

The Common Core Standards

The Common Core Standards for Language and Literacy and The Continuum of Literacy Learning, Grades PreK–8: A Guide to Teaching

“Like the Common Core Standards, the Continuum addresses the specific goals of helping students actively seek the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens worldviews.”

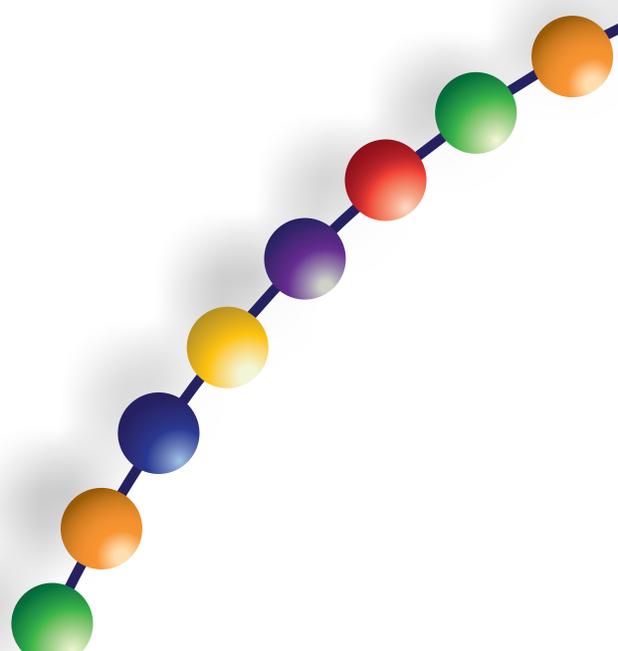
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“Like the Common Core Standards, the Continuum requirements go far beyond mechanical skills and stress ways to develop thinking.”

There is a strong relationship between the new Common Core Standards for Language and Literacy and Fountas and Pinnell’s *The Continuum of Literacy Learning*. The goal of both documents is to ensure that all students are college- and career-ready literate no later than the end of high school. The curriculum goals specifically detailed in the Continuum reach for this high level of skill by the end of eighth grade.

The two documents are similar in their goals but have different purposes:

The Common Core Standards set requirements for English language arts as well as for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. They lay out a broad vision of what it means to be a literate person and so represent the overall goals of every language arts curriculum.

The Continuum of Literacy Learning, PreK–8 (Pinnell and Fountas, Heinemann 2008, 2011) also addresses broad goals but presents finely detailed and specific statements of behaviors and understandings that literate students should demonstrate (and that the teacher should teach) at each grade level and at each level of a gradient of text difficulty (A to Z). It is an “in the hand” teaching tool.

The Continuum of Literacy Learning consists of seven different learning continua: (1) Interactive Read-Aloud and Literature Discussion; (2) Shared and Performance Reading; (3) Writing About Reading; (4) Writing; (5) Oral, Visual, and Technological Communication; (6) Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study; and (7) Guided Reading (small-group reading instruction). The first six continua are organized by grade level—PreKindergarten through Grade 8. The seventh, Guided Reading, is organized by levels A–Z to assist in the teaching of reading. Like the Common Core Standards, the Continuum addresses the specific goals of helping students “actively seek the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens world views.” Also, like the Common Core Standards, the Continuum requirements go far beyond mechanical skills and stress ways to develop thinking.

THE ALIGNMENT BETWEEN THE COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND *THE CONTINUUM OF LITERACY LEARNING, PREK–8*

The Common Core Standards are organized in seven standards:

Standard One—Reading: Literature

Standard Two—Reading: Informational Text

Standard Three—Foundational Skills

Standard Four—Writing

Standard Five—Speaking and Listening

Standard Six—Language

Standard Seven—Range, Quality, and Complexity: Texts Illustrating the Complexity, Quality, and Range of Student Reading

Standard One—Reading: Literature

The Common Core Standards offer requirements for each year, Kindergarten through Grade 5. In general the standards require that students read increasingly complex texts as they progress through the grades. “Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year’s grade –specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades.” The standards go beyond mechanical skills of reading literature to focus on the reader’s ability to:

Remember and report key ideas and details from texts, including understanding characters.

