

English / Language Arts

First Grade

First-grade students extend their knowledge of language arts in significant and exciting ways as they learn skills that enable them to read and write more independently. Instruction should be focused on helping students improve the skills they had begun to develop in kindergarten. An instructional priority must be that the students learn to read and exit the grade with the ability to decode and recognize increasingly complex words accurately and automatically. Moreover, they should be able to write and spell those words and use them to communicate ideas and experiences. Concurrently, students must have broad and rich experiences to expand their knowledge of vocabulary and concepts and extend their exposure and understanding of literary forms. As they write and speak, they should be able to apply the conventions and structures of sentences. Of foremost importance is the availability of quality instructional materials that will allow students to achieve and apply different standards in the first grade. Specifically, students will need decodable texts with which to practice the decoding skills they are learning. In addition, they will need a broad array of high-quality literature and informational texts for the teacher to read to them as they develop listening comprehension skills prerequisite for reading comprehension. The separate forms of text are necessary because neither by itself is suitable or adequate to develop the full range of skills expected of first graders. Each type of text has a distinct and significant role in beginning reading instruction.

Curriculum Outline

Below are the Montana content standards for the English / Language Arts and the local Ronan School District #30 standards that further explain the goals of our program:

MONTANA STANDARDS FOR READING

Reading is essential to learning. It is the pathway to lifelong learning and the key to life's opportunities. Reading is a strategic problem-solving process of gaining personal meaning from text. Students use a range of skills and strategies in the process of reading to comprehend what they read. Reading is not only a basic skill, it is an indispensable tool for critical and creative thinking. There are a diversity of purposes for which readers read a variety of materials. Reading literacy allows students to make connections between their own and others' experiences, to inquire systematically, to access, analyze, synthesize, and critically evaluate information. Early reading achievement is a reliable predictor of later school performance. Success in school is often determined by student proficiency in reading. Proficient readers monitor and evaluate their own progress in reading.

Montana Standard 1—Students construct meaning as they comprehend, interpret, and respond to what they read.

Montana Standard 2—Students apply a range of skills and strategies to read.

Montana Standard 3—Students set goals, monitor, and evaluate their progress in reading.

Montana Standard 4—Students select, read, and respond to print and nonprint material for a variety of purposes.

Montana Standard 5—Students gather, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information from a variety of sources, and communicate their findings in ways appropriate for their purposes and audiences.

MONTANA STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE

Literature, a primary vehicle for teaching reading, attempts to show life in its uncertainties, complexities, and imperfections, offering many insights for the reader. Responding to print and nonprint media allows participants to experience vicariously other lives and to measure their own experiences against those of others. The exploration of literature and films encourages students to become critical and reflective thinkers and to develop personal aesthetic standards for print and nonprint media as art forms.

Montana Standard 1—Students construct meaning as they comprehend, interpret, analyze and respond to literary works.

Montana Standard 2—Students recognize and evaluate how language, literary devices, and elements contribute to the meaning and impact of literary works.

Montana Standard 3—Students reflect upon their literary experiences and purposefully select from a range of works.

Montana Standard 4—Students interact with print and nonprint literary works from various cultures, ethnic groups, traditional and contemporary viewpoints written by both genders.

Montana Standard 5—Students use literary works to enrich personal experience and to connect to the broader world of ideas, concepts and issues.

1.0 Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development

Students understand the basic features of reading. They select letter patterns and know how to translate them into spoken language by using phonics, syllabication, and word parts. They apply this knowledge to achieve fluent oral and silent reading.

Concepts About Print

- 1.1 Match oral words to printed words.
- 1.2 Identify the title and author of a reading selection.
- 1.3 Identify letters, words, and sentences.

Phonemic Awareness

- 1.4 Distinguish initial, medial, and final sounds in single-syllable words.
- 1.5 Distinguish long- and short-vowel sounds in orally stated single-syllable words (e.g., *bit/bite*).
- 1.6 Create and state a series of rhyming words, including consonant blends.
- 1.7 Add, delete, or change target sounds to change words (e.g., change *cow* to *how*; *pan* to *an*).
- 1.8 Blend two to four phonemes into recognizable words (e.g., /c/a/t/ = cat; /f/ /l/a/t/ = flat).
- 1.9 Segment single syllable words into their components (e.g., /c/a/t/ = cat; /s/p/l/a/t/ = splat; /r/i/ch/ = rich).

