

# English / Language Arts

## Third Grade

The curriculum and instruction offered in the third grade should enable students to (1) read grade level fiction and nonfiction materials independently with literal and inferential comprehension; (2) develop a knowledge of common spelling patterns, roots, and affixes; (3) use conventions of spelling and conventions of print (e.g., paragraphs, end-sentence punctuation); (4) clarify new words, make predictions, and summarize reading passages; (5) answer questions that require analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of grade-level narrative and informational text; and (6) support answers to questions about what they have read by drawing on background knowledge and specific details from the text.

*The third grade is often considered the last period of formal instruction in decoding for students who still need it, although they continue to recognize new words beyond this grade level. At the end of this pivotal year, instruction in phonics is phased out from the formal curriculum as a focal point for students who have learned to decode. Increased and extended emphasis is placed on vocabulary acquisition, comprehension strategies, text analysis, and writing. Students are also taught to use context as an independent vocabulary strategy.*

Instruction in identifying the main idea, prior-knowledge connections, and literal and inferential comprehension assumes greater prominence, as does increased variety in the narratives selected for reading (e.g., fairy tales, fables, textbooks). Building strategies for writing sentences and paragraphs is also emphasized. Students learn formal sentence structure, the four basic types of sentences, and the use of the sentences in written paragraphs. Finally, students take a big step forward, learning how to use speaking strategies and applications and how to deliver prose, poetry, and personal narratives and experiences with fluency, intonation, and expression.

## 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.

### **Decoding and Word Recognition**

- 1.1 Know and use complex word families when reading (e.g., *-ight*) to decode unfamiliar words.
- 1.2 Decode regular multisyllabic words.
- 1.3 Read aloud narrative and expository text fluently and accurately and with appropriate pacing, intonation, and expression.

### **Vocabulary and Concept Development**

- 1.4 Use knowledge of antonyms, synonyms, homophones, and homographs to determine the meanings of words.
- 1.5 Demonstrate knowledge of levels of specificity among grade-appropriate words and explain the importance of these relations (e.g., *dog/mammal/ animal/living things*).
- 1.6 Use sentence and word context to find the meaning of unknown words.
- 1.7 Use a dictionary to learn the meaning and other features of unknown words.
- 1.8 Use knowledge of prefixes (e.g., *un-, re-, pre-, bi-, mis-, dis-*) and suffixes (e.g., *-er, -est, -ful*) to determine the meaning of words.

## **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 *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 three, students make substantial progress toward this goal.

### **Structural Features of Informational Materials**

- 2.1 Use titles, tables of contents, chapter headings, glossaries, and indexes to locate information in text.

### **Comprehension and Analysis of Grade- Level-Appropriate Text**

- 2.2 Ask questions and support answers by connecting prior knowledge with literal information found in, and inferred from, the text.
- 2.3 Demonstrate comprehension by identifying answers in the text.
- 2.4 Recall major points in the text and make and modify predictions about forthcoming information.
- 2.5 Distinguish the main idea and supporting details in expository text.
- 2.6 Extract appropriate and significant information from the text, including problems and solutions.
- 2.7 Follow simple multiple-step written instructions (e.g., how to assemble a product or play a board game).

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 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.

### **Structural Features of Literature**

3.1 Distinguish common forms of literature (e.g., poetry, drama, fiction, nonfiction).

### **Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text**

3.2 Comprehend basic plots of classic fairy tales, myths, folktales, legends, and fables from around the world.

3.3 Determine what characters are like by what they say or do and by how the author or illustrator portrays them.

3.4 Determine the underlying theme or author’s message in fiction and nonfiction text.

3.5 Recognize the similarities of sounds in words and rhythmic patterns (e.g., alliteration, onomatopoeia) in a selection.

3.6 Identify the speaker or narrator in a selection.

### **Cultural Reading**

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

Literary works from various cultures, ethnic groups, traditional and contemporary viewpoints written by both genders will 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 Create a single paragraph:
  - a. Develop a topic sentence.
  - b. Include simple supporting facts and details.

#### **Penmanship**

- 1.2 Write legibly in cursive or joined italic, allowing margins and correct spacing between letters in a word and words in a sentence.

#### **Research**

- 1.3 Understand the structure and organization of various reference materials (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus, atlas, encyclopedia).

#### **Evaluation and Revision**

- 1.4 Revise drafts to improve the coherence and logical progression of ideas by using an established rubric.

