



Archdiocese of Washington Catholic Schools

Academic Standards

English/Language Arts



8th GRADE

Standard 1 - READING: Word Recognition, Fluency, and Vocabulary Development

Students use their knowledge of word parts and word relationships, as well as context clues (the meaning of the text around a word), to determine the meaning of specialized vocabulary and to understand the precise meaning of grade-level-appropriate words.

Vocabulary and Concept Development

- 8.1.1 Analyze idioms and comparisons, such as analogies, metaphors, and similes, to infer the literal and figurative meanings of phrases.
- Idioms: expressions that cannot be understood just by knowing the meanings of the words in the expression, such as *to be an old hand at something* or *to get one's feet wet*
 - Analogies: comparisons of the similar aspects of two different things
 - Metaphors: implied comparisons, such as *The stars were brilliant diamonds in the night sky.*
 - Similes: comparisons that use like or as, such as *The stars were like a million diamonds in the sky.*
- 8.1.2 Understand the influence of historical events on English word meaning and vocabulary expansion.
- Example: Recognize how the early influences of Spanish explorers in North America expanded American English vocabulary, adding words such as *tornado*, *tomato*, and *patio*.
- 8.1.3 Verify the meaning of a word in its context, even when its meaning is not directly stated, through the use of definition, restatement, example, comparison, or contrast.
- Example: Understand the meaning of *pickle* in a sentence, such as *The pickle was an important part of metal working.* Use a dictionary to help clarify the use of the word *pickle* in this context.



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Standard 2 - READING: Reading Comprehension (Focus on Informational Materials)

Students read and understand grade-level-appropriate material. They describe and connect the essential ideas, arguments, and perspectives of the text by using their knowledge of text structure, organization, and purpose. At Grade 8, in addition to regular classroom reading, students read a variety of narrative (story) and expository (informational and technical) texts, including classic and contemporary literature, poetry, magazines, newspapers, reference materials, and online information.

Structural Features of Informational and Technical Materials

8.2.1 Compare and contrast the features and elements of consumer materials to gain meaning from documents.

Example: Compare examples of a variety of instructional or technical manuals, such as those for a computer, hair appliance, camera, or electronic game, brought to class by different students. Describe what features make certain instructions easier than others to understand and follow.

8.2.2 Analyze text that uses proposition (statement of argument) and support patterns.

Example: Read and analyze the organization of the “pro” and the “con” editorials on a topic of interest in *USA Today*. In each, decide if the argument is simply and clearly stated. Decide if there are at least three major points in support of the argument, with the strongest argument given first.

Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

8.2.3 Find similarities and differences between texts in the treatment, amount of coverage, or organization of ideas.

Example: Read articles on the same current topic in magazines, such as *Time* and *Newsweek*, and editorials in national or local newspapers. Compare and contrast the texts in how they present the issue.

8.2.4 Compare the original text to a summary to determine whether the summary accurately describes the main ideas, includes important details, and conveys the underlying meaning.

Example: After writing summaries or creating graphic organizers on an informational text read for class, exchange the summary or organizer with another student. Evaluate this classmate’s summary, based on how well the student describes the most important elements of the text.

8.2.5 Use information from a variety of consumer and public documents to explain a situation or decision and to solve a problem.

Example: Decide which is the most practical and economical wireless telephone to purchase by reading articles, brochures, Web pages, and other consumer sources, such as *Consumer Reports*.

Expository (Informational) Critique

8.2.6 Evaluate the logic, internal consistency, and structural patterns of text.

Example: Read *The Brooklyn Bridge: They Said It Couldn’t Be Built* by Judith St. George and evaluate the techniques and the effectiveness of the development of the main idea of the book.



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Standard 3 - READING: Literary Response and Analysis

Students read and respond to grade-level-appropriate historically or culturally significant works of literature that reflect and enhance their study of history and social science. They clarify the ideas and connect them to other literary works.

Structural Features of Literature

8.3.1 Determine and articulate the relationship between the purposes and characteristics of different forms of poetry (including ballads, lyrics, couplets, epics, elegies, odes, and sonnets).