Decoding and Word Recognition

- 1.10 Generate the sounds from all the letters and letter patterns, including consonant blends and long- and short-vowel patterns (i.e., phonograms), and blend those sounds into recognizable words.
- 1.11 Read common, irregular sight words (e.g., *the, have, said, come, give, of*).
- 1.12 Use knowledge of vowel digraphs and *r*-controlled letter-sound associations to read words.
- 1.13 Read compound words and contractions.
- 1.14 Read inflectional forms (e.g., *-s, -ed, -ing*) and root words (e.g., *look, looked, looking*).
- 1.15 Read common word families (e.g., *-ite, -ate*).
- 1.16 Read aloud with fluency in a manner that sounds like natural speech.

Vocabulary and Concept Development

- 1.17 Classify grade-appropriate categories of words (e.g., concrete collections of animals, foods, toys).

2.0 Reading Comprehension

Students read and understand grade-level appropriate material. They draw upon a variety of comprehension strategies as needed (e.g., generating and responding to essential questions, making predictions, comparing information from several sources). The selections in the list of *Recommended Readings in Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight* illustrate the quality and complexity of the materials to be read by students. In addition to their regular school reading, by grade four, students read one-half million words annually, including a good representation of grade-level appropriate narrative and expository text (e.g., classic and contemporary literature, magazines, newspapers, online information). In grade one, students begin to make progress toward this goal.

Structural Features of Informational Materials

- 2.1 Identify text that uses sequence or other logical order.

Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

- 2.2 Respond to *who, what, when, where, and how* questions.
- 2.3 Follow one-step written instructions.
- 2.4 Use context to resolve ambiguities about word and sentence meanings.
- 2.5 Confirm predictions about what will happen next in a text by identifying key words (i.e., signpost words).
- 2.6 Relate prior knowledge to textual information.
- 2.7 Retell the central ideas of simple expository or narrative passages.

Evaluation of Progress in Reading.

- 2.8 Set fluency goals for use with SRI sub-category.
- 2.9 Participate in a home/school program to promote value and enjoy books and reading.
- 2.10 Maintain a record of books read at home

3.0 Literary Response and Analysis

Students read and respond to a wide variety of significant works of children's literature. They distinguish between the structural features of the text and the literary terms or elements (e.g., theme, plot, setting, characters). The selections in *Recommended Readings in Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight* illustrate the quality and complexity of the materials to be read by students.

Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

- 3.1 Identify and describe the elements of plot, setting, and character(s) in a story, as well as the story's beginning, middle, and ending.
- 3.2 Describe the roles of authors and illustrators and their contributions to print materials.
- 3.3 Recollect, talk, and write about books read during the school year.

Cultural Reading

- Hear grade appropriate American Indian Text
- Hear Text from various cultures and ethnic groups.
- Hear texts written by both genders.
- Hear about traditional and contemporary viewpoints.
- Listen and discuss.

Literary works from various cultures, ethnic groups, traditional and contemporary viewpoints written by both genders are to be used.

MONTANA STANDARDS FOR WRITING

The standards set in this document represent what research and experience have described as important in the process of writing. Writing is essential to thinking and learning. As a strategic, problem-solving process, writing is a key element of communication and a critical part of comprehension. In addition to being a developmental basic skill, writing is also indispensable to critical, ethical, and creative thinking. Writers use a range of skills and strategies in the process of writing to communicate with diverse audiences and for diverse purposes. Writing proficiency enables individuals to learn, make connections between their own and others' experiences, create meaning, and evaluate information.

Montana Standard 1—Students write clearly and effectively.

Montana Standard 2—Students apply a range of skills and strategies in the writing process.

Montana Standard 3—Students evaluate and reflect on their growth as writers.

Montana Standard 4—Students write for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Montana Standard 5—Students recognize the structures of various forms and apply these characteristics to their own writing.

Montana Standard 6—Students use the inquiry process, problem-solving strategies, and resources to synthesize and communicate information.

1.0 Writing Strategies

Students write clear and coherent sentences and paragraphs that develop a central idea. Their writing shows they consider the audience and purpose. Students progress through the stages of the writing process (e.g., prewriting, drafting, revising, editing successive versions).