### **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 three outlined in Writing Standard 1.0, students:

- 2.1 Write narratives:
  - a. Provide a context within which an action takes place.
  - b. Include well-chosen details to develop the plot.
  - c. Provide insight into why the selected incident is memorable.
- 2.2 Write descriptions that use concrete sensory details to present and support unified impressions of people, places, things, or experiences.
- 2.3 Write personal and formal letters, thank-you notes, and invitations:
  - a. Show awareness of the knowledge and interests of the audience and establish a purpose and context.
  - b. Include the date, proper salutation, body, closing, and signature.

### **1.0 Written and Oral English**

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.

#### **Language Conventions**

Students write and speak with a command of standard English conventions appropriate to this grade level.

#### **Sentence Structure**

- 1.1 Understand and be able to use complete and correct declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences in writing and speaking.

**Grammar**

- 1.2 Identify subjects and verbs that are in agreement and identify and use pronouns, adjectives, compound words, and articles correctly in writing and speaking.
- 1.3 Identify and use past, present, and future verb tenses properly in writing and speaking.
- 1.4 Identify and use subjects and verbs correctly in speaking and writing simple sentences.

**Punctuation**

- 1.5 Punctuate dates, city and state, and titles of books correctly.
- 1.6 Use commas in dates, locations, and addresses and for items in a series.

**Capitalization**

- 1.7 Capitalize geographical names, holidays, historical periods, and special events correctly.

**Spelling**

- 1.8 Spell correctly one-syllable words that have blends, contractions, compounds, orthographic patterns (e.g., *qu*, consonant doubling, changing the ending of a word from *-y* to *-ies* when forming the plural), and common homophones (e.g., *hair-hare*).
- 1.9 Arrange words in alphabetic order.

**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 Retell, paraphrase, and explain what has been said by a speaker.
- 1.2 Connect and relate prior experiences, insights, and ideas to those of a speaker.
- 1.3 Respond to questions with appropriate elaboration.
- 1.4 Identify the musical elements of literary language (e.g., rhymes, repeated sounds, instances of onomatopoeia).

#### **Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication**

- 1.5 Organize ideas chronologically or around major points of information.
- 1.6 Provide a beginning, a middle, and an end, including concrete details that develop a central idea.
- 1.7 Use clear and specific vocabulary to communicate ideas and establish the tone.
- 1.8 Clarify and enhance oral presentations through the use of appropriate props (e.g., objects, pictures, charts).
- 1.9 Read prose and poetry aloud with fluency, rhythm, and pace, using appropriate intonation and vocal patterns to emphasize important passages of the text being read.

#### **Analysis and Evaluation of Oral and Media Communications**

- 1.10 Compare ideas and points of view expressed in broadcast and print media.
- 1.11 Distinguish between the speaker's opinions and verifiable facts.

## **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 Standard 1.0. Using the speaking strategies of grade three outlined in Listening and Speaking Standard 1.0, students:

2.1 Make brief narrative presentations:

- a. Provide a context for an incident that is the subject of the presentation.
- b. Provide insight into why the selected incident is memorable.
- c. Include well-chosen details to develop character, setting, and plot.

2.2 Plan and present dramatic interpretations of experiences, stories, poems, or plays with clear diction, pitch, tempo, and tone.

2.3 Make descriptive presentations that use concrete sensory details to set forth and support unified impressions of people, places, things, or experiences.

## **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 Vocabulary Development

#### Decoding and Word Recognition

Specific decoding instruction in the earlier grades and redundancy of exposure through repeated practice have developed a stable and reliable strategy for analyzing words. As with earlier instruction in decoding and word recognition, students will need explicit instruction for word families (phonograms). Many of the same principles for selecting and sequencing instruction in the early grades apply here: (1) separating word parts that are highly similar (e.g., *ight* and *aight*); (2) introducing word parts that occur with high frequency over those that occur in only a few words; and (3) teaching the word parts first and then incorporating the words into sentences and connected text. The word-recognition sub-strand in the third grade emphasizes reading harder and bigger words (i.e., multisyllabic words) and reading all words more fluently. Students further their word-analysis and fluency skills through instruction centered on orthographically larger and more complex units (e.g., *ight*, *aught*, *own*). They may learn to apply the orthographic unit *ight* first in such simple words as (pl)*ight*, (m)*ight*, and (sl)*ight*. When students are successful in reading simpler words with *ight*, word analysis should be extended to more complex words in which *ight* occurs in different positions (e.g., *lightning*, *overnight*, *brightness*, *forthright*, *delight*, and *knight*).

