

# The Next Generation Learning Standards for English Language Arts: Frequently Asked Questions

This document was last updated on October 17, 2018. The Office of Curriculum and Instruction will continually update. If you have a question that is not currently answered, please contact us at [EMSCURRIC@nysed.gov](mailto:EMSCURRIC@nysed.gov), including the subject line ELA Standards Question.

## 1. Who designed the Next Generation Learning Standards and why?

In 2015, following a New York State legislative requirement that the P-12 Common Core Standards Learning Standards (2011) be reviewed with stakeholder input, the New York Common Core Task Force—charged with reviewing the Standards and making recommendations for improving the various components relating to the standards—issued its [Final Report](#). Among the suggestions were the gathering of input for new standards from local districts, educators, and parents through an open and transparent process, as well as ensuring the standards meet the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities.

The Next Generation ELA Learning Standards are the culmination of a collaborative two-year process that resulted in substantive changes while maintaining rigor. The [review committees](#) included educators and parents from around New York State. After reviewing more than 4,100 public comments from a fall 2016 survey, as well as comments from experts, the committees incorporated this feedback into the revised learning standards. ELA and Math Learning Standards Advisory Committees met through a series of all-day, in-person meetings, as well as web meetings. They reviewed every learning standard, making any necessary modifications based on professional expertise as well as input gathered from public comment and child development experts. Educators who work with students with disabilities and English language learners were actively involved in the review process as well.

## 2. Is there a list of required texts for students to read in the Next Generation Learning Standards?

There is no required reading list in the [Next Generation Learning Standards](#). Text selection, as well as curriculum decisions, are decided at the local school district level in New York State. Although there is not a required reading list, there are reading expectations included within the standards, including the expectation that students read and interact with grade-level texts. These reading expectations can be found in the introduction section to each grade under the “Range of Reading Experiences and Text Complexity” sections.

The P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (2011) referenced a few specific texts that were required at the high school level, such as reading one work of Shakespeare. Although the Next Generation Learning Standards (2017) do not include this specific expectation, it is still important, and highly recommended, to include classic works of literature in the classroom, to

ensure that all students have a wide range of reading experiences and a rich understanding of the timeless nature of certain classic literary works and how they provide insight into the human experience.

### **3. Are there reading and text complexity expectations at each grade level in the standards?**

Range of Reading and Text Complexity Expectations are included in the [Introduction to the New York State Next Generation English Language Arts Standards](#) as well as within each grade level introduction. The Introduction states, “One of the most important elements of the English language arts standards is the concept of exposing all students to grade-level texts that contain ideas and language that are at a suitable level of complexity, which is critical to preparing students for college and careers. This expectation is the cornerstone for the New York State English Language Arts Learning Standards when the standards refer to texts of appropriate complexity at or above grade level.” For clear guidance regarding text complexity for each grade level band (grades 2-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-10 and 11-12), see [supplemental information on text complexity](#) available on EngageNY.”

### **4. Should students read both full-length and shorter texts?**

Yes, the standards require that students read shorter texts and excerpts, as well as full-length works. The introduction to the ELA Standards states the following guidance around selecting texts:

“When choosing texts to meet the standards, teachers should provide a balance of classic and contemporary literature (both full-length and shorter works). Works should be culturally responsive, relevant to all students and available in the home language when possible. Texts should reflect a global and diverse variety of authors, time periods, genres, and cultural perspectives” (Page 14).

### **5. Do the Next Generation Learning Standards require close reading? If so, is there a specific number of times a student needs to read a text?**

Reading closely is a key part of the Next Generation Learning Standards. Reading Standard 1 says, “Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly/implicitly and make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.”

Close reading as an instructional strategy has been successful for many classroom teachers and students. Since instructional strategies and curriculum decisions are made at the local district level, how to implement close reading is a local school district decision in New York State. There is no set required amount of times a student needs to read a text. The number of times a student reads a text should be tailored to the specific task and anticipated outcomes.