Organization and Focus

- 1.1 Select a focus when writing.
- 1.2 Use descriptive words when writing.

Penmanship

- 1.3 Print legibly and space letters, words, and sentences appropriately.

2.0 Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

Students write compositions that describe and explain familiar objects, events, and experiences. Student writing demonstrates a command of standard American English and the drafting, research, and organizational strategies outlined in Writing Standard 1.0. Using the writing strategies of grade one outlined in Writing Standard 1.0, students:

- 2.1 Write brief narratives (e.g., fictional, autobiographical) describing an experience.
- 2.2 Write brief expository descriptions of a real object, person, place, or event, using sensory details.

1.0 Written and Oral English Language Conventions

The curriculum for written and oral English language conventions have been placed between those for writing and for listening and speaking because these conventions are essential to both sets of skills. Students write and speak with a command of standard English conventions appropriate to this grade level.

Sentence Structure

- 1.1 Write and speak in complete, coherent sentences.

Grammar

- 1.2 Identify and correctly use singular and plural nouns.
- 1.3 Identify and correctly use contractions (e.g., *isn't*, *aren't*, *can't*, *won't*) and singular possessive pronouns (e.g., *my/mine*, *his/her*, *hers*, *your/s*) in writing and speaking.

Punctuation

- 1.4 Distinguish between declarative, exclamatory, and interrogative sentences.
- 1.5 Use a period, exclamation point, or question mark at the end of sentences.
- 1.6 Use knowledge of the basic rules of punctuation and capitalization when writing.

Capitalization

- 1.7 Capitalize the first word of a sentence, names of people, and the pronoun *I*.

Spelling

- 1.8 Spell three- and four-letter short-vowel words and grade-level-appropriate sight words correctly.

Evaluation and Reflection of Writing

Dialog with the teacher to identify strengths and weaknesses in their writing.

MONTANA STANDARDS FOR SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Oral communication is the bridge to the future. It provides the basis of language development, thinking, gathering information, and shaping how we see ourselves and how others see us. Studies show that over 80 percent of communication is spent in speaking and listening, which lends credence to the belief that teaching these skills is not just desirable, but critical. It is the responsibility of education to ensure that students are prepared for their roles as family members, workers, and citizens through oral communication instruction. The National Communication Association defines speaking as “the uniquely human act or process of transmitting and exchanging information, ideas, and emotions using oral language” while listening is “the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages.”

Montana Standard 1—Students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the communication process.

Montana Standard 2—Students distinguish among and use appropriate types of speaking and listening for a variety of purposes.

Montana Standard 3—Students apply a range of skills and strategies to speaking and listening.

Montana Standard 4—Students identify, analyze, and evaluate the impacts of effective speaking and evaluative listening.

MONTANA STANDARDS FOR MEDIA LITERACY

We have long understood the importance of literacy to becoming productive citizens in a democratic society. In our world of powerful images, sounds and words, students must be media literate. Studies show that students view an average of 3,000 or more hours of television prior to graduation from high school than they spend in class. Media literacy is the tool students need to access, analyze, evaluate and produce communication in a variety of forms. Students need to understand the ways words, images and sounds influence the way meanings are created and shared in our contemporary global society.

Montana Standard 1—Students recognize that media messages are constructed using specific techniques which manipulate sound, image, text and movement to convey meaning.

Montana Standard 2—Students distinguish among and use appropriate types of media for a variety of purposes.

Montana Standard 3—Students apply knowledge, skills and strategies to design and create media messages.

Montana Standard 4—Students identify, analyze and evaluate the impacts of media on individuals and societies.

1.0 Listening and Speaking Strategies

Students listen critically and respond appropriately to oral communication. They speak in a manner that guides the listener to understand important ideas by using proper phrasing, pitch, and modulation.

Comprehension

- 1.1 Listen attentively.
- 1.2 Ask questions for clarification and understanding.
- 1.3 Give, restate, and follow simple two-step directions.

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

- 1.4 Stay on the topic when speaking.
- 1.5 Use descriptive words when speaking about people, places, things, and events.

