

What's New in the K–12 Learning Standards for English Language Arts

Overview

The Washington State K–12 Learning Standards for English Language Arts (WA ELA 2026) learning standards update, streamline, and expand the 2011 English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (CCSS). They reflect current research, educator input, and the demands of 21st century communication, including digital and multimodal texts. The standards center students' experiences to drive purposeful, rigorous, and relevant learning.

The revisions to the 2026 learning standards provide prioritization, consistency, and flexibility for educators, including:

- Prioritized standards that identify a universal set of standards that each and every student should have the opportunity to learn and be able to do.
- Consistent formatting of documents for all content areas. Standards look similar and have Microsoft Word and Excel spreadsheet versions for user flexibility.
- Coding and naming system for standards are also similar across content areas to support usability by educators across a variety of school and district roles.

New WA ELA 2026 Domain Structure

ELA CCSS (2011) Domains	WA ELA (2026) Domains
Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Literary Texts• Informational Texts• Foundational Skills (K–5)	Reading <i>A unified reading strand integrates foundational skills, comprehension, interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of texts.</i>
Writing	Writing
Speaking and Listening	Speaking, Listening, and Digital Forums
Language	Language
<i>Standards from Reading and Writing domains moved to new domain</i>	Research and Media Literacy

WA ELA 2026 updates the CCSS by:

- Integrating foundational and comprehension skills.
- Shifting from text types to genres.
- Intentionally aligning with structured literacy.
- Elevating media literacy by creating a dedicated Research & Media Literacy domain.
- Incorporating digital forums as essential communication environments.



Reading Domain

- Foundational skills and comprehension develop at the same time.
- Literary and informational texts are combined and reorganized around genre, including emerging genres (e.g., social media posts).
- Text features expand into grades 6–12, teaching students to “decode” genre-specific visual elements.
- Student selection of texts supports student interest, experience, and prior knowledge.
- Emphasis on linking reading to research, discussion, writing, projects, and real-life applications.

Writing Domain

- Students compose genres that integrate text types (argument, informative, narrative) with flexibility (e.g., a narrative element in a lab report vs. a novel).
- Persuasion broadened beyond argument.
- Intentionally aligned to WIDA’s English Language Development (ELD) Standards.
- Emphasis on applying the writing process to unfamiliar genres and real-world writing tasks, and in other content areas.
- Digital citizenship added: permanence of digital publishing and ethical use of others’ creative work.

Language Domain

- Supports connection to purpose and context across other domains.
- Useful in dual language settings.
- Emphasizes how and why people use language differently in different settings.

Speaking, Listening, and Digital Forums Domain

- Expanded to include digital discussions, in addition to face-to-face communication.
- Digital citizenship added: permanence of digital contributions, online anonymity, and authenticity in digital forums.
- Prepares students for civil discourse across platforms, including project-based learning.

Research and Media Literacy Domain

- Students begin asking and refining research questions in elementary grades.
- Early introduction to curiosity as part of inquiry.
- Expanded use of digital search tools.
- Encourages independent critical thinking about media messages.
- Students analyze reactions to media messages, purposes of media messages, content accuracy, and source credibility, with the last two explicitly separated.