

California's ELA/ELD Framework
SIXTH GRADE

ELA/Literacy and ELD in Action in Grade Six

Both the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards acknowledge the importance of reading complex texts closely and thoughtfully to derive meaning. Accordingly, teachers should prepare reading lessons carefully and purposefully before teaching. This includes selecting challenging texts that are worth reading and rereading; reading the texts ahead of time to determine why the text might be challenging and where language may be complicated or unfamiliar; and planning a sequence of tasks and a series of lessons that build students' abilities to read complex texts with increasing independence. This process requires teachers to analyze the cognitive and linguistic demands of the texts, including the sophistication of the ideas or content of the text, students' prior knowledge of the content, and the complexity of the vocabulary, sentences, and organization of the text.

As discussed earlier in meaning making, teachers should model during instruction how to read text closely by thinking aloud for students, highlighting the literal and inferential questions they ask themselves and pointing out language and ideas they notice while reading. Teachers should guide students to read complex texts frequently and analytically using concrete methods with appropriate levels of scaffolding. Sixth graders need many opportunities to read a wide variety of complex texts and to discuss the texts they are reading, asking and answering literal (on the surface) and inferential (below the surface) text-dependent questions to determine the explicit and implicit meanings in the text and to identify *how* and evaluate *how well* authors present their ideas.

Importantly, for English learners, teachers should explicitly draw attention to text structure and organization and to particular elements of language (e.g., text structure and organization, complex sentences, vocabulary) that serve as resources that help the author convey particular meanings. Examples of specific elements of language resources text connectives to create cohesion (e.g., *for example, suddenly, in the end*); long noun phrases to expand and enrich the meaning of sentences (e.g., “the whole strange-familial world, glistening white” [NGA/CCSSO 2010a: Appendix B, 80]); and complex sentences which combine ideas and convey meaning in specific ways (e.g., “Now that we no longer belonged to the Company, we somehow had to acquire a

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thousand dollars worth of property, a faraway figure when you can only save nickels and dimes.” [NGA/CCSSO 2010a: Appendix B, 80]). Providing English learners with opportunities to discuss the language of the complex texts they are reading enhances their comprehension of the texts while also developing their awareness of how language is used to make meaning.

Lesson planning should look forward to year-end and unit goals and incorporate the framing questions in Figure 6.14.

Figure 6.14. Framing Questions for Lesson Planning

<i>Framing Questions for Lesson Planning</i>	
Framing Questions for All Students	Add for English Learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the big ideas and culminating performance tasks of the larger unit of study, and how does this lesson build toward them? • What are the learning targets for this lesson, and what should students be able to do at the end of the lesson? • Which clusters of CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy does this lesson address? • What background knowledge, skills, and experiences do my students have related to this lesson? • How complex are the texts and tasks that I will use? • How will students make meaning, express themselves effectively, develop language, and learn content? How will they apply or learn foundational skills? • What types of scaffolding, accommodations, or modifications will individual students need to effectively engage in the lesson tasks? • How will my students and I monitor learning during and after the lesson, and how will that inform instruction? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the English language proficiency levels of my students? • Which CA ELD Standards amplify the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy at students’ English language proficiency levels? • What language might be new for students and/or present challenges? • How will students interact in meaningful ways and learn about how English works in collaborative, interpretive, and/or productive modes?

ELA/Literacy and ELD Vignettes

The ELA/literacy and ELD vignettes below are intended to provide concrete illustrations of how to implement the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards in tandem. The vignettes are useful resources for teachers to discuss and use as they collaboratively plan lessons, extend their learning, and refine their practice.

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The examples in the vignettes are not intended to be prescriptive, nor are the instructional approaches limited to the identified content areas. Rather, they are provided here as tangible ideas that can be used and adapted as needed in flexible ways in a variety of instructional contexts.

ELA/Literacy Vignette

Vignette 6.1 illustrates how a teacher might implement the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards during ELA instruction where close reading is the focus of instruction. Vignette 6.2 provides an example of how designated ELD can build from and into the types of lessons outlined in the ELA vignette.

