

English / Language Arts

Sixth Grade

In the sixth grade students focus on active engagement with the text. They are required to analyze, identify, define, explain, and critique rather than merely understand, describe, use, know, and distinguish as they were required to do in the fifth grade. However, the standards still require students to read aloud narrative and expository text fluently and accurately and with appropriate pacing, intonation, and expression.

As in the fifth grade, an instructional priority in the sixth grade is an increased focus on advanced forms of evaluation in expository critique and literary criticism and advanced presentations on problems and solutions.

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 use their knowledge of word origins and word relationships, as well as historical and literary context clues, to determine the meaning of specialized vocabulary and to understand the precise meaning of grade-level appropriate words.

Word Recognition

1.1 Read aloud narrative and expository text fluently and accurately and with appropriate pacing, intonation, and expression.

Vocabulary and Concept Development

1.2 Identify and interpret figurative language and words with multiple meanings.

1.3 Recognize the origins and meanings of frequently used foreign words in English and use these words accurately in speaking and writing.

1.4 Monitor expository text for unknown words or words with novel meanings by using word, sentence, and paragraph clues to determine meaning.

1.5 Understand and explain “shades of meaning” in related words (e.g., *softly* and *quietly*).

2.0 Reading Comprehension (Focus on Informational Materials)

Students read and understand grade-level appropriate material. They describe and connect the essential ideas, arguments, and perspectives of the text by using their knowledge of text structure, organization, and purpose. 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, by grade eight, students read one million words annually on their own, including a good representation of grade-level appropriate narrative and expository text (e.g., classic and contemporary literature, magazines, newspapers, online information). In grade six, students continue to make progress toward this goal.

Structural Features of Informational Materials

- 2.1 Identify the structural features of popular media (e.g., newspapers, magazines, online information) and use the features to obtain information.
- 2.2 Analyze text that uses the compare-and contrast organizational pattern.

Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

- 2.3 Connect and clarify main ideas by identifying their relationships to other sources and related topics.
- 2.4 Clarify an understanding of texts by creating outlines, logical notes, summaries, or reports.
- 2.5 Follow multiple-step instructions for preparing applications (e.g., for a public library card, bank savings account, sports club, league membership).

Expository Critique

- 2.6 Determine the adequacy and appropriateness of the evidence for an author's conclusions.
- 2.7 Make reasonable assertions about a text through accurate, supporting citations.
- 2.8 Note instances of unsupported inferences, fallacious reasoning, persuasion, and propaganda in text.

Evaluation of Progress in Reading

- Participate in conferences with teacher to determine individual goals for reading.
- Set realistic goals in reading; monitor timeline of improvement.
- Reflect on their progress.
- Set goals of reading at home each evening for 20 minutes.

3.0 Literary Response and Analysis

Students read and respond to historically or culturally significant works of literature that reflect and enhance their studies of history and social science. They clarify the ideas and connect them to other literary works. 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 Identify the forms of fiction and describe the major characteristics of each form.

Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

- 3.2 Analyze the effect of the qualities of the character (e.g., courage or cowardice, ambition or laziness) on the plot and the resolution of the conflict.
- 3.3 Analyze the influence of setting on the problem and its resolution.
- 3.4 Define how tone or meaning is conveyed in poetry through word choice, figurative language, sentence structure, line length, punctuation, rhythm, repetition, and rhyme.
- 3.5 Identify the speaker and recognize the difference between first- and third-person narration (e.g., autobiography compared with biography).
- 3.6 Identify and analyze features of themes conveyed through characters, actions, and images.
- 3.7 Explain the effects of common literary devices (e.g., symbolism, imagery, metaphor) in a variety of fictional and nonfictional texts.

Literary Criticism

3.8 Critique the credibility of characterization and the degree to which a plot is contrived or realistic (e.g., compare use of fact and fantasy in historical fiction).

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, coherent, and focused essays. The writing exhibits students' awareness of the audience and purpose. Essays contain formal introductions, supporting evidence, and conclusions. Students progress through the stages of the writing process as needed.