Recognize and use the craft and structure of a text (literary language, story structure, perspective, etc.).

Integrate knowledge and ideas and act on them, to include demonstrating one’s thinking by writing in response to texts.

Process appropriate grade–level material (in a range of genres) with understanding, accuracy, and fluency.

The last point in particular emphasizes that students should receive scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range of texts they control.

For grades PreK–8, the Continuum addresses these same goals through very specific descriptions of behaviors and understandings for thinking within, beyond, and about works of literature. The chart below briefly defines the way goals are categorized.

THE CONTINUUM OF LITERACY LEARNING, PREK–8		
<i>Thinking Within the Text</i>	<i>Thinking Beyond the Text</i>	<i>Thinking About the Text</i>
<p>Solve Words</p> <p>Use a range of strategies to read and understand words.</p>	<p>Predict</p> <p>Think about what may happen next.</p>	<p>Analyze</p> <p>Notice aspects of the writer’s craft and text structure.</p>
<p>Monitor and Correct</p> <p>Check on accuracy and understanding and work to self–correct errors.</p>	<p>Make Connections (Personal/ World/Text)</p> <p>Connect the text to personal and world knowledge as well as to other texts.</p>	<p>Critique</p> <p>Think critically about the text.</p>
<p>Search For and Use Information</p> <p>Notice and use information sources.</p>	<p>Synthesize</p> <p>Adjust present understandings to accommodate new knowledge.</p>	
<p>Summarize</p> <p>Remember important information and carry it forward.</p>	<p>Infer</p> <p>Think about what the writer means but has not stated.</p>	
<p>Maintain Fluency</p> <p>Read at a good rate, using phrasing, pause intonation, and appropriate stress.</p>		

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Within each of the continua related to reading, genres and text characteristics are described in detail. The expectations are listed under the three categories in the chart. Four continua address reading.

The **Interactive Read-Aloud and Literature Discussion Continuum** provides curriculum goals for student engagement with age-appropriate texts that offer opportunities to extend their knowledge of Content, their vocabulary, and their ability to think deeply about the ideas in texts. Teachers have specific goals for working with fiction texts. Students learn to follow and remember multiple events in a story, summarize texts, notice and remember details of the setting, and discuss the impact of the setting on characters and problems. They recognize aspects of fiction texts such as perspective. They develop new concepts and ideas from reading. They actively work to identify and understand new vocabulary used in texts. Through discussion with others of books they have heard read aloud or read independently, they extend their understandings.

The **Shared and Performance Reading Continuum** provides curriculum goals for reading with fluency and expression, using a full range of punctuation, noticing important details and language to include in performance, and conveying meaning through the Voice.

The **Guided Reading Continuum**, organized by levels A–Z, sets requirements for reading a range of grade-level texts. Through small-group instruction, teachers begin where students are and provide specific instruction to support the expansion of reading abilities. Students learn to apply a full range of phonics skills to take words apart while reading for meaning. They learn to read with accuracy, fluency, and understanding, meeting the demands of texts at each level and reading more difficult texts over time with instructional scaffolding. They learn to make predictions and inferences, learn about characters and how they change, and follow events of the plot in fictional texts. They learn to recognize and interpret a full range of writers' techniques such as figurative language, leads, and description.

Expected reading levels for each quarter of each grade level are specified so teachers can identify students who need temporary or intensive intervention to move them to the appropriate level.

The **Writing About Reading Continuum** includes information that will help teachers set expectations and teach students how to show their reading comprehension through writing. Students learn to summarize texts, identify the story structure, and share their critical thinking.

Standard Two—Reading: Informational Text

The *Common Core Standards* provide requirements for reading informational texts at each grade level, Kindergarten through Grade 5. Students are expected to:

Notice and explain the key ideas and details in historical, scientific, or technical nonfiction texts, including the main ideas and relationships between individuals, events, and concepts.

Notice and use the craft and structure of informational texts, including determining the meaning of academic and domain-specific words relevant to grade-level topics; comparing and contrasting the overall structure (e.g., cause/effect or problem/solution); and analyzing a number of texts focusing on same topic.

