3: Staircase of Complexity](#) (Video and Discussion Organizer)
[Introduction to Text Complexity](#) (Video)
[Complex Text and its Implications in the Classroom](#) (Video)
[The Challenge of Challenging Text](#) (Article by Shanahan, Fisher and Frey)
[Kansas Text Complexity Tools](#)
[Preparing for Close Reading with Students](#) (Video)
[CCSSO Supporting District and Teachers with Text Complexity](#) (Webinar)
[CCSS with Appendices](#)
Text Complexity and the Growth of Comprehension (CCSS p. 8)
Standard 10: Range, Quality, and Complexity of Student Reading K-5; Range of Text Types K-5 (CCSS p. 31)

Standard 10: Range, Quality, and Complexity of Student Reading 6-12; Range of Text Types 6-12 (CCSS p. 57)
Appendix A: Text Complexity, Key Considerations, Grade Bands Associated with Lexiles (pp. 2-16)
Appendix B: Text Exemplars
[Revised Publishers' Criteria K-2](#) In addition to students learning to read texts at the K-2 level of complexity, the standards encourage students to encounter more complex texts to build knowledge through read-alouds. (p. 5)
[Revised Publishers' Criteria 3-12](#) Another key priority of the CCSS is a requirement that students be able to demonstrate their independent capacity to read at the appropriate level of complexity and depth. (pp.8-10)

ELA Shift #4: Text-Based Answers

Instructional Shift:

Students should have rich and rigorous conversations which are dependent on a common text. Teachers should insist that classroom experiences stay deeply connected to the text on the page and that students develop habits for making evidentiary arguments both in conversation, as well as writing to assess comprehension of a text.

Assessment Shift:

Questions in assessments should require students to gather evidence from the text, including from paired passages, and not rely on memorization. Give students opportunities to argue their beliefs around complex texts in assessments.

Instructional Implications

- ▶ Create opportunities for students to have deep, evidence-based conversations about text
- ▶ Teach students how to go back and find evidence in the text
- ▶ Ask and identify questions that are text-dependent
- ▶ Provide students with opportunities to read, reread, reference other texts, and to dig more deeply in order to answer questions

Administrative Implications

- ▶ Encourage teachers to spend more time teaching students how to revisit texts to find evidence and write stronger arguments
- ▶ Provide planning time for teachers to engage in text to craft appropriate text-dependent questions
- ▶ Create time for teachers to discuss expectations for students' text-based answers; what should writing/responses look like?
- ▶ Look for students who are excited to discuss their findings

Resources:

[Shift 4: Text-based Answers](#) (Video and Discussion Organizer)

[Text-Dependent Analysis in Action](#) (Video)

[Close Reading, Text-Based Answers and 6-12 Literacy](#) (Video)

[Text-Dependent Questions](#) (Guide to Creating Questions for Close Analytic Reading)

[CCSS with Appendices](#)

Students who meet the Standards readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature. They habitually perform the critical reading necessary to pick carefully through the staggering amount of information available today in print and digitally. (CCSS p.3)

Appendix B: Text exemplars are supplemented by brief performance tasks that further clarify the meaning of the Standards. These sample tasks illustrate specifically the application of the Standards to texts of sufficient complexity, quality, and range.

[Revised Publishers' Criteria K-2](#) Questions and tasks should require thinking about the text carefully and finding evidence in the text itself to support the response. (pp. 7-8)

[Revised Publishers' Criteria 3-12](#) Among the highest priorities of the Common Core State Standards is that students be able to read closely and gain knowledge from texts. (pp. 6-7)

Instructional Shift:

Writing needs to emphasize use of evidence to inform or make an argument rather than the personal narrative and other forms of decontextualized prompts. While the narrative still has an important role, students should develop skills through written arguments that respond to ideas, events, and facts that are presented in the texts they read. They should conduct short, focused research projects K-12. (Appendix A, pp. 24-26; student samples, Appendix C).

Assessment Shift:

Assessments need to include purposeful writing that requires text evidence to support reasoning. Students need to synthesize information from multiple texts and take notes to produce a coherent body of writing.

Instructional Implications

- ▶ Present opportunities to write from multiple sources about a single topic
- ▶ Provide opportunities for students to synthesize and analyze ideas and concepts across many texts in order to draw an opinion or conclusion
- ▶ Use mentor texts to teach text features and structures and apply them to writing
- ▶ Model expectations for writing; use rubrics and student work to help students learn how to self-evaluate
- ▶ Develop reading, writing, language, listening and speaking through short, focused research projects
- ▶ Provide time for collaboration to discuss findings

Administrative Implications

- ▶ Provide professional development and collaborative planning opportunities around opinion (K-5) and argumentation (6-12), informational, and narrative writing
- ▶ Provide collaborative planning for teachers to discuss expectations in students' writing
- ▶ Provide professional development and classroom resources for short, focused research projects
- ▶ Look for students' use of rubrics and work samples while self-evaluating and engaging in peer/teacher conferences
- ▶ Look for students synthesizing, analyzing and writing about information from multiple texts
- ▶ Look for students who are collaborating and excited about writing

