



# Arizona's Common Core Standards

## General Overview of Arizona's Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Unlike past generations, teachers today must prepare students for a world of possibilities that may not currently exist. The workforce of tomorrow must be flexible, motivated, and be able to draw from a deep and vast skill set. The ability to effectively communicate, collaborate, and adapt to situations will be critical to ensuring competition in a global market. By setting high expectations with a commitment to succeed with all students, we are positioning our future workforce to be internationally competitive.

### Arizona's Common Core Standards - English Language Arts (ELA)

**Arizona's Common Core Standards** are the result of a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to meet the needs of our future workforce. Governors and state commissioners of education from 48 states, 2 territories and the District of Columbia were committed to developing a common core of state standards in English language arts and mathematics for grades K-12. In 2010, Arizona adopted Arizona's Common Core Standards to ensure a more seamless education especially for those students who move around Arizona and move across the 46 states.

Arizona's Common Core Standards in English Language Arts are

- research and evidence based,
- aligned with college and work expectations,
- rigorous, and
- Internationally benchmarked.

These standards are written to show a K-12 progression of skills for reading, writing, listening, speaking and the use of language effectively in a variety of content areas. The standards are not only for English language arts but also for literacy in history/social studies, science and technical subjects.

### Common Core Shifts for English Language Arts/Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects

In order for students to be successful, educators must effectively implement the new changes to the standards. There are three (3) shifts<sup>1</sup> associated with Arizona's Common Core Standards in English language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science and technical subjects.

1. **Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction**—Building knowledge through content rich non-fiction plays an essential role in literacy and in the Standards. In K-5, fulfilling the standards requires a 50-50 balance between informational and literary reading. Informational reading primarily includes content rich non-fiction in history/social studies, science and the arts; the K-5 Standards strongly recommend that students build coherent general knowledge both within each year and across years. In 6-12, ELA classes place much greater attention to a specific category of informational text—literary nonfiction—than has been traditional. In grades 6-12, the Standards for literacy in history/social studies, science and technical subjects ensure that students can independently build knowledge in these disciplines through reading and



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writing. To be clear, the Standards do require substantial attention to literature throughout K-12, as half of the required work in K-5 and the core of the work of 6-12 ELA teachers.

2. **Reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational**—The Standards place a premium on students writing to sources, i.e., using evidence from texts to present careful analyses, well-defended claims, and clear information. Rather than asking students questions they can answer solely from their prior knowledge or experience, the Standards expect students to answer questions that depend on their having read the text or texts with care. The Standards also require the cultivation of narrative writing throughout the grades, and in later grades a command of sequence and detail will be essential for effective argumentative and informational writing.

Likewise, the reading standards focus on students' ability to read carefully and grasp information, arguments, ideas and details based on text evidence. Students should be able to answer a range of text---dependent questions, questions in which the answers require inferences based on careful attention to the text.

3. **Regular practice with complex text and its academic language**—Rather than focusing solely on the skills of reading and writing, the Standards highlight the growing complexity of the texts students must read to be ready for the demands of college and careers. The Standards build a staircase of text complexity so that all students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading no later than the end of high school. Closely related to text complexity—and inextricably connected to reading comprehension—is a focus on academic vocabulary: words that appear in a variety of content areas (such as ignite and commit). These shifts can be combined in a variety of ways to help address instruction in Arizona's Common Core Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. For example, shifts 1 and 2 can be combined to address building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction. Shifts 4 and 5 can be combined to address reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational. Finally, shifts 3 and 6 can be combined to address regular practice with complex text and its academic language.

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<sup>1</sup> Student Achievement Partners (updated 07/12/2012). Common core shifts for English language arts/literacy. *Achieve the Core*. Retrieved from [http://www.achievethecore.org/downloads/E0702\\_Description\\_of\\_the\\_Common\\_Core\\_Shifts.pdf](http://www.achievethecore.org/downloads/E0702_Description_of_the_Common_Core_Shifts.pdf)