**Vignette 6.1 ELA Instruction in a Grade Six Interdisciplinary Unit
Close Reading of a Memoir (Literary Nonfiction)**

Background

Ms. Valenti's sixth grade English language arts (ELA) class is learning how to read texts more analytically. Currently, the class is reading memoirs to determine how people depict their formative years, including seminal events that shaped their profession or outlook on the world. Ms. Valenti's class of 35 students includes two students with mild learning disabilities and five English learners at the Expanding level of English language proficiency, four who have been in U.S. schools for at least four years and one who arrived to the U.S. a little over a year ago. Ms. Valenti collaborates with the other sixth grade teachers at her school. Two teachers teach the students mathematics and science, and Ms. Valenti and another sixth grade teacher teach ELA and History/Social Studies. There are a small number (three to five) of EL students in each sixth grade class, and each of the sixth grade teachers teach their own students designated ELD in small groups. Specialists teach the visual and performing arts, as well as physical education.

The interdisciplinary team works together to determine the cross-curricular themes they will teach. Some of the reading of informational and literary texts is done in ELA, but much of it is done in the other content areas. For example, during science and history/social studies time, the class reads informational texts related to the topics they are learning about. During ELA time, the class reads literature or literary non-fiction related to the science or history topics—or both.

Lesson Context

The current interdisciplinary theme is *Careers in Action*, and Ms. Valenti has selected a text that she thinks will appeal to students at this age as it focuses on parents' expectations for their children and how they teach them important life lessons that shape their outlook on the world. The text, "The Making of a Scientist," is a memoir by Richard Feynman, a famous American scientist who won the Nobel Prize in Physics and who is often noted as the best mind since Einstein. In science that day, Ms. Valenti's colleague will engage the students in a science demonstration that illustrates the law of inertia similar to the wagon and ball demonstration, which Feynman includes in his memoir. (*This demonstration is in support of what is happening in the ELA classroom. The law of inertia is not a sixth grade science standard. However, it is in the grades six through eight band of science standards.)

Lesson Excerpts

In today's lesson, Ms. Valenti is going to engage her students in the first of a series of close reading lessons on Feynman's memoir and discuss with them how his early experiences sparked a career in science. During this lesson—the first of three on the same text—students analyze the ideas in one

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portion of the text, while focusing on how the author uses language resources (vocabulary, syntax, and rhetorical devices) to construct the narrative and convey his meaning. In addition, students gain practice in note-taking and summarizing text. The learning target and focus standards for the lesson are provided below:

Learning Target: The students will analyze a short memoir, discuss their interpretations, and identify the central idea and how it is conveyed through details in the text.

CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: *RI.6.2 – Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments; W.6.9 – Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research; SL.6.1 – Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.*

CA ELD Standards Addressed (Expanding): *ELD.PI.6.1 – Contribute to class, group, and partner discussions by following turn-taking rules, asking relevant questions, affirming others, adding relevant information, and paraphrasing key ideas; ELD.PI.6.6b – Express inferences and conclusions drawn based on close reading of grade-level texts and viewing of multimedia using a variety of verbs (e.g., suggests that, leads to).*

Ms. Valenti starts by connecting the new learning to what students already know and by giving a brief background of the text and author.

Ms. Valenti: Today we're going to read a memoir by a famous scientist named Richard Feynman. In the memoir, which is a story of your life that you write yourself, Feynman explains how his father taught him some important life lessons that ultimately shaped his career. This is something that your parents or grandparents or whoever it is who is responsible for raising you does all the time. For example, they may try to teach you to responsibility by having you do chores around the house, like washing the dishes. Does anyone do that? Or, they may try to teach you compassion by having you take care of your little brother or sister or your grandparents when they're sick. Sometimes you're not aware that they're trying to teach you these life lessons until much later. Very briefly, turn and talk about some of the life lessons you think your parents or grandparents or whoever takes care of you are trying to teach you.

The students briefly share with one another. Before they read the text about the principles his father taught him, Ms. Valenti shows them a short video so they can get a sense of who Feynman was during his career as a scientist. The animated video "Ode to a Flower" was created by Fraser Davidson to accompany Feynman talking about the nature of beauty (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSG9q_YKZLI).

