

6 Key Shifts in Common Standards

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS/LITERACY

1. Informational Text

Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction and informational texts. At the elementary level, the standards call for a 50-50 balance between informational texts and literature. They shift the emphasis to 55 percent informational by middle school and 70 percent by high school. Such reading includes content-rich nonfiction in history/social studies, science, and the arts. Informational text is seen as a way for students to build coherent general knowledge, as well as reading and writing skills.

2. Citing Evidence

Reading and writing grounded in evidence from text.

The standards place a premium on students' use of evidence from texts to present careful analyses and well-defended claims. Rather than asking students questions they can answer solely from their prior knowledge or experience, the standards envision students' answering questions that depend on reading the text or texts with care. The standards also require the cultivation of narrative writing throughout the grades. The reading standards focus on students' ability to read carefully and grasp information, arguments, ideas, and details based on text evidence.

3. Complex Text

Regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary.

The standards build a "staircase" of increasing text complexity to prepare students for the types of texts they must read to be ready for the demands of college and careers. 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 "ignite" and "commit").

MATHEMATICS

4. Focus

Focus strongly where the standards focus.

Rather than racing to cover topics in a mile-wide, inch-deep curriculum, significantly narrow and deepen the way time and energy are spent in the math classroom. The standards focus deeply on the major work of each grade so that students can gain strong foundations: solid conceptual understanding, a high degree of procedural skill and fluency, and the ability to apply the math they know to solve problems inside and outside the math classroom.

5. Coherence

Think across grades, and link to major topics within grades.

The standards are designed around coherent progressions from grade to grade. Carefully connect the learning across grades so that students can build new understanding onto foundations built in previous years. Each standard is not a new event, but an extension of previous learning. Instead of allowing additional or supporting topics to detract from the focus of the grade, these topics can serve the grade-level focus.

6. Rigor

In major topics, pursue conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and application with equal intensity.

- Emphasize conceptual understanding of key concepts, such as place value and ratios. Teachers support students' ability to access concepts from a number of perspectives so that students are able to see math as more than a set of mnemonics or discrete procedures.
- Help students build speed and accuracy in calculation. Teachers structure class time and/or homework time for students to practice core functions, such as single-digit multiplication, so that they have access to more complex concepts and procedures.
- Use math flexibly for applications. Teachers provide opportunities for students to apply math in context. Teachers in content areas outside of math, particularly science, ensure that students are using math to make meaning of and access content.

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