

# English / Language Arts

## Seventh Grade

The curriculum for the seventh grade marks a distinctive transition from the sixth grade and the earlier grades in at least two important ways. First, the transition from learning to read to reading to learn is complete. By the time students enter the seventh grade, they should have mastered reading aloud narrative and expository text fluently and accurately, with appropriate pacing, intonation, and expression. For students who have not mastered the previous standard, intensive and systematic instruction in word recognition is imperative. To be able to provide such remediation, teachers may need additional training, for many seventh-grade teachers have not been trained to teach developmental reading skills.

The second reason seventh-grade curriculum is distinctive is that it is decidedly more sophisticated, subtle, and intricate than those for previous grades. For example, students are required to identify and trace the development of an author's argument, write reports that use the formal research process, deliver persuasive oral presentations that employ well-articulated evidence, and analyze characterization as suggested through a character's thoughts, words, speech patterns, and actions. In some cases the curriculum is new and complex, such as the requirement to articulate the expressed purposes and characteristics of different forms of prose, including the short story, novel, novella, and essay. The strands to be emphasized at the seventh-grade level are listed below under the appropriate domains.

### 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.

#### **Vocabulary and Concept Development**

- 1.1 Identify idioms, analogies, metaphors, and similes in prose and poetry.
- 1.2 Use knowledge of Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon roots and affixes to understand content-area vocabulary.
- 1.3 Clarify word meanings through the use of definition, example, restatement, or contrast.

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

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

- 2.1 Understand and analyze the differences in structure and purpose between various categories of informational materials (e.g., textbooks, newspapers, instructional manuals, signs).
- 2.2 Locate information by using a variety of consumer, workplace, and public documents.
- 2.3 Analyze text that uses the cause-and effect organizational pattern.

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

- 2.4 Identify and trace the development of an author's argument, point of view, or perspective in text.
- 2.5 Understand and explain the use of a simple mechanical device by following technical directions.

### **Expository Critique**

- 2.6 Assess the adequacy, accuracy, and appropriateness of the author's evidence to support claims and assertions, noting instances of bias and stereotyping.

### **Evaluation of Progress in Reading**

- Participate in conferences with teacher to determine individual goals for reading.
- Understand their reading fluency and comprehension.
- 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 Articulate the expressed purposes and characteristics of different forms of prose (e.g., short story, novel, novella, essay).

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

- 3.2 Identify events that advance the plot and determine how each event explains past or present action(s) or foreshadows future action(s).
- 3.3 Analyze characterization as delineated through a character's thoughts, words, speech patterns, and actions; the narrator's description; and the thoughts, words, and actions of other characters.
- 3.4 Identify and analyze recurring themes across works (e.g., the value of bravery, loyalty, and friendship; the effects of loneliness).
- 3.5 Contrast points of view (e.g., first and third person, limited and omniscient, subjective and objective) in narrative text and explain how they affect the overall theme of the work.

### **Literary Criticism**

- 3.6 Analyze a range of responses to a literary work and determine the extent to which the literary elements in the work shaped those responses.

**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 Create an organizational structure that balances all aspects of the composition and uses effective transitions between sentences to unify important ideas.
- 1.2 Support all statements and claims with anecdotes, descriptions, facts and statistics, and specific examples.

1.3 Use strategies of note taking, outlining, and summarizing to impose structure on composition drafts.

### **Research and Technology**

- 1.4 Identify topics; ask and evaluate questions; and develop ideas leading to inquiry, investigation, and research.
- 1.5 Give credit for both quoted and paraphrased information in a bibliography by using a consistent and sanctioned format and methodology for citations.
- 1.6 Create documents by using word-processing skills and publishing programs; develop simple databases and spreadsheets to manage information and prepare reports.

### **Evaluation and Revision**

- 1.7 Revise writing to improve organization and word choice after checking the logic of the ideas and the precision of the vocabulary.

