

Common Core Shifts in ELA/Literacy: Implications for Students, Teachers, and Administrators

ELA/Literacy Shift 1: Balancing Informational and Literary Text

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

What the Student Does...	What the Teacher Does...	What the Administrator Does...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build background knowledge to increase reading skill • Exposure to the world through reading • Apply strategies to reading informational text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students equal #s of informational and literary texts • Ensure coherent instruction about content • Teach strategies for informational texts • Teach “through” and “with” informational texts • Scaffold for the difficulties that informational text present to students • Ask students, “What is connected here? How does this fit together? What details tell you that?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase and provide equal amounts of informational and literacy text to students • Hold teachers accountable for building student content knowledge through text • Provide PD and co-planning opportunities for teachers to become more intimate with non fiction texts and the way they spiral together

ELA/Literacy Shift 2: Knowledge in the Disciplines

Content area teachers outside of the ELA classroom 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.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become better readers by building background knowledge • Handle primary source documents with confidence • Infer, like a detective, where the evidence is in a text to support an argument or opinion • See the text itself as a source of evidence (what did it say vs. what did it not say?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift identity: “I teach reading.” • Stop referring and summarizing and start reading • Slow down the history and science classroom • Teach different approaches for different types of texts • Treat the text itself as a source of evidence • Teach students to write about evidence from the text • Teach students to support their opinion with evidence. • Ask: “How do you know? Why do you think that? Show me in the text where you see evidence for your opinion.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and demand the role of all teachers in advancing students’ literacy • Provide guidance and support to ensure the shift to informational texts for 6-12 • Give teachers permission to slow down and deeply study texts with students
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ELA/Literacy Shift 3: Staircase of Complexity

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”. Students read the central, grade appropriate text around which the instruction is centered. Teachers are patient, create more time and space in the curriculum for this close and careful reading, and apply appropriate and necessary scaffolding and supports so that it is possible for students reading below grade level.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read to see what more they can find and learn as they re-read texts again and again • Read material at own level to build joy of reading and pleasure in the world • Be persistent despite challenges when reading; good readers tolerate frustration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure students are engaged in more complex texts at every grade level • Engage students in rigorous conversation • Provide experience with complex texts • Give students less to read, let them re-read • Use leveled texts carefully to build independence in struggling readers • More time on more complex texts • Provide scaffolding • Engage with texts w/ other adults • Get kids inspired and excited about the beauty of language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that complexity of text builds from grade to grade. • Look at current scope and sequence to determine where/how to incorporate greater text complexity • Allow and encourage teachers to build a unit in a way that has students scaffold to more complex texts over time • Allow and encourage teachers the opportunity to share texts with students that may be at frustration level
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ELA/Literacy Shift 4: Text Based Answers

Students have rich and rigorous conversations which are dependent on a common text. Teachers 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 in writing to assess comprehension of a text.

What the Student Does...	What the Teacher Does...	What the Administrator Does...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go back to text to find evidence to support their argument in a thoughtful, careful, precise way • Develop a fascination with reading • Create own judgments and become scholars, rather than witnesses of the text • Conducting reading as a close reading of the text and engaging with the author and what the author is trying to say 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate evidence based conversations with students, dependent on the text • Have discipline about asking students where in the text to find evidence, where they saw certain details, where the author communicated something, why the author may believe something; show all this in the words from the text. • Plan and conduct rich conversations about the stuff that the writer is writing about. • Keep students in the text • Identify questions that are text-dependent, worth asking/exploring, deliver richly. • Provide students the opportunity to read the text, encounter references to another text, another event and to dig in more deeply into the text to try and figure out what is going on. • Spend much more time preparing for instruction by reading deeply. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow teachers the time to spend more time with students writing about the texts they read- and to revisit the texts to find more evidence to write stronger arguments. • Provide planning time for teachers to engage with the text to prepare and identify appropriate text-dependent questions. • Create working groups to establish common understanding for what to expect from student writing at different grade levels for text based answers. • Structure student work protocols for teachers to compare student work products; particularly in the area of providing evidence to support arguments/conclusions.

ELA/Literacy Shift 5: Writing from Sources

Writing needs to emphasize the 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 develop skills through written arguments that respond to the ideas, events, facts, and arguments presented in the texts they read.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to generate own informational texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect that students will generate their own informational texts (spending much less time on personal narratives) • Present opportunities to write from multiple sources about a single topic. • Give opportunities to analyze, synthesize ideas across many texts to draw an opinion or conclusion. • Find ways to push towards a style of writing where the voice comes from drawing on powerful, meaningful evidence. • Give permission to students to start to have their own reaction and draw their own connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build teacher capacity and hold teachers accountable to move students towards informational writing
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ELA/Literacy Shift 6: Academic Vocabulary

Students constantly build the vocabulary they need to access grade level complex texts. By focusing strategically on 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 constantly build students’ ability to access more complex texts across the content areas.

What the Student Does...	What the Teacher Does...	What the Administrator Does...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend more time learning words across “webs” and associating words with others instead of learning individual, isolated vocabulary words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop students’ ability to use and access words that show up in everyday text and that may be slightly out of reach • Be strategic about the kind of vocabulary you’re developing and figure out which words fall into which categories- tier 2 vs. tier 3 • Determine the words that students are going to read most frequently and spend time mostly on those words • Teach fewer words but teach the webs of words around it • Shift attention on how to plan vocabulary meaningfully using tiers and transferability strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training to teachers on the shift for teaching vocabulary in a more meaningful, effective manner.