Resource Guide to the Foundational Skills of the California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

California remains steadfast in its commitment to ensure that all students acquire the foundational skills of literacy that enable them to independently read and use written language to learn about the world and themselves; experience extraordinary and diverse works of literary fiction and nonfiction; and share their knowledge, ideas, stories, and perspectives with others. The *ELA/ELD Framework*[1] recognizes that the foundational skills (RF.K–5.1-4) of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy are just that—the foundation upon which other standards may be most richly achieved. Students who develop automaticity with print—recognizing most words instantly, decoding new words rapidly, and encoding words with little effort—are best positioned to make significant strides in making meaning with increasingly complex text, expanding their language, expressing themselves effectively, and gaining and constructing knowledge.[2] In short, acquisition of the foundational skills is a necessary, although by no means sufficient, condition for students to achieve the overarching goals of California's ELA/literacy and ELD instruction, as discussed in the *ELA/ELD Framework* and presented here in figure 1. (See the Introduction to the Framework [pp. 4-7] and chapter 2 [pp. 54-51] of the *ELA/ELD Framework*.)

Figure 1. Overarching Goals of ELA/Literacy and ELD Instruction

By the time California's students graduate from high school they have

- developed the readiness for college, career, and civic life;
- attained the capacities of literate individuals;
- become broadly literate;
- acquired the skills for living and learning in the 21st century.

The placement of discussions of foundational skills in the *ELA/ELD Framework* and in the listing of the standards themselves (i.e., following other discussions and standards) should not suggest that they are a low priority. In fact, as asserted in the *ELA/ELD Framework*, acquisition of the foundational skills should be given high priority in ELA/literacy instruction in the early years and sufficient priority in later years to meet the needs of older children and adolescents. Equally clear in the *ELA/ELD Framework* is that the foundational skills should not be taught to the exclusion of other CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy even in the

[1] This is the abbreviated name of the *English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (California Department of Education 2015). All references throughout this paper to chapters, sections, and page numbers in the *ELA/ELD Framework* refer to the final online version of the framework, available at http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/cf/elaeldfrmwrksbeadopted.asp.

[2] See the discussion of the five key themes of ELA/literacy and ELD instruction in chapter 2 of the *ELA/ELD Framework* (pp. 67-91) and throughout. These include Meaning Making, Language Development, Effective Expression, Content Knowledge, and Foundational Skills.

earliest grades and even with children experiencing difficulty with print. They are but one component—a critical one—of a comprehensive literacy education.

The purpose of this document is to elucidate and highlight selected key concepts and guidelines from the *ELA/ELD Framework* regarding the foundational skills of reading and to direct readers toward specific discussions of the foundational skills in the framework.[3] The *ELA/ELD Framework* should be read for additional information and detail. See especially the Foundational Skills and the Supporting Students Strategically sections in the Overviews of the Span in chapters 3-7. See also the Foundational Skills discussions in each grade-level section of chapters 3-7.

Discussions in the present document focus on the foundational skills as they relate to literacy development in English. The *ELA/ELD Framework* recognizes that English literacy instruction for English learners needs to build on and be adapted in accordance with several variables: previous literacy experiences in the primary language, oral proficiency in the primary language and in English, how closely the student's primary language is related to English, and, for students with primary language literacy, the type of writing system used. Other considerations include the student's age and level of schooling. See the section on Foundational Skills for English Learners in the Overview of the Span sections of chapters 3-7 in the *ELA/ELD Framework.* See also chapter 6, Foundational Literacy Skills for English Learners, of the *CA English Language Development Standards* (CDE 2012) for more information (http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/documents/eldstndspublication14.pdf).

The *ELA/ELD Framework* further recognizes that foundational skills instruction in languages other than English, such as those taught in California's dual language programs, varies with the language. The Common Core en Español project, a State Standards Initiative Translation Project, provides a translated and linguistically augmented version of the CCSS in Spanish and is preparing guidance for teaching foundational skills in Spanish (https://commoncore-espanol.sdcoe.net). Guidance for other languages is forthcoming.

The Foundational Skills

The CA CCSS Reading Standards for Foundational Skills and Part III of the CA ELD Standards (Using Foundational Literacy Skills) are directed toward fostering children's understanding and working knowledge of **print concepts**, **phonological awareness**, **phonics and word recognition**, and **fluency**. Each of these constellations of skills plays a role in students' achievement of the ultimate goals of foundational skills instruction: to rapidly recognize and decode printed words in meaningful connected text and to nearly effortlessly record ideas in print. In other words, acquisition of the foundational skills contributes to students' ability to independently engage with and use printed language for their own purposes. Descriptions, a brief rationale, and highlights of guidance for instruction are presented for each of the substrands of the foundational skills.

[3] This paper and the *ELA/ELD Framework* also draw attention to the specialized knowledge required of educators.

Print Concepts (RF.K–1.1)

Print concepts include the organization and basic features of print. Among these are that English is read from left to right, top to bottom, and page by page; spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters; words are separated by spaces; and sentences are distinguished by certain features, such as capitalization of the first word and use of ending punctuation. Print concepts also include recognizing and naming upper- and lowercase letters of the alphabet. Research indicates that young children's knowledge of the forms and functions of written language is an important precursor of skillful reading (Justice and Piasta 2011). Knowledge of letter forms and names, in particular, provides a basis for learning about the alphabetic system (Evans and Saint-Aubin 2011). Indeed, a "deep, ready, and working knowledge of letters" (along with knowledge of their relationships to the sounds of speech; see Phonics and Word Recognition section of this document) is crucial for literacy development and overall educational success (Adams 2013, 1).

