

Common Core Shifts for English/Language Arts and Literacy

1. Building knowledge through **content-rich nonfiction**

Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction 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 nonfiction 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, English/language arts (ELA) classes place a greater emphasis on 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 central 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**

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 career. 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 *ignite* and *commit*.

More on the shifts at achievethecore.org

Common Core Shifts for Mathematics

1. **Focus** strongly on the topics emphasized in the standards

Focus: The standards call for a greater focus in mathematics. Rather than racing to cover topics in today's mile-wide, inch-deep curriculum, teachers use the power of the eraser and significantly narrow and deepen the way time and energy is spent in the mathematics classroom. They 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 mathematics they know to solve problems inside and outside the mathematics classroom.

2. **Coherence: Think** across grades, and **link** to major topics* within grades

Thinking across grades: The standards are designed around coherent progressions from grade to grade. Principals and teachers carefully connect learning across grades so that students can build new understanding onto foundations developed in previous years. Teachers can begin to count on students having a deep conceptual understanding of core content and build on it. Each standard is not a new event, but an extension of previous learning.

Linking to major topics: Instead of allowing additional or supporting topics to detract from the focus of the grade, these topics can serve the grade level focus. For example, instead of data displays as an end in themselves, they support grade-level word problems.

3. **Rigor:** In major topics* pursue:

- **conceptual understanding;**
- procedural skill and **fluency;** and
- **application** with equal intensity

Conceptual understanding: The standards call for 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 mathematics as more than a set of mnemonics or discrete procedures.

Procedural skill and fluency: The standards call for speed and accuracy in calculation. Teachers structure class time and/or homework for students to practice core functions, such as single-digit multiplication, so that students have access to more complex concepts and procedures.

Application: The standards call for students to use mathematics flexibly for applications. Teachers provide opportunities for students to apply mathematics in context. Teachers in content areas outside of mathematics, particularly science, ensure that students are using mathematics to make meaning of and access content.

Grade * Major Topics that Support Expectations of Fluency and Conceptual Understanding

K–2	Addition and subtraction – concepts, skills, problem solving, and place value
3–5	Multiplication and division of whole numbers and fractions – concepts, skills, and problem solving
6	Ratios and proportional reasoning, early expressions and equations
7	Ratios and proportional reasoning, arithmetic of rational numbers
8	Linear algebra, linear functions