

Critical Thinking and Analysis

A focus on engaging and motivating early adolescents is critical for success, and students should be supported to explore topics of individual interest and relevance to expand their knowledge. Students analyze and comprehend more rigorous and multiple sources of literary and informational texts (books, articles, digital sources) and examine different structures of various genres, or types, of texts.

At this grade span, students become increasingly effective at expressing themselves and engage in meaningful collaborations with fellow students, teachers, and family members. Argument is introduced, and students evaluate claims in texts and write and present their own arguments, with clear reasons supported by text-based information. Analysis includes not only what the text says explicitly but also what inferences can be drawn.



To help your student develop literacy skills:

- ▶ Set an example—let your child see you read, read to your student, and ask your student to read to you. Build on your student's interests and provide a variety of reading materials, including books, magazines, newspapers, and poetry. Create a comfortable space for reading and writing.
- ▶ Discuss current issues or topics; ask open-ended questions about what your student thinks and the reasons why. Develop shared areas of interest to experience and investigate, such as movies, songs, books, sports, or art.

For more information on the California Common Core State Standards for ELA/Literacy and ideas for helping your student succeed, check out these resources:

- ▶ The Common Core Resources Web page is available online at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/>. Start by clicking on the Students/Parents tab.
- ▶ The California Common Core State Standards for ELA/Literacy are available online at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/finalelaccssstandards.pdf>.
- ▶ The ELA/ELD Framework for California Public Schools is available online at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/cf/elaeldfrmwrksbeadopted.asp>.

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What Your Student Will Learn:

California Common Core State Standards for ELA/Literacy

Students engage in new and challenging literacy experiences as they develop skills and knowledge under the California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts/Literacy. The standards are organized around four strands—Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language—which define what students are expected to learn by the end of each grade.

New for students in grades six through eight are specific literacy standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects for the strands of reading and writing. These literacy standards extend across the different subject-area classes. Learning also focuses on three new emphases: (1) building knowledge through content-rich informational text; (2) reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from different texts, both literary and informational; and (3) engaging in group and individual reading and research activities centered on more complex texts and developing academic language.



Comprehending Informational Text

Students not only engage in careful analysis of texts in English language arts but in other subject-matter classes as well, such as history/social studies, science, mathematics, arts, health, and physical education. This table shows some of the skills in the Reading Standards for Informational Text that students learn by the end of each grade.

Grade	Examples of Making Meaning with Text
6	Students analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.
7	Students analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the major sections contribute to the whole and to the development of the ideas.
8	Students analyze in detail the structure of a specific paragraph in a text, including the role of particular sentences in developing and refining a key concept.

Research, Writing, and Technology

Technology plays an important role in supporting students to gain knowledge, engage in research, and present information. They use the Internet to produce and publish writing as well as to interact with others, are able to link to and cite sources, and have developed keyboard skills to type numerous pages. In addition, students in grades 6–8 use multiple print and digital sources to

- ▶ quote or paraphrase conclusions of others (while avoiding plagiarism);
- ▶ assess the credibility of each source;
- ▶ conduct short research projects to answer a question or to support analysis and reflection on a topic;
- ▶ include graphics, images, music, sound, and visual displays to help clarify information in presentations.



Developing Language Skills

For students to express themselves, it is important they understand the beauty of language—how to choose words wisely, the impact of a well-crafted sentence, and how punctuation affects the pace of a written piece. Students continue to build and demonstrate effective use of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling in writing or speaking. In addition, students build their understanding of figurative language using a range of strategies listed in the table below.

Grade	Increasing Effective Expression
6	Students interpret figures of speech (e.g., personification) in context.
7	Students interpret figures of speech (e.g., literary, biblical, and mythological allusions) in context.
8	Students interpret figures of speech (e.g., verbal irony, puns) in context.