Children learn print concepts through extensive exposure to and active, close interactions with a variety of print materials. Adults should model daily how print works and make explicit references to print, directing children's attention to a variety of print features, as they share books with children and write for and with children. They should teach the letters of the alphabet explicitly and ensure that children observe and use letters in meaningful print experiences. In a discussion of the research on the development of alphabet knowledge, Adams (2013) advises teaching the names and shapes of the uppercase letters before the lowercase letters because the former are visually much easier to learn and provide an anchor for learning lowercase letters. All letters (upper- and lowercase) should be taught sufficiently well so that children can name them accurately, confidently, and effortlessly. The starting point along the sequence of instruction and the pacing of instruction should be determined by the skills of the children and by the task. More time may be needed, for example, to assist children with distinguishing between letters that are visually similar (e.g., *b*, *d*, *p*, *q*) or that appear different in upper- and lowercase forms (e.g., *E* and *e*, *R* and *r*). The sounds the letters represent should be taught later in the instructional sequence to avoid overwhelming the learners. (Knowledge of letter-sound and spelling-sound correspondences is targeted in the Phonics and Word Recognition substrand of the standards and discussed in the so-named section of this paper.)

Some children's understandings of the basic features of print may be well developed upon entry to transitional kindergarten or kindergarten depending upon their prior experiences at home, preschool, or in the community. Other children may have less well developed print concepts. Teachers should be skilled at assessment (especially formative assessment) and provide instruction and practice that is suitable for each child. (See Chapter 8 in the *ELA/ELD Framework* for guidance on assessment.) The *ELA/ELD Framework* makes clear that it is inappropriate both to provide too little attention so that print concepts are not learned thoroughly and to provide too much attention when the concepts are already well known. Instruction should be differentiated based on the varying needs of the learners.

In addition to the kindergarten and grade one standards listed in the Print Concepts substrand of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy, standards that contribute to the development of print concepts include those related to the craft and structure of literature and informational texts (RL/RI.K-1.5-6), writing (W.K–1.1-3), printing upper- and lowercase letters (L.K–1.1a), and conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling (L.K–1.2). Instruction across these standards should be coordinated.

Phonological Awareness (RF.K–1.2)

Phonological awareness is the awareness of and ability to manipulate the sound units of spoken language. Sound units include syllables, onsets and rimes (subsyllabic units consisting of the sound(s) preceding the vowel and the vowel and subsequent sounds), and phonemes (the smallest units of speech sounds, that is, individual speech sounds). Figures 3.8 and 3.9 on pages 153 and 154 of chapter 3 of the *ELA/ELD Framework* provide information about these units.

Because English is predominantly an alphabetic orthography, one in which written symbols represent the phonemes of speech, prospective readers of English are most likely to grasp the logic of the written system when they achieve the most difficult level of phonological awareness: phonemic awareness, or awareness of the individual sounds of speech. Children who are phonemically aware can use their knowledge that speech consists of phonemes to appreciate the manner by which spoken language is encoded in print once they begin to learn letter-sound correspondences. (Knowledge of letter-sound and spelling-sound correspondences is targeted in the Phonics and Word Recognition substrand of the standards and discussed in the so-named section of this paper.) The relationship between phonemic awareness and literacy development is well documented (NELP 2008; NIHCD 2000), and the *ELA/ELD Framework* conveys the importance of ensuring children's acquisition of phonological awareness early in their schooling.

Phonological awareness develops along a multidimensional continuum (Phillips, and others 2008). Generally, children learn to attend to and manipulate larger size units (such as syllables) before smaller units (such as onsets and rimes). They learn to engage in a variety of manipulations with the sounds, some of which are less difficult than others. For example, blending individual spoken sounds together is generally acquired earlier than segmenting a spoken word into its constituent sounds. (See figures 3.16, 3.24, and 3.31, on pages 181-182, 214-215, and 248, respectively, in chapter 3 of the *ELA/ELD Framework* for examples of blending and segmenting phonemes.) Features of phonemes contribute to the ease or difficulty with which they can be manipulated. For example, continuous sounds (such as /m/ and /s/) are generally easier to manipulate than stops (such as /p/ and /t/) because the former can be exaggerated through elongation without the addition of a sound (such as the addition of /uh/ in /puh/). Also, sound units in the initial position of a spoken word generally are easier to attend to than those in the final or medial position. Furthermore, increasing the number of sound units in a word, using words containing consonant clusters (such as the first three consonant sounds in *street*), and asking children to produce ("Blend these sounds to make a word: /c/-/ă/-/t/") rather than recognize ("Point to the picture of the animal the robot is saying in a funny way: /c/-/a/-/t/")

contribute to the challenges of the task. (See the discussions in the Phonological Awareness sections in the Overview of the Span and each grade level section in chapter 3 of the *ELA/ELD Framework*.)

Instruction should be sequenced in accordance with these progressions of phonological awareness development, with a clear focus on the ultimate development of phoneme blending and segmentation because these skills are most closely related to reading and writing, respectively. In other words, instruction is planned so that it progresses from larger units to smaller units and from blending to segmenting (and other manipulations). It also targets words with continuous sounds before those with noncontinuous sounds, initial sounds before final and medial sounds, words with single consonant sounds before words with consonant blends and clusters, and words with fewer sounds to words with more sounds. However, it is important to note that children do not necessarily develop phonological skills in a stairstep fashion. Children may be able to identify and isolate (partially segment) the initial phoneme (the smallest sound of speech) in their names, for example, before they are able to blend (generally an easier skill) onsets and rimes (larger, and therefore typically easier to grasp, units of sound than phonemes).

