

Maryland State Department of Education
English Language Arts/Literacy
Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards Clarifications



The English Language Arts Department at MSDE facilitated the formation teams of educators from all across the state to participate in writing Clarifications for the Common Core Standards at grades Pre-K through twelve. These serve as resources to educators across this state and others as we implement the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards.

Educators from the local systems worked together to create clarification statements that make up a coherent document that reflects the instructional shifts necessary to achieve the Common Core State Standards. The Clarification statements detail for educators the skills necessary for students to demonstrate proficiency in each grade level standard in Reading Literature, Reading Informational Text, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. These Clarifications are an integral part of the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards Curriculum toolkit.

Standard Eight

RI8 Anchor Standard: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Pre-Kindergarten: With modeling and support, identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student has read to him/her a wide variety of informational texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to expository and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

While being read to, a pre-kindergartener has identified for him/her an important point or idea in an informational text. As reading continues, the teacher will indicate what details, facts, or reasons an author includes in the text that support this important point or idea.

Kindergarten: With prompting and support, identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student has read to him/her a wide variety of informational texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to expository and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

Like the pre-kindergartener a kindergartener has identified for him/her an important point or idea in an informational text. As reading continues, the teacher will indicate what details, facts, or reasons an author includes in the text that support this important point or idea. However, to advance this skill after multiple demonstrations of this activity, a kindergartener, with support, supplies orally one or more details, facts, or reasons from the informational text which support an important idea.

Grade One: Identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads or has read to him/her a wide variety of informational texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to expository and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

Since the basics of this demand have been established in previous years, a first grader after reading or being read to and having important points indicated identifies facts, details, or reasons from an informational text that support these important points. A student may deliver these reasons orally or in writing. Drawing and dramatizing are also acceptable means if they fit the parameters of the text.

Grade Two: Describe how reasons support specific points the author makes in a text.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of informational texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to expository and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

Since the basics of this demand have been established in previous years, a second grader may have important points indicated to him/her or may identify those important points individually. After selecting a single important point, a student identifies a reason or reasons that support this important point. But the second grader goes a step farther and tells how that reason becomes a support for the important point.

For example, if a second grader is reading an article about healthy snacks and the author makes the claim that apples are one of the healthiest foods a person can eat.

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That is the identified important point. A supportive reason for this idea is that apples contain vitamin C. A means of telling how that supports the important point is to state that vitamin C in your diet prevents a person from becoming ill.

Grade Three: Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g. comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence).

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of informational texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to expository and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

Since the basics of this demand have been established in grade two, a third grader identifies those important points independently. After selecting a single important point, a student identifies a reason or reasons that support this important point. Next a third grader tells how that reason becomes a support for the important point.

To borrow the example from the second grade standard clarification, if a third grader is reading an article about healthy snacks and the author makes the claim that apples are one of the healthiest foods a person can eat. That is the identified important point. A supportive reason for this idea is that apples contain vitamin C. A means of telling how that supports the important point is to state that vitamin C in your diet prevents a person from becoming ill. The third grader is able to identify the relationship that establishes the parameter for that reasoning. In this particular case, it is cause/effect.

Grade Four: Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of informational texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to expository and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

After identifying an important point or important points in an informational text, a fourth grader identifies the reasons and evidence supplied by the author to support his/her important points. A fourth grader looks at each reason and piece of evidence to offer an explanation of how these elements support the important point. A student might explain that one piece of evidence was a real-life example of the point being made or that another was a fact or that another was personal experience. The important piece here is that a fourth grader understands that a variety of reasons and evidence drawn from a variety of sources prove to be supportive evidence of an important point.

Grade Five: Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of informational texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to expository and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

Where a text offers more than a single important point and multiple supports for each of these points, a fifth grader identifies those important points and then identifies which supportive reasons or evidence support which important points. The process applied to this skill is the same used by fourth graders but with the more complex text a fifth grader would read. Simply, a fifth grader reviews each reason and piece of evidence offered in support of an important idea and explains the type of support it is and how it holds up the important idea. Again, these supports may be facts, descriptive details, personal experience, examples of how something works, etc...