In the third grade students will also need to learn strategies to decode multisyllabic words. They can be taught to use the structural features of such word parts as affixes (e.g., *pre-*, *mis-*, *-tion*) to aid in word recognition. Economy can be achieved by teaching both the word part (e.g., *un*) and its meaning (*not*), then applying the strategy to words that follow the rules. In this structural analysis of the word, students are taught to look for the affix(es) and then find the root or base word.

Guidelines for reading big or multisyllabic words (Nagy et al. 1992, cited in Cunningham 1998) call for:

1. Providing explicit explanations, including modeling, “think-alouds,” guided practice, and the gradual transfer of responsibility to students
2. Relying on examples more than abstract rules (Begin with familiar words. Show “nonexamples.” Use word parts rather than have students search for little words within a word. *Examples*: depart, report.)
2. Teaching what is most useful
3. Making clear the limitations of structural analysis
4. Using extended text in opportunities for application

Cunningham provides a model for reading big words that combines reading, meaning, and spelling and extends the steps by teaching (1) prefixes that are useful from a meaning standpoint (e.g., *re-*); (2) suffixes that are most useful (e.g., *-ly*, *-er*, *-ful*); and (3) a few useful roots (e.g., *play*, *work*, *agree*). Students are also taught to spell words that have high utility for meaning, spelling, and decoding. In addition to being taught structural analysis, students should be taught strategies to confirm the fit of the word in context. Although contextual analysis has limited usefulness as a single word recognition strategy, it expands students’ capacity for word analysis and recognition when used to confirm the accuracy of words identified by decoding and structural

analysis. Words identified through the decoding of letter sounds or letter combinations are followed by recognition of larger units of words, including onsets and rimes and common word parts, such as prefixes and suffixes. After decoding and structural analysis have occurred, contextual analysis can be used to verify the accuracy and fit of the word in the sentence. Extended word-analysis skills and ample opportunities to practice skills in connected text should enable third-grade students to read grade-appropriate text accurately and fluently. A study addressing target rates found that in third-grade classrooms students typically read 79 correct words per minute in the fall and 114 in the spring (Hasbrouck and Tindal 1992). Markell and Deno (1997) found that a minimum threshold for acceptable comprehension was an ability to read correctly 90 words per minute. That is, students who read 90 or more words per minute correctly scored 80 percent or above on a measure of comprehension.

On average a third grader's weekly reading fluency increases approximately 1.08 words per minute (Fuchs et al. 1993). As students learn to recognize words automatically, they should have opportunities to hear and practice reading text aloud, emphasizing pacing, intonation, and expression. Fluency or facility with print frees up cognitive resources for comprehension.

### **Vocabulary and Concept Development**

In the early grades students learn approximately 3,000 new words per year *if* they read one-half million to one million words of running text per year.

Obviously, it is educationally impossible for students to learn even a sizable portion of the 3,000 words through direct instructional approaches alone. Students in the third grade further their knowledge of vocabulary in significant ways, primarily through independent reading but also through independent vocabulary-learning strategies. In addition to direct instruction in synonyms, antonyms, and so on and explicit strategies for teaching the hierarchical relationship among words (e.g., living things/animal/mammal/dog), students are introduced to two strategies for independent learning of vocabulary.

The first strategy is to learn to use the dictionary to understand the meaning of unknown words—a complex task with special constraints for third graders. The words in the dictionary definition are often more difficult than the target word itself. Dictionary usage should be taught explicitly with grade-appropriate dictionaries that allow students to access and understand the meaning of an unknown word. Moreover, understanding the definition of words alone has limited staying power unless the words are used in context and are encountered frequently.

A second independent vocabulary strategy introduced in the third grade is using context to gain the meaning of an unfamiliar word. Context includes the words surrounding the unfamiliar word that provide information to its meaning. Because not all contexts are created equal, however, initial instruction must be designed carefully to enable learners to acquire this important vocabulary strategy.

Students should learn to use context effectively because most word meanings are learned from context. The third-grade curricular and instructional profile focuses on that strategy. In addition to the independent word-learning strategies, the third-grade curricula and instruction extend the understanding of concepts and vocabulary of the English language through (1) learning and using antonyms and synonyms; (2) using individual words in compound words to predict the meaning; (3) using prefixes and suffixes to assist in word meaning; and (4) learning simple multiple-meaning words.

