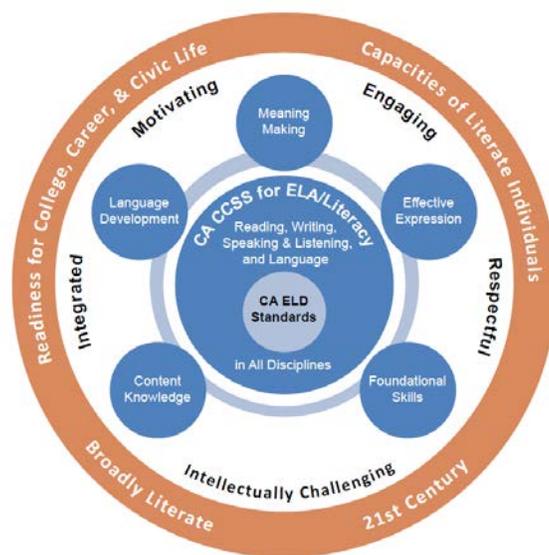


## California’s Recently Adopted English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework: Translating the Common Core State Standards to a Coherent and Sequenced Curriculum for All Students.

As many of your readers have pointed out, the Common Core State Standards express what students should master, but they are not a curriculum. The work of creating a local curricular framework which informs the sequence and breadth of instruction (usually referred to as “scope and sequence”) is complex. The absence of such efforts to move from standards only to a coherent and sequenced curriculum will hamper many states and local district common core implementation efforts. For example, in the math area one of the math common core standards for seventh grade is to use proportional thinking and percentage to solve problems such as: “If \$50 is 20 percent of your total funds, how much do you have?” That standard doesn’t answer the question of how much instructional time should be invested in helping students master it (actually quite a lot), what strategies will be effective, what should be the progression of learning, how should it be assessed, what to do if the students is struggling, and how does instruction correlate with previous units.

Luckily, in the language arts, the new California English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ri/cf/elaeldfrmwrksbeadopted.asp> offers sound advice on how to progress from standards to a coherent instructional program that addresses the question of access to the Common Core for all students. It is based on the California adoption of the multi-state Common Core ELA standards (with some changes such as adding cursive writing—CA CCSS) and English Language Development Standards (CA ELD standards). This framework follows the well-received California mathematics framework adopted last year <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ma/cf/draft2mathfwchapters.asp>.

This commentary will outline the major ideas and structure of the ELA/ELD framework. The following graphic provides a good summary of how the new framework is organized.



## **Grounding the Framework in Broad Liberal Arts Goals**

The **outer ring** of the graphic identifies the overarching goals of ELA/ELD literacy and instruction. By the time California's students complete high school, they should have developed readiness for college, career, and we added civic life; attained the capacities of literate individuals; become broadly literate; and acquired the skills for living and learning in the 21st century.

California has grounded the framework in these broader purposes of the language arts. We want students to be able to understand complex text and ideas as well as reason, analyze, persuade, and problem solve. We also wish them to encounter a rich liberal arts education—learning about the world, civic life, and the human heart, being well-read, and helping them reach their potential. We would like our youngsters to encounter a significant representation of the best classic and contemporary literature including novels, biographies, essays and plays as well as coherent content informational text in science, history, and the humanities. We would like them to experience the joy of reading engrossing stories and fascinating material.

So the ELA/ELD framework is about two main thrusts: First, attention to the totality of *what* students read both on their own in independent reading and in school in their liberal arts disciplines (including literature) during their school years, and second, the analytical, reasoning and literacy skills necessary to comprehend and apply knowledge gleaned from a variety of text structures. Both ideas are stressed in the multi-state Common Core ELA standards. To this end, the framework also recommends an organized independent reading program for each student to supplement what is read in school and provides advice on how to implement such a strategy in Chapter 2.

The **next ring** in the graphic represents the context in which instruction occurs. This framework asserts that the context for learning should be integrated, motivating, engaging, respectful, and intellectually challenging. The Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 cover these two outer rings.

## **Integration of English Language Arts and English Language Development**

One of the unique aspects of the California framework is the full integration of California CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA/English Language Development Standards, both adopted by the California State Board of Education. These standards provide year-end outcome statements for student knowledge and abilities and guide instructional planning and observation of student progress. The integration of ELA/ELD which was made easier in California because the main ELD development group headed by Dr. Kenji Hakuta of Stanford based its standards on the Common Core, addressed what ELD students would need to succeed in learning the Common Core and offered specific suggestions on how to accomplish that goal. The framework provides examples of classroom practices in which ELD teachers, ELA teachers, and content area teachers collaborate to provide equal access to the rigorous instruction required by the CA CCSS. The document addresses the need for both designated ELD instruction and full integration of English language support in ELA and content area classes and includes a full discussion of assessment of English learners.

