



Essential Standards Extended Guide

ELA Grade 8

Guiding Information:

In response to requests from schools and districts for guidance on essential standards, committees of educators from around Idaho collaborated in the summer of 2024 to categorize ELA standards into four groups:

- **Essential standards** are explicitly taught, assessed multiple times, and receive targeted interventions for students who have not yet reached proficiency.
- **Supporting standards** are taught to reinforce essential standards and may or may not be formally assessed.
- **Additional standards** extend learning and are incorporated as time allows within course units, with assessment being optional.
- **Teacher Guidance standards** provide direction for teachers in developing instructional materials, designing units, and creating learning opportunities.

This guidance helps LEAs prioritize the most critical standards, recognizing that not all standards are of equal importance. This document serves as a resource—not a mandate—to assist local efforts. Importantly, this work did not remove or revise any of the adopted Idaho Content Standards and is intended to refocus time and effort.

Given the skills-based nature of ELA, the standards can be grouped flexibly to meet student needs and support various instructional materials. To assist educators, the committees created a step-by-step process, outlined on page 6 of this document. This guide can help educators develop scope and sequence for their instructional time and district-specific courses and provide a starting point for building formative and summative assessments around the standards.

Teacher Guidance Standards
These standards provide direction for teachers in developing instructional materials, designing units, and creating learning opportunities.
RC.8.1. Independently and proficiently read and comprehend texts representing a balance of genres, cultures, and perspectives that exhibit complexity at the lower end of the grades 6–8 band.
RC.8.2. Regularly engage in a volume of reading, independently, with peers, or with modest support related to the topics and themes being studied to build knowledge and vocabulary.
RC.8. 4. Read grade-level text with accuracy, automaticity, appropriate rate, and expression in successive readings to support comprehension.

Teacher Guidance Standards

These standards provide direction for teachers in developing instructional materials, designing units, and creating learning opportunities.

RS.8.2. Read a series of texts organized around a variety of conceptually related topics to build knowledge about the world. (These texts should be at a range of complexity levels so students can read the texts independently, with peers, or with modest support.)

W.8.1. Develop flexibility in writing by routinely engaging in the production of shorter and longer pieces for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. This could include, among others, summaries, reflections, descriptions, critiques, letters, and poetry, etc.

Essential Standards

Standards are to be explicitly taught, assessed more than once, and intervened upon in this cluster of standards.

RC.8.3. Draw several pieces of evidence from grade-level texts that strongly support both what is said explicitly and what is implied, including quoting and paraphrasing from relevant sections and accurately citing textual references.

RC.8.5a. Explain stated or implied themes, analyzing their development over the course of texts, and the relationship of characters, setting, and plot to those themes.

RC.8.5d. Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader created with dramatic irony result in such effects as suspense or humor.

RC.8.6a. Explain stated or implied central ideas of texts, analyzing their development over the course of the texts, including the relationship of individuals, ideas, or events to the central ideas; provide objective summaries of texts.

RC.8.6d. Trace the argument and specific claims in texts, distinguishing claims that are supported by evidence and reasons from claims that are not.

VD.8.1a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

VD.8.2c. Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., crowd versus mob, fired versus laid off).

RS.8.1. Conduct brief as well as multi-day research tasks to take some action or share findings orally or in writing by formulating research questions and generating additional questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration; gathering and assessing the relevance and credibility of information from multiple sources; and summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citations.

W.8.2. Write arguments or make claims that support well-defined points of view effectively with relevant evidence and clear reasoning in ways that logically advance the claim(s) made; demonstrate a nuanced

Essential Standards

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understanding of the topic; and provide a concluding section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

W.8.3. Write informational texts that introduce the topic clearly; preview what is to follow by establishing and maintaining a clear focus with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, and examples from multiple sources using appropriate strategies, such as description, enumeration, classification, comparison, problem-solution, and/or cause-effect; and provide a concluding section that follows from the information presented.