- Ballad: a poem that tells a story
- Lyric: words set to music
- Couplet: two successive lines of verse that rhyme
- Epic: a long poem that describes heroic deeds or adventures
- Elegy: a mournful poem for the dead
- Ode: a poem of praise
- Sonnet: a rhymed poem of 14 lines

Example: Describe the different forms of poetry. Compare poems such as John Ciardi's "Elegy for Jog," Pablo Neruda's "Odes to Common Things," and Edgar Allan Poe's sonnet "To Science."

Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text

8.3.2 Evaluate the structural elements of the plot, such as subplots, parallel episodes, and climax; the plot's development; and the way in which conflicts are (or are not) addressed and resolved.

Example: Read a book, such as *Holes* by Louis Sachar, and discuss how the plot is developed, including the climax and its resolution and how different subplots are incorporated into the story.

8.3.3 Compare and contrast the motivations and reactions of literary characters from different historical eras confronting either similar situations and conflicts or similar hypothetical situations.

Example: Compare books that deal with the theme of the impact of war, both on those who fight in the battles and those who remain at home. Books on this theme include books on the Civil War period, such as *Bull Run* by Paul Fleischman, books on World War I, such as *After the Dancing Days* by Margaret Rostkowski, or about the Vietnam War such as *Park's Quest* by Katherine Patterson.

8.3.4 Analyze the importance of the setting to the mood, tone, and meaning of the text.

Example: Discuss the importance of the setting, including the place, the time period, and the customs, to books, such as *Friendly Persuasion* by Jessamyn West or *Stranded* by Ben Mikaelson.

8.3.5 Identify and analyze recurring themes (such as good versus evil) that appear frequently across traditional and contemporary works.

Example: Explore the theme that heroism demands unusual courage and risk-taking. Read fiction and biographies, such as Rod Serling's television play *Requiem for a Heavyweight* and David Remnick's *King of the World: Muhammed Ali and the Rise of an American Hero*, to identify what both real and imaginary heroes have done.



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8.3.6 Identify significant literary devices, such as metaphor, symbolism, dialect or quotations, and irony, which define a writer's style and use those elements to interpret the work.

- Metaphor: an implied comparison in which a word or phrase is used in place of another, such as *He was drowning in money*.
- Symbolism: the use of an object to represent something else; for example, a dove might symbolize peace
- Dialect: the vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation used by people in different regions
- Irony: the use of words to express the opposite of the literal meaning of the words, often to be humorous

Example: Read several short stories by Mark Twain and discuss his use of dialect in his stories. Watch Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe's musical *My Fair Lady*, an adaptation of Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, and discuss how the musical presents dialect and how this dialect is important to the conflict in the story.

Literary Criticism

8.3.7 Analyze a work of literature, showing how it reflects the heritage, traditions, attitudes, and beliefs of its author.

Example: Read a short biography of Edgar Allan Poe, Jack London, Shirley Jackson, Helen Keller, or Maya Angelou. Analyze how the author's experiences can be used to interpret his or her writings.



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Standard 4 - WRITING: Writing Process

Students discuss, list, and graphically organize writing ideas. They write clear, coherent, and focused essays. Students progress through the stages of the writing process and proofread, edit, and revise writing.

Organization and Focus

- 8.4.1 Discuss ideas for writing, keep a list or notebook of ideas, and use graphic organizers to plan writing.
- 8.4.2 Create compositions that have a clear message, a coherent thesis (a statement of position on the topic), and end with a clear and well-supported conclusion.
- 8.4.3 Support theses or conclusions with analogies (comparisons), paraphrases, quotations, opinions from experts, and similar devices.

Research and Technology

- 8.4.4 Plan and conduct multiple-step information searches by using computer networks.
- 8.4.5 Achieve an effective balance between researched information and original ideas.
- 8.4.6 Use a computer to create documents by using word-processing skills and publishing programs; develop simple databases and spreadsheets to manage information and prepare reports.