## **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. The 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 seven outlined in Writing Standard 1.0, students:

- 2.1 Write fictional or autobiographical narratives:
  - a. Develop a standard plot line (having a beginning, conflict, rising action, climax, and denouement) and point of view.
  - b. Develop complex major and minor characters and a definite setting.
  - c. Use a range of appropriate strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; naming of specific narrative action, including movement, gestures, and expressions).
- 2.2 Write responses to literature:
  - a. Develop interpretations exhibiting careful reading, understanding, and insight.
  - b. Organize interpretations around several clear ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.
  - c. Justify interpretations through sustained use of examples and textual evidence.
- 2.3 Write research reports:
  - a. Pose relevant and tightly drawn questions about the topic.
  - b. Convey clear and accurate perspectives on the subject.
  - c. Include evidence compiled through the formal research process (e.g., use of a card catalog, *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, a computer catalog, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries).
  - d. Document reference sources by means of footnotes and a bibliography.
- 2.4 Write persuasive compositions:
  - a. State a clear position or perspective in support of a proposition or proposal.
  - b. Describe the points in support of the proposition, employing well-articulated evidence.
  - c. Anticipate and address reader concerns and counterarguments.
- 2.5 Write summaries of reading materials:
  - a. Include the main ideas and most significant details.
  - b. Use the student's own words, except for quotations.
  - c. Reflect underlying meaning, not just the superficial details.

## **1.0 Written and Oral English Language Conventions**

The standards 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 the grade level.

### **Sentence Structure**

- 1.1 Place modifiers properly and use the active voice.

**Grammar**

- 1.2 Identify and use infinitives and participles and make clear references between pronouns and antecedents.
- 1.3 Identify all parts of speech and types and structure of sentences.
- 1.4 Demonstrate the mechanics of writing (e.g., quotation marks, commas at end of dependent clauses) and appropriate English usage (e.g., pronoun reference).

**Punctuation**

- 1.5 Identify hyphens, dashes, brackets, and semicolons and use them correctly.

**Capitalization**

- 1.6 Use correct capitalization.

**Spelling**

- 1.7 Spell derivatives correctly by applying the spellings of bases and affixes.

**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**

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

#### **Comprehension**

- 1.1 Ask probing questions to elicit information, including evidence to support the speaker's claims and conclusions.
- 1.2 Determine the speaker's attitude toward the subject.
- 1.3 Respond to persuasive messages with questions, challenges, or affirmations.

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

- 1.4 Organize information to achieve particular purposes and to appeal to the background and interests of the audience.
- 1.5 Arrange supporting details, reasons, descriptions, and examples effectively and persuasively in relation to the audience.
- 1.6 Use speaking techniques, including voice modulation, inflection, tempo, enunciation, and eye contact, for effective presentations.

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

- 1.7 Provide constructive feedback to speakers concerning the coherence and logic of a speech's content and delivery and its overall impact upon the listener.
- 1.8 Analyze the effect on the viewer of images, text, and sound in electronic journalism; identify the techniques used to achieve the effects in each instance studied.

### **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 seven outlined in Listening and Speaking Standard 1.0, students:

- 2.1 Deliver narrative presentations:
  - a. Establish a context, standard plot line (having a beginning, conflict, rising action, climax, and denouement), and point of view.
  - b. Describe complex major and minor characters and a definite setting.
  - c. Use a range of appropriate strategies, including dialogue, suspense, and naming of specific narrative action (e.g., movement, gestures, expressions).
- 2.2 Deliver oral summaries of articles and books:
  - a. Include the main ideas of the event or article and the most significant details.
  - b. Use the student's own words, except for material quoted from sources.
  - c. Convey a comprehensive understanding of sources, not just superficial details.
- 2.3 Deliver research presentations:
  - a. Pose relevant and concise questions about the topic.
  - b. Convey clear and accurate perspectives on the subject.
  - c. Include evidence generated through the formal research process (e.g., use of a card catalog, *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, computer databases, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries).
  - d. Cite reference sources appropriately.
- 2.4 Deliver persuasive presentations:
  - a. State a clear position or perspective in support of an argument or proposal.
  - b. Describe the points in support of the argument and employ well-articulated evidence.