Grade Six: Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of literary nonfiction texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to expository and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

A student entering middle school has experience with examining how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text. Building upon that skill, a sixth grader traces and evaluates the argument and specific claims in a text by first demonstrating knowledge of the organizational pattern of an argument. The basic parts of an argument are the claim and its support. The claim is a statement of belief that the author wants to explain and support. Support is the facts, figures, statistics, and examples used to bolster the claim.

The value of an author's argument is based upon the credibility and accuracy of the supported claim/s. The credibility and accuracy of the claim is evaluated by discerning how much of the argument and claim is factual. In order to check that a claim is factual, a sixth grader may access information about the author and his/her credentials as one means of assessing the text's reliability. Depending upon the subject of the text, how current the information is may also be a reliability factor. A sixth grader may also access other texts on the same subject as another means of determining credibility; this is a check for consistency of information. A discrepancy in information could point to an inaccuracy in a text or to a more current source of information.

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Finally, through this process, a sixth grader may determine that within a literary nonfiction text, some claims may be well drawn and accurately and adequately supported while other claims lack validity and are not supported or poorly supported.

Grade Seven: Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of literary nonfiction texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to expository and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

Building upon a sixth grader's ability to evaluate arguments and their supports, a seventh grader forms a number of judgments about a literary nonfiction text. It is recommended that a teacher read the grade 6 clarification for Standard Eight, which provides a basis for the advancement of the seventh grader.

While the sixth grader makes certain that a claim is supported by evidence, the seventh grader evaluates evidence in a finer measure. First, evidence and reasoning must be valid or well-founded in its use. Second, that same evidence must be relevant or pertinent to the claim being made. Third, that same evidence must be sufficient or adequate to the task of substantiating the claim. Seventh graders must be aware of these academic vocabulary words and apply them critically to the evaluation of reasoning and evidence in a literary nonfiction text.

Grade Eight: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of literary nonfiction texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to expository and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

Building upon a sixth and seventh grader's ability to evaluate arguments and their supports, an eighth grader forms a number of judgments about a literary nonfiction text. It is recommended that a teacher read the grade 6 and grade 7 clarifications for Standard Eight, which provide a basis for the advancement of the eighth grader.

In addition to those skills of discerning the organization of an argument, identifying and evaluating its claim/s, identifying and evaluating its evidence and reasoning, an eighth grader perceives when irrelevant evidence or evidence that is not pertinent to the claim is introduced. It is necessary to realize that irrelevant evidence weakens a claim.

Grades Nine and Ten: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of literary nonfiction texts representing diverse cultures, which may include but are not limited to expository and narrative structures and types such as trade books, magazines, multimedia resources, and functional texts.

Continuing to evaluate a core argument and specific claims in a piece of literary nonfiction and to assess true reasoning and pertinent evidence in the more complex text read by ninth and tenth graders, these students also evaluate an argument to determine whether incorrect statements or specifically misleading evidence is embedded within an argument. Using a process described in the grade 6 Standard Eight Clarification students can apply the process to the text in question. If an author proves unreliable or information is outdated, then the argument is weakened. For example, in a speech purposed to have people follow a prescribed course of action, if that speech contains incorrect information or statements that are, perhaps, only partially true but largely incorrect which have the power to mislead, then that argument is flawed. Ninth and tenth graders have the requisite skills to determine such elements within a text.

Grades Eleven and Twelve: Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g. in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g. *The Federalist*, presidential addresses).

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student reads a wide variety of literary nonfiction texts representing seminal U.S. documents from a broadening array of genres.

Eleventh and twelfth graders identify and explain constitutional principles and legal reasoning within influential literary nonfiction texts. In Supreme Court majority decision and dissents, a student outlines the principles in question and tracks how the legal reasoning leads to the conclusion in the opinion or dissent. For example, in the current case regarding the legitimacy of the healthcare mandate that U. S. citizens must carry health insurance, the majority opinion allows that while a citizen does not have to purchase insurance, he/she can then be assessed a tax for that choice. A student would follow the legal reasoning that ends with that conclusion. The explicit opinion is that an individual does not have to purchase health insurance; the implicit opinion is that an individual must pay either for a tax assessment or an insurance policy. In the case of public advocacy documents, a student defines the basis and reason from which that document emanates, and then outlines the argument that proceeds from that reasoning. That process is outlined in the grade 6 Standard Eight Clarification but is obviously applied to the more complex texts of an eleventh or twelfth grader.

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