Organization and Focus

- 1.1 Choose the form of writing (e.g., personal letter, letter to the editor, review, poem, report, narrative) that best suits the intended purpose.
- 1.2 Create multiple-paragraph expository compositions:
 - a. Engage the interest of the reader and state a clear purpose.
 - b. Develop the topic with supporting details and precise verbs, nouns, and adjectives to paint a visual image in the mind of the reader.
 - c. Conclude with a detailed summary linked to the purpose of the composition.
- 1.3 Use a variety of effective and coherent organizational patterns, including comparison and contrast; organization by categories; and arrangement by spatial order, order of importance, or climactic order.

Research and Technology

- 1.4 Use organizational features of electronic text (e.g., bulletin boards, databases, keyword searches, e-mail addresses) to locate information.
- 1.5 Compose documents with appropriate formatting by using word-processing skills and principles of design (e.g., margins, tabs, spacing, columns, page orientation).

Evaluation and Revision

- 1.6 Revise writing to improve the organization and consistency of ideas within and between paragraphs.

2.0 Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

Students write narrative, expository, persuasive, and descriptive texts of at least 500 to 700 words in each genre. Student writing demonstrates a command of standard American English and the research, organizational, and drafting strategies outlined in Writing Standard 1.0. Using the writing strategies of grade six outlined in Writing Standard 1.0, students:

- 2.1 Write narratives:
 - a. Establish and develop a plot and setting and present a point of view that is appropriate to the stories.
 - b. Include sensory details and concrete language to develop plot and character.
 - c. Use a range of narrative devices (e.g., dialogue, suspense).
- 2.2 Write expository compositions (e.g., description, explanation, comparison and contrast, problem and solution):
 - a. State the thesis or purpose.
 - b. Explain the situation.
 - c. Follow an organizational pattern appropriate to the type of composition.
 - d. Offer persuasive evidence to validate arguments and conclusions as needed.
- 2.3 Write research reports:
 - a. Pose relevant questions with a scope narrow enough to be thoroughly covered.
 - b. Support the main idea or ideas with facts, details, examples, and explanations from multiple authoritative sources (e.g., speakers, periodicals, online information searches).
 - c. Include a bibliography.
- 2.4 Write responses to literature:
 - a. Develop an interpretation exhibiting careful reading, understanding, and insight.
 - b. Organize the interpretation around several clear ideas, premises, or images.
 - c. Develop and justify the interpretation through sustained use of examples and textual evidence.
- 2.5 Write persuasive compositions:
 - a. State a clear position on a proposition or proposal.
 - b. Support the position with organized and relevant evidence.
 - c. Anticipate and address reader concerns and counterarguments.

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 Use simple, compound, and compound-complex sentences; use effective coordination and subordination of ideas to express complete thoughts.

Grammar

1.2 Identify and properly use indefinite pronouns and present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect verb tenses; ensure that verbs agree with compound subjects.

Punctuation

1.3 Use colons after the salutation in business letters, semicolons to connect independent clauses, and commas when linking two clauses with a conjunction in compound sentences.

Capitalization

1.4 Use correct capitalization.

Spelling

1.5 Spell frequently misspelled words correctly (e.g., *their, they're, there*).

Evaluation and Reflection of Writing

Use Step Up as model.

Apply the six-trait rubric to evaluate their own writing.

Meet with the teacher to identify strengths and weaknesses in writing.

Evaluate their growth with regards to writing over the course of the year.

Choose best writing products to include in their portfolios demonstrating proficiency.

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 Speaking, Listening, and Media Strategies

Students deliver focused, coherent presentations that convey ideas clearly and relate to the background and interests of the audience. They evaluate the content of oral communication.

Comprehension

- 1.1 Relate the speaker's verbal communication (e.g., word choice, pitch, feeling, tone) to the nonverbal message (e.g., posture, gesture).
- 1.2 Identify the tone, mood, and emotion conveyed in the oral communication.
- 1.3 Restate and execute multiple-step oral instructions and directions.

