

- L.8.1a. Explain the function of verbals (gerunds, participles, infinitives) in general and their function in particular sentences.
- L.8.1b. Form and use verbs in the active and passive voice.
- L.8.1c. Form and use verbs in the indicative, imperative, interrogative, conditional, and subjunctive mood.
- L.8.1d. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb voice and mood.
- L.8.2a. Use punctuation (comma, ellipsis, dash) to indicate a pause or break.
- L.8.2b. Use an ellipsis to indicate an omission.

The new standards at grade eight represent the last time students are expected to learn significant new content in language conventions. At this point students begin to consolidate their knowledge and use of language conventions in preparation for high school.

## Content Knowledge

Reading literature and informational texts and engaging in research in English language arts and other subjects help students develop content knowledge and develop understandings of the ways in which reading and writing are employed across the disciplines. Students in grade eight read and write increasingly complex texts and engage in independent reading programs. Snapshot 6.11 illustrates how teachers collaborate in the area of disciplinary literacy.



### Snapshot 6.11. Debating About the Effects of Human Activity on the Health of the Earth Integrated ELA, ELD, and Science Disciplinary Literacy Lesson in Grade Eight

The eighth-grade teaching team at Fred Korematsu Middle School has worked hard at collaborating across disciplines over the past several years. Initially, it was challenging for the teachers to find ways to contribute to the team's efforts as experts from particular areas, such as content knowledge, academic literacy development, and English language development. However, over the years, the team has strengthened its collaborative processes so that now, they engage more easily in discussions about content, pedagogy, and approaches to teaching disciplinary literacy.

In science, the teachers work together to help students develop deep content understandings and the disciplinary literacy knowledge and skills necessary to confidently and successfully engage with disciplinary texts using scientific habits of mind. For example, the ELA, ELD, and science teachers recently worked together to develop a biography unit on various scientists. The students worked in small interest groups to read biographies of scientists of their choice and then collaboratively wrote a vignette of an important event in the scientist's life. They also created a multimedia presentation based on the vignette, which they presented to their classmates.

**Snapshot 6.11. Debating About the Effects of Human Activity  
on the Health of the Earth**  
**Integrated ELA, ELD, and Science Disciplinary Literacy Lesson in Grade Eight  
(cont.)**

From the science teacher's perspective, the ELA and ELD teachers have helped her to be more explicit about the language in science texts when she facilitates discussions. From the ELA and ELD teachers' perspectives, the science teacher has familiarized them with the core science principles and conceptual understandings that are important for students to understand and given them insights into how scientists think. As the three teachers analyze the texts they use in their various disciplines and discuss the types of writing they expect their students to do, they discover that each discipline has its own *culture* or ways of reading, writing, speaking, thinking, and reasoning.

For example, they notice that arguments look different in ELA than they do in science or social studies and that these differences go beyond vocabulary knowledge. In ELA, students learn to respond to literature by analyzing and evaluating novels, short stories, and other literary texts. In literary responses, students are expected to present and justify arguments having to do with themes and abstract ideas about the human condition, explain figurative devices (e.g., metaphor, symbolism, irony), and interpret characters' actions and dialogue and using evidence from the text to support their claims. In science, students learn to reason and argue scientifically, composing arguments supported by evidence that is presented in ways that reflect scientific knowledge and thinking. The language used to shape arguments reflects differences in the purposes of argumentation in each discipline. To support their students, the teachers plan ways to more explicitly teach the language of argument in general and to help students attend to some of the differences in argumentative writing that occur across content areas.

Currently, the teachers are collaborating on a unit where their students will research the effects of human activity on the health of the world. Among the tasks students will complete is an argument for how increases in human population and per capita consumption of natural resources impact Earth's systems and people's lives. Together, the teachers design meaningful and engaging tasks that will support all students in achieving the performance task. These tasks include overt attention to how arguments in science are constructed with much discussion about the language resources used. Some discussions are facilitated in a whole class format, while others are conducted in small collaborative groups. Likewise, some tasks are facilitated in the science classroom, while others are facilitated in the ELA and ELD classrooms. Teachers engage their students in the following in order to enhance their skills in reading and writing arguments in science:

**Building Students' Skill in Reading and Writing Arguments in Science**

- Reading many texts, viewing media, and multiple discussions to develop deep knowledge about the topic
- Conducting collaborative research investigating the topic and gathering evidence in notebooks for possible use in written arguments and debates
- Using *mentor* science argumentative texts to identify and discuss *claims, position statements, counterarguments, supporting evidence, and persuasive language*

**Snapshot 6.11. Debating About the Effects of Human Activity  
on the Health of the Earth**  
**Integrated ELA, ELD, and Science Disciplinary Literacy Lesson in Grade Eight  
(cont.)**