Teachers should provide carefully conceived, learner-appropriate instruction in phonological awareness. Lessons should be engaging, of short duration, and conducted with small groups of children with similar phonological awareness skills. Adams (2013, 2) notes “games and activities that lead children to attend to the phonemes—to voice them, blend them, break them apart, and contrast them and the words that they make—are shown to significantly accelerate children’s grasp of the alphabetic principle.” Some lessons may include attention to the place and manner of articulation of phonemes, especially if students are experiencing difficulty (Castiglioni-Spalten and Ehri 2003). In addition to small group instruction, teachers should establish phonologically rich environments that explicitly draw children’s attention to and stimulate play with sounds throughout the day through songs, poetry, games, and books in a variety of contexts (Yopp and Yopp 2009, 2011).

When appropriate, likely near the end of kindergarten and throughout grade one, phonemic awareness instruction should be tied closely with phonics instruction.[4] Children use letters to represent the sounds that comprise spoken words. Learning letter-sound correspondences contributes to progress in phonological awareness. On the other hand, instruction in letter-sound correspondences makes most sense when children already have some awareness of phonemes. In other words, learning that the letter *r* represents the sound /r/ means little if a child is unaware of the existence of /r/ in the stream of spoken language or if the sound is not in the child’s primary language. Although a child may demonstrate simple paired-associate learning (responding with the sound when presented

[4] It is crucial that educators understand the difference between *phonemic awareness* and *phonics*. *Phonemic awareness* refers to the awareness that the speech stream is comprised of small units of sound—phonemes—and the ability to segment speech into those sounds, blend spoken sounds together to form words, and otherwise manipulate and attend to the sounds. *Phonics* is an instructional approach whereby children learn about the systematic relationship between the sounds of speech (i.e., the phonemes) and the symbols (i.e., letters and letter combinations) used to represent them in print.

with a letter), the child in fact may not have acquired or be gaining an understanding of the phonological basis of spoken language and, in turn, its relationship to printed language.

Evidence exists that oral language, specifically breadth of vocabulary, also may contribute to the development of phonological awareness. The more words in a child's vocabulary, the more likely that some words are phonologically quite similar (e.g., *cup* and *cap*). Distinguishing between phonologically similar words demands greater attention to individual sounds, which heightens children's awareness of sounds. (See Lonigan 2006 and Yopp and Yopp 2011 for discussions.) Thus, for this and other far-reaching and highly impactful reasons discussed in the *ELA/ELD Framework*, attention to vocabulary development is crucial beginning in the earliest years.

Given the range of experiences children have with reflecting on and playing with the sounds of language before they enter transitional kindergarten or kindergarten, some children acquire phonological awareness quickly while other children take longer and require more instruction. The *ELA/ELD Framework* calls for differentiated instruction in phonological awareness that progresses systematically from what individual children know to what they need still to learn. Because of the strong relationship between phonemic awareness and literacy development, assessment followed by appropriate, targeted instruction is critical. Children who are not demonstrating progress in phonological awareness by mid-kindergarten, as determined by mid-year assessment, should be provided additional instructional attention.

In addition to the kindergarten and grade one standards listed in the phonological awareness section of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy, standards that contribute to the development of phonological awareness include knowledge of letter names (RF.K.1a) and letter-sound correspondences (RF.K.1ab), decoding regularly spelled one-syllable words (RF.K.1b), writing (W.K–1.1-3), spelling (L.K.2bcd; L.1.2de), and vocabulary (RL/RI.K–1.4; L.K–1.3-6). Instruction across these standards should be coordinated.

Phonics and Word Recognition (RF.K–5.3)

Phonics and word recognition standards include knowledge of **letter-sound and spelling-sound correspondences**, knowledge of **word parts** (syllables and morphemes), and recognition of **irregularly spelled words**. As readers, individuals use this knowledge to *decode* and identify words in written language. In other words, the phonics and word recognition reading standards are taught (along with print concepts and phonological awareness) so that students have the knowledge and skills to access language that has been recorded in print, including words they have never before encountered in print. Notably, as writers, individuals also use this knowledge to *encode* language into print. Indeed, decoding and encoding rely on much of the same underlying knowledge (Joshi, and others 2008-09; Moats 2005-06). The goal of phonics and word recognition instruction is to teach children the skills necessary for independence with the code. See figure 2, adapted from figure 3.7 (pp. 151-152) in chapter 3 of the *ELA/ELD Framework*, for an overview.

Figure 2. Independence with the Code

A major goal of early reading instruction is to teach children the skills that allow them to independently engage with print. One of these skills is decoding printed words. Mastering this skill begins the process of automatically recognizing words, which frees readers to think about what they read.

By sounding out or decoding a new word, the learner connects the letters or letter combinations with the sounds they represent and blends those sounds into a recognizable spoken word with its attendant meaning. (The spoken word should already be in the beginning reader's vocabulary, and the learner should understand that the point of decoding is to access meaning.) After a word is decoded several times, this symbol-sound-meaning package becomes established. In subsequent encounters with the word in print, the learner recognizes and understands the word at a glance in much the way he or she understands a familiar spoken word.

