

Grades K–1 ELA/Literacy Considerations for the 2020–21 School Year

Learning new language skills, particularly how to read, is a hallmark of kindergarten and grade 1. Students learn about the alphabet and its role in reading. They learn how to listen carefully to the sounds inside words: to play with those sounds, to rhyme. They learn to match words with beginning sounds, blend sounds into words, and use a whole range of word analysis skills. Lots of practice with all these foundational skills are potent steps toward their becoming joyful and competent readers. Through regular opportunities to think, talk, and write about rich stories and other read-aloud books, students’ vocabulary and knowledge about how the world works grow exponentially. They learn to confer with their peers about topics and texts being studied by responding to the comments of others, asking questions to clear up confusions, and following rules for discussions. Students also begin to experiment with writing and are encouraged to use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing letters to share information, ideas, and feelings.

Teach Students to Read (K–1)

Systematic, Explicit Foundational Skills with Ample Time for Practice

See RF.1, RF.2, RF.3 and RF.4 for grades K–1 guidance.

Considerations for Instructional Content and Practices

- Utilize a systematic scope and sequence of foundational skills lessons that follows a carefully designed progression, ideally 45 minutes to 60 minutes daily.²⁰
 - Focus time and attention on phonological and phonemic awareness starting in early kindergarten with an increasing emphasis on phonics in early/mid-K through grade 3.
- Instructional time to include:
 - explicit teacher modeling of new content.
 - opportunities for student practice of targeted skill(s) through speaking, reading, writing, and/or listening.
 - reading of decodable text (sentences or text containing previously taught sound/spelling patterns and high-frequency words) that students read and reread for automaticity/accuracy.^{*21}

²⁰ Suggestions included throughout on the regularity with which practices should be undertaken reflect traditional school times and patterns. These should be moderated as school disruptions require.

²¹ Asterisks (*) are placed by instructional content and practice that contribute to students’ sense of belonging and safety, efficacy, value for effort and growth, as well as a sense of engagement in work that is relevant and culturally responsive. These reflect and bolster the samples included below in the section titled “Facilitate SEAD Through Close Reading of Complex Texts.”

Fluency Practice With Grade-Appropriate Texts

See RF.4 for grades K–1 – Fluency of Grade-Level Text.

Considerations for Instructional Content and Practices

- Model and support fluent reading by reading with students (echo reading and choral reading) and listening to students as appropriate throughout daily reading instruction.
- Focus on decoding grade-appropriate texts with accuracy and automaticity before moving to a focus on fluency.
- Incorporate regular, repeated reading practice (e.g., 10–20 minutes daily) with decodable texts to support accuracy and automaticity with taught sound and spelling patterns.*
- Even when improving fluency is the focus, ensure students have time to discuss the meaning of the text and address text-based vocabulary as needed.*

Formative Assessments to Modify Instruction Based on Student Progress

See RF.1, RF.2, RF.3, and RF.4 for grades K–1 guidance.

Considerations for Instructional Content and Practices

- Administer brief diagnostic screener at the beginning of the year and at periodic checkpoints throughout the school year:
 - Prioritize letter inventory, phonological awareness, and grade-level-appropriate sound and spelling patterns for each student
- Collect formative data during daily lessons (e.g., checklists, sampling dictation responses, monitoring of student work); respond to data and adjust instruction accordingly. Ensure frequent opportunities to formatively assess:
 - students’ phonological awareness, connecting to phonics as appropriate.
 - students’ ability to decode and encode new words based on grade-level-appropriate phonics instruction.
- Support students’ decoding and fluency development through additional small group or individual support; opportunities to amplify or embed practice with needed skills within existing instruction or practice opportunities; modified student practice or scaffolds.*

Facilitate SEAD (Social, Emotional, and Academic Development) Through Building of Foundational Reading Skills

Sample actions for how SEAD can be effectively integrated in ELA/literacy instruction:

- Promote a sense of belonging by including language routines, such as choral reading and word games, so students see themselves as a part of a learning community.