- Unpacking *claims* to determine what types of evidence and warrants are expected
- Unpacking paragraphs and sentences in mentor science argumentative texts to identify language resources used and discuss why the writer used them
- Weighing competing positions and discussing what makes arguments or counterarguments more credible
- Identifying and discussing audiences (their beliefs, attitudes, and experiences) for particular arguments and how to convince them to accept different positions
- Orally debating positions, using supporting evidence from research, to practice formulating claims and counterarguments, engage in rebuttals, and define partners' claims in order to undermine them
- Using templates to organize ideas and jointly construct short arguments for different audiences
- Role playing to rehearse making arguments for intended audiences, providing feedback to peers on language they use and evidence they present, and adjusting language and content, based on feedback received

When the students write their arguments about the impact of human activity on the Earth, they do so collaboratively in interest groups. They write for a peer audience, adopting an academic stance while also envisioning a clear purpose for their writing. That is, they attempt to persuade their peers to think a certain way (e.g., climate change is affecting food supply) or do a certain thing (e.g., recycle to conserve natural resources) based on their sound arguments that include credible and convincing evidence. Each group's argument will be evaluated by two other groups as well as the teacher, using criteria that the class generates over the course of the unit as they learn more about what makes an effective science argument.

As the unit progresses, the science, ELA, and ELD teachers meet frequently to discuss how the learning tasks are going and to make adjustments based on their observations of student discussions and writing tasks. At the end of the unit, they agree that the intensive cross-disciplinary approach they have employed has helped students understand the structure of different types of arguments they read and to produce their own arguments in different disciplines. The combined activities have also supported them to take a more critical stance to reading and writing tasks more generally.

**CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy:** RI.8.1–3, 5, 8; W.8.1, 7; SL.8.1, 3, 4, 6; RST.8.1, 5, 8; WHST.8.1, 7, 9

**CA ELD Standards:** ELD.PI.8.1–4, 6a, 7–9, 10a, 11a; ELD.PII.8.1–2

**Related CA Next Generation Science Standard:**

MS-ESS3-4 Construct an argument supported by evidence for how increases in human population and per capita consumption of natural resources impact Earth's systems.

## Snapshot 6.11. Debating About the Effects of Human Activity on the Health of the Earth

### Integrated ELA, ELD, and Science Disciplinary Literacy Lesson in Grade Eight (cont.)

#### Additional Information

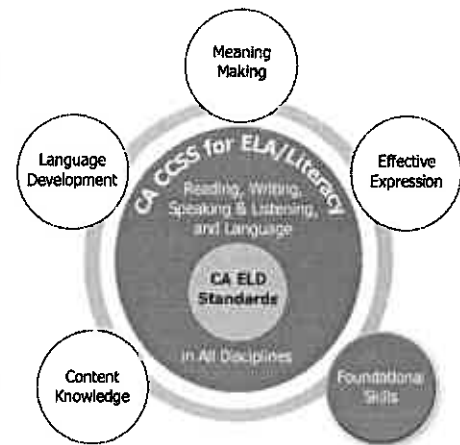
Fang, Zhihui. 2010. *Language and Literacy in Inquiry-Based Science Classrooms, Grades 3–8*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin

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- The National Science Teachers Association (NSTA): Outstanding Science Trade Books for Students K–12 (<http://www.nsta.org/publications/ostb/>)

## Foundational Skills

Ideally by the time students enter grade eight, their knowledge of foundational skills is well established. They have a large base of sight words, and they rapidly and effectively employ word recognition skills to identify new printed words. Fluency, which includes accuracy, rate, and prosody, continues to develop as students engage in wide and extensive reading. Rate of reading varies, as it should, with the text and the task. Based on an extensive study of oral reading fluency, Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006) recommend that students scoring more than 10 words below the 50th percentile receive additional instruction that targets fluency. (See figure 6.29.)



**Figure 6.29. Mean Oral Reading Rate of Grade Eight Students**

Percentile	Fall WCPM*	Winter WCPM*	Spring WCPM*	Avg. Weekly Improvement**
90	185	199	199	0.4
75	161	177	177	0.5
<b>50</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>0.6</b>
25	106	124	124	0.6
10	77	97	97	0.6

\*WCPM = Words Correct Per Minute      \*\*Average words per week growth

**Source**  
Hasbrouck, Jan, and Gerald A. Tindal. 2006. "Oral Reading Fluency Norms: A Valuable Assessment Tool for Reading Teachers." *The Reading Teacher* 57: 646–655.

Fluency rates must be cautiously interpreted with all students. See the discussion of fluency in the overview of the span in this chapter and the section on supporting students strategically. The primary way to support students' fluency is to ensure accuracy in decoding and engagement in wide, extensive reading of texts that are neither too simple nor too challenging. In addition, students should have authentic reasons to reread text because rereading also supports fluency.