Ensuring that children know how to decode regularly spelled one-syllable words by mid-first grade is crucial to their progress in becoming independent readers. (Instruction in decoding simple words begins for many children in kindergarten.) Beginning readers need several skills in order to decode printed words. Learners need to be phonemically aware (especially able to segment and blend phonemes); know the letters of the alphabet, letter-sound and spelling-sound correspondences, and other print concepts; and understand the alphabetic principle (that is, that letters and letter combinations represent the sounds of spoken language). Beginning readers are taught to use this knowledge to generate and blend sounds in print to form recognizable words. Instruction begins with simple letter-sound relationships and systematically progresses to more complex ones. Sequences of letter-sound instruction usually start with consonants and short vowels and reading and spelling consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words. Instruction in long vowels (those spelled with an ending e), consonant blends, diphthongs, and other letter combinations follows and progresses from high-frequency to less common letter-sound relationships. By the end of second grade, students know all useful spelling patterns and the sounds they represent and can accurately decode words that contain them, including two-syllable words. They also can read words containing common prefixes and suffixes. To develop automaticity with decoding (that is, to decode nearly effortlessly and with little conscious attention), learners need practice decoding a variety of words containing the letter-sound and spelling-sound patterns they are learning. The amount of practice needed varies by child.

Students also need to learn to rapidly recognize high-frequency words with irregular or uncommon spelling-sound patterns—words for which decoding is less useful. Multiple exposures, in isolation and in context, are typically required. Moreover, learners need to expand their vocabularies so decoding and sight word recognition result in meaning making. Learning how to spell words containing the spelling-sound patterns being introduced reinforces students' understanding of the alphabetic principle.

Phonics instruction focuses on teaching beginning readers about the relationship between letters or letter combinations and phonemes in spoken language—**letter-sound and spelling-sound correspondences**. Knowledge of letter-sound and spelling-sound correspondences along with phonemic awareness is required for understanding the *alphabetic principle*, that is, that the symbols used in printed language (i.e., alphabetic languages, such as English and Spanish) represent the phonemes of spoken language.

This is a crucial understanding about printed language that should be given the instructional attention necessary for acquisition. Importantly, the nature of the English orthography makes learning about the relationships between letters and letter combinations and sounds complicated, and teachers should be aware of the complexities of written English and carefully guide learners to ensure their success and confidence in working with the alphabetic system. See figure 3, adapted from figure 3.7 in chapter 3 of the *ELA/ELD Framework*. See also the discussion on page 325 of chapter 4 of the framework.

Figure 3. The English Orthography

The English alphabetic system is not a *transparent* orthography (such as Spanish) in which there is a one-to-one match between letters and sounds. Rather, English is an *opaque* or *deep* orthography and uses 26 letters to represent more than 40 sounds. Some letters represent more than one sound, such as the sounds represented by the letter *a* in *ape*, *apple*, and *again*. Some sounds are represented by two letters, such as *th* and *sh*, and some sounds are represented in more than one way, such as the long a (*ā)* sound in *fate, bait, way, hey, straight,* and *freight*. As a result, learning about the relationship between letters and sounds is complex.

The orthographic or phonological context in which a sound occurs can determine the way it is represented in print. The *ck*, *k,* and *c* spellings of /k/ at the end of syllables with short vowels provide an illustration: Generally, the letter combination *ck* represents the /k/ sound at the end of a one-syllable word when it is immediately preceded by the short vowel (as in *back, stuck*, and *thick*) whereas *k* represents the /k/ sound at the end of a one-syllable, short-vowel word when immediately preceded by a consonant (as in *milk*, *trunk*, and *desk*). In multisyllabic words, /k/ is often represented by *c* at the end of syllables when immediately preceded by a short vowel (as in *picnic*, *actor,* and *historic*). Although at first glance the use of *k*, *ck*, and *c* for the /k/ sound seems capricious, close examination reveals a consistency in use.

The meaningful relationship among words can also influence the spelling of words. For example, the *ea* spelling combination in the words *heal* and *health* is pronounced differently in these words, yet the vowel spelling is maintained because of the semantic relationship between the words. Likewise, the letter *n*, though unheard, appears in the printed word *autumn* because of the word's meaningful relationship with the word *autumnal*. The use of the spelling for affixes, is generally consistent, in spite of differences in pronunciation. For example, *–ed* is used as a signal for past tense in each of these printed words, although what is heard at the end of the spoken words is different: *played*, *walked*, and *shouted*.

The complexity of written English can be confusing to students. It is important that educators and other adults recognize this and support students' understanding of the multi-layered logic and complexity of written English. Instruction should begin with simple patterns and build to more complex ones.

Instruction in letter-sound and spelling-sound correspondences should be explicit and follow a logical sequence. The starting point and pacing of instruction varies significantly by child in accordance with prior learning and speed of acquisition. The Phonics and Word Recognition section in the Overview of the Span in chapter 3 of the *ELA/ELD Framework*

provides guidance on teaching the letter-sound and spelling-sound correspondences; see especially the points on pages 159-160.

As children begin to learn letter-sound correspondences, their attention should be directed to the correspondences' use in a variety of contexts, such as the initial letter *b* in the word card posted by the *block* area, the letter's appearance in a big book, or the initial sound in a classmate's printed name. However, teachers should be mindful of inconsistencies between what they have taught and what appears in uncontrolled words (i.e., words that have not been selected deliberately as examples of the learned letter-sound correspondence). For example, if children have been taught the most common sounds for the letters *p* and *a*, they may be confused by *Phil's* name card or an alphabet book that states "A is for art." These inconsistencies should be noted when they are encountered. Initially, beginning readers' exposure to print that matches instruction should be maximized. Otherwise, the instruction seems irrelevant and is confusing to learners.

