

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) update the 2011 English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA CCSS). The updated standards are shorter, clearer, and include new ways students communicate today, such as digital and multimedia texts. They are based on current research and feedback from educators. The standards also connect learning to students' experiences, so instruction feels meaningful, challenging, and useful.

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

- Prioritized standards that identify a universal set of standards that 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 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 • Literary Texts • Informational Texts • Foundational Skills (K–5)	Reading <i>The Reading domain integrates foundational skills, comprehension, interpretation, analysis, and evaluation together.</i>
Writing	Writing
Speaking and Listening	Speaking, Listening, and Digital Forums
Language	Language
	Research and Media Literacy

WA ELA 2026 updates the ELA 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.
- Adding digital forum formats as authentic communication environments.
- Supporting connection to purpose and context across domains.



What is New by Domain

Reading Domain

- Foundational skills are placed in the context of a language and print-rich environment.
- Literary and informational texts are combined and organized around existing and emerging genres.
- Text features expand into grades 6–12.
- Reading links to research, discussion, writing, and real-life applications.

Writing Domain

- Composes genres that combine text types with flexibility.
- Persuasion broadened beyond argument.
- Alignment 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.
- Addition of digital citizenship, permanence of digital publishing and ethical use of others’ creative work.

Language Domain

- Emphasizes how and why people use language differently in different settings.
- Encoding and transcription are added.

Speaking, Listening, and Digital Forums Domain

- Includes online discussion formats as well as face-to-face discussion.
- Digital citizenship added, including permanence of digital contributions, online anonymity, and authenticity in digital forums.
- Emphasizes civil discourse in multiple formats.

Research and Media Literacy Domain

- Students begin asking and refining research questions in elementary grades.
- Introduces 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.