Integrate knowledge and ideas by drawing on many print or digital sources to answer questions or solve problems; identify and explain how authors use evidence to support points; and integrate information from several texts on the same topic.

Independently and proficiently process and understand the range of reading and level of text complexity for the grade.

The *Continuum* addresses these same goals for grades PreK–8 by providing very specific descriptions of behaviors and understandings for thinking within, beyond, and about

informational texts. The goals specific to each grade level are presented in the same categories described for thinking within, beyond, and about works of literature.

Within each of the continua related to reading, genres and text characteristics are described in detail. Then, expectations are listed under the three categories in the chart. Four continua address reading.

The **Interactive Read-Aloud and Literature Discussion Continuum** provides curriculum goals for student engagement with age-appropriate texts that offer opportunities to extend their knowledge of Content, vocabulary, and ability to think deeply about the ideas in texts. Teachers have specific goals for working with informational texts. Students learn to search for and use important information and to summarize a text. They draw inferences from a text and use them to explain the relationships between events and ideas. At every grade level they are taught to identify specific evidence from the text to support the information they have acquired.

The **Shared and Performance Reading Continuum** provides curriculum goals for reading with fluency and expression, using a full range of punctuation, noticing important details and language to include in performance, and converting meaning through the Voice. Students may develop readers theater scripts that reflect times in history or describe important events. They also use information from nonfiction texts to judge the accuracy of fiction texts.

The **Guided Reading Continuum**, organized by levels A–Z, sets requirements for reading a range of grade-level texts. Through small-group instruction, teachers begin where students are and engage them in specific instruction to support the expansion of their reading abilities. Students learn to apply a full range of phonics skills to take words apart while reading for meaning. They learn to read with accuracy, fluency and understanding, meeting the demands of texts at each level and reading more difficult texts over time with instructional scaffolding. In their Introductions to texts, teachers point out the features of informational texts (e.g., headings, legends) and teach students to use tools such as glossaries and indexes so that they can find information quickly. Teachers make specific teaching points: use informational texts to answer questions; make connections among ideas; think critically about several texts on the same topic; and identify and synthesize new information and ideas. At every grade students learn to identify evidence in the text to support their ideas.

Expected reading levels for each quarter of each grade level are specified so that teachers can identify students who need temporary or intensive intervention to move them to the appropriate level.

The **Writing About Reading Continuum** includes information that will help teachers set expectations and teach students how to show their reading comprehension through writing. Students learn to take notes to help them remember and reorganize information. They use a number of texts on the same topic to create a piece of writing that conveys their knowledge of a subject, and they identify evidence from the text to support their ideas.

Standard Three—Foundational Skills

The *Common Core Standards* require skills in (1) phonics/word analysis and (2) reading fluency.

Students should know and be able to use a **range of phonics and word analysis skills** appropriate to the grade level. For upper elementary grades, this would include the ability to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words both in and out of context by using a combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (roots and affixes) of words.

Students should be able to read grade-level texts with **accuracy, fluency, purpose, and understanding** and be able to read prose and poetry aloud at an appropriate rate and with expression. They should be able to use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as needed.

The *Continuum of Literacy Learning* provides curricular goals for the acquisition and use of a wide range of phonics and word analysis skills; it also supports students in reading with fluency, accuracy, purpose, and understanding. Five continua speak directly to these curriculum goals.

The Phonics/Word Study Continuum. This continuum exists in two forms: (1) a grade-by-grade description of strategic actions categorized in nine important areas of learning and (2) a highly-detailed, continuous continuum that shows the development of strategic actions continuously, moving to higher levels of complexity, across grades PreK–8. Both forms provide specific statements of principles that students need to control for specific periods across each grade level—early, middle, and late. The nine areas of learning are shown in the following chart.

Phonics and Word Study: Nine Areas of Learning

For the first three areas, specific curriculum goals are listed for PreK, K, Grade 1, and Grade 2. For each of the last six areas, specific curriculum goals are listed for each grade level.