Beginning readers should be taught how to use their expanding knowledge of letter-sound correspondences to decode regularly spelled printed words, generally beginning with simple consonant-vowel-consonant words (e.g., *bat*, *dog*, *him*) that contain letter-sound correspondences they know. They identify the sounds represented by the letters in the word and learn to blend those sounds together to form the word. Some children are able to identify the sounds readily but have difficulty blending them into a word. While all children can profit from initial, carefully modeled and guided blending instruction, some children need more extensive instructional support. See figure 3.34 on pages 253-254 in chapter 3 of the *ELA/ELD Framework* for information about instruction on blending sounds in printed words.

As students learn to decode regularly spelled words, teachers should work to ensure that students move beyond *partial alphabetic decoding*, an early stage of reading acquisition that may involve, for example, looking only at the initial and final letters of a word to identify it, to *full alphabetic decoding* (Ehri 2005). That is, teachers should guide beginning readers to attend to each letter or letter combination in the word to generate the word; full alphabetic decoding plays a central role in the development of effective and efficient word recognition skills (McCandliss, and others 2003, 102).

Instruction in decoding should target words that contain the correspondences that have been taught *and* that are in the children's oral vocabulary. Children, then, can match the result of their decoding efforts to a familiar word and therefore recognize that they have been successful in identifying the printed word. Moreover, by decoding a word in their vocabulary, readers attach meaning—and purpose—to the process of sounding and blending printed words. The *ELA/ELD Framework* emphasizes that beginning instruction should target familiar words for these reasons; see chapter 3, page 160. (At the same time, instruction should ensure that students' vocabulary continues to expand.) As students progress as readers, they read text that contains words that are not in their spoken vocabulary. In fact, text is a primary source of new vocabulary and students are taught to use a variety of resources to understand new words in text, including context, morphology, and glossaries.

Beginning readers need ample opportunity to practice what they are learning. Practice with phonics involves word work, which includes activities such as word building. See examples of word building in chapters 3 (pp. 249-251) and 4 (pp. 327-329) of the *ELA/ELD Framework*. Practice also includes reading connected text that is controlled in such a way that the spellings of most of the words are consistent with what children have learned. Decodable texts[5] especially serve this purpose. The value of decodable texts is time-limited but significant for beginning readers because these texts provide the opportunity for students to apply what they are learning about the alphabetic code, which enhances their reading acquisition (Cheatham and Allor 2012). Indeed, Adams (2009) notes that students' *use* of acquired skills (not simply their *learning* of the skills) to decode new words is crucial and that decodable text prompts that use. See page 160 in chapter 3 of the *ELA/ELD Framework* for a discussion.

The amount of time devoted to decodable text depends upon how quickly beginning readers grasp the code. Some children need considerable practice with decodable books. Others need less because they more quickly acquire and apply the skills. Learners should be provided instruction and texts that reflect and advance their skills. This means some children can more quickly engage as readers with a wider range of text, including easy reader and other trade books. (All children should be exposed to a wide range of text; this may be provided primarily through read alouds by the teacher until children have become more skilled with print.) Formative assessment and interim assessments should inform these decisions.

Importantly, the more students engage with print, the more words they learn. The more words they learn, the more they become familiar with widely occurring multiletter patterns, such as *at* in *cat/bat/rat*, *ight* in *night/flight/right* and *udge* in *judge/grudge/fudge*. Repeated encounters with these patterns across different words result in their rapid recognition in new words. Hudson (2011, 173) notes that "the consolidation of letters into larger patterns is at the heart of the development of word reading automaticity."

See figure 4 on the next page for Adams' (2013, 32-33) explanation of readers' increasingly efficient word recognition.

[5] Decodable texts are defined in the *ELA/ELD Framework* as those in which 75-80 percent of the words consist solely of previously taught letter-sound and spelling-sound correspondences and the remaining words are previously taught high-frequency sight words (i.e., words that students that have been taught to read by sight because they are irregularly spelled or they contain letter-sound or spelling-sound correspondences not yet taught) or story or content words.

Figure 4. Adams' Description of Efficiency in Word Recognition

Each time the mind attends to information, it creates a trace of that experience, including the perceived parts and the temporal order in which they were perceived. To sound out a word, a student must examine the letters left to right, in sequence. This causes the ordered, left-to-right sequence of letters to leave a trace of itself in memory. At the same time, because the student is sounding the word, the trace that results includes the letters' connection to their phonology or speech sounds. That is true for the individual letters and groups of letters, as well as the word as a whole. If the word is in the student's oral vocabulary, connections are also built from its spelling and sounds to its meaning and, one by one, to each of the contexts in which it has occurred . . . Gradually, through repeated encounters, the representation of the word and its parts become so richly and strong interconnected that the word is recognized virtually at a glance. Its spelling, pronunciation, and meaning seem to come to mind at once.

. . . Progressively, as a result of having processed many words letter by letter, left to right, and spelling to sound, a student's mind becomes familiar and responsive to common spelling patterns and their spelling-sound translations, independently of the specific words in which they have been encountered. As this happens, the student gains *decoding automaticity*.

It is crucial that students are taught to monitor their understanding as they decode words in connected text. ***All students need to know that text should make sense and convey meaning*.** Contextual analysis can be used to verify the accuracy and fit of the word in the sentence or larger discourse. Contextual analysis, however, should not be relied upon to identify the word.