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

- 1.4 Select a focus, an organizational structure, and a point of view, matching the purpose, message, occasion, and vocal modulation to the audience.
- 1.5 Emphasize salient points to assist the listener in following the main ideas and concepts.
- 1.6 Support opinions with detailed evidence and with visual or media displays that use appropriate technology.
- 1.7 Use effective rate, volume, pitch, and tone and align nonverbal elements to sustain audience interest and attention.

Analysis and Evaluation of Oral and Media Communications

- 1.8 Analyze the use of rhetorical devices (e.g., cadence, repetitive patterns, use of onomatopoeia) for intent and effect.
- 1.9 Identify persuasive and propaganda techniques used in television and identify false and misleading information.

2.0 Speaking Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

Students deliver well-organized formal presentations employing traditional rhetorical strategies (e.g., narration, exposition, persuasion, description). 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 six outlined in Listening and Speaking Standard 1.0, students:

- 2.1 Deliver narrative presentations:
 - a. Establish a context, plot, and point of view.
 - b. Include sensory details and concrete language to develop the plot and character.
 - c. Use a range of narrative devices (e.g., dialogue, tension, or suspense).
- 2.2 Deliver informative presentations:
 - a. Pose relevant questions sufficiently limited in scope to be completely and thoroughly answered.
 - b. Develop the topic with facts, details, examples, and explanations from multiple authoritative sources (e.g., speakers, periodicals, online information).
- 2.3 Deliver oral responses to literature:
 - a. Develop an interpretation exhibiting careful reading, understanding, and insight.
 - b. Organize the selected interpretation around several clear ideas, premises, or images.
 - c. Develop and justify the selected interpretation through sustained use of examples and textual evidence.
- 2.4 Deliver persuasive presentations:
 - a. Provide a clear statement of the position.
 - b. Include relevant evidence.
 - c. Offer a logical sequence of information.
 - d. Engage the listener and foster acceptance of the proposition or proposal.
- 2.5 Deliver presentations on problems and solutions:
 - a. Theorize on the causes and effects of each problem and establish connections between the defined problem and at least one solution.
 - b. Offer persuasive evidence to validate the definition of the problem and the proposed solutions.

Media

Apply critical thinking skills to make informed decisions as consumers and producers of information.

Analyze propaganda techniques, bias, fact, fiction, and opinion in various media messages.

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

Word Recognition

The sixth-grade curriculum and instruction continue to focus on decoding words fluently and accurately. Students are required to read aloud narrative and expository text fluently and

accurately, with appropriate pacing, intonation, and expression. As in the fourth and fifth grades, students not reading at grade level should receive continued systematic and explicit instruction in decoding or comprehension strategies or both. (See the fourth-grade section on reading for a discussion of systematic, explicit instruction in reading.)

Vocabulary and Concept Development

The vocabulary and concept development curriculum for the sixth grade shifts from a focus on word origins and roots and affixes derived from Greek and Latin to a focus on interpreting figurative language and recognizing meanings of frequently used foreign words with multiple meanings. In addition, students are required to understand and explain shades of meaning in related words (e.g., *softly* and *quietly*). As in the fourth and fifth grades, students should continue to engage in extensive independent reading as the primary means for increasing vocabulary knowledge. They must continue to be given ample opportunities and encouragement to read. Vocabulary instruction must still be systematic (see the vocabulary guidelines for the fourth grade). Instruction in word derivation should be a common component of instruction across the academic year, emphasizing and coordinating vocabulary analysis with words students will encounter in the instructional materials they read. In an effort to increase the likelihood that students will retain vocabulary, words that have been studied previously should be interspersed in instructional materials and lessons.

