

# Preface

Responsibility for ensuring that all students develop proficiency in the language arts is not new. The increasing social, economic, and technological demands for students to be proficient in reading, writing, listening, and speaking are urgent and unforgiving. For high school graduates in California to proceed to institutions of higher education or to be employable and meet the unprecedented civic, economic, and technological challenges of the twenty-first century, they must be more than merely literate. They must be able to read all forms of text fluently and independently, communicate effectively and creatively in oral and written form, and comprehend and deliver complex forms of discourse. In addition to those pragmatic and economic purposes of language arts proficiency, the role of California educators is to instill in students (1) a lifelong love of reading; (2) a facility and joy of communicating through language; and (3) a deep appreciation of literary and informational text and the ways in which print expands our universe and our understanding of history and humanity.

Our students will require higher levels of literacy skills than ever before. California has put in place a system of support to respond to that reality and to achieve the goal that all students who graduate are proficient in the language arts. An integral component of that system is the *Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*. Content standards, well-designed materials, skilled teachers, and a comprehensive program of assessment complete the system.

This framework is based on the rigorous English–language arts content standards adopted by the State Board in November of 1997. Those standards form the basis of curriculum development at every grade level and a statewide assessment and accountability system. *Education Code* Section 60605(f) requires that this framework be aligned with the standards.

The *Reading/Language Arts Framework* replaces the 1987 *English–Language Arts Framework* and relies heavily on the converging research base in beginning reading. It responds to the charge of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education to ensure that all students can read at grade level at least by the end of the third grade. The framework observes the commitment to a balanced and comprehensive language arts program, defining balance as the differential instructional emphasis on specific skills and strategies at strategic points in a learner’s instruction to ensure proficiency according to all language arts standards.

This framework addresses reading, writing, speaking, listening, and written and oral English-language conventions for the full range of learners and across the full kindergarten through grade twelve educational span. The standards and the framework give special emphasis to continuity and progression in the language arts curriculum and to the reality that standards in the earlier grades are building blocks for proficiency in the later grades. Educators must make a commitment to provide the necessary support to ensure that all students reach proficiency. The framework further recognizes and ad-

dresses the critical linkages among curriculum, instruction, and assessment to enhance student learning. Effective, well-trained teachers and quality instructional materials that select and sequence information to optimize learning and the retention of information are at the core of effective programs. The framework emphasizes the important content and instructional connections that can and should be made across domains and standards to provide a coherent, effective, and efficient program of language arts instruction.

The standards describe the content students should master by the end of each grade level. The framework elaborates on those standards and describes the curriculum and instruction necessary to help students achieve the levels of mastery. It also focuses on specific grade-level, standards-based instruction and, as such, has a purpose much different from

frameworks of the past. Most important, this framework focuses on developing the highest levels of language arts proficiency to enable students to participate fully in society and the world of work and to unlock the power and pleasure of communicating effectively in the English language.

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