## 6. Are the Engage NY instructional shifts still relevant?

During the rollout for the P-12 Common Core Learning Standards in 2011, the Department produced a series of [“instructional shifts”](#) to exemplify key changes in the standards that should be addressed at the classroom and curriculum level. Through the revision of the standards, the committee created the new [Lifelong Practices of Readers and Writers](#), which represent the most up-to-date guidance on areas of key focus for the standards. Although key features of the ELA shifts connect to the Practices and are still relevant (ex: using evidence in writing and reading grade-level complex texts), the Lifelong Practices should serve as the focus for implementing the new ELA Standards. In addition to the Practices, the [Introduction to the English Language Arts Learning Standards](#) sets key context about how to use the standards and what to focus on instructionally.

## 7. Do the ELA Standards represent what a student should know by the end of the school year?

Yes, the State Learning Standards represent what a student should know and be able to do, as a result of instruction and experience, by the end of each school year. Language Standards 1 & 2 are organized within grade bands. [Appendix A](#) of the Standards details the grade band progressions.

## 8. Is text-based evidence still an important part of the standards?

Yes. Reading Standard 1 and Writing Standard 5 specifically mention the use of textual evidence. The ability to cite evidence is a key literacy skill and is still an expectation of the Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards. As students read, write, and discuss texts, they are expected to use evidence from text to support their ideas and arguments.

In the new Standards, the Reading Standards have been streamlined. What is the best way to interpret and use this newly designed section?

One of the main suggestions from the ELA educator committee was to avoid redundant standards. The merging of the 2011 Reading for Literature and Reading for Information standards was meant to avoid some of the duplications within the previous standards. To clarify, a coding system is included in the Reading Standards section. If a Standard notes (RI) after it, then the standard applies to informational texts. If RL is noted, then the standard specifically applies to literary texts. If both RI and RL are noted, the standard applies to both literary and informational texts. This system of coding is meant to help with local curriculum decisions. Overall, students in P-12 should be engaged in reading a range of text types, including both literature and informational text.

Please note that Reading Standard 8 (“Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence”) previously applied only to informational texts in the 2011 Standards. Although it naturally fits more with nonfiction texts that include a clear argument, the review panel (see

[“Who designed the Next Generation Standards and why?”](#) above) understood its application to literary texts as well; for example, a student could evaluate an argument or claim in a poem or fictional story through the eyes of a character.

**9. With the previous set of standards, there was some training that suggested teachers should not provide background knowledge as students read texts. Is background knowledge allowed as students read?**

Yes, background knowledge can be provided to students prior to and during reading. Research has shown that background knowledge is an essential component to reading comprehension. The more a student knows about the world, the easier it will be to comprehend and access new texts.

One concern cited by educators about providing too much background knowledge prior to reading is that it could inhibit the opportunity for students to make their own meaning or draw a conclusion about a text. Additionally, summarizing a text prior to reading could give away key information or spoil the enjoyment a student will have while reading a text for the first time. Providing background knowledge is encouraged; however, teachers should use judgment about how much is necessary prior to reading. The key goal of reading in P-12 classrooms should be to support the Lifelong Practices of Readers and Writers.

**10. How are *central idea* and *theme* different? Can themes only be used in literary texts? How are *central idea* and *theme* different? Can themes only be used in literary texts?**

Central idea and theme, as used in the Next Generation Learning Standards, have distinct definitions as used in the standards. Central idea is defined in the ELA glossary as “A concept or idea that is central to a text or section of a text.” Theme as defined as “A message or moral of a text. Themes often explore timeless and universal ideas and are almost always implied rather than stated explicitly.”

The main difference between theme and central idea is that theme, which is used more frequently in literary texts, focuses on a message or timeless idea from which we can learn. Since informational texts include texts such as memoir or essays that include literary writing, theme may be used as a tool for analysis; however, theme is much more prevalent in fiction, poems, plays, and other literary texts and naturally fits better in literary analysis.

**11. Will the Engage NY Modules apply to the Next Generation Standards?**

Each school district in New York State maintains complete and local control over its curriculum and is free to determine the content, concepts, and skills necessary to help students progress toward the grade level goals *defined by the standards*. For this reason, schools should be working on their curriculum documents to address the Standards updates. For districts or individual teachers who have chosen the modules as a primary resource, some revisions and refinements will be necessary to fully address the Next Generation Learning Standards. A Guide

to Aligning the 3-12 Modules and Other Local Curricula to the Next Generation ELA Standards

will be made available on the Next Generation Learning Standards website as a resource to help districts. Please note that the New York State Education Department will not be updating the EngageNY modules, but local districts are welcome to use these [open-source resources](#) to make local revisions. However, the curriculum modules are not required curricula; these are optional materials.