Reading

Reading Comprehension (Focus on Informational Materials)

The sixth-grade curriculum requires students to (1) identify the structural features of the popular media (e.g., newspapers, magazines, on-line information) and use those features to obtain information; and (2) analyze instructional materials that use a compare-and-contrast organizational pattern. In addition, comprehension strategies include (1) connecting and clarifying main ideas and identifying their relationships to other sources and related topics; (2) clarifying the understanding of instructional materials by creating outlines, logical notes, summaries, or reports; and (3) following multiple-step instructions for preparing applications (e.g., for a public library card, bank savings account, sports club or league membership). Expository critique continues at this level and requires students, for example, to determine the adequacy and appropriateness of evidence for an author's conclusions and to note instances of unsupported inferences, fallacious reasoning, unreasonable persuasion, and propaganda in instructional materials.

The advanced form of expository critique at this level relies heavily on students' prerequisite skills in identifying adequate and appropriate evidence and distinguishing conclusions substantiated with ample and appropriate evidence from those not substantiated. The teacher should initially model multiple examples for which the students evaluate the evidence to support conclusions. The examples should contain evidence clearly appropriate or inappropriate and progress to evidence more subtle and complex.

After the teacher's modeling has been completed, the students can work in pairs or cooperative groups to evaluate the validity of conclusions. Independent practice should be the culminating assignment.

The reading-comprehension strategy described previously (see the fifth-grade Reading Comprehension Strand) may be extended effectively to the sixth grade with more complex narrative and informational texts.

Reading

Literary Response and Analysis

Literary response and analysis in the sixth grade should extend the strategies described in the fifth grade (see story grammar strategies) to more complex narrative and informational text that allows students to:

- Analyze the effect of qualities of character (e.g., courage or cowardice, ambition or laziness) on plot and resolution of conflict.
- Analyze the influence of setting on the problem and its resolution.
- Determine how tone or meaning is conveyed in poetry through word choice, figurative language, sentence structure, line length, punctuation, rhythm, repetition, and rhyme.
- Identify the speaker and recognize the difference between first-person and third-person narration (e.g., autobiography compared with biography).
- Identify and analyze features of themes conveyed through characters, actions, and images.
- Explain the effects of common literary devices (e.g., symbolism, imagery, metaphor) in a variety of fictional and nonfictional texts.

Students are also required to evaluate the meaning of archetypal patterns and symbols and the author's use of various techniques (e.g., appeal of characters in a picture or book, logic and credibility of plots and settings) to influence the readers' perspectives.

Although the element of *theme* has been an instructional focus for several grades, it remains a difficult concept that requires systematic instruction. Using characters' actions as evidence of a theme, for example, will require explicit instruction and prompting initially (directing students to read for how the character's actions influence the story). Students will need to learn to document character actions by reading and analyzing several examples under teacher-guided conditions.

Once students become familiar with the requirements of this analysis, they can conduct analyses independently. They should also work with poetry, determining how tone or meaning is conveyed through word choice, figurative language, sentence structure, line length, punctuation, rhythm, repetition, and rhyme. The general instructional guidelines specified for the literary response and analysis strand in the fourth grade are also appropriate here (see the overview for the fourth grade).

Writing

Writing Strategies

Organization and Focus

When students advance to the sixth grade, they also advance their writing to (1) selecting forms of writing that best suits the intended purpose; (2) creating multiple-paragraph expository compositions; and (3) using a variety of effective and coherent organizational patterns, including comparison and contrast; organization by categories; and arrangement by spatial order, order of importance, or climactic order. Because the requirements of this strand are complex, sixth-grade students should be eased into this complexity of writing forms, purposes, and organizational patterns.

To ensure that all students are successful as they advance in more complex writing, teachers should:

- Select clear examples or models of the different forms of writing (e.g., autobiographical and persuasive writing) so that students are able to distinguish the features of each form. The examples selected to represent each form must not be overly complex or subtle or cluttered in purpose or structure.

