

English–Language Arts  
Content Standards  
for California  
Public Schools  
Kindergarten Through  
Grade Twelve



*Adopted by the*  
California State Board  
of Education  
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# Grade Eight

## READING

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### 1.0 Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development

Students use their knowledge of word origins and word relationships, as well as historical and literary context clues, to determine the meaning of specialized vocabulary and to understand the precise meaning of grade-level-appropriate words.

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#### *Vocabulary and Concept Development*

- 1.1 Analyze idioms, analogies, metaphors, and similes to infer the literal and figurative meanings of phrases.
- 1.2 Understand the most important points in the history of English language and use common word origins to determine the historical influences on English word meanings.
- 1.3 Use word meanings within the appropriate context and show ability to verify those meanings by definition, restatement, example, comparison, or contrast.

### 2.0 Reading Comprehension (Focus on Informational Materials)

Students read and understand grade-level-appropriate material. They describe and connect the essential ideas, arguments, and perspectives of the text by using their knowledge of text structure, organization, and purpose. The selections in *Recommended Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* illustrate the quality and complexity of the materials to be read by students. In addition, students read one million words annually on their own, including a good representation of narrative and expository text (e.g., classic and contemporary literature, magazines, newspapers, online information).

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#### *Structural Features of Informational Materials*

- 2.1 Compare and contrast the features and elements of consumer materials to gain meaning from documents (e.g., warranties, contracts, product information, instruction manuals).
- 2.2 Analyze text that uses proposition and support patterns.

*Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text*

- 2.3 Find similarities and differences between texts in the treatment, scope, or organization of ideas.
- 2.4 Compare the original text to a summary to determine whether the summary accurately captures the main ideas, includes critical details, and conveys the underlying meaning.
- 2.5 Understand and explain the use of a complex mechanical device by following technical directions.
- 2.6 Use information from a variety of consumer, workplace, and public documents to explain a situation or decision and to solve a problem.

*Expository Critique*

- 2.7 Evaluate the unity, coherence, logic, internal consistency, and structural patterns of text.

**3.0 Literary Response and Analysis**

Students read and respond to historically or culturally significant works of literature that reflect and enhance their studies of history and social science. They clarify the ideas and connect them to other literary works. The selections in *Recommended Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* illustrate the quality and complexity of the materials to be read by students.

*Structural Features of Literature*

- 3.1 Determine and articulate the relationship between the purposes and characteristics of different forms of poetry (e.g., ballad, lyric, couplet, epic, elegy, ode, sonnet).

*Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text*

- 3.2 Evaluate the structural elements of the plot (e.g., subplots, parallel episodes, climax), the plot's development, and the way in which conflicts are (or are not) addressed and resolved.
- 3.3 Compare and contrast motivations and reactions of literary characters from different historical eras confronting similar situations or conflicts.
- 3.4 Analyze the relevance of the setting (e.g., place, time, customs) to the mood, tone, and meaning of the text.
- 3.5 Identify and analyze recurring themes (e.g., good versus evil) across traditional and contemporary works.
- 3.6 Identify significant literary devices (e.g., metaphor, symbolism, dialect, irony) that define a writer's style and use those elements to interpret the work.

*Literary Criticism*

- 3.7 Analyze a work of literature, showing how it reflects the heritage, traditions, attitudes, and beliefs of its author. (Biographical approach)

# WRITING

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## 1.0 Writing Strategies

Students write clear, coherent, and focused essays. The writing exhibits students' awareness of audience and purpose. Essays contain formal introductions, supporting evidence, and conclusions. Students progress through the stages of the writing process as needed.

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### *Organization and Focus*

- 1.1 Create compositions that establish a controlling impression, have a coherent thesis, and end with a clear and well-supported conclusion.
- 1.2 Establish coherence within and among paragraphs through effective transitions, parallel structures, and similar writing techniques.
- 1.3 Support theses or conclusions with analogies, paraphrases, quotations, opinions from authorities, comparisons, and similar devices.

### *Research and Technology*

- 1.4 Plan and conduct multiple-step information searches by using computer networks and modems.
- 1.5 Achieve an effective balance between researched information and original ideas.

### *Evaluation and Revision*

- 1.6 Revise writing for word choice; appropriate organization; consistent point of view; and transitions between paragraphs, passages, and ideas.

## 2.0 Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

Students write narrative, expository, persuasive, and descriptive essays of at least 500 to 700 words in each genre. Student writing demonstrates a command of standard American English and the research, organizational, and drafting strategies outlined in Writing Standard 1.0.

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Using the writing strategies of grade eight outlined in Writing Standard 1.0, students:

