

Appendix: Key Instructional Shifts for English Language Arts



Shifting instructional practice is central to improving teaching and learning. The 2021 revisions to Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for English Language Arts, per Nebraska revised statute 79-76.001, require a number of key shifts in classroom practice and consideration of curricular materials that are essential to realize the vision of excellent literacy instruction. This document provides an overview of the key instructional shifts for English Language Arts and the roles that teachers, students, and school leaders* have in the stages of their implementation.

ELA/Literacy Shift 1: Science of Reading/Foundations of Reading | The revised standards are designed around the *Science of Reading* which is a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about how young children learn to read. The *Foundations of Reading* standards and indicators at each grade level outline a carefully sequenced progression of skills that should inform instruction of phonology, sound-symbol association, syllables, morphology, syntax, and semantics. A systematic, cumulative approach ensures all students attain early literacy proficiency.

Teachers...

- Provide explicit instruction in print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency.
- Provide frequent, meaningful opportunities for practice of newly acquired skills.
- Progress monitor with diagnostic assessments.
- Differentiate instruction for struggling readers.

School leaders...

- Provide systematic early literacy training based on the science of reading.
- Provide access to HQIMs and ongoing support for their implementation.
- Create structures that maximize core instruction during literacy blocks.
- Ensure school environments are print-rich.

Students...

- Orally practice phonemic awareness activities.
- Engage in frequent, meaningful practice of emerging skills.
- Read high-quality decodable texts at school and at home.
- Self-select literary and informational texts based on their interests.

ELA/Literacy Shift 2: Staircase of Complexity | In order for students to be prepared for the complexity demands of the texts they will encounter in college, career, and personal life, each grade level requires a "step" of growth on the "staircase of complexity." High-quality, knowledge-building texts that are at or above grade level should form the center of instruction.

Teachers...

- Use anchor and supporting texts that increase in complexity over the year.
- Provide frequent, meaningful opportunities for close reading and re-reading.
- Provide rigorous tasks and opportunities to write and speak about content.
- Scaffold instruction for struggling readers.

School leaders...

- Develop and refine a district-wide, cohesive scope and sequence grounded in complex, knowledge-building texts.
- Provide deep, sustained professional learning on the implementation of HQIMs.
- Create structures for cross-curricular experiences with complex texts.

Students...

- Employ strategies for comprehending grade-level texts and their academic language.
- Increase time spent writing about the content of complex texts using academic language.
- Interact meaningfully with complex texts through robust discussion.
- Self-select texts at their own reading level.

ELA/Literacy Shift 3: Balancing Literary and Informational Texts | The revised standards reflect the unique but interrelated skills associated with successful comprehension of literary ("Prose and Poetry)," and informational text types. It is recommended students read a 50-50 balance of literary and informational texts, thereby building their knowledge of the world and content in science, social studies, the arts, and literature.

Teachers...

- Provide rich experiences with a variety of text types.
- Explicitly teach the unique characteristics and features of informational text.
- Use thematically-related text sets designed to build deep knowledge of topics.
- Read aloud to students to model expert, fluent reading of text.
- Scaffold instruction for struggling readers.

School leaders...

- Develop and refine a district-wide, cohesive scope and sequence grounded in complex, knowledge-building texts.
- Provide deep, sustained professional learning on the implementation of high-quality instructional materials.
- Develop structures and professional learning opportunities so that students access complex text in all content areas.

Students...

- Read a balance of literary and informational texts across content areas.
- Read a wide range of multimodal texts in which meaning is conveyed through visual, audio, gestural, tactile, and spatial means.
- Build vocabulary through a combination of conversation, direct instruction, and reading.
- Participate in frequent opportunities to write about content and practice the modes and structures of literary and informational text types.

ELA/Literacy Shift 4: Explicit Writing Instruction | The *Production of Writing* strand of the revised standards lays out an explicit sequence of evidence-based skills that lead to writing proficiency. The progression emphasizes sentence-level and paragraph composition so that students are able to craft cohesive writing pieces grounded in evidence from complex texts.

Teachers...

- Explicitly teach grammar, usage, and mechanic skills in the context of high-quality texts.
- Use high-quality instructional materials that provide a mix of on-demand and process writing tasks.
- Provide frequent opportunities for revising and editing pieces written by self and others.
- Design lessons in which students explicitly examine grammatical structures in meaningful, complex sentences.
- Design instruction in which students experience grammatical conventions in various contexts.

School leaders...

- Equip teachers with professional learning, high-quality materials, and evidence-based resources to support their knowledge of language.
- Ensure a district-wide scope and sequence reflects a carefully planned integration of language and content.
- Assess the frequency and quality of direct writing instruction in all classes.
- Support the implementation of formative, interim, and summative assessment that informs instruction.

Students...

- Write about the content of complex texts using academic language and conventions appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience.
- Recognize the sentence as the building block of all writing.
- Demonstrate their learning through a variety of written tasks.
- Engage in deliberate practice of emerging skills.
- Learn grammatical concepts through the construction and revision of their own writing and that of others.