



# Illinois State Board of Education

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## **Fact Sheet: Illinois Schools Implement New English Language Arts Standards**

*Illinois Learning Standards call for more critical reading, analytical writing and nonfiction*

As schools implement the new Illinois Learning Standards, incorporating the Common Core, students are learning English language arts (ELA) and literacy instruction through new lessons, classroom approaches and content. The updated Illinois Learning Standards, approved in 2010, mark a new way of learning, one that emphasizes critical thinking, reading and writing and greater depth of understanding.

The Illinois Learning Standards, based on the Common Core, establish clear and consistent expectations for the knowledge and skills that students should acquire at the end of each grade level. They provide more clarity on how students should progress from grade to grade. Compared to Illinois' former learning standards, the new standards in ELA encourage three major instructional shifts:

- Balance the amount of literature and informational texts
- Use textual evidence to support reading and writing
- Expand academic vocabulary

### **Instructional Shifts in ELA Instruction under the Illinois Learning Standards, incorporating the Common Core**

<u>Instructional Shift</u>	<u>Examples</u>
Reading nonfiction and informational texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In K-5, students spend equal time reading informational texts and literature</li> <li>• By grade 12, the ratio of informational text to literature during the course of an entire school day is 7:3</li> </ul>
Using textual evidence to support reading and writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of well-defended claims in writing</li> <li>• Students must read texts in order to answer questions (rather than using prior knowledge or experience)</li> </ul>
Expanding academic vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texts increase in complexity across grade level</li> <li>• Focus on academic vocabulary and words that appear across disciplines</li> </ul>

In addition, these new learning standards call for greater literacy across all subjects—not just English—so that teachers in history, social studies, science and technical subjects also play a role in sharpening students’ critical reading skills and increasing their access to informational texts. Perhaps the greatest instructional change however, is the standards’ strong emphasis on reading critically and writing analytically. The shift “Engaging with Complex Text” is one example of the way in which these new learning standards encourage greater depth of understanding. The standards emphasize close and careful reading of fewer texts, rather than cursory reading of many texts, so that students can focus on the most important literacy and language skills.

One hundred percent of the questions on this school year’s Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) will be aligned to the new Illinois Learning Standards, based on the Common Core. This alignment will ensure that the ISAT provides teachers with meaningful data and feedback about the progress their students are making in ELA. For the 2014-15 school year, Illinois schools will administer new online assessments created through the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) that are specifically designed to gauge students’ knowledge grounded in the Common Core standards.

The instructional shifts in ELA instruction under the Common Core are the result of efforts to improve students’ college and career readiness. They highlight deeper understanding of reading material and the development of real-world skills necessary for success after high school graduation. For too long, too many students graduated from high school and then entered college and the workforce underprepared. Many college students require remedial courses because they lack adequate skills in ELA to complete college-level coursework. Additionally, employers are searching for applicants with strong reading and writing skills. The Common Core’s focus on nonfiction and informational texts more closely mirrors the reading and writing that students will encounter in college and careers. At the same time, however, literary classics remain a crucial part of students’ education.

The following chart lists the Common Core’s anchor learning standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening and language (drawn from <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/R>):

**Common Core Anchor Standards in ELA**

Reading	Writing	Speaking and Listening	Language
Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly; cite textual evidence	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of texts using relevant evidence	Prepare for and participate in a range of conversations with diverse partners	Demonstrate command of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking
Determine central ideas or themes of a text;	Write informative/explanatory texts to convey complex ideas and	Integrate and evaluate information presented in	Demonstrate command of standard English

summarize key supporting ideas	information	diverse media and formats	capitalization, punctuation and spelling when writing
Analyze how and why individuals, events or ideas develop over the course of a text	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events	Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning and use of evidence and rhetoric	Apply knowledge of language to understand how it functions in different contexts
Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience	Present information, findings and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning	Determine the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, reference materials and meaningful word parts
Analyze the structure of texts	Develop writing as needed by planning, editing and rewriting	Make use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language and nuances
Assess how point of view shapes the content and style of a text	Use technology to produce and publish writing and to collaborate with others	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks	Acquire and use accurately a range of academic and domain-specific words
Integrate content presented in diverse media and formats	Conduct research projects based on focused questions	—	—
Evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning	Gather relevant information from multiple sources and assess the credibility of each source	—	—
Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis and reflection	—	—
Read complex	Write routinely over	—	—

literary and informational texts independently and proficiently	extended and shorter time frames for a range of tasks and audiences		
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For more information about the Common Core standards in Illinois and the new online PARCC assessments, please visit <http://www.isbe.net/hot-topics.htm>. Additional information about the PARCC assessments can be found at <http://parcconline.org/>.

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