- Empower students to monitor their own decoding skills and fluency through cycles of action and reflection.
- Engage students in reading and rereading to build habits as increasingly independent readers.

Rationale and Research

Systematic, Explicit Foundational Skills with Ample Time for Practice

- A body of research points to the fact that systematic, explicit foundational skills instruction is a critical part of early childhood instruction, and it is crucial for students as they are learning to read and write in English (Student Achievement Partners, 2020).
- This means supporting students beginning with phonological awareness, following a clear sequence of phonics patterns, providing direct instruction with adequate student practice, and making use of weekly assessment and targeted supports (Adams, 2011; Castles et al., 2018; Lesnick et al., 2010; Liben & Paige, 2017; National Reading Panel, 2000; No Child Left Behind, 2002).

Fluency Practice With Grade-Appropriate Texts

- Reading fluency has a direct correlation with reading comprehension. Research shows dysfluency causes as much as 40% of the variance in student performance (Pinnell et al., 1995).
- Fluent reading depends on a reader’s understanding of the orthographic relationships that form the basis of decoding.

Formative Assessments to Modify Instruction Based on Student Progress

- Overall reading fluency in elementary school readers is a good predictor of reading comprehension in the secondary school years (Stanley et al., 2017). To ensure fluency develops, it is critical that frequent, ongoing, informal assessment of taught foundational skills takes place and immediate re-teaching and support be provided if needed.

**Keep Text at the Center of
Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language Instruction**

Regular Close Reading of Complex, Anchor Texts through Read-Aloud

See Appendix A for guidance²² for text read aloud in grades K–1.

Considerations for Instructional Content and Practices

- Focus all students on the same rich, read-aloud anchor texts (as defined by the chart below) multiple times a week, as school disruptions allow.
- Organize units around conceptually-related topics (and content-rich themes for literary texts) that build knowledge through anchor texts and volume of reading. Set aside skills-paced calendars.
- Provide and adjust instructional scaffolds so every student can engage with the anchor texts, rather than restrict students to texts at their prescribed independent reading level. Scaffolds could include building knowledge about the topic of the text under study, providing access to texts read aloud, etc. ^{*₂₃}

Grade Band	Lexile Range
K-1	Texts for read-aloud should be in the 2-3 band (or higher)
2-3	420-820 Texts for read-aloud only should be in the 4-5 band (or higher)
For all grade bands also consider qualitative features (such as levels of meaning, structure, language, and knowledge demands) as well as readers and tasks.	

²² See Appendix A from the CCSS.

²³ Asterisks (*) are placed by instructional content and practice that contribute to students’ sense of belonging and safety, efficacy, value for effort and growth, as well as a sense of engagement in work that is relevant and culturally responsive. These reflect and bolster the samples included below in the section titled “Facilitate SEAD Through Close Reading of Complex Texts.”

Sequences of Text-Specific Questions and Tasks to Support Close Reading

See RL.1 and RI.1 for specific guidance for grades K–1 – Text Evidence.

Considerations for Instructional Content and Practices

- Provide sequences of questions that engage students deeply with the anchor text read aloud to build understanding.
- Create text-based tasks that take varied forms (e.g., drawing, discussion, writing, dramatic play, speaking).*

Systematic Work with Text-Based Vocabulary and Syntax

See RL.4, RI.4, L.4, L.5 and L.6. for specific guidance for grades K–1 – Vocabulary and Syntax Important to Comprehension or Expression.

Considerations for Instructional Content and Practices

- Use text-based questions/tasks to focus on academic and domain-specific words that merit more attention (e.g., critical for understanding the text, part of large word families). Do this rather than memorizing text-agnostic word lists.
- Provide supplemental practice on text-based vocabulary through games, exercises, and focus on word parts and their morphology.
- Encourage the use of the targeted words from the anchor text throughout discussions and writing assignments.
- Regularly—and daily if possible—choose one complex and compelling sentence from the anchor text to deconstruct and reconstruct with students.

Frequent Evidence-Based Discussions About Anchor Texts

See SL.1 for specific guidance for grades K–1 – Conversations and Collaborations Centered on Evidence.

