

# The English Language Arts Common Core State Standards and *LETRS*® Content

*LETRS* is a professional development program for teachers, not an instructional program for students. The *LETRS* curriculum includes theoretical and research bases for teaching students how to read, write, and use language in academic settings, as well as many generic activities and techniques for successful instruction.

*LETRS* addresses fundamental topics in literacy, including the process of learning to read and write; the cognitive skills of good and poor readers; the subtypes of reading difficulty; the structure of the English language; the components of effective instruction; and the instructional practices best supported by research. *LETRS* respects reality: students have individual strengths and weaknesses that affect the ease and success with which they attain academic proficiency across varied subject matter and teachers are often underprepared for the challenges of a diverse student population.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) articulate rigorous expectations for grade-level learning that should culminate in college and career readiness. Many students, however (about 40 percent in reading and language arts), will struggle to meet grade-level standards and are dependent on high-quality instruction to do so. Raising the achievement of all students, including those at risk, requires a professionally sophisticated and motivated work force. We must have knowledgeable and effective teachers and teacher leaders who consistently provide high-quality instruction and who use valid and appropriate

assessments and interventions where necessary. *LETRS* enables educators to accomplish these goals.

The developers of the CCSS have been clear that the standards do not explain the research basis for teaching reading, although they do reflect that base. The standards do not tell teachers how to teach, nor do they address curriculum design, instructional delivery systems, integration of subject matter, or adaptations of instruction necessary for students with differing profiles of ability. With *LETRS*, we address teachers' need to know why, for whom, in what way, and at what point in reading development certain practices are most likely to be effective. Finally, we demonstrate through video, modeling, scripting, and role play how systematic teaching is carried out.

This document enumerates the CCSS standards for literary and informational reading comprehension, foundational reading skills, and language, and notes the *LETRS* modules in which teachers are most directly prepared to address those standards. While the CCSS articulate the level of reading skill necessary for success for college and career, *LETRS* focuses on the developmental stepping stones that enable higher levels of achievement. *LETRS* content does not cross over into the traditional domains of secondary English, such as literary criticism and advanced composition.

—Louisa C. Moats, Ed.D.



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Louisa C. Moats, Ed.D.

CCSS Domain	Content Knowledge for Teachers of Reading, Writing, and Language			Key Applications (What We Want Teachers to Do)
	Major Topics	<i>LETRS</i> Module*	Subtopics, Module Content	
<b>Reading Foundations</b>	Why Learning to Read is Difficult	F, 1	National and local data; origins of alphabetic writing; oral and written language; simulation of learning to read	Anticipate that the majority need to be taught how to read over several years
	How the Brain Learns to Read	F, 1	Eye movement technology; fMRI studies; the Simple View; 4-part processing system	Expect a distribution of individual differences and be prepared for different subtypes/causes for reading difficulties
	(Advanced) Definition of Dyslexia and Types of Reading Disabilities	1, 8	Most common reading disorder; contrast with comprehension-based difficulties	Recognize the symptoms of dyslexia; support explicit, code-based instruction for students with deficits
	How We Become Fluent Readers	F, 1, 5	Reading rope; the meaning of oral reading fluency data	Expect that fluency results from many sub-components; be prepared to assess the contribution of each “strand”
	Stages and Processes of Fluent Word Recognition	1, 5, 7, 10	Lexical Quality Hypothesis of Perfetti; Ehri’s phases; why “three cueing systems” model needs changing	Select and use a well-designed, explicit, cumulative code-emphasis instructional program
	Phonological Processing and Phoneme Awareness	F, EC, 2	Areas of phonological processing (Scarborough and Brady); the role of PA in reading and spelling; why the phoneme is elusive; the speech sound system of English, including consonant and vowel features; comparison to Spanish	Recognize evidence for phonological weaknesses in students; emphasize articulation and the distinctive features of phonemes in instruction; use the phoneme charts to interpret and correct student errors

\*Key Abbreviations: F = *LETRS* Foundations, An Introduction to Language and Literacy;  
EC = *LETRS* for Early Childhood Educators; Numbers 1–11 correlate to Core *LETRS* Modules

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<b>Reading Foundations, continued</b>	Teaching Phoneme Awareness	F, 2, EC	Progression of PA development; programs, principles, and techniques of instruction	Implement the principles of research-based instruction of PA and explain the relationship between PA and other literacy components
	(Advanced) Phonological Influences on Speech Perception, Production, and Spelling	2	Allophonic variation as represented in students' spellings	Recognize, interpret, and respond constructively to phonologically driven speech, reading, and spelling errors
	(Advanced) Phonological Working Memory	2, 9	Relationship of PWM to reading, speaking, listening, and writing	Scaffold tasks to accommodate weaknesses in PWM
	Alphabetic Knowledge and Concepts of Print	F, EC, 1, 3, 7	Orthographic processing and its links to language; how "concepts of print" are usually measured in screenings; importance of letter knowledge	Assess and teach letter recognition, letter formation, and alphabetic order; Teach print awareness as necessary
	Organization of English Orthography	3, 7, 10	5 levels/principles of orthographic representation	Expect that any English word can be explained by virtue of its history, phoneme-grapheme relationships, positions and sequences of sounds, orthographic rules, and morphology
	Etymology—Word Origin and History	3, 10	English spelling represents Anglo-Saxon, French, Latin, Greek, and other language influences.	Identify or investigate the origin of words in an appropriate resource such as the OED; make educated guess on basis of sound, spelling, and meaning

