

STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

The Standards Shifts

Louisiana’s ELA standards help students make meaning of text and communicate about text. They are the skills that help students process the content of text. These new standards ask students to go deeper in their exploration of ELA content, and thus require teachers to shift their instruction.

These major shifts include:

Shift 1: Practice with complex and varied text and its academic language.

Definition of this shift. In careers, college, and life, students will regularly have to read complex and varied materials, make meaning of them, and act on what they have read. The standards call for students to practice these real-life skills so they are prepared to excel outside of a K-12 classroom. Research shows one factor that distinguishes a college- and career-ready student from one who is not ready is the ability to read and understand grade-level complex text. It is essential, then, that students have access to text with academic language, including rich vocabulary and complex sentence structure. Students should also read varied texts, including a balance of informational and literary texts in ELA classrooms across the year. Informational texts include content-rich nonfiction in history/social studies, science, the arts, and literary texts include fictional texts such as novels, short stories, and poetry. To be clear, the standards do require substantial attention to literature throughout K-12, at least 50% of the time in ELA classes.

Illustration from the unit plans. All of the included unit plans use anchor texts at or above the complexity level of that grade level and provide teachers with guidance in how to support students in reading and understanding those complex texts. To support teachers and students exploring rigorous texts, the sample daily instructional tasks include guidance on how to help students (1) read the text, (2) understand the text, (3) express the meaning of the text. The first two sections of these tasks help all students engage with grade-level text. Below is an example of a daily task from the [grade 7 unit for A Christmas Carol](#) that integrates standards to help all students read grade-level text.

READ THE TEXT: Have students read “History of Christmas” from BBC independently prior to analyzing the text in pairs. Read aloud Stave II of *A Christmas Carol* as students follow along and summarize the stave as a class. (RL.7.2) Then ask students to take note of Dickens’s language at the beginning of Stave II. Divide the students into pairs and have them partner to read the first 20 paragraphs of Stave II aloud. Discuss: What is the effect of repetition and sound devices in first part of Stave II (RL.7.1, RL.7.4)? Then have students read Stave III in pairs and summarize the text (RL.7.2, RL.7.10).

Shift 2: Writing and speaking should connect to and support the reading of text.

Definition of this shift. Just as students must read complex and varied text given expectations for college, careers, and life, students must also communicate effectively about that text. Writing and speaking are not meant to happen in isolation—they help students and adults communicate their ideas about the information they are taking in (from text and other sources). Thus, in classrooms, the standards push teachers and students to connect reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language, as every input (reading, listening, and language) must have an output (writing, speaking, and language) and vice versa. Even more, 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.

Illustration from the unit plans. Throughout the plans, students are asked to express their understanding of text through writing or speaking. From the same lesson noted above from *A Christmas Carol*, the daily task then asks students to write in response to the text with this culminating daily activity.

7 Assessments will measure whether students can read sufficiently complex texts independently. Research shows that the ability to read and understand complex text is what differentiates high performers from low performers and indicates readiness for college and careers. Assessment passages will be sufficiently complex for the grade level and will represent a range of complexity from readily accessible to very complex.

7

EXPRESS UNDERSTANDING: Have students continue to maintain their reading logs, tracking and writing about Scrooge’s reactions to the setting, his interactions with each ghost, and what he learns from his experiences throughout Staves II and III. Teachers provide feedback to students on their logs for Stave I or have students exchange reading logs and provide feedback to each other before beginning Stave II so that students can improve the quality of their evidence selection and written analysis. (RL.7.1, RL.7.2, RL.7.3)


Shift 3: The goal is comprehension of text, not mastery of a skill or strategy.


Definition of this shift. Students must use the standards in connection with each other to make meaning of text. The standards are not meant to be addressed once in isolation and then checked off, never to be addressed again. Teachers must identify what needs to be taught with each particular text and then select the most important related standards that will help a student make meaning of that particular text. Students use combinations of skills and strategies to help them read, understand, and express their understanding about text. Thus, the standards are not isolated skills that can be mastered through individual, disconnected lessons. Rather, the standards represent outcomes for reading, understanding, and expressing understanding of quality complex texts. Throughout a given year, then, students will work with the same standards again and again in the context of different texts to build independence in reading and understanding grade-level complex texts.

Illustration from the unit plans: *The unit plans (and the examples above) provide tasks that illustrate how students use the skills of the standards to understand complex texts. Students are being asked to work with the same standards again and again with different texts.*

Standards are the tools students use to make meaning of and communicate about text. Louisiana’s new standards, the plans included in this guidebook, and the online ELA instructional framework help teachers make these shifts.

To find your grade-level standards, go to the [“Appendix”](#) of this document.

To find learning modules to help you better understand the standards, go to the  [standards page](#)¹⁰ in the Teacher Support Toolbox.

The new ELA standards are well  [researched](#).¹¹ Do not miss out on reviewing the research behind this approach to ELA instruction.

¹⁰ <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/classroom-support-toolbox/teacher-support-toolbox/standards>

¹¹ <http://www.achievethecore.org/dashboard/2/search/1/1/0/1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8/9/10/11/12/page/405/ela-literacy-research-and-articles>