Evaluation and Revision

- 8.4.7 Review, evaluate, and revise writing for meaning and clarity.
- 8.4.8 Edit and proofread one's own writing, as well as that of others, using an editing checklist or set of rules, with specific examples of corrections of frequent errors.
- 8.4.9 Revise writing for word choice; appropriate organization; consistent point of view; and transitions among paragraphs, passages, and ideas.



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Standard 5 – WRITING: Writing Applications

(Different Types of Writing and Their Characteristics)

At Grade 8, students continue to write narrative (story), expository (informational), persuasive, and descriptive essays of at least 750 to 1,000 words. Students are introduced to writing technical documents. Student writing demonstrates a command of Standard English and the research, organizational, and drafting strategies outlined in Standard 4 — Writing Process. Writing demonstrates an awareness of the audience (intended reader) and purpose for writing.

In addition to producing the different writing forms introduced in earlier grades, such as letters, Grade 8 students use the writing strategies outlined in Standard 4 — Writing Process to:

8.5.1 Write biographies, autobiographies, and short stories that:

- tell about an incident, event, or situation by using well-chosen details.
- reveal the significance of, or the writer's attitude about, the subject.
- use narrative and descriptive strategies, including relevant dialogue, specific action, physical description, background description, and comparison or contrast of characters.

Example: Write an autobiographical account of one of your most memorable first days of school. Describe the day and its importance clearly enough so the reader can see and feel the day from your perspective.

8.5.2 Write responses to literature that:

- demonstrate careful reading and insight into interpretations.
- connect response to the writer's techniques and to specific textual references.
- make supported inferences about the effects of a literary work on its audience.
- support judgments through references to the text, other works, other authors, or to personal knowledge.

Example: After reading *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, write a final chapter to the book, describing what happens to the main character after the point where Lowry ends the book. Then, plan a class presentation explaining the new ending, and how it is supported by the rest of the book.

8.5.3 Write research reports that:

- define a thesis (a statement of position on the topic).
- include important ideas, concepts, and direct quotations from significant information sources, including print reference materials and the Internet, and paraphrase and summarize all perspectives on the topic, as appropriate.
- use a variety of primary and secondary sources and distinguish the nature and value of each.
- organize and display information on charts, tables, maps, and graphs.
- document sources with reference notes and a bibliography.

Example: Research the topic of the benefits and drawbacks of public transportation. Conduct research to learn why some experts argue that we should use more public transportation. Survey parents and friends to find out how often they use public transportation for school, business, or pleasure travel. Summarize the findings and write a report on the pros and cons of public transportation, including charts and graphs to support your findings.



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8.5.4 Write persuasive compositions that:

- include a well-defined thesis that makes a clear and knowledgeable appeal.
- present detailed evidence, examples, and reasoning to support effective arguments and emotional appeals.
- provide details, reasons, and examples, arranging them effectively by anticipating and answering reader concerns and counter-arguments.

Example: Using the research completed on public transportation, write a persuasive letter to the mayor on why the community should or should not invest more resources into public transportation.

8.5.5 Write technical documents that:

- identify the sequence of activities needed to design a system, operate a tool, or explain the bylaws of an organization's constitution or guidelines.
- include all the factors and variables that need to be considered.
- use formatting techniques, including headings and changing the fonts (typeface) to aid comprehension.

Example: Write a report of a science experiment that was conducted in class, describing both the process and the scientific conclusions. Describe the steps clearly, using precise scientific vocabulary, so that another reader could follow exactly what the experiment involved and could understand the reasoning behind the conclusion. Add graphics and text design to make the content clearer and easier to follow.

8.5.6 Write using precise word choices to make writing interesting and exact.

Example: Write stories, reports, articles, and letters using a variety of word choices. (Use *adequately* instead of *enough*. Use *encyclopedia* or *mystery novel* instead of *book*.)

8.5.7 Write for different purposes and to a specific audience or person, adjusting tone and style as necessary.

Example: Write a letter to the editor in response to an opinion column in your school or community newspaper.



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Standard 6 - WRITING: Written English Language Conventions

Students write using Standard English conventions appropriate to this grade level.

