

# Washington State Literacy

## *Learning to Read and Reading to Learn in Washington*

Due to local control, Washington's literacy teaching landscape is as diverse as our 295 public school districts. Across the state, educators work diligently to provide support in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language for all children. OSPI and statewide partners work to support literacy instruction by continually revising and improving the supports and systems available for teachers to support building children's strong literacy skills.

**OSPI's mission** is to provide funding, resources, tools, data, and technical assistance that **enable educators to ensure students succeed** in our public schools, are prepared to access post-secondary training and education, and are equipped to thrive in their careers and lives.

The [Washington State Comprehensive Literacy Plan: Birth to Grade 12 \(CLP\)](#) expands the definition of literacy, integrating the [Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts](#), the [English Language Proficiency Standards](#), and a multi-level instructional framework to guide core instruction and intervention supports for all students.

**Washington's definition of literacy** was developed by the State Literacy Team, made up of experts and practitioners from across Washington. This definition of literacy, on page two of the [CLP](#), defines literacy as an on-going cognitive process that begins at birth. It involves the integration of **listening, speaking, reading, writing, and critical thinking**. Literacy also includes the knowledge that enables the speaker, writer, or reader to recognize and use language appropriate to a situation in an increasingly complex literate environment. Active literacy allows people to think, create, question, solve problems, and reflect in order to participate effectively in a democratic, multi-cultural society (CLP 2012).

In July 2011, Washington adopted the [Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts \(CCSS-ELA\)](#) to replace the state's 2005 Reading, Writing, and Communication Learning Standards. The [CCSS-ELA](#) are built on an intentional progression of the skills and knowledge necessary for all students to be ready for careers, college, and life when they exit high school. The progressions for learning provide specific focus for each grade level. The standards lay the groundwork for new benchmarks for reading achievement that better fit the skills students need across all grade levels. There are three [Key Shifts in English Language Arts](#) to support students' achieving the standards:

1. Using [complex text](#) and **academic language** for regular practice
2. Using **evidence** from the text to support reading, writing and speaking
3. Using **content-rich nonfiction** to build student knowledge

In December 2013, OSPI adopted *new* [Washington State English Language Proficiency \(ELP\) Standards](#). These standards were developed to address the increased rigor and language demands of the career- and college-ready standards, and they are aligned with the [CCSS-ELA](#) standards. [According to A Call for Equity and Excellence for ELLs in Washington State](#), ELL students make up 10.5 percent of the student population in Washington, over 110,000 students are in the process of learning a new language while simultaneously engaging in content to meet rigorous grade-level standards. With the ELL specialist and

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content area teacher in mind, the [ELP Standards](#) provide the language bridge to move students toward full engagement and academic success.

The [ELP Standards](#) make it clear that language learning encompasses more than just learning grammar and vocabulary. It includes a focus on receptive, productive, and interactive modalities for instruction of ELLs. With the *new* 2013 [ELP Standards](#), English language development goes hand-in-hand with our state's 2012 expanded definition of literacy as found in Washington's [CLP](#), identifying how a greater emphasis on instruction in student's primary language will enhance cognitive processes.

With the adoption of the [CCSS-ELA](#) and associated [ELP Standards](#) as **Washington K–12 Learning Standards** and the refinement of the state's [CLP](#), state literacy partners are poised to provide comprehensive and coherent professional learning for educators to better support accelerated learning outcomes for all students.

**Effective K-4 reading teachers must differentiate and adapt instruction according to multiple points of formative and interim student assessments, as well as carefully monitor student progress and reteach as necessary (Denton, 2009).**

OSPI and literacy experts from across the state (including experts in K–4 literacy) in each of the nine Educational Service Districts (ESDs) have jointly developed **professional learning opportunities** (common across all regions) to support robust implementation of the [CCSS-ELA](#) and early literacy instruction. Funded via 2013 [ESSB 5946 \(RCW 28A.655.235\)](#) these opportunities provide targeted resources to each ESD region to improve K–4 ELA support for teachers and students. The work of these “regional literacy coordinators” is grounded in the **standards** (i.e. [CCSS-ELA](#)) and [ELPs](#)), and **foundational research** (e.g. [CLP](#) and **Menu of Best Practices and Strategies for ELA**), and will serve as a strong support system for districts as they move forward to implement their local **comprehensive literacy plans**.

**Evidence-based teaching practices** for effective K–4 reading instruction includes: explicit instruction, modeling and scaffolding, dynamic and flexible grouping, increased reading time, discussion, and frequent oral and silent reading practice (Jones et al., 2012). Effective K–4 reading teachers must differentiate and adapt instruction according to multiple points of formative and interim student assessment, as well as carefully monitor student progress and reteach as necessary (Denton, 2009). The **ultimate reading goal** for all K–12 students is for each student to possess the skills to “comprehend texts across a range of types and disciplines” (CCSS-ELA).