2.0 Speaking Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

Students deliver brief recitations and oral presentations about familiar experiences or interests that are organized around a coherent thesis statement. Student speaking demonstrates a command of standard American English and the organizational and delivery strategies outlined in Listening and Speaking 1.0. Using the speaking strategies of grade one outlined in Listening and Speaking 1.0, students:

- 2.1 Recite poems, rhymes, songs, and stories.
- 2.2 Retell stories using basic story grammar and relating the sequence of story events by answering *who, what, when, where, why,* and *how* questions.
- 2.3 Relate an important life event or personal experience in a simple sequence.
- 2.4 Provide descriptions with careful attention to sensory detail.

Media

Use media to build background knowledge as another avenue of communication.

Use knowledge box clips to gain media information and knowledge.

Below is a narrative that describes and elaborates best practices research in English Language Arts and is the standard to which we strive.

Reading

Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development

Concepts About Print

First-grade students refine their understanding of the relationship between print and language and extend that understanding to more specific applications. Specifically, they should be able not only to discriminate letters from words and words from sentences but also to match a spoken word (e.g., *cat*) with a printed word. This awareness of words and their relation to speech is reinforced by instruction and practice in phonemic awareness. First graders further their understanding of books and stories by learning the standard conventions of print, including titles and authors. Instruction in concepts about print is focused on teaching students to (1) match oral words with printed words; (2) learn the conventions of stories, books, and other forms of literature (titles, authors); and (3) discriminate letters, words, and sentences. A recommended instructional method is to teach a particular convention of print (e.g., title) as any other basic concept, using a wide range of examples. Once students learn the basic concept, it should be incorporated into a wide array of text forms and be reviewed systematically.

Phonemic Awareness

The first-grade curriculum and instruction in phonemic awareness prepare learners by making explicit the relationship between the words they hear and the phonemic structure of the language. Students must possess phonemic awareness if they are to understand the relationship between speech and print and therefore develop proficiency in reading and writing increasingly complex words and word types. Instruction in language at the phoneme level and student proficiency in that area are the hallmarks of the curriculum standards for the first grade. Through systematic instructional sequences, students should become not only phonemically aware but also phonemically proficient in identifying and producing a range of phonemic awareness skills. (*Note:* For a more complete discussion of phonemic awareness and its relation to early reading and spelling success, see the kindergarten section in this chapter.) First-grade students should be provided with systematic and extensive instruction and practice in:

- Learning to analyze words at the phoneme level (i.e., working with individual sounds within words)
- Working with phonemes in all positions in words (initial, final, medial)
- Progressing from identifying or distinguishing the positions of sounds in words to producing the sound and adding, deleting, and changing selected sounds
- Allocating a significant amount of time to blending, segmenting, and manipulating tasks
- Working with increasingly longer words (three to four phonemes)
- Expanding beyond consonant-vowel-consonant words (e.g., *sun*) to more complex phonemic structures (consonant blends)
- Incorporating letters into phonemic awareness activities
- Aligning the words used in phonemic awareness activities with those used in reading

Instruction in phonemic awareness can span two years, kindergarten and first grade. But in this aspect of teaching as in others, the teacher must be guided by the students' developing competencies. Some students require little training in phonemic awareness; others might require quite a bit. Although early phonemic awareness is oral, the teacher must be careful not to delay in providing learning opportunities with print. Learning phonics and learning to decode and write words all help students continue to develop phonemic awareness. In addition, students who have developed or are successfully developing phonemic awareness should not have to spend an unnecessary amount of time being instructed in such awareness. Adequate, ongoing assessment of student progress is essential.

Decoding and Word Recognition

Students who enter the first grade should possess two critical skills: (1) fundamental understanding of the phonemic structure of words; and (2) association of letters and sounds. Some students combine the two skills intuitively through alphabetic insight; that is, the process of hearing sounds in words and using the sequence of letters in words and their associated sounds to read words.

A priority of the first-grade curriculum must be to ensure that all students develop alphabetic insight and extend their ability to decode words independently and read words automatically. Automaticity comes from reading many decodable texts in which most words are composed of taught letter-sound correspondences and some words are taught directly as sight words. Decodable text should be used as an intervening step between explicit skill acquisition and the student's ability to read quality trade books. It should contain the phonic elements with which students are familiar. However, the text should be unfamiliar to the student so that they are required to apply word-analysis skills and not reconstruct text they have memorized. A review of recommendations indicates that in the first grade students progress from being able to generate the sounds for all consonants and vowels to reading compound words, words with inflectional endings, and common word families.