Sentence Structure

- 8.6.1 Use correct and varied sentence types (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex) and sentence openings to present a lively and effective personal style.
- 8.6.2 Identify and use parallelism (use consistent elements of grammar when compiling a list) in all writing to present items in a series and items juxtaposed for emphasis.
- Correct: *Students having difficulty and needing help should stay after class.*
 - Incorrect: *Students having difficulty and who need help should stay after class.*
- 8.6.3 Use subordination, coordination, noun phrases that function as adjectives (*These gestures — acts of friendship — were noticed but not appreciated.*) and other devices to indicate clearly the relationship between ideas.

Grammar

- 8.6.4 Edit written manuscripts to ensure that correct grammar is used.

Punctuation

- 8.6.5 Use correct punctuation.

Capitalization

- 8.6.6 Use correct capitalization.

Spelling

- 8.6.7 Use correct spelling conventions.



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Standard 7 - LISTENING AND SPEAKING: Listening and Speaking Skills, Strategies, and Applications

Students deliver focused, coherent presentations that convey ideas clearly and relate to the background and interests of the audience. They evaluate the content of oral communication. Students deliver well-organized formal presentations using traditional speech strategies, including narration, exposition, persuasion, and description. Students use the same Standard English conventions for oral speech that they use in their writing.

Comprehension

- 8.7.1 Paraphrase (restate) a speaker's purpose and point of view and ask questions concerning the speaker's content, delivery, and attitude toward the subject.

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

- 8.7.2 Match the message, vocabulary, voice modulation (changes in tone), expression, and tone to the audience and purpose.
- 8.7.3 Outline the organization of a speech, including an introduction; transitions, previews, and summaries; a logically developed body; and an effective conclusion.
- 8.7.4 Use precise language, action verbs, sensory details, appropriate and colorful modifiers (describing words, such as adverbs and adjectives), and the active (I recommend that you write drafts.) rather than the passive voice (The writing of drafts is recommended.) in ways that enliven oral presentations.
- 8.7.5 Use appropriate grammar, word choice, enunciation (clear speech), and pace (timing) during formal presentations.
- 8.7.6 Use audience feedback, including both verbal and nonverbal cues, to reconsider and modify the organizational structure and/or to rearrange words and sentences for clarification of meaning.

Analysis and Evaluation of Oral and Media Communications

- 8.7.7 Analyze oral interpretations of literature, including language choice and delivery, and the effect of the interpretations on the listener.
- 8.7.8 Evaluate the credibility of a speaker, including whether the speaker has hidden agendas, or presents slanted or biased material.
- 8.7.9 Interpret and evaluate the various ways in which visual image makers (such as graphic artists, illustrators, and news photographers) communicate information and affect impressions and opinions.

Speaking Applications

- 8.7.10 Deliver narrative (story) presentations, such as biographical or autobiographical information that:
- relate a clear incident, event, or situation by using well-chosen details.
 - reveal the significance of the incident, event, or situation.



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- use narrative and descriptive strategies to support the presentation, including relevant dialogue, specific action, physical description, background description, and comparison or contrast of characters.

8.7.11 Deliver oral responses to literature that:

- interpret a reading and provide insight.
- connect personal responses to the writer's techniques and to specific textual references.
- make supported inferences about the effects of a literary work on its audience.
- support judgments through references to the text, other works, other authors, or personal knowledge.

8.7.12 Deliver research presentations that:

- define a thesis (a position on the topic).
- research important ideas, concepts, and direct quotations from significant information sources and paraphrase and summarize important perspectives on the topic.
- use a variety of research sources and distinguish the nature and value of each.
- present information on charts, maps, and graphs.

8.7.13 Deliver persuasive presentations that:

- include a well-defined thesis (position on the topic).
- differentiate fact from opinion and support arguments with detailed evidence, examples, reasoning, and persuasive language.
- anticipate and effectively answer listener concerns and counter-arguments through the inclusion and arrangement of details, reasons, examples, and other elements.
- maintain a reasonable tone.

8.7.14 Recite poems (of four to six stanzas), sections of speeches, or dramatic soliloquies (sections of plays in which characters speak out loud to themselves) using voice modulation, tone, and gestures expressively to enhance the meaning.