- Make explicit the specific purpose and intended audience for each of the different forms of writing. Provide ample opportunities for students to discern the specific purpose and intended audience for each form before requiring them to generate examples of each form of writing on their own.
- Use an adequate number of examples of each different form of writing. The examples should reveal a modest range of the distinguishing features of each form (It is not essential initially to show students the full range of distinguishing features of each.)
- Employ a teaching strategy (e.g., explicit modeling, think-aloud strategy, facilitative questioning strategy) that makes conspicuous for students the distinguishing features of each writing form.
- Construct a review schedule that provides students with ample opportunities to revisit and reinforce the distinguishing features of each form.

Research and Technology

Research or information problem solving is an application of all of the language arts skills learned to date, especially reading comprehension (Eisenberg and Berkowitz 1990). Research is a recursive process in which the learner uses steps to access, evaluate, discard, select, and use information from multiple sources. Many models for the research process exist. Users must eventually construct their own mental model of the process as they use it (Loertscher 1998). Students prepare formal documents (e.g., term papers or research reports) in response to assignments and may also use research in formal debates or multimedia presentations. The skills students learn as they master standards in this strand relate directly to career preparation in a variety of fields.

Students must learn to use organizational features of electronic text (e.g., Internet searches, databases, keyword searches, E-mail addresses) to locate relevant information. They must learn to compose documents with appropriate formatting (e.g., margins, tabs, spacing, columns, page orientation), using their word-processing skills.

Teaching students the organizational features of electronic text for locating information and creating documents is potentially a troublesome task for at least two reasons. First, the software features and requirements of electronic text vary greatly—from a library database to Web sites on the Internet to a word-processing document. Second, many features of an electronic text involve functions (e.g., keyword searches using a find command) or other features (e.g., e-mail addresses) not technically part of an electronic text. The electronic text environment must be simplified significantly if students are to learn about the organizational features of electronic text.

Teachers should work with library media and/or computer teachers to ease students into this complex computer-based, electronic text environment by:

- Teaching students about different electronic sources available to them in their classroom, school library, and community libraries or computer centers and labs (e.g., CDROM encyclopedias and dictionaries, library databases, other online databases, newsgroups, web pages)
- Teaching students the names, purposes, methods, and limitations of different electronic sources (e.g., automated library catalog, web sites, e-mail)
- Teaching students the methods necessary for using electronic sources, such as navigating within one source and searching one source or a database for a specific topic before searching in multiple sources and for multiple topics
- Providing students ample opportunities to explore and learn in one type of electronic text, such as the automated library catalog or electronic magazine indexing before introducing another type of electronic text

- Selecting and establishing access for all students to one type of electronic text (e.g., automated library catalog)
- Creating a clearly defined task with specific objectives and outcomes to ensure that students will gain appropriate experience from working in the electronic text (e.g., automated library catalog).
- Ensuring that students have the prerequisite knowledge, skills, and experience with the computer environment to benefit from working tasks specific to the research and technology standards

Learning to use a word-processing program to compose documents requires that students understand the basics of operating the computer system they will be using at school and, it is hoped, at home as well. The instructional guidelines for teaching sixth-grade students to compose documents with appropriate formatting by using word-processing skills and principles of design (e.g., margins, tabs, spacing, columns, page orientation) include, for example, teaching students to:

- Open existing files, save files, and create new files in the word-processing program they will use most frequently.
- Understand the basics of navigation, text manipulation, and editing within the word processor, including use of (1) the control to change the location of the cursor, highlight text, or access menus, commands, and icons; (2) navigation keys, such as the page up, page down, and arrow keys; (3) common commands on the keyboard (e.g., typing control and the letter S to save a document); and (4) copy, cut, and paste command functions for text manipulation and editing. Show students how to manipulate, create, and edit documents before teaching them to format documents. Easier formatting techniques include line and paragraph spacing; bold, italics, and underlining; and different fonts and font sizes. Formatting techniques of mid-level difficulty include margins, page numbers, tabs, and page breaks.
- Use the spelling and grammar checks judiciously and wisely. For example, students should learn not to depend solely on the word-processing functions. Examples of errors that would pass a spelling and grammar check but would be caught by a proofreader should be used to demonstrate the limits of those functions.

