

Key Instructional Shifts of the Common Core State Standards

English Language Arts/Literacy	
<p>1. Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction and informational texts</p>	<p>The standards address reading and writing across-the-curriculum that complement the content the standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects, thus offering new grounding in informational text and placing a premium on students building knowledge from that reading. In K-5, fulfilling the standards requires a 50-50 balance between informational and literary reading. The K-5 standards also 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.</p> <p>Part of the motivation behind the interdisciplinary approach to literacy in the standards is the established need that most required reading in college and workforce training programs is informational in structure and challenging in content.</p>
<p>2. Reading and writing grounded in evidence from text</p>	<p>Shifting away from today’s emphasis on narrative writing (in response to de-contextualized prompts), 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 from their prior knowledge or experience, the standards expect students to answer questions that depend on their having actually read the text.</p> <p>Likewise, the reading standards focus on students’ ability to read closely and grasp information, arguments, ideas and details based on text evidence. Students should be able to answer a range of <i>text-dependent</i> questions, questions in which the answers require no information from outside the text, but instead require inferences based on careful attention to the text.</p>
<p>3. Regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary</p>	<p>Rather than focusing solely on the skills of reading and writing, the standards highlight the growing complexity of the texts students must read to be ready for the demands of college and careers. The standards build a staircase of text complexity so that all students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading no later than the end of high school. Closely related to text complexity—and inextricably connected to reading comprehension—is a focus on academic vocabulary: words that appear in a variety of content areas (such as <i>ignite</i> and <i>commit</i>).</p>