

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 Two

W1 Anchor Standard: Write Informative/Explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Pre-Kindergarten: Use a combination of drawing, dictating, or developmentally appropriate writing to state information on a topic.

2a: Name a topic.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student learns about a specific topic by having a book read to him/her, listening to guest speakers, viewing multimedia presentations or hands-on experiences relative to a specific topic. In a teacher-directed setting, the teacher models how and guides students to name the topic.

At this early age, it is essential that students be able to verbally name the topic. This is achieved through teacher think-alouds and modeling. Students should dictate responses, create drawings and be encouraged to use inventive writing to name the topic.

2b: Supply some facts about the topic.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student learns about a specific topic by having a book read to him/her, listening to guest speakers, viewing multimedia presentations or hands-on experiences relative to a specific topic from the source. In a teacher-directed setting, the teacher models how and guides students to name the topic and tell specific facts (statements that can be proven) about the topic.

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At this early age, it is essential that students be able to verbally name the topic and tell facts about the topic from the source. This is achieved through teacher think-alouds and modeling. Students should dictate responses, create drawings and be encouraged to use inventive writing to name the topic and tell a minimum of two facts about the topic.

Kindergarten: Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory text in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student tells facts (statements that can be proven) about information learned about a specific topic. Students may acquire this information from having a teacher read aloud a book to him/her, listening to guest speakers, viewing multimedia presentations or hands-on experiences relative to a specific topic. In a teacher-directed setting, the teacher models how and guides students to name the topic of the source to include facts. The teacher could do this through shared writing using visuals such as an organizer. Students should be able to construct a minimum of two related thoughts naming the topic and giving facts using drawing, dictating and/or writing.

Grade One: Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.

For Informative Texts:

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student must write a few related sentences or a paragraph to give information that is true or has been learned about a topic. The students can produce reports, learning logs, reading journals, and letters. Students will gather information including facts (statements that can be proven) about the topic from sources (books, magazines, Internet, presentations, interviews, etc.). Students may work with a partner to locate information. Facts and details should directly relate to the topic. Students can organize information by using graphic organizers including Gathering Grids, post-its™, index cards, etc. The topic sentence introduces the subject. The body will include the facts and details gathered from sources. The student will provide some sense of closure to the writing by writing a sentence that tells what they learned or how they feel about the topic (e.g. Now I know...).

For Explanatory Texts:

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student must write a few related sentences or a paragraph to explain how to do something. The students can produce learning logs, reading journals, letters, and directions. The topic sentence introduces the subject. The body sentences provide step-by-step directions in order. Time-order words (first, second, then, next, after, now) can be used to explain each step or tell when something happens. The student will provide some sense of closure to the writing by writing a sentence. Writers can provide closure that makes readers want to try the instructions.

Grade Two: Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.

For Informative Texts:

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student must write one or more paragraphs to give information that is true or has been learned about a topic. The students can produce

reports, learning logs, reading journals, and letters. Students will gather information including facts (statements that can be proven) and definitions about the topic from sources (books, magazines, Internet, dictionary, presentations, interviews, etc.). Students may work with a partner to locate information. Facts and details should directly relate to the topic. Students can organize information by using graphic organizers including Gathering Grids, post-its™, index cards, etc. The topic sentence introduces the subject. The body will include the facts and details gathered from sources. The student will provide some sense of closure to the writing by writing one or more sentences that tells what they learned or how they feel about the topic (e.g. Now I know...).

For Explanatory Texts:

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, a student must write one or more paragraphs to explain how to do something. The students can produce learning logs, reading journals, letters, and directions. The topic sentence introduces the subject. The body sentences provide step-by-step directions in order. Time-order words (first, second, then, next, after, now) can be used to explain each step or tell when something happens. The student will provide some sense of closure to the writing by writing one or more sentences. Writers can provide closure that makes readers want to try the instructions.

Grade Three: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

2a: Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension.