Evaluation and Revision

Students are expected to continue to revise their writing to improve the organization and consistency of ideas within and between paragraphs. This instruction should take place throughout the year as students progress from easy text to more complex forms of composition. In addition, a specific part of a period each day should be devoted to revising and editing written compositions.

Writing

Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

As in the fifth grade, students in the sixth grade are expected to write narrative, expository, persuasive, and descriptive texts (e.g., responses to literature and research reports about important ideas, issues, or events) of at least 500 to 700 words in each genre and continue to demonstrate a command of standard English.

A new requirement in the sixth-grade standards is writing expository compositions (e.g., description, explanation, comparison and contrast, problem and solution). Students must (1) state their thesis or purpose; (2) explain the situation; (3) follow an organizational pattern

appropriate to the type of composition; and (4) offer persuasive evidence to validate arguments and conclusions as needed.

Instructional guidelines for writing expository compositions include:

1. Introducing and teaching one type of expository composition at a time
2. Selecting clear and appropriate examples of each type of expository composition, including examples of students' writing to use as models
3. Using a think sheet or note sheet to provide an outline for learning the essential structure of each type of expository composition
4. Reading and summarizing the important information in one type of expository text (e.g., a social studies text involving a problem and solution) by using a think sheet or note sheet before writing the specific type of expository composition
5. Establishing a process to provide students with sufficient comments and feedback for their expository compositions, such as a partner system for editing that uses an editing checklist on selected assignments and teacher comments on others.

Written and Oral English- Language Conventions

Students are expected to have a command of communication conventions, including sentence structure (e.g., simple, compound, complex, and compound/complex sentences); grammar (e.g., identifying and using indefinite pronouns and present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect tenses); punctuation (e.g., using colons, semicolons, and commas correctly in contexts); capitalization; and spelling.

Listening and Speaking

Listening and Speaking Strategies

As in the fourth and fifth grades, students in the sixth grade listen critically and respond appropriately to oral communications.

However, sixth graders are also expected to deliver focused, coherent presentations. They continue to be engaged as listeners and speakers and (1) relate the speaker's verbal communication to the nonverbal message; (2) identify the tone, mood, and emotion conveyed in the oral communication; and (3) restate and execute multiple-step oral instructions and directions. The standards for the organization and delivery of oral communication are both similar to those for the fourth and fifth grades (e.g., select a focus, an organizational structure, and a point of view for an oral presentation) and different (e.g., emphasize salient points to assist the listener; support opinions with detailed evidence; use effective rate, volume, pitch, and tone; and align nonverbal elements to sustain audience interest and attention).

Students are also expected to analyze the use of rhetorical devices (e.g., cadence, repetitive patterns, onomatopoeia) for intent and effect. Finally, they are to identify persuasive and propaganda techniques used in television programs and identify false and misleading information. To identify techniques of persuasion and propaganda, students must learn their basic structure through observation of models and instruction by the teacher.

The basic elements of persuasive argument (thesis, support for argument or thesis, counter arguments to rebut alternative positions on a topic) are used in written and oral discourse. By addressing the structural elements in writing and listening to persuasive arguments, the teacher can make instruction effective.

Listening and Speaking Speaking Applications

(Genres and Their Characteristics)

Sixth-grade students are expected to deliver well-organized formal presentations employing traditional rhetorical strategies.

Specifically, they are required to deliver narrative, informative, and persuasive presentations as well as oral responses to literature and presentations on problems and solutions.

Students are expected to demonstrate a range of speaking skills and strategies that include establishing a context, plot, and point of view; posing relevant questions sufficiently limited in scope to be competently and thoroughly answered; developing an interpretation exhibiting careful reading, understanding, and insight; engaging the listener and fostering acceptance of the proposition or proposal; and theorizing on the causes and effects of a problem and establishing connections between the defined problem and at least one solution.

