

Common Core Standards and Best Practices

Introduction: The Common Core

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) represent a coherent progression of learning expectations in English language arts and mathematics. They are designed to prepare K-12 students for college and career success.

The English Language Arts (ELA) K-5 standards focus on six strands:

- Three Reading strands – Literature, Non-fiction, Foundational skills
- Writing
- Speaking and Listening, and
- Language.

Over the past decade, we have learned much about the use of informational text in elementary classrooms. We know the skills that students need for reading textbooks in math, science, and social studies differ significantly due to format and content specific vocabulary. Yet in the earliest grades, teachers tend to read fewer informational texts to students during read-aloud and guided instruction. Many students lack access to informational text within classroom libraries, reading programs, and even some school and public libraries.

Students need exposure and experience with informational text, early and often. With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), students in Grades K-5 should have access to and instruction involving 50% informational text and 50% literature within their classrooms. The CCSS emphasize four types of informational texts: literary nonfiction, expository, argument or persuasion, and procedural. Teachers should review each book they have in their classroom libraries through the lens of the CCSS, to ensure that a variety of quality of books are available.

The Common Core standards for informational text are divided into four areas:

- Key Ideas and Details,
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, and
- Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity.

Teachers should read and discuss with colleagues the Anchor Standards for Reading. Appendix B of the CCELA Standards provides a list of suggested, although not required, reading material.

Key Ideas and Details, as noted in the Anchor Standards for Reading, provide the foundation for students to:

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

- Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of the text.

In grades K and 1, high-interest texts are used as the teacher prompts and supports students in their understanding of key ideas and details. Students also learn how to describe connections between individuals, events, ideas and details within the text.

Craft and Structure, as noted in the Anchor Standards for Reading, provide the foundation for students to:

- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- Analyze the structure of texts including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
- Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

In grades K and 1, students work with text features, learning how books are organized. As students increase their interactions with print, they gain a deeper understanding of the role of the words and illustrations in text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, as noted in the Anchor Standards for Reading, provide the foundation for students to:

- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge to compare the approaches the authors take.

In grades K and 1, students use the illustrations and text to describe key ideas. Students also discuss and compare basic similarities and differences between two texts on the same subject.

Informational texts include: biographies, autobiographies, books about history, social studies, science, and the arts; technical texts, including directions, forms, and information displayed in graphs, charts, or maps; and digital sources on a range of topics.

Young children are usually intrigued by informational texts. Providing students opportunities to choose some of the topics to be read and studied increases their interest in listening, reading, and writing. The teacher's role becomes increasingly important as she models enthusiasm for the material to be read. The teacher provides tasks that are multisensory and offer appropriate challenge, yet allow students growing autonomy in completing tasks.

CCSS-ELA Reading Standards for Informational Text**Grade K****Key Ideas and Details**

1. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
2. With prompting and support, identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.
3. With prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.

Craft and Structure

4. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.
5. Identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book.
6. Name the author and illustrator of a text and define the role of each in presenting the ideas or information in a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. With prompting and support describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person, place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts).
8. With prompting and support, identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.
9. With prompting and support, identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., illustrations, descriptions, or procedures).

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Grade 1**Key Ideas and Details**

1. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
2. Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.
3. Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.

Craft and Structure

4. Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.
5. Know and use various text features (e.g., heading, tables of contents, glossaries, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text.
6. Distinguish between information provided by pictures of other illustrations and information provided by words in a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas.
8. Identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.
9. Identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., in illustrations, descriptions, or procedures).

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. With prompting and support, read informational texts appropriately complex for grade.

Direct Instruction

Utilizing Direct Instruction ensures that students will get the support they need to “own” new skills and concepts. The table below outlines the process used in direct instruction.

Teacher Explains Task	<p><u>Discuss How and When the Skill is to be Used</u> – Involve students in a conversation concerning why the skill should be learned and applied in their lives.</p> <p><u>Explain and Demonstrate the Skill</u> – Use simple yet accurate academic terms to move students to mastery.</p> <p><u>Engage Every Student</u> – Provide students with ongoing opportunities to ask questions. Carefully monitor students’ accurate use of all academic and content specific terms. Focus on higher order questions.</p>
Teacher Models Task (I do)	<p><u>The Teacher (I do)</u> - Model the new strategy explicitly (work to see the strategy from your students’ current background) and let your students see you use the strategy throughout the day, with lots of “I do it” on the part of the teacher. Students have to be actively engaged throughout the lesson, even when the teacher is “doing”—make sure they are NOT passive listeners. Engage them verbally and through response cards: yes/no cards, stop/go cards. Keep an ongoing list of how you keep your students actively involved throughout the lesson; this serves as a “reality check” to make sure students are kept actively engaged/involved, and also provides a quick-reference for effective methods you have used with your students.</p> <p><u>Explain and Demonstrate the Skill</u> – Use simple yet accurate academic terms to move students to mastery. “Think Aloud” procedures are most helpful.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">In a “Think Aloud,” the teacher models the thought processes that take place when difficult or unfamiliar material is read aloud. Teachers verbalize their thoughts as they read orally to students. The purpose is to assist students’ comprehension as they gain insight to how the mind can respond to what is known with what is being read.</p> <p>Work to increase the complexity of your examples and student work until the work is at grade-level or beyond. Move students to doing their own “Think Aloud.”</p> <p><u>Engage Every Student</u> – Provide students with ongoing opportunities to ask questions. Carefully monitor students’ accurate use of all academic and content specific terms. Focus on higher order questions.</p>