## **12. What are the assessment changes for the Next Generation Standards?**

State assessments will still be given to students in grades 3-8, and the Regents Examination in English Language Arts will continue to be a graduation requirement for high school students. Newly designed 3-8 ELA tests will be administered in the spring of the 2020-2021 school year. As in the past, an Educator Guide, which includes the standards assessed, the test design, and the test blueprint, will be made available prior to the test.

## **13. For the Prekindergarten expectations, do we use the Next Generation Learning Standards document or the Prekindergarten Foundation Standards?**

Both the [2011 P-12 Learning Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy](#) and the newly adopted [NYS Next Generation Learning Standards](#) for English Language Arts (2017 – full implementation 2020-2021) contain prekindergarten learning standards. In addition to these standards documents, NYSED’s [Office of Early Learning](#) published the New York State [Prekindergarten Foundation](#) for the Common Core organizing all prekindergarten standards in one document arranged by the five domains of early learning:

- Approaches to Learning
- Physical Development and Health
- Social and Emotional Development
- Communication, Language, and Literacy
- Cognition and Knowledge of the World

The Office of Early Learning is currently aligning this document to the Next Generation Standards as well. Prekindergarten educators should familiarize themselves with both the learning standards and the prekindergarten foundation as there is content specific to each. For example, the prekindergarten foundation includes information on children’s physical development. [The Introduction to the Next York State Next Generation Early Learning Standards](#) as well as the [Prekindergarten Introduction](#) within the English Language Arts standards also contain information exclusive to the Next Generation Learning Standards.

## **14. Within the Next Generation Learning Standards, some of the expectations include bullets under the standard. Is there a specific order or hierarchy for the bullets?**

While some of the expectations include bullets, the order of these bullets does not indicate a hierarchy. In some instances, the organization of bullets *may* represent a sequential order in

which the skills *could be taught* as certain skills build upon the understanding of others. Curricular and instructional decisions remain at the local level. Local districts and educators should determine the most appropriate sequence of skills development based on the strengths and needs of the students in our classrooms.

### **15. Why are the Language Standards in grade bands in the standards?**

During the standards review, the ELA revision committee decided to include Language Standards 1 and 2 (located in Appendix A), which focus on grammar and conventions, in grade bands (Prekindergarten-Grade 2; Grades 3-5; Grades 6-8; and Grades 9-12). These skills are depicted on a continuum because research suggests that Core Convention Skills and Core Punctuation and Spelling Skills develop along a progression. The grade banded standards are expected to be accomplished *by the end of the grade band*; for example, for the P-2 band, the student is expected to accomplish the standard by the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

The forward arrow (→) is included throughout Language Standards 1 and 2 to indicate skills that connect and progress across the band. See [Appendix A](#) of the Next Generation English Language Arts Standards for more information.

Please note Language Standards 3 and 4 are not banded. *Knowledge of Language and Vocabulary Acquisition and Use* include grade-specific standards.

### **16. Is independent reading a part of the Next Generation Learning Standards?**

Independent reading is an essential part of English Language Arts and Literacy instruction; it is included in the Next Generation Learning Standards within the Lifelong Practices of Readers and Writers, the Text Complexity Expectations, and the Range of Student Reading Experiences. Two of the Lifelong Practices of Readers highlight the importance of independent reading, as we develop students' ability to self-select texts based on interest and read for multiple purposes, including for learning and for pleasure. The Range of Student Reading Experiences and the Text Complexity Expectations are found in each grade level's introduction in the Next Generation English Language Arts Standards. Within the Range of Student Reading Experiences, independent readings are mentioned as one of the many formats present in learning environments for reading. The Text Complexity Expectations describe the importance of using complex texts, while affirming that "students read texts at an instructional and independent level...". Independent reading is an essential component of English Language Arts and Literacy instruction.

### **17. Is there a place to find key definitions of vocabulary from the Next Generation Learning Standards?**

Key definitions of vocabulary from the Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards are contained in the document's glossary. The [Glossary of terms used with the Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards \(2017\)](#) can be found in Appendix B of the standards.