In the **center** of the graphic are the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards. At the core of instruction, the graphic communicates the intricate but integral relationship between the two sets of standards. Each chapter of the framework provides examples and vignettes of teachers providing fully integrated support.

### **Five Major Organizing Themes**

**Circling** the standards center in the graphic are California’s five key organizing themes of the standards meant to influence instruction: meaning making, language development, effective expression, content knowledge, and foundational skills. These are discussed in general in Chapter 2 and become the organizing components for the grade level clusters in Chapters 3-7. The five themes fit in the broader context outlined above and help organize the standards into useful areas of instruction. They should be taught where possible in an integrated fashion. All are about developing the ability to understand text and apply knowledge and all five reflect the transition to a more active, engaging classroom envisioned by the CCSS.

The **foundational skills** theme (which is further explicated and summarized in a white paper on foundational skills cited in the link to the framework cited above--at the bottom of the linked page under the resources title) addresses ways teachers support students to get meaning from quickly recognizing printed words already in the student's vocabulary—a major task of instruction from mid-kindergarten through mid-second grade. The framework provides guidance on helping children learn to decode and use the tool of full-alphabetic sounding out in becoming automatic with a growing number of words during these early years. It suggests using a linguistic progression of letter/sound correspondences from easier and transparent to the more complex ones (because of the complex and non-transparent nature of English linguistics). The framework recommends materials to be read by the student at the beginning should match and provide practice in the combinations which have been taught. When students become sufficiently adept at recognizing enough words and letter/sound combinations to comfortably read them, the framework recommends that should make the transition to a wide variety of engaging trade books. Of course, a rich teacher read-aloud and discussion program should accompany this approach.

The **language development** theme addresses how to support students in understanding a growing number of vocabulary words, learning academic language, and negotiating syntactical complexity. It offers advice on how to organize a research-based curriculum in these areas.

The **meaning making** theme aims to help students infer, make connections, and use strategies such as close reading, using evidence from text, or meta-cognitive techniques to help understand both literature (including novels, biographies, essays, plays, and poems) and discipline based informational text.

The **content knowledge** theme advises how to develop student background knowledge, provide support and motivation for the discipline areas such as biographies of key figures and events in history or science, and assist students in tackling the different text structures in the disciplines all of which improves comprehension.

The **effective expression** theme provides suggestions on deepening understanding by having students write, argue, or discuss in argument, explanation/inform, and narrative styles. This theme also includes writing and speaking conventions and spelling.

Each of these themes encourages an active, engaging curriculum with multiple opportunities for students to apply what they are learning in a variety of ways. The framework is chock-full of exemplars of this type of instruction by incorporating numerous vignettes and snapshots of classroom strands and examples of the connection to content areas.

The framework has chapters for Transitional Kindergarten– grade 2, grades 3–5, 6–8, and high school. Each is organized around these five themes. Foundation skills, which eventually covers syllabication, morphemic analysis, and fluency, are included in every grade span through high school with the recognition that teachers at all levels must be aware of foundational skills to provide support and intervention strategies, when necessary, at later grades. The framework also has chapters on assessment, access and equity emphasizing interventions for the broad range of students, criteria for adopting materials, professional learning, leadership and program supports, and 21st century learning.

The assessment chapter emphasizes the role and provides guidance for immediate and short term formative assessment and the intervention and equity chapter stresses the importance of rapid intervention (RTI and multi-tiered instruction) for all special needs students to prevent failure. The professional learning chapter underscores the crucial importance of professional development and collaboration across disciplines, team building and learning communities, continuous improvement, and the support and leadership structures necessary for system-wide support in the implementation of the active and engaging classroom instruction envisioned by the common core standards and this framework. The framework contains multiple exemplars and vignettes as a guide to professional learning.

Appendix A of the California Framework written by one of the authors of this commentary, Carol Jago, deals with the important role of literature in the CCCS. The appendix, along with sections in the body of the framework, also addresses the issue of the level of text complexity students should encounter and advice for helping teachers access complex text for all students. There are suggestions and links to compendiums of the best literature and informational text by discipline. The Framework has taken a balanced approach that some material should be at independent reading levels, some more difficult for particularly interesting topics, and, finally, some challenging text for instruction which needs to be scaffolded.

We hope this framework will help provide useful assistance in the nationwide effort to improve the quality of instruction for all children.

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