W.8.4. Write personal or fictional narratives that establish a situation and narrator; engage and orient the reader to the context and one or multiple points of view; use a variety of techniques such as description, dialogue, pacing, and precise words and phrases, sensory language, and transition words to develop the characters, capture the action and convey sequence, and signal shifts from one timeframe or setting to another, and provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated event(s).

ODC.8.1. Engage in collaborative discussions about grade-level topics and texts with peers by following rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, defining individual roles, and tracking progress on specific goals; propelling conversations forward by posing and responding to questions, relating the current discussion to broader themes, and connecting the ideas of several speakers; and when warranted, qualifying or justifying one's views considering new evidence heard.

ODC.8.2. Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the intent (e.g., social, political, commercial) behind its presentation.

GC.8.2a. Use commas, ellipsis, and dashes when writing and reading aloud to indicate a pause, break, or omission.

Supporting Standards

Standards that support the Essential Standards. These standards will be taught but may or may not be formally assessed.

RC.8.5. Use evidence from literature to demonstrate understanding of grade-level texts

RC.8.5b. Analyze how characters are revealed through particular lines of dialogue or events in literary texts.

RC.8.5c. Analyze how authors structure texts to advance a plot, explaining how each event gives rise to the next or foreshadows a future event.

RC.8.6. Use evidence from nonfiction works to demonstrate understanding of grade-level texts.

RC.8.6b. Analyze how texts make connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comp

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RC.8.6c. Analyze the structural elements of a text, including the role of specific sentences, paragraphs, and text features in developing and refining key concepts

RC.8.6e. Analyze cases in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

VD.8.1. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade-level content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

VD.8.1c. Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), print or digital, to find the pronunciation of a grade-level word and determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.

VD.8.2. Determine how words and phrases provide meaning and nuance to grade-level texts

VD.8.2b. Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., homonyms, person to location, object to use) to better understand each of the words.

VD.8.2d. Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

VD.8.3. Acquire and use accurately general academic and content-specific words and phrases occurring in grade-level reading and content; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression. Use these words in discussions and writing.

W.8.5 Produce clear and coherent organizational structures in which ideas and other information are logically grouped; headings, other formatting, and graphics (e.g., charts and tables) support the purpose; and precise language, content-specific vocabulary, and varied transitions create cohesion and clarify the relationships

W.8.6 With support from adults and peers, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. (Editing should demonstrate command of grade-level Grammar and Conventions.)

W.8.7. Write by hand or with technology to produce and publish writing, link to and cite sources, present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently, and interact and collaborate with others.

ODC.8.3. Analyze a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

ODC.8.4. Report orally on a topic or text or present an argument, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, and well-chosen details; use appropriate vocabulary, volume, and clear pronunciation.

Supporting Standards

Standards that support the Essential Standards. These standards will be taught but may or may not be formally assessed.

GC.8.1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

GC.8.1a. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb voice and mood

GC.8.1c. Form and use verbs in the active and passive voice to achieve particular effects.

GC.8.1e. Expand, combine, or reduce sentences (e.g., adding or deleting modifiers, combining, or breaking up sentences) for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style

GC.8.1f. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

GC.8.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of English punctuation and capitalization when writing and reading aloud to create meaning.

GC.8.3. Spell derivatives correctly by applying knowledge of bases and affixes.

Additional Standards

If time allows, these standards may be taught and/or assessed

RC.8.5e. Relate themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works to contemporary stories, poems, or drama.

VD.8.1b. Use common Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., in readings about mathematics, determine the meanings of the words percentile and perimeter).

VD.8.1d. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary.

VD.8.2a. Interpret figurative language (e.g., verbal irony, puns) in context.

ODC.8.5. Demonstrate an understanding of and respect for the rights and obligations of using and sharing intellectual property.

ODC.8.6. Consider the evidence websites or blog posts use to support their position (e.g., Are they transparent about their sources? Do they link to peer-reviewed articles?).

ODC.8.7. Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums—print or digital text.

Additional Standards

If time allows, these standards may be taught and/or assessed

ODC.8.8. Integrate digital displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

GC.8.1b. Form and use verbs in the indicative, imperative, interrogative, and conditional mood.