Early Literacy Concepts

Teachers use the continuum as a guide to provide explicit instruction in foundational early literacy behaviors such as left-to-right directionality, Voice-to-print matching (saying one word for each word on the page), attending to punctuation and its function, and noticing visual signposts in print.

Phonological Awareness

The continuum includes specific statements describing students' ability to hear sounds in words and to identify and manipulate the full range of phonemes quickly and automatically.

Letter Knowledge

The continuum includes specific statements describing students' ability to identify letters quickly and automatically using their distinctive features.

Letter-Sound Knowledge

The continuum includes specific statements of all letter-sound relationships, simple to complex, that students will need to learn and use across the grades as readers and writers.

Spelling Patterns

The continuum includes specific statements of all phonogram patterns and other word patterns that students will need to learn and use across the grades to make their reading and writing more efficient.

High-Frequency Words

The continuum includes specific goals for learning to read and write the 500 most frequently used words so that they can use them rapidly and easily.

Word Meanings/ Vocabulary

The continuum includes specific statements of behaviors and understandings related to the development of strategies for deriving the meaning of words from context and for expanding oral and written vocabularies.

Word Structure

The continuum includes specific curriculum goals across the grades for all root and base words, prefixes, and affixes, so that students can solve words efficiently while reading and writing. At upper levels, the continuum includes specific curriculum goals for using Greek and Latin roots.

Word Solving Actions

The continuum includes specific curriculum goals for applying all phonics and word-solving understandings in an active, problem-solving way while reading and writing texts. Students learn to connect words by their parts; make new words by changing the beginning, ending, or middle; and add letters to change the meaning and function of words.

The Phonics and Word Study Continuum is linked to optional assessments that have specified expectations for four periods across the year in order to help teachers identify students who need intervention.

The Guided Reading Continuum. Across texts that increase in difficulty from levels A, B, and C (Kindergarten) to levels X, Y, and Z (Grade 8), the Guided Reading Continuum includes specific statements of behaviors and understandings related to using phonics and word-solving skills rapidly, easily, and automatically to read with accuracy and fluency. It also includes specific statements of goals for reading with understanding, which are described under "Reading: Literature" and "Reading: Informational Texts."

Phonics and Word Solving. Students must not only know the letter-sound relationships, patterns, and word structures but also be able to use them rapidly, "on the run," while reading continuous text. The Guided Reading Continuum provides specific statements of the strategic actions students need to solve words in texts they will encounter at a particular level. Also, for each level, specific principles are provided to guide the teacher in several minutes of "hands-on" word work during every guided reading lesson. Teachers use these specific goals to guide their teaching of whole-group minilessons that are systematically sequenced. Minilessons are followed by application activities for individuals and small groups.

Fluency. Fluency requires rapid, automatic decoding as well as attention to meaning and language syntax. At every level, the Guided Reading Continuum includes specific curriculum goals for fluent reading; e.g., recognizing and using punctuation, reading in phrases, pausing appropriately, using appropriate word stress and intonation to make reading expressive, and reading at a good rate. Teachers demonstrate and prompt for these five dimensions of fluent reading.

Expected reading levels for each quarter of each grade level are specified so teachers can identify students who need temporary or intensive intervention to move them to the appropriate level.

Criteria for meeting expectations require that students use word-solving skills in a fluent way that results in understanding.

Shared/Performance Reading Continuum. Shared/performance reading occurs any time students read jointly from a single text. Younger children might read in unison or in "parts" during readers theater. Older students may use choral reading to perform any kind of text (usually poetry or dramatic texts but also historical or literary nonfiction). The emphasis is on using the Voice to convey meaning. The Shared/Performance Reading Continuum includes specific curriculum goals for phrasing, pauses, appropriate word stress, intonation, and rate.

Standard Four—Writing

The Common Core Standards specify requirements in four areas: (1) Text Types and Purposes; (2) Production and Distribution of Writing; (3) Research to Build and Present Knowledge; and (4) Range of Writing.