As students progress in reading, they learn to decode multisyllabic words; some readers acquire this ability more readily than others. In fact, moving beyond single syllable words can be a point of significant difficulty for some developing readers. Knowledge of **syllable patterns and morphemes** (such as affixes and roots) contributes to skill in decoding these words (Gabig and Zaretsky 2013; Moats 2000; Verhoeven and Carlisle 2006). When students have learned about the smaller parts of multisyllabic printed words, they can use knowledge of those parts to identify them in longer words and blend them together to form the larger word. The *ELA/ELD Framework* maintains that instruction and experience with common syllable patterns and with morphemes should be given ample attention to ensure students' success with decoding multisyllabic words. Knowledge of morphemes, especially, supports not only decoding, but also contributes to meaning making as students use these meaningful parts to understand the words. See chapter 5 of the *ELA/ELD Framework* (pp. 363-364) for a discussion of teaching multisyllabic words. See also discussions of the importance of learning Greek and Latin roots relative to understanding the meaning of words in chapter 5 (p. 428) and relative to spelling development in chapter 4 (pp. 304-305).

Some words do not follow regular spelling patterns, including many high-frequency words (e.g., *said*, *was, they*). These **irregularly spelled words** should be taught as *sight words*[6] and learned as wholes. Some words are temporarily irregular; these words become regular once the relevant letter-sound or spelling-sound correspondences have been taught. Sometimes temporarily irregular words are taught as sight words so that students have access to more texts earlier than they otherwise might have in the instructional sequence. In other words, it is helpful to learn certain words before their spelling patterns are taught so that children can read a wider range of beginning reading selections. The kindergarten standards include learning to read by sight some regularly spelled high-frequency words (RF.K.3c).

Teachers should introduce irregularly spelled words systematically and draw attention between the points of irregularity in the word and the students' existing knowledge about the code to prevent confusion. For example, the initial and final sounds in the spoken word *said* are represented in print by letters that regularly represent those sounds; the medial vowel, however, is represented by an irregular spelling. Irregularly spelled words should be practiced and reviewed enough times (which varies by learner) so that students read them swiftly and confidently. The pacing and number of irregular words introduced should be carefully considered so that students are not overwhelmed. The emphasis should be on learning the words well.

Students should have many opportunities to review the irregular words they have learned and also to read the words in contexts that are important to them, such as in classroom environmental print and in texts. An increasing corpus of printed words that students can recognize by sight—both irregularly spelled words and those they have decoded enough times that they are instantly identified—allows readers to engage quickly and successfully with an increasing amount of text, which further propels their reading development and expands their worlds.[7]

Achievement of the standards in the Phonics and Word Recognition substrand of the standards is crucial in order for students to progress as readers. The *ELA/ELD Framework* asserts that skills identified in this substrand should be given adequate attention—differentiated based on students' needs—by skilled educators. It further states that instruction should be logically sequenced, applied to meaningful text, and be sufficient to ensure students' ease and confidence with the skills. Students ready to progress should be given instruction appropriate for their needs. Students needing additional, more intensive instruction should be identified quickly. Careful monitoring, especially in the form of formative assessment, is crucial. See the sections on Phonics and Word Recognition in the Overviews of the Span and each grade level section of chapters 3-5 in the *ELA/ELD*

[6] The term *sight words* is used in two ways in reading instruction. One is in reference to words that are learned as wholes because they contain irregular letter-sound or spelling-sound correspondences, as in the discussion on this page. The other refers to words that have been decoded enough times (which varies by learner) that they are automatically recognized; thus, they are words the reader knows "by sight."

[7] Content knowledge is one of the capacities of literate individuals and a key theme of ELA/literacy and ELD instruction identified in the *ELA/ELD Framework*. See chapter 2, pages 87-89, and each section on Content Knowledge in chapters 3-7.

Framework for guidance. See chapter 8 of the *ELA/ELD Framework* for information on assessment.

In addition to the kindergarten through grade five standards listed in the Phonics and Word Recognition substrand of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy, standards that contribute to phonics and word recognition include those related to print concepts, phonological awareness, and fluency (RF.K–5.1,2,4); spelling (L.K–5.2); and vocabulary (L.K–12.3-6). Instruction across these standards should be coordinated.

Fluency (RF.K–5.4)

Fluency is the ability to read with accuracy, appropriate rate (which requires automaticity, discussed below), and prosody. Although fluency is important when children read aloud written text for an audience, such as their peers or family members, ***the primary importance of fluency is that it enables comprehension*** (Rasinski and Samuels 2011; Samuels 2006; Shanahan, and others 2010; Stanovich 1994). Children who can efficiently access print have the cognitive resources available to engage in meaning making.[8] Standard 4 (RF.K–5.4) of the reading foundational skills in the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy makes this purpose clear: Students read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. The fluency standard further emphasizes comprehension by including that students read on-level text with purpose and understanding (RF.1–5a) and use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary (RF.2–5.4c). It is important to note that although meaning making with text is dependent on fluent decoding, it involves much more than fluent decoding. Furthermore, evidence suggests that the relationship between fluency and comprehension is reciprocal: fluency contributes to comprehension and comprehension contributes to fluency (Hudson 2011).