GC.8.1d. Explain the function of verbals (gerunds, participles, infinitives) in general and their function in particular sentences.

Unit Planning with Standards

The Idaho Content Standards for English Language Arts have been grouped into four standard categories to acknowledge that the abundance of standards must be broken down for use in a classroom with students. This document provides guidance for educators to begin developing unit plans around the categorized standards.

Pre-Planning: Read through all the Teacher Guidance standards. These standards are necessary for teachers to consider and remember while completing the steps below.

Step	Description
Step 1	Begin by choosing 3-4 essential standards that can be grouped into a cohesive unit. You should choose these essential standards from different strands (writing, reading comprehension, research, oral and digital communication, vocabulary development, and grammar and conventions). You also need to consider the text(s) you have available or might use with your students to teach, support, practice, and assess these standards.
Step 2	Choose supporting standards. After identifying your essential standards, you should choose 2-3 supporting standards to use and potentially assess alongside your essential standards. When choosing these supporting standards, consider which ones might lend themselves to the work your students will do with the essential standards and what skills might be necessary to complete assessments. Remember, these standards may or may not be formally assessed in your classroom as you work through the unit.
Step 3	Create or find summative assessments for each essential standard. For every essential standard, you need to have a goal in mind and then work backward to meet that goal. Daily lessons and practice, formative assessments, and interventions should work towards these summative assessments of your essential standards. At this point, you should have 3-4 summative assessments that directly assess each of your essential standards.
Step 4	At this point, you should have 3-4 essential standards identified, 2-3 supporting standards identified, and 3-4 summative assessments tied to essential standards with potential connections to your supporting standards. You should now work to create formative assessments for all essential standards while using the supporting standards to help guide students and their learning. Consider creating/finding formative assessments that will lead to or practice the same types of work as your summative assessment. What might your students need to try and receive feedback on from your essential standards before they reach their summative assessment?

Step	Description
Step 5	Identify which additional standards you will use when/if there is time or need in your unit. These should be standards that might extend or enhance the grouping of standards and assessments you have already identified. Consider what blends well with the type of assessment you have created/found and what might benefit your students from learning once they are proficient with your essential and supporting standards.

Sample Unit Outline 1

Essential Standards	Supporting Standards	Additional Standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RS.8.1. • RC.8.6a. • RC.8.3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GC.8.1. • ODC.8.4. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ODC.8.8.

Potential Assessment(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RS.8.1: Research Tracker with Annotated Bibliography • RC.8.6a: Annotated Research Articles • RC.8.3. Graphic organizer with cited evidence to support a research topic

Rationale
<p>The essential standards in this sample were chosen on the premise that the research process standard (RS.1) naturally includes the reading comprehension standard of comparing non-fiction texts on a similar topic (RC.6a). Students will be asked to cite relevant evidence (RC.3) to support their research.</p> <p>While completing the research process, the supporting grammar and conventions standards (GC.1) can support their overall writing. The supporting communication standard (ODC.4) could be included so students may present their research while including digital media elements in their presentations (ODC.8).</p>

Sample Unit Outline 2

Essential Standards	Supporting Standards	Additional Standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• W.8.2.• RC.8.5a.• ODC.8.1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• W.8.6.• GC.8.1e	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• None

Potential Assessment(s)

- W.8.2: Argument paragraph on the theme of a short story
- RC.8.5a: Hexagonal thinking activity to determine theme statement for paragraph
- ODC.8.1: Philosophical Chairs on theme statements or Fishbowl Discussion on theme statements for short story

Rationale

The essential standards in this sample were chosen on the premise that the argument task (W.2) could be written at the end of the discussion assessments (ODC.1) which would be focused on the identified theme statements created through a hexagonal thinking activity for the reading comprehension standard (RC.5a). The grammar and convention supporting standard (GC.1e) would be a natural fit to assess a final writing task from the writing essential standard. The supporting writing standard (W.6) was chosen to support the overall writing process.

For Questions Contact

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