Content and Instructional Connections

The teacher can help students integrate mastery of standards across domains, strands, and academic disciplines by having students:

1. Read aloud narrative and expository text fluently and accurately, with appropriate pacing, intonation, and expression.
2. Use opportunities for narrative reading to identify and interpret figurative language and words with multiple meanings.
3. Make connections between main ideas and their relationships to other sources and related topics. They should be able to demonstrate that the connections and relationships are found in different forms of fiction or expository text, such as students' sixth-grade history–social science or science instructional materials.
4. Select a form of writing (e.g., personal letter, letter to the editor, review, poem, narrative, report on a historical figure or scientific phenomenon) and demonstrate how it best suits the intended purpose.
5. Use organizational features of electronic text (e.g., bulletin boards, databases, keyword searches, e-mail addresses) to locate information related to history or science standards.

Corequisite standards. Sixth-Grade Writing Strategies Standards.

- 1: Create multiple-paragraph expository compositions.
- 2: Use a variety of effective and coherent organizational patterns.
- 3: Use organizational features of electronic text.
- 4: Compare documents with appropriate formatting by using word-processing skills and principles of design.
- 5: Revise writing to improve the organization and consistency of ideas within and between paragraphs.

Curricular and Instructional Decisions Writing Standard

Write research reports that:

1. Pose relevant questions and are sufficiently narrow in scope.
2. Offer support from several authoritative sources.
3. Include a bibliography.

The sixth grade is the first level at which the curriculum requires students to read and create informational discourse supported by references. Students are required to do so—at increasing levels of sophistication—in grades seven through twelve, making the instruction they receive in the sixth grade the foundation for much of their language arts work throughout the rest of their school years.

The transition to expository writing based on outside sources is often difficult for students. Although sixth-grade students may know how to use reference materials (e.g., encyclopedias, online resources), they may not know how to read and take notes from those materials in a way that facilitates writing research reports. (If students do not know how to use reference materials, they should be given direct instruction so that they can satisfy this important prerequisite. The library media teacher should be a willing partner in this process.) The following guidelines can help reduce that difficulty and make research writing successful for more students:

1. When reading reference materials, students should:
 - a. Write all bibliographic information for a source on index cards. Make sure that all necessary information is noted. Then number the cards. The information does not have to be put in a particular style at this point.
 - b. Make a separate index card for each important point in the source. Place direct quotations in quotation marks. Write on each card the bibliographic number of the source for the notes.
 - c. Repeat this process for a number of sources.
2. Begin outlining as usual during this prewriting phase. Locate source cards that support each entry in the outline. Create files of source cards according to the entries.
3. Elaborate on the outline by ordering source cards for each entry and indicating their order on the outline. Cards can now be coded by using a system, such as point I, card 1; point II, card 3; and so on.
4. During this prewriting phase, the students should make decisions about whether their topic is too broad or too narrow. They are likely to find that they do not need some of the sources for some points and need a few more sources for other points.
5. The key to writing a good research report lies in doing extensive preparation as shown. Once the teacher is convinced that the students are well prepared, the students should begin drafting and working reiteratively through the phases of the writing process.
6. Instruction on how to incorporate source material into text should be overt. The students need to know that they may state someone else's point of view in their own words but must credit the source.
7. Once the students know which sources are to be used in their report, they should go back to their bibliographic cards and order the entries according to a formal style. (See, for example, the guidelines published by the Modern Language Association or the American Psychological Association. Or perhaps the school has adopted a style to be used.) Bibliographic formats may often appear to be senseless to students. The teacher should instruct the students to use a style book and should demonstrate some of the major bibliographic formats and the rationale behind bibliographies. Discuss, for example, the difficulties the students would have in trying to find sources if bibliographic entries were incomplete.
8. Instruction should incorporate other related language arts standards into the instruction on research writing. The content standards for history–social science, science, and mathematics are rich sources of topics for research reports.