The *ELA/ELD Framework* states, in regard to fluency instruction, the development of students' accuracy should be given the highest priority initially. As noted in the Phonics and Word Recognition section of the present document, primary grade teachers should work to ensure that students become skilled at full alphabetic decoding. Sufficient instruction should be provided in phonics and word recognition so that readers are able to take advantage of all letters and letter combinations, syllable patterns, and morphemes in a word to identify the word.

After ensuring accuracy, teachers should work to build students' automaticity in identifying words. Automaticity refers to effortless, virtually unconscious, accurate identification of words. Familiar printed words are recognized instantaneously; they have been decoded enough times that the memory trace from orthographic representation to phonological and semantic representation is well established. They have become sight words.[9] Words that students have not yet encountered in print also are identified quickly as students are able to rapidly employ their phonics and other word attack skills to determine the word.

[8] Meaning making includes critical reading, such as considering an author's intent and perspectives, and comprehension monitoring, both of which demand the reader's cognitive resources.
[9] See Footnote 6. Here the term *sight words* refers to the second definition.

Irregularly spelled words that have been taught have been practiced enough times (in and out of context) for rapid retrieval as well.

Rate of accurate reading of connected text is a common measure of automaticity. An extensive study of oral reading proficiency provides the mean number of words read accurately per minute by students in grades one through eight in unpracticed readings from grade-level materials (Hasbrouck and Tindal 2006). The means are displayed in the Fluency sections of each grade level section in chapters 4-6 in the *ELA/ELD Framework*. Fluency rates should be interpreted cautiously with students who are speakers of languages other than English. In addition, fluency rates are not appropriate to apply to students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing and use American Sign Language.

As the *ELA/ELD Framework* makes clear, although rate is important, the goal is not speed for its own sake. The goal is automaticity with print so that meaning making can occur. Indeed, attempts to race through text may result in fewer efforts to engage in full alphabetic decoding. In their haste, students may guess at words, use only partial alphabetic decoding, or draw exclusively on other cues, such as context or images. Doing so regularly results in less practice with the full alphabetic decoding that is necessary for building the accuracy and automaticity with word identification that will serve readers well at present and over time. Furthermore, excessive speed can result in loss of comprehension. Rate should be appropriate for meaning making. Some text should be read more slowly than other text, depending upon the complexity of the language and ideas and the purposes for reading.

Prosody, or expression, includes rhythm, phrasing, and intonation. Prosodic reading suggests that the reader can identify words quickly and accurately and is comprehending the text. Moreover, it suggests the reader is using syntactic and semantic information in the text to organize language. Although the nature of the relationship between prosodic reading and comprehension is not clear, research indicates that a relationship exists (Hudson 2011; Rasinski, and others 2011; Rasinski, Rikli, and Johnson 2009; Rasinski and Samuels 2011). Instructional attention to expression, such as phrasing, in oral reading may be important, especially with students who can decode accurately but who are experiencing comprehension difficulties.

The *ELA/ELD Framework* states that all students should hear good models of fluency. For this, and many other important reasons,[10] students should be read aloud to regularly by adults and others who read with accuracy, at a rate appropriate for the text and purpose, and with expression that conveys meaning. Young students need many opportunities to participate, by chanting along, in teacher read alouds of simple, engaging text. Students of all ages should hear texts of different types and disciplines read aloud (Rasinski and Samuels 2011).

The *ELA/ELD Framework* also maintains that students need many opportunities to read on their own in order to develop fluency. Decodable texts used by beginning readers should

[10] See the section on Reading Aloud in chapter 2 (pp. 58-60) of the *ELA/ELD Framework*.

reflect their accumulating knowledge about the code so that it is applied and practiced in the context of connected text. As readers build skill with word recognition, students should increasingly engage in independent and wide reading. Reading volume has many benefits,[11] including that it influences fluency. It is important to note that although engagement with complex text is an essential component of ELA/Literacy programs, students should have access to—and spend considerable time with—interesting texts at their reading level in order to build fluency (Carnegie 2010). In other words, they should have many opportunities to read text that is neither too challenging nor too easy (Moats 1998).

Fluency also is facilitated when students engage in repeated reading of text (NICHD 2000; Samuels 1979). Ensuring authentic reasons to read and reread text, such as preparing for sharing a poem or presenting a readers theatre performance, is important. (See the Fluency sections in chapters 3-5 in the *ELA/ELD Framework*.)

In addition to the kindergarten through grade five fluency standards of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy, standards that contribute to fluency development are those related to print concepts, phonological awareness, and phonics and word recognition (RF.K–5.1-3); spelling (L.K–5.2); vocabulary (L.K–12.3-6); and presentation of knowledge and ideas (SL.2–4.5). Instruction across these standards should be coordinated.

Instruction: Key Guidelines and Critical Grade-Level Foci

As the *ELA/ELD Framework* states, students acquire foundational skills through excellent, carefully designed, and thoughtfully sequenced instruction along with ample opportunities to practice and apply skills in meaningful contexts. Instruction should focus on developing students' understanding of the logic of the written code, not on rote memorization,[12] and on their efficient use of the code. Furthermore, instruction should prompt active engagement and be developmentally appropriate for the age group. Teachers should be mindful of the range of factors that influence learning, including motivation. The *ELA/ELD Framework* identifies many variables that contribute to motivation. Among them are success and challenge. Instruction should ensure that each learner experiences success and is appropriately challenged. (See the section on Motivation and Engagement in chapter 2, pages 63-64, for a discussion of these and other important factors, such as choice and relevance.)