Students are expected to competently **produce a range of text types and to write for many different purposes**. These text types and purposes deepen across the grades, starting with simple narratives but moving toward a complex range. E.g., students are expected to write opinion pieces that are logically ordered with reasons supported by facts and ideas. They need to write informational texts that develop a topic and link ideas across categories of information using precise language and domain-specific vocabulary. Also, they need to write narratives that develop real or imagined experiences or events using narrative techniques such as dialogue and descriptions. In all of these text types, they should be able to logically organize ideas and provide concluding statements that follow from their presentation.

Students are expected to **produce writing that is clear and coherent in which the development and Organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience** (grade-specific expectations are defined). This standard emphasizes that students should receive guidance and support from peers and adults as they engage in the writing process—planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying new approaches. Also, with support, students are expected to use **technology and publish** writing, demonstrating keyboarding skills and interacting with others.

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Students are expected to conduct research projects to gather knowledge and then to recall, summarize, or paraphrase information in finished work so that they can **present knowledge in a logical and coherent way**. Older students are expected to properly acknowledge sources.

As grade levels increase, students are expected to **develop a range of writing that allows them to write for extended periods of time**—in single settings or over extended time frames. The expectation is that their range of writing will extend to many different discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

The *Writing Continuum* in *The Continuum of Literacy Learning* specifies genre or text-type expectations for each grade level, PreK–8. The range of genres grows and the expectations and complexity within genres increase. In addition, the Writing Continuum includes detailed statements about expectations in three areas—craft, conventions, and process. Teachers use these curriculum goals to plan whole-group minilessons, small-group lessons, and individual student conferences. Across the structure of a writing workshop, teachers provide specific instruction directed toward these goals. The structure of writing workshop includes (1) a minilesson on a specific principle; (2) individual writing with some small-group work and teacher conferences; and (3) sharing and a restatement of the minilesson principle.

Craft. The Writing Continuum includes specific goals for learning the characteristics of genres and text types as well as what writers do to make their writing coherent and interesting. Students learn how to begin in an interesting way, organize information, use descriptive language, craft sentences, and make concluding statements. They learn to write narratives that communicate emotion and ideas and to use writers' techniques like dialogue, description, and figurative language. They learn how nonfiction writers present material and back it up with research. They learn to use text structures such as compare and contrast, chronological sequence, problem-solution, and cause-effect. Often, teachers use mentor texts to give students specific examples of a writer's craft.

Conventions. The Writing Continuum includes specific expectations for each grade level regarding conventions such as spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, text Organization, and general coherence. Teachers use the continuum to plan minilessons and individual student conferences. In early grades, conventions like spacing and handwriting are important. As writers grow, the continuum specifies keyboarding skills and the production of finished pieces of writing.

Process. The Writing Continuum includes specific expectations for each grade level regarding students' ability to engage in the writing process. Teachers use the continuum to teach students to gather information or think of ideas; set a purpose for writing, get their ideas down in drafts, revise and rewrite, edit, and publish finished pieces using technology. All processes are demonstrated in whole- and small-group lessons so that students can see how this recursive process works. The expectation is that students will write every day and build a repertoire of strategic actions for producing a wide range of writing—including, at the higher levels, literary Essays and research reports.

Standard Five—Speaking and Listening

The Common Core Standards address required abilities in Speaking and Listening in two areas: (1) comprehension and collaboration and (2) presentation of knowledge and ideas.

Students are expected to be able to **engage in a range of collaborative discussions that demonstrate comprehension of topics and/or texts**. The expectation is that they will come to discussions well prepared, having read and understood the material, and be able to express their ideas clearly. They are expected to follow the rules of dialogue, to pose and respond to questions, to make comments that contribute to and elaborate on the ideas of others, and to draw conclusions from group discussion. They are also expected to be able to summarize a written text read aloud, points made by a speaker, or information presented in diverse ways, including technology, and to explain how claims are supported by reasons and evidence.

Students are expected to be able to present **knowledge and ideas about a topic and make arguments with logically sequenced ideas, appropriate facts, and relevant descriptive details to support the main ideas**. Expectations increase

across the grades with the ultimate expectation that students will include multimedia components and be able to adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks. The use of formal English appropriate to context is expected.