To show proficiency of the skills in this supporting standard a student needs to begin their paragraph with a topic sentence that introduces what the student is writing about. The author should arrange similar ideas together. Illustrations/drawings used need to be purposeful in explaining/extending the meaning of the text.

2b: Develop the topic with facts, definitions, and details.

To show proficiency of the skills in this supporting standard a student needs to include text/source based information that explains the topic. These explanations may include but are not limited to clarifying the meaning of important terms and/or describing specific examples and details.

2c: Use linking words and phrases (e.g., also, another, and, more, but) to connect ideas within categories of information.

To show proficiency of the skills in this supporting standard, a student needs to demonstrate their understanding of the use of linking words which may include but are not limited to also, another, and, more and but to connect similar ideas. Ideas can be combined within sentences or by combining multiple sentences.

2d: Provide a concluding statement or section.

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To show proficiency of the skills in this supporting standard, a student needs to provide closure by sharing what they have learned about the topic.

Grade Four: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

2a: Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections: include formatting (e.g., headings) illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

To show proficiency of the skills in this supporting standard a student needs to begin their writing with a paragraph that introduces what the student is writing about and provides a clear focus for the writing piece. The author should arrange similar ideas together in paragraphs or sections. Sections may include headings and subheadings. Multi-media may include URL, a link to a web page, video or audio clip, or an image. Illustrations/drawings, headings and sub-headings and multi-media used need to be purposeful in explaining/extending the meaning of the text.

2b: Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.

To show proficiency of the skills in this supporting standard a student needs to include text/source based information, quotations or examples that explain the topic. These explanations may include but are not limited to clarifying the meaning of important terms and/or describing specific examples and details. All information needs to be grounded in the texts used. Quotations should be written word for word with quotation marks before and after the quoted words. The author/speaker should be given credit for the quotation. Any additional inclusions, not from the original source, (e.g., from internet, personal experience) need to be purposeful and directly related to the topic and purpose of the writing.

Grade Five: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

2a: Introduce a topic clearly, provide a general observation and focus; and group related information logically; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when use to aiding comprehension

To show proficiency of these skills in this standard, a student needs to introduce a topic clearly, creating a title, subtitle, or heading that introduces the main idea of the response. The writer will create a main idea statement that clearly and captures the readers interest, telling an anecdote, mentioning an unusual fact, asking a question, or including a lively description. The topic sentence should provide general information or observations that focus on the main idea of the chosen topic. Use of a graphic organizer to group related information logically will benefit the writer, especially with decisions about formatting, illustrations, and multimedia pertaining to comprehension. Order depends on particular text structure and level of importance, placing most powerful information first. Text structures may include: cause/effect, problem/solution, description, compare/contrast, and sequence. Use of appropriate text features that would aid comprehension of informational or explanatory text include: illustrations, captions, headings, links to multimedia, diagrams, bold print, italics, and pictures

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2b: Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.

To show proficiency of these skills in this supporting standard, a student needs to develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic. The writer will show proficiency in citing quoted text appropriately using proper format, and citing resources used in gathering information. Facts, definitions, details and quotes should relate to, support, and clarify the topic by answering questions such as “Why?” or “How?”

2c: Link ideas within and across categories of information using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., in contrast, especially).

To show proficiency of these skills in this supporting standard, a student needs to make a connection between categories of information using words, phrases, and clauses. The writer will be able to use commonly-used transition words to link ideas, such as *in contrast* and *especially*.

2d: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

To show proficiency of these skills in this supporting standard, a student needs to use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic discussed. Careful word choice is imperative to communicating specific ideas, by using words that express clear pictures and ideas presented in the text.

2e: Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.

To show proficiency of these skills in this supporting standard, a student needs to provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented. The writer will restate the main idea or explanation provided in the response. The concluding statement must also include a connection with the beginning of the response, and share a final thought about the topic.