Considerations for Instructional Content and Practices

- Design collaborative, small-group, or partner discussions about anchor texts—daily if possible—for students to process and extend their learning:*

 - Make strategic use of peer partnerships to promote as much productive talk as possible.*
 - Ask students to reflect on each other’s thinking using evidence, as well as considering and challenging others’ perspectives.*

- Step in (and out) of discussions to keep students focused and encourage them to construct longer and deeper responses.*

Regular Evidence-Based Writing About Anchor Texts

See W.8 for specific guidance for grades K–1 – Recall Information From Provided Sources.

Considerations for Instructional Content and Practices

- Connect writing to what students are reading (or listening to) to deepen comprehension, check for understanding, and ensure all students have equal access to the topic on which they’re writing.*
- Include writing tasks connected to the literary texts students are reading that target perspective-taking and exploring the emotions and motivations of characters as an on-ramp to self-exploration and reflection.*
- Reserve non-text-based writing prompts to advance specific goals rooted in social-emotional learning (reflect on feelings, foster artistic expression, write personal stories).*
- Support students to make use of knowledge gained from the anchor text in their writing without requiring direct text evidence.
- Within these writing opportunities, address and support students’ ability to demonstrate command of writing and conventions, including use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

Facilitate SEAD Through Close Reading of Complex Texts

Sample actions for how SEAD can be effectively integrated in ELA/literacy instruction:

- Ensure that the richness and complexity of texts read aloud are regularly available to every student, and that community is built by reading and listening to texts as a learning community.
- Ensure anchor texts throughout the curriculum reflect and reveal accurately a multicultural world and resonance with learners.
- Include perspective-taking in the study of literary texts by attending to how characters might think and feel to support understanding emotions and thoughts. Perspective-taking can also be included with informational text to similarly highlight multiple perspectives, or investigate claims, purpose, and reasoning of an author or topic.
- Empower students to monitor their own comprehension and fluency through cycles of action and reflection.
- Provide a variety of text-dependent writing, speaking, performance, or multimedia task options for students to express comprehension, knowledge, and skills.
- Establish student discussion protocols to facilitate evidence-based discourse about text that supports active listening, values diverse perspectives and insights, and ensures there is equity of voice and responsibility.
- Encourage students to draw on their emotional and empathetic skills as they orally express their thoughts, feelings, ideas, and arguments.

Rationale and Research

Regular Close Reading of Complex, Anchor Texts through Read-Aloud

- The complexity of the text is the element that most differentiates performance, not the skills supposedly captured in the verbs used to describe the skills (ACT, 2006).
- Providing readers not yet reading at grade level with complex texts improves their achievement. As a result, leveled reading approaches are not based on evidence; those approaches stunt the growth of students' reading comprehension and create inequitable outcomes (Brown et al., 2018; Morgan et al., 2000).
- Students cannot learn how to comprehend complex text independently unless they are given complex text to read (Shanahan et al., 2012).

Sequences of Text-Specific Questions and Tasks to Support Close Reading

- Students (all people) understand and remember what they pay attention to and think about. Attending to evidence in text leads to understanding and retaining text content (Willingham, 2010).
- Text-dependent questions and tasks can also serve as a scaffold to ensure that students are fully understanding the text under study, keeping the text at the center of instruction.

Systematic Work with Text-Based Vocabulary and Syntax

- Robust academic language gives students access to complex texts and allows them to write and communicate with precision. The things we know have to be named and described by words when encountered in print (Adams, 2011).

Frequent Evidence-Based Discussions About Anchor Texts

- Evidence-based discourse with text-dependent questions is both a scaffold to and a goal of literacy development. Processing evidence found in text through oral discourse results in deeper comprehension of text than strategies-based approaches (McKeown et al., 2009).

Regular Evidence-Based Writing About Anchor Texts

- Writing about what students have read, educators ensure that all students have the knowledge needed to focus on writing craft. (Hawkins et al., 2008).
- Writing about texts is one of the most effective things that students can do to improve their reading comprehension and knowledge (Burke & Gilmore, 2015; Willingham, 2010).