Two continua in *The Continuum of Literacy Learning* directly address these standards.

Oral, Visual, and Technological Communication Continuum. For grades PreK–8, this continuum presents specific behaviors and understandings that student need to develop across the grades. These are categorized in three areas:

Speaking and Listening. Students are expected to learn to listen and understand and to demonstrate this understanding through discussion, which may take place in interactive read-aloud sessions, shared writing, or Content discussions. They are expected to learn to interact socially using all of the conventions of conversation, and to participate effectively in extended text and Content-area discussions. E.g., as grade-levels increase, they would be expected to form clear questions and use vocabulary specific to the topic or discipline to report what is known, share knowledge, and express opinions.

Presentation. The continuum includes expectations for each grade level related to speaking with a clear Voice, at appropriate volume, and with the audience in mind. Students are expected to present their ideas in an organized way with appropriate word choice and interesting ideas. As they grow over time, they are expected to use conventional English.

Technology. The continuum includes expectations for students' learning general ways of communicating through technology as well as using it as a tool for research and for presentation of knowledge.

The Interactive Read-Aloud and Literature Discussion Continuum. This continuum includes expectations for students' participation in whole-class discussion of fiction and nonfiction text as well as "book clubs" or small-group discussions. Students are expected to read and prepare, follow the agreed-on rules of discussion (e.g., for getting a turn or building on the comments of others), present their own ideas clearly, summarize information, and self-evaluate their participation. The expectations increase from grade to grade.

Standard Six—Language

The Common Core Standards require that students demonstrate competence in three areas: (1) conventions of standard English, (2) knowledge of language, and (3) vocabulary acquisition and use.

Students are expected to **demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English Grammar and usage when writing or speaking**. This includes the function of various parts of speech and verb forms and tense. (Students are expected to recognize and correct inappropriate Grammar.) It also includes the correct use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Students are expected to **use their knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening** and as they grow more aware to be able to compare and contrast different varieties of English (e.g., formal and informal; regional dialects).

Students are expected to **use context to derive the meaning of new vocabulary, consult reference materials when needed, and use grade-appropriate word structure, including root words and affixes**. This also means understanding the figurative use of words and phrases and knowing the meaning of common idioms. Appropriate to the grade, they should also acquire academic and domain-specific words and phrases and use them in speech and writing.

Several continua within *The Continuum of Literacy Learning* address these standards.

The Interactive Read-Aloud and Literature Discussion Continuum specifies expectations for students' acquisition of new vocabulary within the context of hearing fiction and nonfiction texts read aloud and discussing them with others. They are expected to express ideas clearly often using the language of the text.

The Writing Continuum. This continuum specifies expectations for the conventional use of English Grammar and for the growing use of tier 2 vocabulary (academic language) and tier 3 vocabulary (technical words specific to the Content area).

The Oral, Visual, and Technological Communication continuum directly specifies the growing use of conventional English to communicate with others and to present knowledge. Students are expected to write and speak in a way that demonstrates their acquisition of vocabulary specific to Content areas.

The Guided Reading Continuum includes specific goals for deriving the meaning of new vocabulary from the context of written language. Teachers use these statements to make teaching points during small-group reading lessons.

Standard Seven—Range, Quality, and Complexity: Texts Illustrating the Complexity, Quality, and Range of Student Reading

The Common Core Standards provide illustrative texts that represent a wide range of topics and genres for each grade level. “At a curricular or instructional level within and across grade levels, texts need to be selected around topics or themes that generate knowledge and allow students to study those topics or themes in depth.”

The Continuum of Literacy Learning specifies characteristics of texts for each grade level, PreK–8, for reading aloud and for guided reading. These text characteristics are presented in ten categories, as shown in the chart below.

Characteristics of Texts: *A Guide for Selection*

Genres/Forms

For each grade level, a range of genres is specified. Also described are specific forms such as short stories, mysteries, graphic novels, and picture books at all levels. Teachers select a variety of genres and forms for interactive read-aloud and guided reading. Students are also expected to choose books for independent reading, and the requirements for reading in different genres increase over time.