Two vocabulary emphases initiated in kindergarten should carry through in the third grade; that is, direct instruction in specific concepts and vocabulary essential to understanding text and exposure to a broad and diverse vocabulary through listening to and reading stories. Of the new vocabulary skills introduced in the third grade, using prefixes and suffixes to aid in word meaning is one that students will use frequently as they read more complex and challenging text. (See the earlier discussion for guidance in teaching prefixes and suffixes.)

## Reading

### Reading Comprehension

In the third grade emphasis is placed on narrative and expository texts and literal and inferential comprehension. Third grade students expand comprehension skills and strategies by:

- Using conventions of informational text (e.g., titles, chapter headings, glossaries) to locate important information
- Using prior knowledge to ask questions, make connections, and support answers
- Recalling major points in text and modifying predictions
- Recalling main ideas from expository text
- Demonstrating comprehension by identifying answers in the text
- Extracting information from text
- Following simple, multiple-step instructions

A major advancement in comprehension for the third grade focuses on identifying and recalling the main idea and supporting details of expository texts. In writing there is a related according to which students write paragraphs that include topic sentences (i.e., main ideas) and supporting facts and details. Expository text is typically more difficult to comprehend than narrative text. The ability to comprehend expository text is essential for achievement in school, especially in the later elementary grades and in the middle school years.

Successful instruction in complex comprehension strategies, such as finding the main idea, depends largely on the design of the information taught. Well-designed text enables readers to identify relevant information, including main ideas and the relations between ideas (Seidenberg 1989). In a review of text processing research, Seidenberg (1989) found that general education students from elementary school through college demonstrated difficulty in analyzing the main ideas in textbooks, especially if the main ideas were implied rather than stated clearly. For initial instruction in the acquisition of main ideas, the teacher should consider:

- Beginning with linguistic units appropriate to the learner; for example, using pictures and a set of individual sentences before presenting paragraph or passage-level text to help students learn the concept of main idea
- Using text in which the main idea is explicitly stated and is clear and in which the ideas follow a logical order
- Using familiar vocabulary and passages at appropriate readability levels for learners
- Using familiar topics
- Using familiar, simple syntactical structures and sentence types
- Progressing to more complex structures in which main ideas are not explicit and passages are longer

## Reading

### Literary Response and Analysis

The third-grade curriculum and instruction are focused on (1) broadening the type of narrative texts students read and study (e.g., fairy tales, fables); (2) distinguishing literary forms (poetry, prose, fiction, and nonfiction); and (3) deepening students' understanding of elements in narrative text.

In the third grade students read a wide variety of literature (poems, fiction, nonfiction) and narrative text structures (fairy tales, legends). They should also begin to examine the commonalities (e.g., plots, characters, settings) in story structure, particularly the plots in different types of stories and the uniqueness of each story. The structural element of theme is added to the story elements to extend the schema for the comprehension of stories.

Students should begin to identify the speaker and articulate the purpose. Particular emphasis should be placed on extending the understanding of character development by studying what characters say and do. The actions, motives, attributes, and feelings of characters may be abstract concepts for many third graders. Just as students need a curriculum such as basic story grammar to aid in the comprehension of the basic elements of stories, they may also need prompts or structures to assist in the identification and analysis of character. This curriculum or map may be a simple structure that makes visible and obvious the features of characters to which students should attend. For example, in the chart on the following page, the main characters from *Charlotte's Web* (White 1952) are identified, and critical character features are specified. The sections in the chart serve to allow students to trace changes in characters over the course of the text.

As in all well-designed instruction in comprehension, a carefully designed sequence of examples should be provided when students are in the acquisition phase of learning to extend their understanding and facility with character development. The sequence should first be modeled and then guided by the teacher and, finally, practiced by the students. Opportunities for corrective feedback should also be provided.

## Writing

### Writing Strategies and Writing Applications

In the third grade students extend their writing strategies by (1) creating a single paragraph with a topic sentence and supporting details; (2) refining the legibility of their writing; (3) learning to access information from a range of reference materials (e.g., thesaurus, encyclopedia); (4) revising drafts to improve coherence and progression of ideas; and (5) progressing through the stages of the writing process. Using these strategies, students continue to advance skills in written conventions as they learn to use declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences. Advanced grammatical conventions, particularly subject-verb agreement and use of the tense, are the focus of third grade instruction, along with continued development in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

As students learn to read words with double consonants, inflected endings, y-derivatives (e.g., *baby/ies*), and so forth, they are ready to learn to spell the words. Guidelines outlined in the first grade for spelling instruction are applicable in this grade. *Homophones* (i.e., words that sound alike but have different spellings and meanings: *their*, *there*, and *they're*) pose particular spelling problems. Homophones should be introduced a few at a time. It is recommended that a single homophone be introduced first. After mastery of that homophone, another may be presented. Once both homophones are mastered, they may be used in discrimination exercises in which meaning and context are emphasized.

