

GRADES 4-5 OVERVIEW

In Grades 4 and 5, students continue to grow as readers, writers, listeners, and speakers. They are still concrete learners, but they are beginning to delve into abstract thinking. Collaboration with peers and instructors is critical in these grades as students learn to develop ideas by drawing upon the insight of others. Literacy growth and development are fostered by direct, explicit reading instruction which is built on foundational literacy skills and on regular formative assessments. Inquiry- and discovery-based learning environments draw upon the natural curiosity of fourth and fifth grade students, encouraging their engagement, creating deeper understanding, and forging a more personal connection to what they read, write, speak, and hear.

Although Foundational Literacy headings are not used in Grades 4 and 5, students continue to develop foundational skills, building on the alphabetic principle, comprehension and encoding, fluency, phonemic awareness, phonics, phonological awareness, and vocabulary foundations laid in Grades K-3 in accordance with the Alabama Literacy Act. In Grades 4 and 5, standards are elevated to ensure continuous student mastery appropriate for upper elementary proficient readers. Students extend learning from concrete ideas to abstract concepts.

When students exhibit deficits in foundational skills, teachers should refer to the companion resources that will be published to support the course of study and to school and district RtI and intervention plans.

Reading standards in Grades 4 and 5 continue to be a major component of receptive content instruction. Reading skills, developed with equal focus on fiction and informational text, allow students to comprehend relationships, author interpretations, events, procedures, ideas, and concepts across content areas. Instruction should provide opportunities for students to read widely and deeply from a broad range of high-quality, rigorous literary and informational texts in order to build the confidence and background knowledge needed for a solid reading foundation. Students can build this solid foundation when instruction is intentionally and coherently structured to develop rich content knowledge within and across grades.

The writing process is integrated throughout the standards in Grades 4 and 5 as a major impetus to expressive learning. The Simple View of Writing (Berninger et al.) was a guiding factor in development of these standards. In order for students to become proficient writers, they must possess foundational writing skills to encode and organize words and composition skills to formulate and organize content. Students use the stages of the writing process to meet the challenging expectations of the standards by producing narrative, informative, and argumentative writings in response to many types of texts. These tasks become more demanding as rigor increases from fourth to fifth grade. Focusing on language and grammar skills during the writing process embeds language learning into

meaningful practice. The inclusion of keyboarding and handwriting techniques during writing enhances clear expression and production of work. Short research projects combine aspects of reading and writing to produce comprehensive, abstract work. Conventions of standard English (including relative pronouns, verb forms, prepositional phrases, and appropriate capitalization and punctuation) and general academic and domain-specific vocabulary continue to be critical components in language development that students apply to reading, speaking, and listening as well as to writing.

Listening and speaking skills enhance learning for both reception and expression for students in Grades 4 and 5. Through discussion, collaboration, and reporting, students learn to be productive participants in conversations that require them to compare, contrast, analyze, and synthesize a multitude of ideas in various domains. Technology is used to enhance and expand both reception and expression, allowing students to transcend traditional learning environments by accessing and communicating information virtually.

When “including” appears in content standards, it should be construed as “including but not limited to.” The items listed must be taught; others may also be included in instruction.

Examples represent options that might prove useful in instruction of the standard. They are not intended to be exhaustive lists and the suggestions listed do not have to be taught.

Grades 4-5 Recurring Standards for English Language Arts, listed at the beginning of each grade level, are to be fully included in instruction.