Decoding plays an essential role in this evolution from a time when students enter with limited knowledge of how to recognize words to a time when they leave fully able to recognize unfamiliar words. Beginning decoding (or more technically, phonological recoding) is the ability to (1) read from left to right simple, new regular words; (2) generate sounds from all the letters; and (3) blend those sounds into a recognizable word. Explicit instruction and attention to specific letters in words and repeated opportunities to practice words successfully result in automaticity—the ability to recognize a word effortlessly and rapidly. Decoding is essential to reading unfamiliar words and reading words independently and is a critical benchmark in a student's reading development.

Because the English language is alphabetic, decoding is an essential and primary means of recognizing words. English has too many words for the user to rely on memorization as a primary strategy for identifying words. In the first grade the skills and strategies learned in decoding and word recognition are extended in the standards for writing conventions. For example, as students learn to read compound words and contractions, economy in instruction can be gained by having the students write the words and use them in speaking. Similarly, as students learn to read three- and four-letter short-vowel words and sight words, they should be given instruction and opportunities to practice spelling those words. Decoding instruction in the first grade should:

- Progress systematically from simple word types (e.g., consonant-vowel-consonant) and word lengths (e.g., number of phonemes) and word complexity (e.g., phonemes in the word, position of blends, stop sounds) to more complex words.
- Model instruction at each of the fundamental stages (e.g., lettersound correspondences, blending, reading whole words).
- Sequence words strategically to incorporate known letters or lettersound combinations.
- Provide initial practice in controlled connected text in which students can apply their newly learned skills successfully.
- Include repeated opportunities to read words in contexts in which students can apply their knowledge of letter-sound correspondences.
- Use decodable text based on specific phonics lessons in the early part of the first grade as an intervening step between explicit skill acquisition and the students' ability to read quality trade books. Decodable text should contain the phonics elements and sight words that students have been taught. However, the text should be unfamiliar to students so that they are required to apply word-analysis skills and not simply reconstruct text they have memorized.
- Teach necessary sight words to make more interesting stories accessible. First-grade instruction in word analysis should teach students high-frequency irregular words systematically. Words with high utility should be selected and used judiciously in early reading. Teachers should point out irregularities while focusing student attention on all letters in the word and should provide repeated practice. The number of irregular words introduced should be controlled so that the students will not be overwhelmed. High-frequency words (e.g., *was, saw; them, they, there*), often confused by students, should be strategically separated for initial instruction as well.

Instruction in word families and word patterns (i.e., reading orthographic units of text, such as *at, sat, fat, rat*) should begin after students have learned the letter-sound correspondences in the unit (Ehri and McCormick 1998). Teaching students to process larger, highly represented patterns will increase fluency in word recognition. However, the instruction should be carefully coordinated and should build on knowledge gained from instruction in letter-sound correspondence.

The benchmark for facile word readers in the first grade is their ability to read aloud fluently in a manner that resembles natural speech. Although important in its own right, fluency has significant implications for comprehension. A primary reason for its importance is that *if students are not fluent, automatic decoders, they will spend so much mental energy decoding words that they will have too little energy left for comprehension* (Stanovich 1994). Comprehension clearly involves more than fluent word recognition but is dependent on fluent word recognition. On average, first graders increase their reading fluency approximately 2.10 correct words per minute per week (Fuchs et al. 1993). After an estimated 30 weeks of instruction, students should leave the first grade reading approximately 60 words per minute correctly. Practice in fluency is most appropriate when students are accurate word readers. One technique that has been used to increase fluency is repeated readings of the same text to develop familiarity and automaticity (Samuels 1979).

Vocabulary and Concept Development

The curriculum and instruction offered in the first grade extend the understanding of concepts and vocabulary in English. Instruction should focus on two types of vocabulary development, basic categorization of grade-appropriate concepts (e.g., animals, foods) and the words students hear and read in stories and informational text that are instrumental to comprehension. Vocabulary development occurs through both explicit instruction in specific concepts and words and through exposure to a broad and diverse range of words in stories and informational text that have been read. In addition to learning specific vocabulary, first-grade students also learn to use context and surrounding text to understand the meaning of unknown words. They are provided instruction and opportunities that prepare them to use new and descriptive vocabulary in their speaking and writing.