Ms. Valenti asks the students to briefly discuss at their table groups (they are seated four to a table) how the video depicts the kind of person Feynman was, and after a couple of minutes, and asks two students to share their ideas. She briefly explains some terms in the reading that students would not be likely to determine from the context (such as *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *magnitude*, *translate*) but that are critical for understanding the text. She also briefly reviews what the literary term *theme* means by drawing students' attention to the chart in the room that defines literary terms and then gives a few examples from previously read texts as an additional reminder. She tells them that they're going to be looking for themes in the text.

Next, she reads the first part of the text aloud as students read along silently with her in their own copies. Ms. Valenti has found that reading aloud complex texts gives her students a feeling for the various voices in the narrative and models for them the intonation she uses as a proficient reader. This also provides an oral introduction to the language in the text and gives her an opportunity to stop at strategic points to explain particular vocabulary and untangle syntactic structures (i.e., paraphrase particularly complex sentences) that may be unfamiliar to students.

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After, she asks the students to share with a partner, in their own words, what they think the main theme or lesson of the section is as she listens in while circulating around the room. Her on-going intent is to support students to interpret texts deliberately, and she needs to know how they are currently interpreting texts so that she can stretch them to develop increasingly sophisticated levels of proficiency and develop greater autonomy as readers. She notes that there are multiple interpretations of what the main theme or lesson is, and she uses this observational information to shape how she'll support students to read the text analytically so that they can refine or revise their initial ideas about what the author is expressing both explicitly and implicitly.

Ms. Valenti then asks the students to read the same text silently while they use a reading guide that contains focus questions. She explains that they will read the text multiple times and that for this *first* reading, they will just read for general understanding and do not need to worry about knowing the meaning of every word. (The students will have opportunities to analyze the vocabulary, grammatical structures, and nuanced meanings in the text as the lesson progresses.) The focus questions are displayed on the board, and she reviews each question to ensure her students understand them. She also provides them with a half-page handout with the focus questions on them:

Focus Questions for Today's Reading

Write notes under each question *as you read*.

- What is happening in the text?
- Who is in the text and how are they interacting?
- What was Feynman's father trying to teach his son with the tiles?
- What was Feynman's father trying to teach his son with the dinosaurs?
- Which sentence best captures the central idea in this part of the text?

Excerpt from the text:

"The Making of a Scientist" by Richard Feynman

Before I was born, my father told my mother, "If it's a boy, he's going to be a scientist." When I was just a little kid, very small in a **highchair**, my father brought home a lot of little bathroom tiles—**seconds**—of different colors. We played with them, my father setting them up **vertically** on my **highchair** like dominoes, and I would push one end so they would all go down.

Then after a while, I'd help set them up. Pretty soon, we're setting them up in a more **complicated** way: two white tiles and a blue tile, two white tiles and a blue tile, and so on. When my mother saw that she said, "Leave the poor child alone. If he wants to put a blue tile, let him put a blue tile."

But my father said, "No, I want to show him what patterns are like and how interesting they are. It's a kind of **elementary** mathematics." So he started very early to tell me about the world and how interesting it is.

We had the **Encyclopaedia Britannica** at home. When I was a small boy he used to sit me on his lap and read to me from the *Britannica*. We would be reading, say, about dinosaurs. It would be talking about the *Tyrannosaurus rex*, and it would say something like, "This dinosaur is twenty-five feet high and its head is six feet across."

My father would stop reading and say, "Now, let's see what that means. That would mean that if he stood in our front yard, he would be tall enough to put his head through our window up here." (We were on the second floor.) "But his head would be too wide to fit in the window." Everything he read to me he would **translate** as best he could into some **reality**.

It was very exciting and very, very interesting to think there were animals of such **magnitude**—and that they all died out, and that nobody knew why. I wasn't **frightened** that there would be one coming in my window as a **consequence** of this. But I learned

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from my father to **translate**: everything I read I try to figure out what it really means, what it's really saying.

