

Utah's New English Language Arts Core

UTAH HAS ADOPTED MORE RIGOROUS ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

The **Utah English Language Arts Core Standards** are endorsed by more than 100 major parent groups, corporations, professional organizations, and government entities, including:

- Utah Legislature
- Utah State Board of Education
- Utah State Superintendent Larry Shumway
- National Parent Teacher Association
- The College Board
- American Association of School Administrators
- Association for Career and Technical Education
- Council for Exceptional Children
- Microsoft U.S.
- Partners in Learning
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
- Salt Lake City Chamber of Commerce

The new standards are the foundation of reading and language arts instruction from kindergarten through 12th grade. They include the knowledge and skills students need to be successful when they leave high school, whether they go on to college, pursue career or technical training, or move directly to the workforce to learn the skills they need to be successful while on the job.

The new standards are based on the **same levels of performance as those in the highest performing countries in the world**, and are intended to prepare our students to succeed in today's very competitive world economy. Over the next several years, students will be expected to read a broader range of texts at higher levels of complexity. For example, passages that used to be appropriate for sixth grade students may be used in fifth grade. Writing assignments will also become more rigorous.

You will not see courses with new or different names as a result of these new standards. You will, however, begin to see

differences in the kinds of assignments students receive, including differences in the ways in which they demonstrate what they have learned. You will see students reading a wider variety of texts including more "informational" text at every age and grade—text that gives information about the world rather than simply telling a story. You will also begin to see students produce more writing, and be asked to revise and improve that writing.

There is virtually no aspect of success in life that is not influenced by how well a person understands and uses language. Utah's English Language Arts Core Standards will prepare our students to read, write, speak, and listen at higher levels. The Utah State Reading Goal defined by our legislature is to have every student reading at grade level by the end of third grade. Implementing Utah's new Core Standards in English Language Arts will help prepare every student to be prepared for post high school college or career training.

Highlights of the new standards include:

1. Three types of writing, which are explicitly taught from Kindergarten on:
 - Narrative (telling a story or telling about an event),
 - Informative/explanative (conveying information), and
 - Opinion/argumentation (building a position or explanation using valid reasoning and credible information).
2. Increased emphasis on reading and writing informational text at every grade level.
3. Greater emphasis on digital reading, writing, and multi-media production.
4. A focus on comprehension of text, including analysis for credible evidence and sound reasoning.
5. Students will be expected to create projects and documents—generating their own language and evidence—to demonstrate what they have learned, in addition to taking and passing tests.

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What can parents do to help their children achieve at these higher levels?

Here are some important suggestions:

- Stay in touch with your children's teacher and monitor your children's school performance. Waiting until the end of a semester or school year to find out about problems will be too late to help. Let your children know school work is important to you and that you expect them to do their best.
- Be ready to support your children as assignments become more difficult to read and more challenging to write. Be patient. Provide the time and location and resources needed to study at home.
- There is no substitute for reading. Reading a variety of books increases vocabulary, comprehension, general knowledge of the world, and love of learning. The more you read, the better reader you are! From the time your children are young, provide regular, structured time for reading. Fill your home with opportunities to read. Show them that you are a reader, too.

Frequently Asked Questions

How will students be assessed on the new standards? Will new standards mean new tests?

Students will be assessed on an ongoing basis as they proceed through grades and courses. Utah is part of a large consortium of states working on new computer-based assessments that will be in place within a couple of years. These new assessments will provide a much more comprehensive assessment of student achievement.

Do the new standards provide adequate challenge for high-ability students?

Yes. The standards are more rigorous than any Utah has used before. They provide excellent guidance for teachers to provide both content and instruction that will challenge high-ability learners.

Are the new standards too hard for students who may already be struggling with reading and writing?

The new standards include guidance on best-practices of instruction—not just what to teach, but how best to teach. All students' learning and progress will be carefully monitored, with teachers making adjustments and reteaching as necessary.

When can we expect the new standards to be fully implemented in every classroom?

Our goal is to complete the transition to the new standards by the beginning of the 2013–2014 school year. It is an enormous undertaking! Thousands of teachers will be participating in comprehensive professional development in order to implement the new standards effectively. New materials will be purchased and used as funds become available.