- 2.1 Write biographies, autobiographies, short stories, or narratives:
  - a. Relate a clear, coherent incident, event, or situation by using well-chosen details.
  - b. Reveal the significance of, or the writer's attitude about, the subject.
  - c. Employ narrative and descriptive strategies (e.g., relevant dialogue, specific action, physical description, background description, comparison or contrast of characters).
- 2.2 Write responses to literature:
  - a. Exhibit careful reading and insight in their interpretations.
  - b. Connect the student's own responses to the writer's techniques and to specific textual references.
  - c. Draw supported inferences about the effects of a literary work on its audience.
  - d. Support judgments through references to the text, other works, other authors, or to personal knowledge.
- 2.3 Write research reports:
  - a. Define a thesis.
  - b. Record important ideas, concepts, and direct quotations from significant information sources and paraphrase and summarize all perspectives on the topic, as appropriate.
  - c. Use a variety of primary and secondary sources and distinguish the nature and value of each.
  - d. Organize and display information on charts, maps, and graphs.
- 2.4 Write persuasive compositions:
  - a. Include a well-defined thesis (i.e., one that makes a clear and knowledgeable judgment).
  - b. Present detailed evidence, examples, and reasoning to support arguments, differentiating between facts and opinion.
  - c. Provide details, reasons, and examples, arranging them effectively by anticipating and answering reader concerns and counterarguments.
- 2.5 Write documents related to career development, including simple business letters and job applications:
  - a. Present information purposefully and succinctly and meet the needs of the intended audience.
  - b. Follow the conventional format for the type of document (e.g., letter of inquiry, memorandum).
- 2.6 Write technical documents:
  - a. Identify the sequence of activities needed to design a system, operate a tool, or explain the bylaws of an organization.
  - b. Include all the factors and variables that need to be considered.
  - c. Use formatting techniques (e.g., headings, differing fonts) to aid comprehension.

## WRITTEN AND ORAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

The standards for written and oral English language conventions have been placed between those for writing and for listening and speaking because these conventions are essential to both sets of skills.

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### 1.0 Written and Oral English Language Conventions

Students write and speak with a command of standard English conventions appropriate to this grade level.

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#### *Sentence Structure*

- 1.1 Use correct and varied sentence types and sentence openings to present a lively and effective personal style.
- 1.2 Identify and use parallelism, including similar grammatical forms, in all written discourse to present items in a series and items juxtaposed for emphasis.
- 1.3 Use subordination, coordination, apposition, and other devices to indicate clearly the relationship between ideas.

#### *Grammar*

- 1.4 Edit written manuscripts to ensure that correct grammar is used.

#### *Punctuation and Capitalization*

- 1.5 Use correct punctuation and capitalization.

#### *Spelling*

- 1.6 Use correct spelling conventions.

## LISTENING AND SPEAKING

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### 1.0 Listening and Speaking Strategies

Students deliver focused, coherent presentations that convey ideas clearly and relate to the background and interests of the audience. They evaluate the content of oral communication.

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#### *Comprehension*

- 1.1 Analyze oral interpretations of literature, including language choice and delivery, and the effect of the interpretations on the listener.
- 1.2 Paraphrase a speaker's purpose and point of view and ask relevant questions concerning the speaker's content, delivery, and purpose.

#### *Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication*

- 1.3 Organize information to achieve particular purposes by matching the message, vocabulary, voice modulation, expression, and tone to the audience and purpose.
- 1.4 Prepare a speech outline based upon a chosen pattern of organization, which generally includes an introduction; transitions, previews, and summaries; a logically developed body; and an effective conclusion.
- 1.5 Use precise language, action verbs, sensory details, appropriate and colorful modifiers, and the active rather than the passive voice in ways that enliven oral presentations.
- 1.6 Use appropriate grammar, word choice, enunciation, and pace during formal presentations.
- 1.7 Use audience feedback (e.g., verbal and nonverbal cues):
  - a. Reconsider and modify the organizational structure or plan.
  - b. Rearrange words and sentences to clarify the meaning.

#### *Analysis and Evaluation of Oral and Media Communications*

- 1.8 Evaluate the credibility of a speaker (e.g., hidden agendas, slanted or biased material).
- 1.9 Interpret and evaluate the various ways in which visual image makers (e.g., graphic artists, illustrators, news photographers) communicate information and affect impressions and opinions.

## 2.0 Speaking Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

Students deliver well-organized formal presentations employing traditional rhetorical strategies (e.g., narration, exposition, persuasion, description). Student speaking demonstrates a command of standard American English and the organizational and delivery strategies outlined in Listening and Speaking Standard 1.0.

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Using the speaking strategies of grade eight outlined in Listening and Speaking Standard 1.0, students:

- 2.1 Deliver narrative presentations (e.g., biographical, autobiographical):
  - a. Relate a clear, coherent incident, event, or situation by using well-chosen details.
  - b. Reveal the significance of, and the subject's attitude about, the incident, event, or situation.
  - c. Employ narrative and descriptive strategies (e.g., relevant dialogue, specific action, physical description, background description, comparison or contrast of characters).
- 2.2 Deliver oral responses to literature:
  - a. Interpret a reading and provide insight.
  - b. Connect the students' own responses to the writer's techniques and to specific textual references.
  - c. Draw supported inferences about the effects of a literary work on its audience.
  - d. Support judgments through references to the text, other works, other authors, or personal knowledge.
- 2.3 Deliver research presentations:
  - a. Define a thesis.
  - b. Record important ideas, concepts, and direct quotations from significant information sources and paraphrase and summarize all relevant perspectives on the topic, as appropriate.
  - c. Use a variety of primary and secondary sources and distinguish the nature and value of each.
  - d. Organize and record information on charts, maps, and graphs.
- 2.4 Deliver persuasive presentations:
  - a. Include a well-defined thesis (i.e., one that makes a clear and knowledgeable judgment).
  - b. Differentiate fact from opinion and support arguments with detailed evidence, examples, and reasoning.
  - c. Anticipate and answer listener concerns and counterarguments effectively through the inclusion and arrangement of details, reasons, examples, and other elements.
  - d. Maintain a reasonable tone.
- 2.5 Recite poems (of four to six stanzas), sections of speeches, or dramatic soliloquies, using voice modulation, tone, and gestures expressively to enhance the meaning.