Ms. Valenti also encourages students to underline words or phrases they don't understand and to write any questions or comments they have about the text in the margin. After they read independently, the students work in pairs to discuss their notes and questions while Ms. Valenti circulates around the classroom to listen in, clarify, and assist students with any unsolved questions, providing explanations and probing their thinking as relevant. For example, some students do not understand what the word *seconds* means in reference to bathroom tiles. Other students focus on particular phrases and sentences and work together to disentangle the meanings. Ms. Valenti stops at a table where Jamal and Tatiana, an EL student at the late Expanding level of English language proficiency, are discussing their notes. The pair has already determined that the text mostly involves Feynman, as a child, and his father, and that Feynman's father is showing his son patterns using the tiles and reading to him about dinosaurs from the encyclopedia.

Jamal: Okay, so what do we think that his dad, Feynman's dad, was trying to teach him with the tiles?

Tatiana: (Referring to her notes.) I think he was trying to teach him about math, about math patterns, and he was showing him how you can make patterns with tiles.

Jamal: But he was just a baby, so he couldn't teach him with numbers, right? So he used the tiles.

Tatiana: What about the dinosaurs? What do you have?

Jamal: (Referring to his notes.) I think it's the same thing. His dad was trying to show him how big a dinosaur would be if it was standing outside the house, but he was also trying to get him excited about dinosaurs.

Ms. Valenti: Is there something in the text that gave you that idea?

Jamal: (Looking at the text for a moment.) Here it says "Everything he read to me he would translate as best he could into some reality." I think he means that his father was trying to teach him some things, some real things about math patterns and dinosaurs, but he had to make it real for a kid, even for a baby.

Tatiana: And he was also trying to teach him something about the world.

Ms. Valenti: Can you say more about that, and can you find some examples in the text?

Tatiana: Here, it says that his father said, "No, I want to show him what patterns are like and how interesting they are."

Ms. Valenti: So, what does that mean to you? How can you interpret that, using the focus questions?

Tatiana: I think his dad was really trying to show him how the world has all this ... stuff ... how it's interesting. His father was trying to teach him some real things, like math patterns and dinosaurs, and he had to make that real for him as a kid. But I think he was also trying to teach him about how to see the world. That he should see it as interesting and that it has a lot of things to observe.

Jamal: Yeah, like he was trying to help him think differently about the toys he has or things he's doing. Like he was trying to help him think like a scientist.

After the students have had a chance to delve deeply in to the text, Ms. Valenti pulls the whole class together to discuss their notes. Picking up on the themes and questions the students have raised, she leads a loosely structured discussion to support them to articulate and elaborate on their ideas, all the while prompting them to go back into the text to support their claims. Lately, Ms. Valenti has noticed that some of the girls in the class have seemed reluctant to share their ideas, so she makes a conscious effort to let them know she wants to hear from them and cares about what they have to say, using the following

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techniques:

- Meeting with individuals before the conversation to make sure they know she knows they care about their participation in class discussions and to inquire as to why they are not comfortable sharing.
- Pausing before asking a probing question to allow everyone to gather their thoughts and prepare their responses.
- Deliberately calling on individuals during the conversation, those who she heard sharing enthusiastically in their pair conversations, and then validating their ideas.
- Encouraging the whole class to listen respectfully.

Next, she structures the conversation a bit more by helping them to *funnel* their ideas into a concise statement that captures the theme of the section in students' own words. She facilitates a *joint construction* of the statement by first writing "His father wanted to teach his son" in a chart she's prepared, which is displayed on the document reader. She then asks the students to help her expand and enrich the sentence to add precision and nuances. She then guides the students to identify details from the text that support the statement. The jointly constructed central idea and details are shown in the chart below.