Build Knowledge Through Reading, Writing, and Speaking about Topics Across Content Areas

Regular Reading of Multiple Texts and Media on a Range of Conceptually Related Topics

See W.8 for specific guidance for grades K–1 – Research and Wide Reading on Topics; CCSS-Distribution of Literary and Informational Passages.

Considerations for Instructional Content and Practices

- Choose content-rich informational texts that are topically connected to the anchor texts to build students’ knowledge about the topic and maximize their breadth of exposure to academic vocabulary.

Grade	Literary	Informational
K-1	50%	50%

- Offer students texts that span a range of complexity levels so they can read the texts independently, with peers, or with modest support. This should include a balance of literature and informational texts across ELA, science, history, and the arts.*²⁴
- Eliminate skills-paced calendars and generalized theme-based units in favor of organizing units around topics that build knowledge through anchor texts and volume of reading.

Regular Research, Discussion, and Writing About Topics

See W.8 for specific guidance for grades K–1 – Research and Wide Reading on Topics. See also SL.1 for specific guidance for grades K–1 – Conversations and Collaborations Centered on Evidence and Research. See also RI.9 from grades K–1 – Integrating Information and Knowledge From Texts on the Same Topic.

Considerations for Instructional Content and Practices

²⁴ Asterisks (*) are placed by instructional content and practice that contribute to students’ sense of belonging and safety, efficacy, value for effort and growth, as well as a sense of engagement in work that is relevant and culturally responsive. These reflect and bolster the samples included below in the section titled “Facilitate SEAD Through Research, Writing, and Speaking About a Volume of Topically Connected Texts.”

- Regularly ask students to participate in shared research tasks where they explore multiple texts and auxiliary resources (e.g., illustrations, video clips, maps) to build knowledge on a topic. (These can be driven by student interest, topic of anchor text, and course content.)*
- Promote independent reading by providing options for students to choose topically connected texts.*
- Ask students to integrate what they have just read or listened to with what they have read or listened to previously to build a more coherent understanding of a topic.
- Design collaborative, small-group, or partner discussions on topics for students to process and extend their learning.*

Facilitate SEAD Through Research, Writing, and Speaking About a Volume of Topically Connected Texts

Sample actions for how SEAD can be effectively integrated in ELA/literacy instruction:

- Ensure instruction and materials are responsive to students’ existing funds of knowledge as well as connecting students to a shared knowledge of the world through the study of conceptually coherent topics.
- Anchor topical knowledge building in collaborative opportunities for students to conduct research while practicing cooperation, communication, innovation, reflection, self-regulation, and empathy.
- Create space and opportunity for students to identify and explore their own interests and fascinations.
- Develop and strengthen writing in response to feedback from others.

Rationale and Research

Regular Reading of Multiple Texts and Media on a Range of Conceptually Related Topics

- Knowledge of a subject aids thinking, memory, and learning of new information (Willingham, 2006).
- Reading ability and knowledge about the world are tightly connected (Kintsch, 1998).
- Students’ knowledge of the topic has been shown to have a greater impact on reading comprehension than generalized reading ability (Recht & Leslie, 1988).
- Informational texts are excellent sources from which students can learn about the world and how things work; they can be used to systematically build students’ cumulative knowledge over time (Hirsch, 2006).

Regular Research, Discussion, and Writing About Topics

- Building knowledge and domain-specific vocabulary play an essential role in the literacy development of students. To build this essential knowledge and vocabulary, students must read, analyze, discuss, and write about a range of conceptually coherent topics (Cervetti et al., 2016; Landauer & Dumais, 1997).

- It is through volume and range of writing that students gain mastery of a variety of writing skills and applications. (Burke & Gilmore, 2015; Willingham, 2010). When students do the grappling and the heavy-lifting, new skills and content stick.
- Students learn significantly more vocabulary when they read texts about conceptually coherent topics for a period of time (Cervetti et al., 2016; Landauer & Dumais, 1997).