## *Media*

*Begin making informed decisions by recognizing and analyzing specific techniques used to convey and manipulate media meaning.*

*Determine that all media influence individuals and society.*

**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 Vocabulary and Concept Development**

At this level the development of vocabulary used in literary works or seventh-grade content areas is emphasized.

Students must also identify idioms, analogies, metaphors, and similes in prose and poetry and continue to clarify word meanings through definitions, examples, restatements, and contrasts. Extensive opportunities to read are essential to vocabulary development. A student's vocabulary typically doubles between the fourth grade and the eighth grade as a direct result of how much a

student reads. The more students read, the more their vocabulary increases. Although extensive independent reading is the primary means of increasing vocabulary, a need for teacher-directed vocabulary instruction still exists. New and important vocabulary should be taught and reviewed cumulatively and periodically during the school year. Without cumulative reviews and practice in context, vocabulary gains are likely to be temporary. Teachers should also provide students with opportunities to work with word derivations from Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon roots and affixes in reading assignments.

## Reading

### **Reading Comprehension (Focus on Informational Materials)**

Although teachers have always taught reading-comprehension skills in relation to informational texts, the standards focus more attention on this aspect of the language arts curriculum, especially on expository rather than narrative reading.

In the school setting informational texts are generally textbooks or reference works but can also include magazines, newspapers, online information, instructional manuals, consumer workplace and public documents, signs, and selections. Instructional strategies used to help students comprehend informational materials are often different for literary texts. In a departmentalized school, responsibility for improving the reading comprehension of instructional materials should be shared with teachers of all subjects, particularly teachers of history–social science and science.

Strategies for comprehending informational materials in the seventh grade are focused on (1) use and analysis of categories of informational materials (e.g., consumer and workplace documents, textbooks, newspapers, instructional manuals); and (2) assessment of an author's argument. Because both standards involve a cluster of challenging skills, systematic instruction and ample practice are required to become proficient. Instructional guidelines for evaluating an author's argument include:

- Selecting and using, during initial instruction, examples of an author's arguments that are not complex and sophisticated but simple and straight forward
- Providing students with a procedural facilitator, such as a think sheet that maps for students the basic structure of an argument (e.g., the main problem, the author's position, statements in support of the author's position, statements against the author's position) and allows them to record and map the author's argument
- Scheduling ample opportunities throughout the year for students to read increasingly more complex arguments
- Providing systematic feedback to students on their analysis and evaluation of an author's arguments
- Integrating the evaluation of an author's arguments in reading comprehension activities with writing activities in which students develop their own arguments about a particular topic of interest

## Reading

### **Literary Response and Analysis**

The increased sophistication and intricacy of the curriculum is readily apparent in the literary response and analysis strand. For example, students are required to:

- Articulate the express purposes and characteristics of different forms of prose (e.g., short story, novel, novella, essay).

- Identify events that advance the plot and determine how each event explains past or present actions or foreshadows future actions.
- Analyze characterization as delineated through a character's thoughts, words, speech patterns, and actions; the narrator's description; and the thoughts, words, and actions of other characters.
- Identify and analyze recurring themes across works (e.g., the value of bravery, loyalty, and friendship; the effects of loneliness).
- Contrast points of view (e.g., first and third person, limited and omniscient, subjective and objective) in narrative text and explain how they affect the overall theme of the work.