Reading

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension can be developed through listening and reading. For kindergarten students and all other students whose decoding and word-recognition skills do not yet allow them access to story-level passages, systematic opportunities must be provided to listen to stories and answer comprehension questions orally. The oral readings should have more complex vocabulary, syntactic structures, and story lines than are found in the text used for decoding and word recognition. Key comprehension strategies for first graders include:

- Identifying text that uses sequence or other logical order
- Following one-step written instructions
- Responding to or posing *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *how* questions
- Recognizing the commonalities that occur across stories and narrative text
- Using context to resolve ambiguities about the meaning of words and sentences
- Confirming predictions by identifying supporting text
- Relating prior knowledge to textual information
- Retelling the central ideas of simple expository or narrative passages

Instruction in comprehension is designed with the same precision as instruction in word recognition. For comprehension to occur, the words in the text, along with their meanings, must first be accessible to the learner. Initial reading comprehension is practiced with texts students can read at their level. When appropriate, the complexity of comprehension instruction may be simplified by allowing students to learn and practice the strategy from information presented in speech or in pictures. If the forms of presentation are not appropriate, initial instruction in comprehension can begin with manageable textual units (e.g., sentences, short paragraphs before longer passages, and complete stories). Additional instruction in comprehension may include:

- Modeling multiple examples and providing extensive guided practice in comprehension strategies
- Helping students recognize the features of text that facilitate comprehension
- Brainstorming central ideas from the text (e.g., What do we know about what frogs eat? What do we know about where they live? What do we know about their appearance? What else would we like to know about frogs?)

The text for initial instruction in comprehension should (1) begin with linguistic units appropriate for the learner; (2) use familiar vocabulary; (3) be based on a topic with which the learner is familiar; and (4) use simple syntactical structures.

Instruction in comprehension should also require students to determine which strategy to use and why and provide extensive opportunities for students to read and apply the strategies throughout the year. For example, instruction designed to teach children to answer *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *how* questions would consist of determining which type of question to ask first. *Who* and *what* questions are typically easier to answer than *when* and *where* questions. For *when* and *where* questions, instruction in how to identify the when and where in text may be necessary. These examples would be presented orally because the wording may be too difficult for first graders to decode:

After the baseball game tells when.

On Saturday tells when.

On the table tells where.

In San Francisco tells where.

When students can correctly identify and discriminate between when and where, they learn to answer questions from sentences. *Example: Text:* “Nick went home after the baseball game.”

Question: “When did Nick go home?” (After the baseball game)

A simple instructional design would teach each type of question separately.

After one type is clearly understood and applied (e.g., *who*), a second type (e.g., *what*) would be introduced. After both types are understood, *who* and *what* questions can be combined in an instructional session. At the very beginning of instruction, first-grade students should be given a linguistic structure they can comprehend. Sentences are, therefore, a plausible starting point because they provide a manageable unit of language that conveys information. Once students can answer questions at the sentence level, the teacher can proceed to multiple sentences and eventually to paragraphs. Students who are more advanced can be prompted to ask and answer the questions.

Reading

Literary Response and Analysis

First-grade students should extend their schema or structure of stories to the organizational structure that narrative text has a beginning, a middle, and an end. In addition, they should learn the sequence or logical order of informational text. They use those structures to comprehend text as well as retell stories. The elements of plot are added to the previously taught setting, characters, and important events. For a description of instructional design for elements of story grammar, see the kindergarten section in this chapter. The importance of understanding the structures of text is reflected in the number of related standards. As an example, students read about and learn the elements of stories. They also learn that stories have a beginning, middle, and end. These structures are directly connected to Writing Standard for which students write brief narratives describing an experience. Further related is Speaking Standard where students retell stories, using basic story grammar elements. Content standards in mathematics, history–social science, and science can be addressed simultaneously as students read (or have read to them) stories or expository text that develop concepts and vocabulary in those academic areas. Economic, effective curricular programs and instruction will draw upon those relationships to expedite and reinforce language arts learning across the curriculum. Strategies recommended in teaching organizational sequences of text (informational or narrative) are:

- Ensuring that students have a conceptual understanding of beginning, middle, and end
- Introducing text where the components of text are explicit (beginning, middle, and end being obvious)
- Beginning with short passages to reduce the memory load for learners
- Focusing on only one component at a time (e.g., beginning)