Grade Six: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

2a: Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

To show proficiency of these skills in this standard, a student needs to introduce a topic clearly by creating a title, subtitle, or heading that introduces the main idea of the response. The writer will create a main idea statement that clearly identifies the topic, and captures the reader’s interest, by telling an anecdote or brief story, mentioning an unusual fact, asking a question or including a lively description. The topic sentence should provide general information or observations that focus on the main idea of the chosen topic. Use of a graphic organizer to

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group related information logically will benefit the writer, especially with decisions about formatting, illustrations and multimedia pertaining to comprehension. Order depends on particular text structure and level of importance, placing most powerful information first. Text structures to include: cause/effect, problem/solution, description, classification, definition, compare/contrast, and sequence. Use of appropriate text features that would aid comprehension of informational or explanatory text include: illustrations, captions, headings, links to multimedia, diagrams, bold print, italics, and pictures.

2b: Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

To show proficiency of these skills in this standard a student needs to develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic. The writer will show proficiency in citing quoted text appropriately using proper format, facts, definitions, and citing resources used in gathering information. Details and quotes should related to, support, and clarify the topic by answering questions such as, “Why?” or “How?”

2c: Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

To show proficiency of these skills in this standard a student needs to make a connection between categories of information using words, phrases and clauses. The writer will be able to use commonly used transition words to link ideas, such as, in contrast and especially.

2d: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

To show proficiency of these skills in this standard, a student needs to use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic discussed. Word choice is imperative to communicating specific ideas, by using words that express clear pictures and ideas presented in the text.

2e: Establish and maintain a formal style.

To show proficiency of these skills in this standard, a student needs to establish and maintain a formal style. A formal style consists of advanced vocabulary, longer sentences, no contractions, no personal pronouns, and no slang. The student is presenting him/herself as an expert on the topic. The writer may use a variety of sentences including declarative, interrogative, and imperative.

2f: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.

To show proficiency of these skills in this standard, a student needs to provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented. The writer will restate the main idea or explanation provided in the response. The concluding statement must also include a connection with the beginning of the response, and share a final thought about the topic.

Grade Seven: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

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2a: Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

A student entering 7th grade should be able to introduce the topic of an informative or explanatory text. This introduction should be clear and engaging and should indicate what main elements will be addressed in order to orient the reader with the purpose of the text. Students should adhere to a logical organizational pattern (such as definition/classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect). Graphics should be connected to the text and formatting should appropriately aid the purpose of the text. Students are encouraged to use multimedia to enhance, present, and/or publish their writing when it could aid the comprehension of the audience.

2b: Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

Students should develop their topic with an objective voice. They should include concrete facts, definitions, details, quotations, or other appropriate information and examples, but they should avoid conversational commentary, opinions, and claims. Students should maintain their informational purpose throughout the text and avoid elements of argumentative writing.

2c: Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

To show proficiency of the skills in this substandard, 7th graders must use transitional words and phrases to provide information that is clear to the audience and aids in comprehension. Student should also be able to use transitional words and phrases to produce a polished and cohesive informational/explanatory piece that shows unity among ideas and concepts.

2d: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

For this substandard, there are no differences between 6th, 7th and 8th grades. Domain-specific vocabulary refers to vocabulary that is generally used in one particular content area. For example, domain-specific vocabulary in science might include *mitosis* or *meiosis*, while domain-specific vocabulary in social studies might include *gross domestic product* or *cultural diffusion*. For math, domain-specific vocabulary might include *mean*, *median*, or *mode*, and for language arts, domain-specific vocabulary might include *characterization*, *setting*, or *tone*.

2e: Establish and maintain a formal style.

For this substandard, there are no differences between 6th, 7th and 8th grades. Maintaining a formal style means that students should avoid informal or conversational language and should make sure that they adhere to standard conventions. The challenge here is for students to maintain a strong and clear voice to command the attention and interest of readers/listeners while still producing an academically appropriate text.

2f: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information presented.