The level of sophistication required by the curriculum calls for instruction that is both deep and diligent and allows students ample opportunity to scrutinize a particular work. Selection of literary works is important. Teachers should select works that are appropriate to the age and reading level of the students and are varied in culture and themes. In addition, the works must also lend themselves to exploring with the students how events advance the plot; how each event explains past or present actions or foreshadows future actions; and how a character's thoughts, words, speech patterns, and actions reveal characterization. Once the literary features and devices that are part of a particular work become clear, the teacher may introduce other more complex and varied literary works in which such features and devices are used. Grade-level literary selections of various genres and lengths representing a variety of authors and cultures can be found in district-adopted anthologies.

Extensive independent reading, which in the seventh grade increasingly takes place outside the classroom, is an important element of the language arts curriculum. The curriculum requires that by the end of middle school, students will have read one million words annually on their own, including a good representation of narrative (classic and contemporary literature) and expository (magazines, newspapers, online) instructional materials. One million words translate to about 15 to 20 minutes of reading per day. Instructional formats and strategies used for outside reading have much in common with those used in teaching core literature works but differ significantly.

Student choice is a more important element in outside reading and may result in less-diverse selections because young readers typically choose to focus on a single author, topic, or genre for a period of time. Their reading should not be limited to works of fiction or nonfiction but should include magazines, especially those in areas of special interest to the students, newspapers, and online sources.

A variety of methods are available to assess reading done outside the classroom, including student-maintained reading logs and book reports in various formats. According to the standard, the instruction should be focused on the reading itself rather than on the final report on reading. Independent reading significantly improves a student's reading comprehension and vocabulary and increases familiarity with models of good writing and conventions of writing and spelling. It also serves an important affective purpose; that is, to develop a lifelong appreciation for reading for pleasure and information. Recent research indicates that the volume of reading also affects general cognitive development.

## Writing

### Writing Strategies

Seventh-grade students are expected to continue to develop strategies for organizing and giving focus to their writing.

Increased emphasis is given to documentation of support (e.g., support for all statements and claims through the use of anecdotes, descriptions, facts and statistics, specific examples) and the extension of strategies (e.g., note taking, outlining, summarizing).

Students are expected to write research reports. They should be instructed in all phases of the research process, from identifying topics to preparing bibliographies, and should be expected to locate relevant information in electronic as well as printed texts. Further, they should be able to produce documents with a wordprocessing program and organize information gathered in the research process. (The guidelines for writing in the sixth grade are applicable in the seventh grade as well.)

## Writing

### Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

Writing in the seventh grade focuses less on narrative writing (writing to tell a story) and more on multiparagraph expository compositions. Specifically, students are expected to write texts of between 500 and 700 words (two or three typed, double-spaced pages) in these categories: interpretations of literature, research reports, persuasive compositions, and summaries.

### Written and Oral English-Language Conventions

Seventh-grade students are expected to have a general command of English language conventions when they speak and write. Curriculum emphases at this grade level include sentence structure (e.g., proper placement of modifiers and use of the active voice); grammar (e.g., proper use of infinitives and participles, clear pronouns and antecedents); punctuation (e.g., correct use of hyphens, dashes, brackets, and semicolons); and spelling (e.g., applying the spelling of bases and affixes to derivatives).

Although most of the strands are also included at earlier grade levels, many students in the seventh grade have not yet mastered the curriculum and will require continued support and guidance in the form of remedial instruction that should:

- Involve teacher direction and guidance, with clear examples being offered in simplified contexts (e.g., use of pronouns with clear referents in abbreviated passages) before students are required to work in more complex contexts (e.g., multiple paragraphs with multiple pronouns and referents).
- Provide extensive opportunities to receive instruction and feedback from teachers or peers throughout the year and as a frequent small part of lessons or class periods.
- Emphasize the accurate use of conventions in student writing and speaking.
- Hold students to a high level of performance because the conventions are fundamental to proficient performance on other standards (e.g., writing strategies, writing applications).

