

Alaska's English Language Arts Standards



The FACTS:

In 2012, the State Board of Education & Early Development adopted academic standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics. Academic standards help teachers ensure their students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful by providing clear, consistent expectations and goals for student learning.

The standards do not tell teachers how to teach nor do the standards place limits on local curriculum. The standards do not preclude the use of culturally relevant lessons. In fact, teaching the standards in the context of local cultures is one of the best ways to present them.

Standards Structure

The English Language Arts Standards include four content areas: reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. Within each content area are grade-specific standards that designate what students should be able to do by the end of that grade. They leave room for local school districts to determine how the goal of each standard will be met as well as any additional topics that should be addressed.

Reading Standards

Emphasis is placed on the foundational skills of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) through fifth grade. By fifth grade, students are expected to have mastery of those skills, which can be utilized through their academic career. The expectation is that by that point they would have mastery of those skills, which can be accessed throughout their academic career.

The standards expect that students read increasingly complex texts so that by the end of high school they are ready for the demands of college-level and career-level reading. Students are expected to read challenging informational texts in subjects such as social studies and science, as well as literature.

Writing Standards

The cornerstone of the writing standards is the ability to write logical argument based on sound reasoning and relevant evidence. Students are expected to conduct research and write about what they learned in short, focused projects and longer in-depth projects.

Speaking and Listening Standards

Oral uses of language are common in postsecondary education and the workplace. The standards for speaking and listening expect students to gain, evaluate, and present complex information, ideas and evidence through speaking and listening.

Language Standards

The language standards encourage students to develop their vocabulary through conversation, direct instruction and reading. Language standards provide a framework for students that help build their ability to communicate with greater precision and complexity.

Literacy Standards

For grades 6-12 there are standards for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. These standards recognize that teachers in subjects other than English must play a role in developing students' skills in reading and writing.

Instructional Shifts in English Language Arts

In the English Language Arts Standards, there are three major shifts, or focus areas, that encourage changes in instructional practices:

- Building knowledge through **content-rich nonfiction**.
- Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in **evidence from text**—both literary and informational.
- Regular practice with **complex text** and its **academic vocabulary**.