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<b>Reading Foundations, continued</b>	Phoneme-Grapheme Correspondence	F, 3, 7	<p>Definition of “grapheme”—letter or letter combination, representing a phoneme;</p> <p>Knowledge of predictable consonant and vowel correspondences in English;</p> <p>Scope and sequence of explicit instruction;</p> <p>Principles of phonics and spelling instruction</p>	<p>Use sound-symbol cards to instruct;</p> <p>Use a phoneme-grapheme mapping technique to teach the code;</p> <p>Teach systematic sound blending;</p> <p>Teach to accurate, automatic application of decoding in connected text;</p> <p>Use decodable text for practice;</p> <p>Integrate spelling and reading instruction; use pattern-emphasis spelling program</p>
	Position-Based Spelling Patterns	3, 10	Recognize and explain patterns such as soft c and g; c, k, -ck; -ge, -dge; -ch, -tch; the FLOSS rule; oi/oy; ai/ay	Use word sorts to familiarize students with patterns
	Six Syllable Types in English	3, 10	Identify, classify, assemble, and deconstruct multisyllabic words	Include explicit teaching of syllable patterns in reading and spelling instruction
	Morphology	1, 3, 10	<p>Identify common Anglo-Saxon, Latin, and Greek morphemes in English words;</p> <p>Distinguish syllables and morphemes; Understand the progression of difficulty (inflectional vs. derivational morphemes, etc.)</p>	Directly and systematically teach inflectional and derivational morphology; link to word meaning (vocabulary), spelling, and word recognition

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<b>Reading Foundations, <i>continued</i></b>	Attaining Fluency	F, 1, 5	Define fluency as sufficient speed to support comprehension); automaticity;  Interpret oral reading fluency norms;  Explain how (and when) ORF predicts passage comprehension;  Explain how fluency develops	View fluency as characteristic of skilled performance;  Identify for whom, when, why, and for how long to use direct fluency-building techniques;  Employ a range of techniques to build fluency when appropriate for selected students
<b>Comprehension of Literary and Informational Text (Anchor Standards)</b>	Models of Comprehension Processes	6, 11	The RAND model (text, reader, task, context);  Cain and Oakhill (surface, text base, mental model);  Levels of language model: word, phrase, sentence, inter-sentence, paragraph, discourse, inter-text connections;  Process vs. product;  Characteristics of poor comprehenders	Expect that many variables contribute to comprehension or the lack thereof; anticipate multiple ways in which text, task, and context can be varied to enable comprehension; use the framework of <i>surface</i> comprehension, comprehension of the <i>text base</i> , and construction of a <i>mental model</i> to describe comprehension problems
	Text Organization and Genre	F, 6, 11	Definition and description of “text complexity”; identification of uses and formats of major genres	Select and use appropriate graphic organizers for each genre; teach text structure explicitly; determine the approximate difficulty and complexity of texts using established guidelines

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<b>Comprehension of Literary and Informational Text (Anchor Standards), <i>continued</i></b>	Ask and Answer Questions	F, 6, 11	Question forms; connections between grammar, syntax, and answers to questions	Formulate queries at critical junctures in text; show explicitly where students should look for answers to specific types of questions
	Reading for Key Ideas and Details	F, 6, 11	Establishing a purpose and goal for reading; enabling gap-filling and bridging inferences; building schemas, background information, and mental models; strategies for MI location	Set a context (background) for reading; explicitly distinguish main idea and detail using techniques such as guided highlighting; mediate inference-making during reading through queries at key junctures in text; use explicit techniques to support retelling, summarization, and evaluation
	Interpret Words and Phrases	F, 4, 6, 11	Word relationships (semantics); figurative language; direct and indirect vocabulary instruction	Anticipate challenging language; use routine for explicit instruction of important word meanings; emphasize relationships among words
	Integrate Knowledge and Ideas	F, 4, 6, 11	Identify cohesive devices in text, including reference and substitution; meaning and role of logical connectors	Explicitly identify in text those words that link ideas within and across texts
<b>Language</b>	Oral Language and Written Language Relationships	F, EC, 1, 4	Oral and written language differ; Oral language is learned much earlier and more easily than written	Continuously and consciously foster oral language development through direct and indirect methods
	Vocabulary Development and Instruction	F, EC, 4	The “vocabulary gap”; relationship to other aspects of language including reading comprehension and writing	Directly teach key words in depth; use a direct and explicit routine for introducing new words



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<b>Language, <i>continued</i></b>	Knowledge of Syntax for Speaking, Reading, and Writing	6, 9, 11	Techniques for teaching sentence sense; progression of sentence skills	Employ strategies such as sentence combining and sentence expansion
	Standard English Conventions and Grammar	3, 9	Understand dialect and non-standard variations of speech; progression of written language conventions	Explicitly and cumulatively teach spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage for writing
<b>Writing</b>	Why Writing is Difficult	9	The mental juggling act—cognitive models of writing; difference between skilled and unskilled writers	Prepare to teach all foundational skills as well as composition of text genres; prepare to scaffold difficult assignments
	How Children Learn to Write	EC, 9	Development of writing skill over time	Adopt a cumulative approach to teaching foundational writing skills, guided by a scope and sequence
	Relationship of “Lower Level” to “Higher Level” Writing Skills	9	Handwriting, writing fluency, spelling, grammar and usage, punctuation, and capitalization support composition quality and quantity	Juxtapose skills practice, especially in transcription (letter formation, writing fluency, spelling), with meaningful composition
	Structures of Narration, Exposition (Informational Text), and Argumentation	6, 9, 11	Distinguish the features of major genres	Use graphic organizers, models, and direct feedback to focus students on requirements of a text type
	Phases of the Writing Process	9	Cognitive, linguistic, and memorial requirements of planning, translation, reviewing, and revising	Preview and support writing with oral language; give meaningful and motivating assignments; emphasize thorough planning and “front loading” to enable student success; provide frames to support generation of written language; structure feedback and revision