## Listening and Speaking

### Listening and Speaking Strategies

#### Listening Strategies

Although listening and speaking are frequently paired, they represent decidedly different skills. An accomplished speaker may be a poor listener and vice versa. In the classroom, listening instruction is often concerned as much with behavior management (“Eyes up front, please”) as with systematic skills in comprehending and evaluating oral information. The standards define specific listening skills to be taught in seventh grade. For example, students are expected to ask appropriate questions designed to elicit needed information and discern the speaker’s point of view. As for electronic journalism, students are expected to be able to recognize techniques used to affect the viewer.

## **Speaking Strategies**

Language arts teachers have traditionally provided a variety of speaking opportunities in informal settings (e.g., small group discussions, cooperative learning activities) and more formal settings (e.g., individual or group presentations to the class). In many cases, however, instruction in speaking has been less structured and less detailed and has occupied less class time than instruction in reading and writing. The standards provide a detailed outline for an appropriate instructional program in speaking. Seventh-grade students are expected to employ traditional rhetorical strategies to deliver well-organized formal narrative, research, and persuasive presentations as well as oral summaries of articles and books. The standards identify for teachers the speaking skills and strategies that accompany each type of oral presentation. For example, students are expected to describe complex major and minor characters in a narrative presentation. Students making a research presentation are expected to use their own words to convey their message.

Because the same genres appear in the writing applications at this grade level, writing and speaking activities might be combined. For example, students might write a persuasive composition and deliver an oral persuasive presentation on the same topic.

## **Listening and Speaking**

### **Speaking Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)**

Like sixth-grade students, those in the seventh grade are expected to deliver well organized formal presentations that employ traditional rhetorical strategies. Specifically, students are required to deliver narrative, research, and persuasive presentations as well as oral summaries of articles and books. They are expected to demonstrate a range of speaking skills and strategies that includes, for example, describing complex major and minor characters and a definite setting; using a range of appropriate strategies, including dialogue, suspense, and naming of specific narrative actions; using their own words, except for material quoted from the source, in an oral summary; and including evidence generated through the formal research process for a research presentation.

## **Content and Instructional Connections**

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

1. Analyze the differences in structure and purpose between various categories of informational materials (e.g., textbooks, newspapers, instructional manuals, signs).
2. Examine informational materials for an organizational structure that balances all aspects of the composition and uses effective transitions between sentences to unify important ideas.
3. Identify informational materials in which statements and claims are supported by anecdotes, descriptions, facts and statistics, and specific examples.
4. Create materials in which credit for quoted and paraphrased information in a bibliography is given and a consistent and sanctioned format and methodology are used for citations.
5. Revise writing to improve organization and word choice after checking the logic of ideas and precision of vocabulary.

## **Curricular and Instructional Development**

Use sophisticated but appropriate sentence structures in oral and written discourse. At this level a challenge for students is to use sentence structures more sophisticated than simple kernel-

sentence types but not excessively complex or convoluted. Instruction should, therefore, focus on options for combining kernel sentences in various ways and the rhetorical impact and appropriateness of those various combinations. To achieve a balance, instruction should address both sentence combining and decombining. A focus on sentence combining alone can easily, if inadvertently, create the impression that longer, more complex sentence structures are inherently or universally better than simpler sentence structures.

### Instructional Objective Instructional Design

*Prerequisite standard. Sixth-Grade Written and Oral Communication Conventions:* Use simple, compound, and compound-complex sentences.

*Corequisite standard. Seventh-Grade Writing Strategies Standard:* Revise writing to improve organization and word choice.

Ultimately, students should be expected to develop a sense of appropriate sentence structures well enough to apply that sense to revisions of their own drafts. Initially, however, students should work on combining (and decombining and recombining) contrived sentences, which can be selected judiciously to illustrate specific possibilities for improvement. (Sentences contrived for revision can be taken from student writing examples or created by decombining sentences from texts students will read.)