- Introducing an additional component when students can reliably identify those previously taught
- Guiding students through sample text in which teachers think out loud as they identify the components
- Having students discuss the elements orally and make comparisons with other stories
- Using the beginning, middle, and end as a structure for recalling and retelling the story or information

Writing

Writing Strategies and Writing Applications

First-grade writing combines the important skills of idea formation and documentation, penmanship, and spelling. Spelling assumes increased importance as students are responsible for communicating their ideas through recognized conventions. At this stage spelling instruction takes three forms. Students should be taught explicitly how to use their knowledge of the phonemic structure of words and letter-sound correspondences to spell *the words they do not know*. As students begin to read words, they should be taught to spell *the words they can read*. In addition, students need to learn to spell *high-frequency words* correctly. The ability to use phonetic spelling, although temporary, indicates that children “have achieved an essential milestone toward mastery of decoding in reading” (Moats 1995). Moats reports that although some students easily learn to spell correctly, many others do not. Guidelines for instruction in spelling for students who do not easily learn to spell correctly include:

1. Systematic, teacher-directed instruction and practice with controlled amounts of new information
2. Regulation of the amount of information presented at one time (Introduce smaller sets of words as opposed to entire lists at one time.)
3. Plentiful opportunities to practice newly introduced spellings
4. Presentation of only one spelling rule or generalization at a time
5. Provision of immediate corrective feedback
6. Organized, sequential instruction that builds on phonological awareness and letter-sound correspondences and regular one-syllable patterns.

Students in the first grade are introduced to writing as a means of communicating. They begin to understand that writing is a process and learn to apply the process appropriately to write brief narratives and brief descriptions of objects, persons, places, or events. As students learn to apply process writing to narrative and descriptive structures, they also learn the different types of sentences along with the conventions for recording their ideas (e.g., capitalization, punctuation). They learn to apply writing conventions, with particular emphasis being placed on the fundamentals of grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. General guidelines for writing instruction include:

1. Selecting and emphasizing those sentence types most useful for communicating ideas
2. Focusing on one form of punctuation until learners achieve mastery and then introducing a second form
3. Sequencing student writing activities so that they first see good models, edit other writing, and then generate their own sentences or text.

As students learn the various stages of writing as a process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing), they should have a structure for incorporating varying combinations of the stages into their writing that is based on the purpose of a specific piece of writing. Using a story grammar structure or a simple structure for descriptive text helps students apply the stages of writing.

Listening and Speaking

Listening and Speaking Strategies and Speaking Applications

First-grade students are increasingly responsible for comprehending information presented orally, communicating their ideas through speaking and writing, recalling important information from narratives and informational text, and answering questions. Their responses should incorporate greater diversity into the words they use and greater mastery of grammatical structures. To respond to or produce complete, coherent sentences that use descriptive words or correct singular and plural nouns, students need models of those structures along with many opportunities to produce their own sentences. Instructional considerations to improve sentence production include:

1. Providing explicit models
2. Eliciting student responses that progress from identification to production
3. Carefully selecting, sequencing, and scheduling instructional targets that allow learners to master one form (e.g., *my*) before progressing to the next (e.g., *his/her* or *your/yours*)
4. Providing frequent opportunities to repeat sentences
5. Strategically integrating instruction requiring students to discern the correct usage (e.g., *his/her*, *your/ yours*)

In addition, students should learn to comprehend and reconstruct sequences of information, including multiple-step directions, poems, songs, and stories. Incremental instruction in which students are taught to recall increasingly longer units should build on the sentence-level guidelines previously outlined.

Content and Instructional Connections

The following activities integrate standards across domains, strands, and academic disciplines. Teachers may wish to:

1. Use known letters, phonemic awareness, letter-sound associations, and encoding skills to read, write, and spell words.
2. Reinforce the connections between phonemic awareness, translating a printed word into its letter-sound correspondences, reading the whole word, and spelling. Use words that students can read in spelling and writing activities.
3. Introduce words from stories in various instructional activities. Provide frequent opportunities for students to hear and practice new vocabulary.
4. Provide ample opportunities for students to hear stories read aloud and then discuss those stories.
5. Provide opportunities for students to retell stories based on their knowledge of story elements. Model how to retell familiar stories, emphasizing coherent Communication conventions.
6. Use the story grammar structure to comprehend, retell, and compose stories.
7. Have students read (and read to them) stories and informational text that address the first-grade content standards in mathematics, science, and history–social science.