Teacher and Student Practice Task Together (we do)	<p><u>Engage Every Student</u> – Invite volunteers to attempt the strategy on their own. Give corrective feedback as needed, allowing for follow-up questions. All feedback (including praise) needs to be specific. Carefully monitor students’ accurate use of all academic and content specific terms. Provide students with ongoing opportunities to ask questions. Focus on higher order questions.</p>
Student Practice (you do)	<p><u>Access Student Ownership</u> – After many “I do it” and “we do it” examples, ease into “you do it” opportunities under your careful eye. Applying new learning accurately is crucial to future success. Student responses should give you a clear picture of their level of understanding and level of application.</p> <p><u>Engage Every Student</u> – Provide students with ongoing opportunities to ask questions. Invite volunteers to attempt the strategy on their own. Give corrective feedback as needed, allowing for follow-up questions. All feedback (including praise) needs to be specific. Carefully monitor students’ accurate use of all academic and content specific terms. Focus on higher order questions.</p> <p><u>Constructive Feedback</u> – Remember to begin with less complex examples with the goal of moving to grade level and above examples. Students may work independently, in pairs and or small groups. This is the perfect time for students to verbally state each step of the strategy, while giving their reason for the choices they are making.</p>
Scaffolding/ Constructive Feedback	<p><u>Constructive Feedback</u> – Remember to begin with less complex examples with the goal of moving to grade level and above examples. Students may work independently, in pairs and or small groups. This is the perfect time for students to verbally state each step of the strategy, while giving their reason for the choices they are making.</p> <p><u>Scaffolding and Differentiation</u> –At this time the teacher will need to provide additional opportunities for student practice (with immediate feedback and reteaching—with possible accommodations) to ensure all students have every opportunity to learn.</p> <p><u>Engage Every Student</u> – Provide students with ongoing opportunities to ask questions. Give corrective feedback as needed, allowing for follow-up questions. All feedback (including praise) needs to be specific. Carefully monitor students’ accurate use of all academic and content specific terms. Focus on higher order questions.</p>

Guide for Planning and Implementing Informational Text Lessons for Students in Grades K-1

This scope and sequence chart outlines the instructional topics in the standards. In the classroom, all of these topics are addressed multiple times, throughout the year.

Scope and Sequence (K-1)	
CCELA Strand	Instructional Topics
Foundational Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print Concepts • Phonological Awareness • Phonics & Word Recognition • Fluency
Reading: Literature and Informational Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Ideas and Details • Craft and Structure • Integration of Knowledge and Ideas • Text Complexity
Speaking & Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening Comprehension and Collaboration • Oral Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conventions of Standard English • Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text Types and Purposes • Production and Distribution of Writing • Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Note: Be careful not to front load—telling students too much, so there is nothing left to discover when material is read aloud to or by students.

When planning for informational text lessons, consider the appropriate level of text complexity (RI.K.10, RI.1.10) for your instructional goals, and find a book that will inform and interest your students.

Example of an Informational Text (Science)

National Geographic Kids Frogs by Elizabeth Carney

Level of text complexity:

- Recommended ages 5–8, Lexile Level 410
- Appropriate for Grade K and 1 if read aloud by the teacher

Recommendations for using *National Geographic Kids Frogs* with students in Grade K:

- No words will be pre-taught. (Words are clearly defined within the text.)
- Words will be written on cards or shown on an interactive whiteboard for students to see, hear pronounced, and pronounce for themselves.
 - splash ▪ ribbit ▪ disguise ▪ poison
 - habitat ▪ warns ▪ continent ▪ gills
 - croak ▪ puff ▪ crickets

Over one to two weeks, the teacher will cover Standards 1-9 within the **Reading: Information Text** strand (see chart, above). The teacher reads the text aloud multiple times, in its entirety. In addition, for each standard, the teacher will select a few pages that work well for highlighting the standard and for providing additional exposure to content specific vocabulary. Lesson plans can be built around those pages.