The advantages to teaching sentence structure initially in this way are as follows:

- When all students are looking at and working with the same set of examples, teachers can conduct efficient whole-class instruction based on those examples.
- Teachers can correct work or otherwise evaluate student work more easily and give feedback when all students work initially with the same set of examples.
- Teachers can ensure that they cover several important classes or categories of sentence combining when examples are chosen specifically to illustrate those classes or categories.
- The examples used during initial instruction give teachers and students a solid basis of reference as individual student work is being revised.

Consider, for instance, the following example of student writing:

Cowboys in Uruguay and Argentina are called gauchos. The gauchos are found in the country. They live and work in grass-covered prairies. Some gauchos herd cattle in the pampas. They do not make much money. Gauchos wear colorful outfits. They carry large knives and they drink a beverage called maté. It's a type of tea.

Initially, teachers should demonstrate possible improvements in the writing sample while discussing with students the relative advantages or effects of each possibility. For example, students might compare the differences in emphasis between Example 1 and Example 2:

*Example 1.* Gauchos, who are the cowboys of Uruguay and Argentina, live throughout the countryside.

*Example 2.* Across the countryside in the pampas of Uruguay and Argentina, you find cowboys called gauchos.

Which choice is better suited to a paragraph about gauchos? Why? What other options for sentence combining are possible? Which options illustrate trying to put too much into a sentence? How would the sense of Example 1 change if the commas were removed? In short, instruction should address the strategies that good writers use—consciously or otherwise—by making such strategies overt and clear for students. Instruction should demonstrate the techniques by which secondary ideas are subordinated to primary, important ideas in strong, active sentences. Most critically, instruction should emphasize the relationships among ideas in kernel and

complex sentences to ensure that students appreciate that conventions (e.g., the use of commas in dependent clauses) support the communication of ideas.

Teachers should direct initial instruction in strategies for developing complex sentence structures and for evaluating competing structures. For such instruction to be meaningful, it must center on active discourse between teachers and students. The challenge for many students at this level is not so much to combine sentences as such but to do so judiciously in relation to specific purposes of communication. Teacher demonstrations and evaluations of thinking critically out loud are indispensable to effective instruction.

### **Assessment**

1. *Entry-Level Assessment for Instructional Planning.* Brief in-class compositions on well-defined topics should give teachers a satisfactory overview of the relative sophistication with which students manipulate sentence structures.
2. *Monitoring Student Progress Toward the Instructional Objective.* All written and oral assignments provide opportunities for ongoing assessment of this standard. Students should be prompted to focus on good sentence structures in all assignments that follow the initial instruction on this topic.
3. *Post-test Assessment Toward the Standard.* The best type of summative evaluation comes from specifically evaluating sentence structures in conjunction with authentic assignments in writing and speaking that address the writing and speaking standards.

1. *Students with Reading Difficulties or Disabilities.* Students with reading difficulties or disabilities often use long strings of primitive kernel sentences in their writing. They may run a number of these sentences together without punctuation, splice them with commas, or join them with repeated use of conjunctions like *and* or *but*. In turn, many of the sentences are likely to overuse passive and intransitive verbs. When necessary, teachers should be prepared to begin instruction in sentence combining at the students' level. In addition, these students will probably take longer to make the transition from predominantly simple sentences to the wider use of longer, more appropriate complex sentences.

2. *Students Who Are Advanced Learners.* The highest-performing students are the ones most likely to be able to learn about language for its own sake and benefit from that learning. For instance, they can investigate in depth the relationships between grammatical dependency and nuances in meaning and be challenged, for example, to come up with contrasting sentence pairs, such as the following:

Teenagers, who don't drive well, should pay higher insurance rates.  
Teenagers who don't drive well should pay higher insurance rates.

3. *Students Who Are English Learners.* Students with restricted proficiency in English will require intensive communication instruction above and beyond that found in the regular language arts program. The type of explicit strategy instruction described previously for lower performing students will help English learners as well. They might be exempted from some regular classroom work in sentence combining to provide more instructional time for intense work on well-formed grammatical kernel sentences.