Prerequisite standard. Kindergarten Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development Standard: Match all consonant and short-vowel sounds to appropriate letters.

Prerequisite or corequisite standards. First-Grade Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development Standards.

- 1: Blend two to four phonemes into recognizable words.
- 2: Segment single-syllable words into their components.

Corequisite standard. First-Grade Written and Oral English-Language Conventions
Standard: Spell three- and four-letter short-vowel words and grade-level-appropriate sight words correctly.

Meeting Students' Diverse Needs

1. *Students with Reading Difficulties or Disabilities*

- a. These students need a firm understanding of prerequisite skills before beginning blending. If they cannot blend sounds auditorily or know only a few letter-sound correspondences, provide appropriate instruction before introducing blending.
- b. Some first graders will continue to stop between the sounds in a word. Provide extra models of not stopping between the sounds and provide sufficient waiting time for students to process the sounds into the whole word.
- c. Assess whether the rate of introduction of new letter sounds into blending or new word types is manageable for students with special needs. If the pace is too rapid, provide additional instruction.
- d. If students have difficulty in retaining the blending strategy, schedule a booster session sometime during the day for one to two minutes.

2. *Students Who Are Advanced Learners*

- a. Use entry-level assessment to determine the need for instruction in blending. Keep in mind that some students may have memorized a large repertoire of words but still lack blending strategies. Use the nonsense words measure to assess their ability.
- b. Determine the word type(s) for which students need instruction. They may learn the blending strategy and immediately generalize to more complex word types, making further or extensive instruction in blending unnecessary.
- c. If isolated word types are unfamiliar to students, design an instructional schedule to address the missing skills. If the students are proficient in decoding phonetically regular words, proceed to introductory passage-reading standards.
- d. Provide explicit instruction in targeted skill areas, keeping in mind that the students may acquire the blending strategy very quickly. Accelerate movement through instructional objectives.
- e. If the students can demonstrate mastery of the grade-level standards, consider grouping the students within or across grade levels to work on the second-grade standards. Because many advanced learners enter the first grade reading well above grade level, the teacher should determine their overall reading ability in addition to their performance in specific skill areas. On the basis of a comprehensive assessment, give students challenging instructional materials and monitor their progress carefully to ensure they are learning at a rate commensurate with their abilities.

Note: Unnecessary drill and practice in areas of high performance can be very discouraging for advanced learners because they are being asked to learn something they already know.

3. *Students Who Are English Learners*

The following suggestions assume that students will begin language arts instruction in English and that literacy instruction is augmented by concurrent formal linguistic instruction in English (English language development). If instruction is provided in part in the primary language and that language is alphabetic, the instruction in the primary language should be designed according to the same standards and principles established for language arts instruction in this framework. It is suggested, therefore, that the teacher:

- a. Reassess the students' knowledge of letter-sound correspondences and phonological awareness of the sounds included in the lesson before teaching English learners to blend sounds. Additional phonological and letter-sound instruction should be provided as needed. Teachers should be aware of phonological differences between English and the students' primary languages and provide additional exposure to and practice with the difficult sounds.
- b. Provide additional modeling and practice for those English learners who need further assistance. Appropriate modeling can be provided by the teacher or by native English-speaking peers. Be sure to provide sufficient waiting time to process and produce sounds.
- c. Assess whether the rate of introduction of new letter sounds into blending or of new word types is manageable. If not manageable for some students, determine a way to provide additional systematic, guided instruction so that they will be able to catch up with their classmates and accomplish the lesson objective.
- d. Ensure that students have had previous instruction or experiences (or both) with the words included in the instruction and that they understand their meaning.
- e. Assess what knowledge is assumed before each unit of instruction. That is, determine what knowledge the typical English speaker already brings to the classroom and provide preteaching of key concepts.
- f. Have English learners who have acquired literacy skills in their first language draw on those skills in English. Teachers can build on the knowledge of reading skills that students have acquired in their first languages when teaching English letter-sound correspondences.
- g. Provide English learners with explicit models of the letter sound correspondences that students are expected to know and correct errors as would be done for other learners. Correction of errors should always be conducted in a way that encourages students to keep trying and helps them see the progress they are making.