To show proficiency of this substandard, incoming 7th graders should be able to provide a concluding statement, but students are now expected to focus on providing a conclusion that better supports the information they've presented. To support their informative writing, students may choose to provide a brief summary, thoughts for additional research or discussion, and/or a related observation or quotation to provoke further thought.

Grade Eight: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

2a: Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

An 8th grade student should already be able to introduce the topic in a clear and engaging way and to indicate what main elements will be addressed in order to orient the reader with the purpose of the text. The ideas, concepts, and information presented by the students should be organized into broader categories. This means that the dimensions of a topic can be examined and reported in greater detail and a more diverse scope. Students should begin to thoroughly explore and discuss some of the more critical aspects of subtopics relating to their overall topic. Students should continue to use multimedia to enhance, present, and/or publish their writing when it could aid the comprehension of the audience.

2b: Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

Students will continue to develop their topic with facts that are appropriate to that topic. However, now students should evaluate the relevant facts they've found and include only the most appropriate and effective facts to support their writing.

2c: Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

To show proficiency of the skills in this substandard, 8th graders must use *varied* transitional words and phrases to provide information that is clear to the audience and aids in comprehension. Student should also be able to use *varied* transitional words and phrases to produce a polished and cohesive informational/explanatory piece that shows unity among ideas and concepts.

2d: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

For this substandard, there are no differences between 6th, 7th and 8th grades. Domain-specific vocabulary refers to vocabulary that is generally used in one particular content area. For example, domain-specific vocabulary in science might include *mitosis* or *meiosis*, while domain-specific vocabulary in social studies might include *gross domestic product* or *cultural diffusion*.

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For math, domain-specific vocabulary might include *mean*, *median*, or *mode*, and for language arts, domain-specific vocabulary might include *characterization*, *setting*, or *tone*.

2e: Establish and maintain a formal style.

For this substandard, there are no differences between 6th, 7th and 8th grades. Maintaining a formal style means that students should avoid informal or conversational language and should make sure that they adhere to standard conventions. The challenge here is for students to maintain a strong and clear voice to command the attention and interest of readers/listeners while still producing an academically appropriate text.

2f: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

There are no differences between 7th and 8th grade for this substandard.

Grades Nine and Ten: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

2a: Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

2b: Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

2c: Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

2d: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.

2e: Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

2f: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, students will independently write informative/explanatory texts to convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. The purpose of informative/explanatory writing is to increase readers' knowledge of a subject, help readers better understand a procedure or process, or to provide readers with an enhanced comprehension of a concept. Explanations start with the assumption of truthfulness and answer questions about why or how. Their aim is to make the reader understand rather than to persuade him or her to accept a certain point of view. By definition, a complex topic must be worthy of explanation and teach something new. Though a personal experience might serve

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as a trigger for the topic, the student must develop the writing at an objective, academic level. Student uses the most appropriate method of development including but not limited to cause/effect, process analysis, problem/solution, definition, and classification.

Expository is synonymous with explanatory. Examples include literary analyses, summaries, manuals, memos, resumes.

- a. The topic is introduced and organized in a logical manner in order to make important connections and distinctions within the essay.
- b. Relevant, sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, other information and examples from credible primary and secondary sources to provide balanced support for the topic and demonstrate an attention to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
- c. The writer's use of word choice and sentence structure link sections of the text.
- d. Writer uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic

Grades Eleven and Twelve: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

2a: Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

2b: Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

2c: Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

2d: Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.

2e: Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

2f: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

- To show proficiency of the skills in this standard, students will write informative text to convey complex ideas
Master introduction, organization, and concepts to then create a unified whole including formatting, graphics, and multimedia presentation
- Select the most important and relevant facts, expand definition, solid details, quotes and examples to the topic
- Use age/grade appropriate transition and grammar to connect sections of the text and make clear connections

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- Use age/grade appropriate vocabulary along with figurative language to show complexity of writing
- Use formal style and neutral tone
- State conclusions that wrap up supports and information provided