The teacher will choose one or two additional books about frogs to share during the teaching of *National Geographic Kids Frogs*, so students can practice comparing and contrasting texts on similar topics.

It is important to purposefully incorporate standards from other strands. The teacher will decide which standards to be covered, as she reflects on previous lessons and what students need for continued practice and additional exposure. Following are some suggestions.

- **Reading: Foundational Skills** (RF.K.1a, b, c, and RF.K.3c)
 1. Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.
 - a. Follow words from left to right, top to bottom, and page to page.
 - b. Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters.
 - c. Understand that words are separated by spaces in print.
 3. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.
 - c. Read common high-frequency words by sight (e.g., the, of, to, you, she, my, is, are, do, does).
- **Speaking & Listening** (SL.K.1a, and b, SL.K.2, and SL.K.3)
 1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
 - a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).
 - b. Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges.
 2. Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.
 3. Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.
- **Language** (L.K.1b, c, d, e, f and L.K.2a, b)
 1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
 - b. Use frequently occurring nouns and verbs.
 - c. Form regular plural nouns orally by adding /s/ or /es/ (dog, dogs; wish, wishes).
 - d. Understand and use questions words (interrogatives) (e.g., who, what, where, when, why, how).
 - e. Use the most frequently occurring prepositions (e.g., to from, in, out, on, off, for, of, by, with).
 - f. Produce and expand complete sentences in shared language activities.

2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
 - a. Capitalize the first word in a sentence and the pronoun *I*.
 - b. Recognize and name end punctuation.
- **Writing (W.K.2)**
 2. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

Resources for Finding Books

Seek out the following resources for finding trade books to use in your classroom

Outstanding Science Trade Books for Students K–12

Reading science trade books is the perfect way for students to build literacy skills while learning science content.

Notable Social Studies Trade Books For Young People

The titles provided were evaluated and selected by a Book Review Committee appointed by National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and assembled in cooperation with the Children's Book Council (CBC).

Reflection Tool for Teacher Use—Grade K

A challenge for Grade K teachers may well be their ability to “prompt and support” versus “telling” students. Teachers should closely monitor the amount of “teacher talk” compared to “student talk.”

Another challenge may lie in Grade K teachers' awareness of quality informational text.

Key Ideas and Details

- ☒ Where in the lesson did I prompt and support students in asking and answering questions concerning key details in the text?
- ☒ Where in the lesson did I prompt and support students in identifying the main topic and retell key details of the text?
- ☒ Where in the lesson did I prompt and support students in identifying the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in the text being read.

Craft and Structure

- ☒ Where in the lesson did I prompt and support students in determining the meaning of unknown words in the text?
- ☒ Where in the lesson did I provide students the opportunity to identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book?
- ☒ Where in the lesson did I provide students the opportunity to define the role of the author and illustrator of the text?

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- ☒ Where in the lesson did I prompt and support students in describing the relationship between the illustrations and the text?
- ☒ Where in the lesson did I prompt and support students in identifying the reasons an author gave to support points in the text?
- ☒ Where in the lesson did I prompt and support students in identifying basic similarities and differences between two texts on the same topic?

Reflection Tool for Teacher Use—Grade 1

Teachers will want to monitor the amount of “teacher talk” versus “student talk” throughout every lesson. Students should be encouraged to answer in complete sentences—doing so greatly increases a students’ ability to write in complete sentences.

Key Ideas and Details

- ☒ Where in the lesson did I provide students the opportunity to answer questions concerning the key details in the text?
- ☒ Where in the lesson did I provide students the opportunity to identify the main topic and retell key details in the text?
- ☒ Where in the lesson did I provide students with the opportunity to describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in the text?

Craft and Structure

- ☒ Where in the lesson did I provide students the opportunity to ask and answer questions to determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in the text?
- ☒ Where in the lesson did I provide students the opportunity to understand and use various text features to locate key facts or information in the text? (e.g., headings, tables of contents, glossaries, electronic menus, icons)
- ☒ Where in the lesson did I provide students the opportunity to distinguish between information provided by pictures or other illustrations and informational provided by the words in the text?

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- ☒ Where in the lesson did I provide students the opportunity to use the illustrations and details in a text to describe key ideas?
- ☒ Where in the lesson did I provide students the opportunity to identify reasons the author gave to support a point in the text?
- ☒ Where in the lesson did I provide students the opportunity to identify basic similarities and differences between two texts on the same topic concerning illustrations, descriptions, or procedures?

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