Central Idea (in our words)	Details from the Text (paraphrasing and quotes)
Feynman's father wanted to teach his son about the interesting things in the world and how to think like a scientist, so he would <i>translate</i> things in ways that his son would understand.	The father ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • made playing with tiles into a way to learn about patterns and mathematics. • said, "No, I want to show him what patterns are like and how interesting they are. It's a kind of elementary mathematics." • read to him from the encyclopedia • helped him visualize the dinosaur outside his house

Ms. Valenti repeats the process the students just engaged in with the next section of the text, in which Feynman tells about how his father taught him about the difference between knowing the name of something and knowing something through observing birds. After the collaborative conversations in pairs and whole class discussion, Ms. Valenti invites the students to revise their *central idea* statement and add other thoughts to the chart. The students decide to add a section to the chart that highlights the life lessons, or principles, that Feynman's father taught him. Two of the principles the students jointly construct with Ms. Valenti are the following:

- When you read, try to figure out what it really means, what it's really saying. You have to read between the lines.
- There's a difference between knowing the name of something and really knowing something. You have to look at how something behaves or works, and not just know what it's called.

The class finishes the final section of the excerpt, in which Feynman's father teaches him to notice some important principles in physics, using every day experiences and understandings as a springboard to understanding science concepts. Again, the class revises and adds to the chart.

Ms. Valenti concludes the lesson by showing the students the short video "Ode to a Flower" once more. This time, she asks the students to think about how what Feynman's father taught him may have influenced the way he sees the flower. After watching the video, the students share their thoughts in their table groups, and Ms. Valenti then wraps up the lesson by calling on several students to share with the whole class an idea or two from their table conversations.

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Next Steps

The next day, Ms. Valenti guides students to read the same text again, but she changes the focus questions so that students can analyze the *craft and structure* of the passage and become aware of the author's deliberate language choices in writing the passage the way he did. She designs her questions so the students can focus on literary devices, word choices, structural elements, and author's purpose. For example, she asks the students to consider *how* the author lets us know what his father was trying to accomplish (e.g., which words or literary devices were used). On the third day (the third read, which focuses on *integrating knowledge and ideas*), Ms. Valenti guides students to think about what the text means to them and how it connects to other texts or experiences. For example, one of her focus questions for students to consider as they read the text analytically is "How does the way Feynman's father teaches him principles compare to ways that other real or fictional individuals we've read about have learned them?"

At the end of the week, Ms. Valenti has the students work together in their table groups to collaboratively complete and edit the following in-class writing assignment:

Pick one of the examples that Feynman uses (the dinosaur, the birds, or the wagon). In one concise paragraph, explain the lesson Feynman's father was trying to teach him with the real example and then explain why that example was useful. Be sure to include evidence from the text in your explanation.

Ms. Valenti provides the groups with a handout focusing on a select set of elements they need to include in their explanations (e.g., the lesson or principle, evidence from the text, vivid vocabulary, well-constructed sentences). She reminds them about prior lessons and suggests that they first write all of their ideas down and then work together to combine the ideas, select the words and phrases that are the most precise, condense them into sentences, and link the sentences together to make a cohesive paragraph. Each student in the group must have the same paragraph in their notebook, which she will check at the end of the day.

Later in the unit, Ms. Valenti and the students will read another memoir of an important and interesting individual using the same sequence (focusing on key ideas and details on day one, craft and structure on day two, and integration of knowledge and ideas on day three).

Sources:

This lesson was adapted from one found on the Achieve the Core Web site (Student Achievement Partners 2013).

*"The Making of a Scientist," by Richard Feynman was originally published in *Cricket Magazine*, October 1995, Vol. 23 (2).

Resources:

- To learn more about Richard Feynman, see the BBC (Horizon) documentary, "Richard Feynman—No Ordinary Genius" (<http://www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2011/12/14/bbcs-richard-feynman-no-ordinary-genius/>) at Brainpickings.org.
- For more ideas on supporting girls to be classroom leaders, see the Ban Bossy Web site (<http://banbossy.com/>).
- To see a video demonstrating the law of inertia, visit the WonderHowTo Web site (<http://science.wonderhowto.com/how-to/experiment-law-inertia-354383>).
- To see more ideas for using this text and for many other resources, visit www.achievethecore.org.
- For an example of how to guide students to annotate and question the texts they read, see: Schoenbach, Ruth, Cynthia Greenleaf, and Lynn Murphy. 2012. *Reading for Understanding: How Reading Apprenticeship Improves Disciplinary Learning in Secondary and College Classrooms* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.