Many of the concepts and procedures used in research writing are new to sixth-grade students. Carefully delivered instruction over a long period of time is the key to teaching the concepts and procedures effectively, ensuring that students will have a strong foundation for coming school years.

1. The guidelines listed previously suggest a great deal more teacher-student interaction than do most traditional approaches to instruction in writing research reports. Teachers and library media teachers should model strategies such as those described and then closely monitor student progress through the application of each strategy, giving feedback and additional assistance when required.
2. A good scaffolding device to help students acquire mastery of research writing is initially to have groups work together in writing a single research report. To do so reduces considerably the need for students to develop a topic, find sources, record information on cards, organize, and create formal bibliographies. If this approach is used, however, students should also write individual research reports after the successful completion of a group report. (Students can still work cooperatively on some aspects of individual reports, such as revising or editing.)

Assessment

1. *Entry-Level Assessment for Instructional Planning.* Students must know how to find and use reference materials as a prerequisite to meaningful instruction in writing research reports. Before beginning such instruction, the teacher should work with the library media teacher to develop an assignment for assessing students' proficiency in using source material. The students are asked to write a report that requires them to find answers to factual questions (e.g., finding three or four different sources telling how the American explorer Meriwether Lewis died). Such sources might include an encyclopedia, a book on Lewis and Clark, an Internet search, and a query to the Lewis and Clark Museum in St. Louis.
2. *Monitoring Student Progress Toward the Instructional Objective.* Adhering to the clear stages of instruction, such as those listed previously for developing index cards, provides an opportunity to assess incrementally students' progress toward the research report standard. The teacher should adjust instruction according to the results of assessment. For instance, if the students have not located and catalogued an adequate number of sources prior to prewriting, instruction should be postponed briefly while the teacher gives further assistance and guidance in using source material.
3. *Post-test Assessment Toward the Standard.* A final research report presented in manuscript form is the best and most direct assessment for this standard. The individually written report, rather than a group report, serves as the summative evaluation tool.

Meeting Students' Diverse Needs

1. *Students with Reading Difficulties or Disabilities.* The recommended accommodation for these students is access to the regular language arts curriculum through careful, systematic instruction in key concepts and strategies, such as those described previously. In addition, these students may require additional teacher or peer support (or both) with difficult procedures, such as developing a well-organized outline and organizing index cards to fit the outline. In addition, topics for students may vary, allowing research on topics that are more familiar.
2. *Students Who Are Advanced Learners.* Instruction can be differentiated for these students by:
 - a. Assisting them in their development of higher-level research questions based on key words from taxonomies of thinking skills
 - b. Directing them to more sophisticated and specialized source material (through the library media teacher)

- c. Encouraging them to incorporate more advanced elements into their reports (such as those found in the standards for higher grade levels)

Note: These students require knowledge of the fundamentals of writing research reports, as do other students, and sometimes need assistance in finding closure on a project because of propensity to explore topics in great depth.

3. *Students Who Are English Learners.* Although all writing assignments are likely to be challenging for English learners, research reports may be especially difficult, given the additional requirements of reading source materials and cataloguing the results for planning purposes. Accordingly, the teacher may wish to:
 - a. Direct English learners to source materials written at a level they can manage.
 - b. Use clear, simple instructional language to teach the basic concepts and procedures of research report writing. During any cooperative learning sessions, care should be taken to distribute English learners among the groups.
 - c. Provide English learners with feedback at every stage of developing their research reports. They need guidance in organizing, finding reference materials, and revising and editing.
 - d. Expose English learners to several models of the types of research reports they are expected to write.
 - e. Provide additional instruction in how to incorporate quotations and citations into their reports appropriately.
 - f. Assess English learners at every stage of the research report.

Editing is an important stage that teachers often overlook, partly because of the grammar mistakes they make and partly because it is the last stage in the research report process. Teachers need to make sure that they save time to assess this stage along with the other important stages of the research report.