Text Structure

The ways texts are organized are described, including the elements of narratives as well as the structure of informational texts. The complexity of the text Organization is also described for each grade level. Teachers use interactive read-aloud, literature discussion, and guided reading to teach students how to recognize the structure of narrative and expository texts as well as how to detect underlying structures such as cause and effect.

Content

Grade-appropriate Content is described with a clear link to subject matter studies. Teachers select texts for interactive read-aloud and literature discussion that build students’ background knowledge and often link to Content area study.

Themes and Ideas

Grade-appropriate themes and ideas are described for each level. Themes and ideas move from concrete, easy-to-understand concepts to highly abstract themes across the grades. Through discussion, teachers help students learn about the author’s message (theme) and analyze the way the writer presents concepts.

Language and Literary Features

In fiction and literary nonfiction, writers use specific language such as description, figurative language, idioms, and poetry to engage readers and evoke sensory images and emotion. They use techniques like dialogue to help readers learn about characters in fiction, and they also use structural techniques like flashback to make writing interesting. Writers of nonfiction texts may embed other genres within them. The literary characteristics of texts at each grade level are described in specific statements. Teachers use these statements in interactive read-aloud, literature discussion, guided reading, and writing workshop to make students aware of the craft of written language.

Characteristics of Texts: *A Guide for Selection* (continued)

Sentence Complexity

Sentence complexity refers to the length of the sentence and the number of independent and dependent clauses within it. For each grade and text level, the appropriate sentence complexity is described. Through interactive read-aloud, teachers help students acquire the ability to understand more complex sentences; and through discussion, students expand their ability to use them. In writing workshop, teachers use mentor texts to demonstrate how writers craft sentences.

Vocabulary

Texts at every level are analyzed for the vocabulary demands, growing from simple texts for younger children to texts with academic and discipline-specific language. Teachers use the vocabulary descriptions to help them explain new vocabulary to children as they read aloud and as they engage students in small-group reading instruction.

Words

The length and complexity of words is also an important text characteristic, because word difficulty increases the challenge of texts. The Guided Reading Continuum includes specific descriptions of the kinds of words that students will need to be able to decode at a level, and teachers can use small-group instruction to help students take words apart (using root words, base words, prefixes, and suffixes) while reading for meaning.

Illustrations

Characteristics and functions of illustrations are specifically described for each grade level and each text level. Teachers use these statements to help students search for information in pictures and appreciate their artistry or humor. Teachers also use the statements to help them provide specific instruction on how to read and derive information from graphics in nonfiction texts.

Book and Print Features

Book and print features for every grade and text level. For the lower levels, detailed descriptions are provided regarding the layout of print, spacing, lines, and punctuation. Higher levels provide specific descriptions of text features such as headings and subheadings, legends, diagrams, labels, call-outs, and the many different tools that writers (particularly nonfiction writers) use. Teachers use these descriptions in interactive read-aloud, guided reading, independent reading conferences, and writing workshop to help students become aware of them and understand their use.

As noted in the chart above, the text characteristics described can be used in several different contexts, including interactive read-aloud and literature discussion, guided reading, and writing. They also help support teachers analyze texts to determine challenges and opportunities for learning.

The Continuum of Literacy Learning provides for the development of these seven standards in grades PreK–8. From grades 6 to 8, these competencies are still under development, but they become more closely integrated with the Content areas. Students are expected to use discipline-specific language and vocabulary and to engage in speaking, reading, and writing that demonstrate their growing acquisition of Content knowledge.

BROAD GOALS ALIGNED WITH FINELY DETAILED AND SPECIFIC STATEMENTS OF BEHAVIORS AND UNDERSTANDINGS

The Continuum of Literacy Learning, PreK–8 consists of seven different learning continua and provides a detailed and comprehensive list of behaviors and understandings to notice, teach and support at each grade level and A–Z text level. The following grids align specific statements of behaviors and understandings from *The Continuum of Literacy Learning, PreK–8* with broad requirements from the Common Core Standards. We chose only a few examples to demonstrate the strong relationship between the Common Core Standards and the Continuum.

With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.