Resources:

[Shift 5: Writing from Sources](#) (Video and Discussion Organizer)

[Writing to Inform and Make Arguments](#) (Video)

CCSS with Appendices

Distribution of Communicative Purposes by Grade in the 2011 NAEP Writing Framework (CCSS p.5)

Students have to become adept at gathering information, evaluating sources, citing material accurately, and reporting findings from their research and analysis of sources in a clear and cogent manner. (CCSS pp. 41, 63)

Definitions of the Three Writing Text Types (Appendix A, pp. 23-25)

Short research project: An investigation intended to address a narrowly tailored query in a brief period of time, as in a few class periods or a week of instructional time. (CCSS Appendix A, Glossary p. 43)
Appendix B: Text exemplars and performance tasks

[Revised Publishers' Criteria K-2](#) Writing assignments should be varied and ask students to draw on their experience, on their imagination, and most frequently on the texts they encounter through reading or read-alouds...will enable students to engage in a full range of writing. (pp.7-8)

[Revised Publishers' Criteria 3-12](#) Student writing should be responsive to the needs of the audience and the particulars of the text in question. Writing does not follow a formula but focuses on elements and characteristics of good writing. (pp. 11-12)

ELA Shift #6: Academic Vocabulary

Instructional Shift:

Academic vocabulary crosses content areas and is found in both informational and literary text; it is frequently seen on SAT tests. Students must constantly build the vocabulary they need to be able to access grade-level complex texts. By focusing strategically on the comprehension of pivotal and commonly found words (such as “discourse,” “generation,” “theory,” and “principled”) and less on esoteric literary terms (such as “onomatopoeia” or “homonym”), teachers build students’ ability to access more complex texts across the content areas.

Assessment Shift:

Students should be assessed directly on the meaning of key, common terms, that occur frequently and regularly across various content-area texts; the definition of which can be discerned from the text. Academic vocabulary can also be assessed indirectly through general comprehension of the text.

Instructional Implications

- ▶ Develop students’ ability to use and access words that appear in everyday text and that may be slightly out of reach
- ▶ Explicitly teach strategies that can be transferred across content-areas
- ▶ Discriminate between the tiers of vocabulary; choose Tier 2 vocabulary (academic) to teach before, during and after reading, listening and viewing. Teach Tier 3 vocabulary (domain-specific) in the context of the discipline
- ▶ Determine the words that students will read most frequently and spend the majority of time on those
- ▶ Teach fewer words; but, teach word associations rather than words in isolation

Administrative Implications

- ▶ Because language and vocabulary are integrated into all of the CCSS strands, provide collaborative time for teacher study groups that focus on language and vocabulary
- ▶ Provide training to teachers on strategically choosing vocabulary – 3 Tiers, with an understanding of academic vs. domain specific
- ▶ Look for explicit vocabulary instruction in which students are being taught transferrable strategies
- ▶ Look for students reading often and in varied texts
- ▶ Look for students discussing words in relation to previous knowledge, in the context of stories, digital media, and informational text

Resources:

[Shift 6: Academic Vocabulary](#) (Video and Discussion Organizer)

[Tennessee Academic Vocabulary](#) (Strategies, Content-Area Words Lists)

[Effective Vocabulary Instruction](#) (Tiers of Vocabulary)

[CCSS with Appendices](#)

The vocabulary standards focus on understanding words and phrases, their relationships, and nuances, and on acquiring new vocabulary, particularly general academic and domain-specific words and phrases. (CCSS p. 8)
Tier two words are referred to as general academic words; Tier three words are referred to as domain-specific words. (CCSS, Appendix A p. 33)

[Revised Publishers' Criteria K-2](#) When they enter school, students differ markedly in their vocabulary knowledge. Instruction in science, social studies, and the arts will be a major vehicle for enhancing students’ vocabulary because most new word learning takes place in the context of having to understand and express ideas about subject matter. (p. 4-5)

[Revised Publishers' Criteria 3-12](#) Of particular importance is building students’ academic vocabulary or Tier Two words. Informational texts that carefully sequence content within a domain will greatly support the development of these words while building student knowledge. (pp. 10, 17)

REFERENCES

engage^{ny} Instructional Shifts for the Common Core, www.engageny.org

K-12 Teachers: Building Comprehension in the Common Core, [Oregon Literacy Plan](#)

Liebling & Metzler, *Making a Difference in Student Achievement Using the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: What School and District Leaders Need to Know*, November 2011

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, [CCSS with Appendices](#)

Revised Publishers' Criteria for English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades K-2, [Revised Publishers' Criteria K-2](#)

Revised Publishers' Criteria for English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades 3-12, [Revised Publishers' Criteria 3-12](#)