In practice students apply those strategies and conventions as they learn and extend proficiency in writing narratives, descriptions, and personal and formal correspondence. This strategic integration of skills, strategies, and structures requires (1) explicit instruction in each of the individual components (e.g., sentence types, writing of paragraphs, use of tense); and (2) systematic connections of components to demonstrate the utility of the individual parts

and communicate to students the big picture of writing. A common flaw in instructional materials is that they often fail to make the important connections for students. For example, students may learn to write declarative sentences but do not practice them or integrate them into other writing activities. Similarly, if students practice writing sentences with correct punctuation and capitalization but never apply the skills in larger contexts or for authentic purposes, instruction is fragmented. The skills are seemingly without purpose.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Section</i>	<i>Section</i>	<i>Section</i>
<b>Charlotte</b>	How she feels:	Changes:	Changes:
	How she acts:	Changes:	Changes:
	How she looks:	Changes:	Changes:
<b>Wilbur</b>	How he feels:	Changes:	Changes:
	How he acts:	Changes:	Changes:
	How he looks:	Changes:	Changes:

The goal in writing instruction must, therefore, be to ensure that component parts (skills, strategies, structures) are (1) identified; (2) carefully sequenced according to their complexity and use in more advanced writing applications; (3) developed to mastery; and (4) progressively and purposefully connected within and across content standards in the four academic areas and then incorporated into authentic writing exercises.

## Listening and Speaking

### Listening and Speaking

#### Strategies; Speaking Applications

In the third grade emphasis is placed on listening and speaking strategies and on speaking applications. Fourteen standards signify the importance of students' speaking and listening development, the amount and type of information they should comprehend, and the formats and methods they should use to communicate their knowledge and ideas.

The connections across the language arts domains (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) have been stressed in other sections of this curriculum but bear repeating because they have particular significance for developing students' speaking and listening skills. Just as students need structures, maps, or anchors to facilitate their understanding of narrative or expository text, they will require the same types of supporting structures when learning what to listen for and what to speak about. Simplistic as it may seem, students may not know what to include when summarizing (e.g., organizing descriptions or sequencing events). The parallels of the structures students learn in reading and writing apply directly to the goals of listening and speaking, and those connections require explicit, carefully designed instruction. The benefits of earlier teaching should be readily apparent because students already know the elements of stories, descriptions, and sequences of events from previous instruction in reading and writing.

It is typically easier to retell than to create and easier to comprehend than to compose. Therefore, instructional materials and instruction should honor those inherent complexities and ensure that students first have opportunities to listen to and read narratives, descriptives, and sequences of events before being asked to write and orally present narratives, descriptives, and sequences of events. Instructional design must address further (1) the length of the information to be listened to or spoken; (2) familiarity with the topic; (3) familiarity with the vocabulary; and (4) syntactical complexity of the information.

Initial listening and speaking applications should be shorter in length, should be centered on more familiar topics, and should be less complex syntactically.

## Content and Instructional Connections

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

1. Reinforce the connections between decoding, word recognition, spelling, and writing.  
Word families, multisyllabic words, and structural units (e.g., prefixes) that students learn to read should be incorporated into spelling and writing instruction and practice.
2. Incorporate words or word parts from vocabulary instruction (e.g., prefixes, synonyms) in systematic opportunities that use those words in sentences. Practice throughout the day and over a period of time.
3. Make connections between structures used for comprehension and composition.  
Demonstrate how text structures can be used across domains to enhance recall and composition.
4. Teach rules that generalize across reading materials and make explicit the connections of their use in a variety of subject areas (e.g., use context to help learn the meanings of words you do not know).
5. Make connections by incorporating and reinforcing specific skills and conventions (e.g., grammar, main idea, sentence types) across all writing assignments and exercises.
6. Select appropriate content standards for science, mathematics, and history–social science to address within language arts instructional time.

### *Prerequisite standards.* **First-Grade Reading Comprehension.**

- 1: Use context to resolve ambiguities about word and sentence meanings.
- 2: Confirm predictions about what will happen next in a text by identifying key words.

When given a text (sentence or sentences) with unfamiliar vocabulary used in close proximity, students should first decode the word and then use the context to determine the word meaning. Learning words from context involves a range of variables that enhance or impede the success of the strategy, including the student's previous knowledge about the subject matter, the proximity of other words in the passage that may serve as clues, and the difficulty of the reading selection. Successful learning from context depends largely on practice. Teachers can teach this strategy through:

1. Systematic selection and sequencing of examples (contexts)
  2. Progression of context difficulty from shorter passages (e.g., 40 to 60 words with two or three unfamiliar words) to longer ones (e.g., 80 to 100 words with five or six unfamiliar words)
  3. Explicit instruction and modeling in how to use context to learn word meaning
- Contexts for Initial Instruction:
4. Unfamiliar words are limited to a manageable number (one every two to three sentences).
  5. Unfamiliar words are kept within the students' readability level.
  6. Contexts focus on a familiar topic.
  7. Contexts include a range of examples in which new vocabulary is accessible through surrounding context and a few examples in which a dictionary must be used.
  8. Contexts focus on vocabulary of high utility.

1. Model the process of using context to learn new word meanings. Think out loud as you model: “I don’t know the meaning of this word. I’ll read the words around it to see if they help me.” Show the conventions used to define new words (e.g., appositives).
2. Model multiple positive and negative examples (i.e., vocabulary for which the context does or does not provide meaning). Show students how to use a dictionary in the latter case.
3. Invite students to suggest which other words or passages provide clues to the meaning of the unfamiliar word.
4. Ask students to suggest synonyms for the unknown word and substitute the synonyms to see whether the meaning of the sentence changes or remains the same.
5. Guide students through the process of using the context to learn new word meanings. Provide corrective feedback.

## Meeting Students’ Diverse Needs

### 1. *Students with Reading Difficulties or Disabilities*

- a. Students with reading difficulties or disabilities must be very firm in prerequisite skills to benefit from context. The prerequisite skills include:
  - Decoding and word-recognition skills that enable students to read the text with 90 to 95 percent accuracy (If students cannot read the grade-level text, identify materials that are appropriate and teach the same strategy.)
  - Knowledge of words in context that define or explain the unfamiliar word
- b. Students with reading difficulties or disabilities may need more controlled examples with shorter length, fewer unknown words, and so forth.

### 2. *Students Who Are Advanced Learners*

- a. Entry-level assessment should be used to determine the necessity of teaching students to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words from context. Advanced learners are often characterized by their extensive vocabulary, making necessary the use of materials beyond their grade level to assess their skills.
- b. The level and type of instruction needed should be established. Students may progress rapidly to learning word meanings if context is separated from the target vocabulary once the basic strategy is known.
- c. Students with a high level of proficiency in this skill may benefit from exposure to more sophisticated alternate activities for vocabulary development instead of this instruction.

### 3. *Students Who Are English Learners*

- a. For English learners to benefit from context, they must know the grammatical features, idioms, and vocabulary words used to define or explain the unfamiliar word. They should also understand the concepts presented in the text. English learners may need additional prereading activities that explain cultural references and develop their grammatical competence and knowledge of English vocabulary.
- b. Entry-level assessment should also be used to determine the appropriateness of this objective. English learners do not rely on the strategy of learning the meanings of words from context without also learning the necessity of attending to the specific ways in which words are used in writing. Teachers should not assume that English learners will acquire the grammatical rules governing the use of words at the same time they are acquiring the meaning of the words.

To teach students the rules, teachers need to provide students with explicit instruction, model the words in speech and writing, encourage students to use words in sentences and in longer text, and provide students with corrective feedback on their use of words.

c. Curricular materials should provide English learners with additional opportunities to read texts that contain similar vocabulary words and grammatical structures so that students are repeatedly exposed to new words and structures. Some texts should be relevant to the interests and needs of English learners from diverse cultures.

1. Texts should contain explicit instruction strategies for identifying words from near-proximity contexts and far-proximity contexts. Sufficient examples of each type should be provided to ensure student mastery of the strategy.
2. Texts should be carefully selected and designed according to critical features, including proximity of the defining context, number of unfamiliar word meanings, richness of the context, readability of the text, text length, and syntactical complexity.
3. Measures for conducting assessment at the entry level and throughout the period of instruction must be included in the curricular materials.