[11] Reading volume contributes to progress in each of the key themes: Meaning Making, Language Development, Effective Expression, Content Knowledge, and, as discussed in this paper, Foundational Skills. In addition, it is fundamental to achieving one of the overarching goals of ELA/literacy and ELD instruction identified in figure 1 of this paper: becoming broadly literate. See chapter 2 of the *ELA/ELD Framework.*

[12] Memorization is required for knowledge of letters, letter-sound and spelling-sound correspondences, and irregularly spelled sight words. Some regularly spelled words are memorized in kindergarten, but in general regularly spelled words should not be taught through simple rote memorization. Instead, students should learn to apply their expanding knowledge of the printed system to decode these words.

Chapters 3-5 in the *ELA/ELD Framework* and the standards themselves outline the foundational skills that are targeted at each grade level. The *ELA/ELD Framework* notes that some standards should be given more attention than others, either because they typically take longer to learn or they are especially critical in learning to read and write using an alphabetic code. In figure 5, the most crucial content addressed in each grade level is noted. Teachers should refer to the standards for their grade level for a complete list. Furthermore, they should be prepared to address the content of previous or subsequent grades as determined by the knowledge and skills of their students. For example, some children may arrive in kindergarten already reading and writing simple words using their knowledge of letter-sound correspondences and phonemic awareness. They should be provided instruction that builds on what they already know and advances their skills. Some third graders may need instruction that is more typical of what is provided in grade two. It should be provided. The point is that ***instruction in foundational skills should be appropriate for the learners and neither delay their progress nor overlook their needs and proceed too rapidly***.

Figure 5. Selected Critical Instructional Foci in Foundational and Closely Related Skills by Grade Level

Grade	Skills/Knowledge from Across Strands of Standards The relevant strand or domain is provided in parentheses. RF-Reading Foundational Skills; L-Language; SL-Speaking and Listening
K (See Note)	▸ all upper- and lower case letter forms and names (RF) and how to print most (L) ▸ isolation of initial, medial vowel, and final sounds in spoken words and blending two to three spoken phonemes into words (RF) ▸ identifying most letter-sound correspondences, including short vowels (RF) ▸ writing the letters that correspond to most consonants and short-vowel sounds (L) ▸ reading by sight selected common high-frequency words (RF) ▸ beginning decoding of simple CVC words containing learned letter-sound correspondences (implied by RF.K.4 and L.K.2d) ▸ spelling simple words phonetically (L)
1	▸ phoneme blending (including consonant blends) and segmenting (RF) ▸ spelling-sound correspondences for digraphs (RF) ▸ most frequent common vowel teams, including final e (RF) ▸ decoding regularly spelled one-syllable words (RF) ▸ decoding two-syllable words following basic patterns (RF) ▸ reading words with inflectional endings (RF); determine the meaning of words using affixes, roots, and inflections (L) ▸ using conventional spelling for words with common spelling patterns and spell untaught words phonetically drawing on phonemic awareness and spelling conventions (L) ▸ reading by sight selected irregularly spelled words (RF) ▸ accuracy in decoding; automaticity with selected skills (RF)

Grade	Skills/Knowledge from Across Strands of Standards The relevant strand or domain is provided in parentheses. RF-Reading Foundational Skills; L-Language; SL-Speaking and Listening
2	▸ additional, less frequent, common vowel teams (RF) ▸ decoding regularly spelled two-syllable words with long vowels (RF) ▸ decoding words with common prefixes and suffixes (RF); determine meaning of words using prefixes and roots (L) ▸ read by sight selected irregularly spelled words (RF) ▸ using spelling patterns to spell words (L) ▸ accuracy in decoding; automaticity with taught skills (RF, SL)
3	▸ meaning of common prefixes and derivational suffixes (RF) ▸ decoding words with common Latin suffixes (RF) ▸ decoding multisyllablic words (RF) ▸ read by sight selected irregularly spelled words (RF) ▸ spelling patterns, including word families, syllable patterns, meaningful word parts, suffixes (L) ▸ determine meaning of words with known affixes and roots (L) ▸ accuracy in decoding (RF) ▸ automaticity and prosody (RF, SL)
4	▸ consolidation of skills to decode multisyllablic words (RF) ▸ Greek and Latin affixes and roots (L) ▸ conventional spelling, using consolidated knowledge of the written system (L) ▸ fluency (RF, SL)
5	▸ consolidation of skills to decode multisyllablic words (RF) ▸ Greek and Latin affixes and roots (L) ▸ conventional spelling, using consolidated knowledge of the written system (L) ▸ fluency (RF)
6-8	▸ Greek and Latin affixes and roots (L) ▸ conventional spelling, using consolidated knowledge of the written system (L) ▸ fluency (RF—not listed in the 6-8 grade level standards but relevant)
9-12	▸ Greek and Latin affixes and roots (L) ▸ patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (L) ▸ conventional spelling, using consolidated knowledge of the written system (L) ▸ fluency (RF—not listed in the 9-12 grade level standards but relevant)

Note: Transitional kindergarten includes instruction that addresses the kindergarten foci; however, teachers provide instruction at a slower pace, in a context appropriate for younger children, and with the aim of progress toward the standards. Transitional kindergarten teachers should also draw upon the California Preschool Learning Foundations in Language and Literacy (CDE 2008) and the alignment document (CDE 2012).

The *ELA/ELD Framework* acknowledges that students enter school and each grade level with different skills and knowledge and that they will progress through the foundational skills at different rates. The *ELA/ELD Framework*, therefore, calls for differentiated instruction. Teachers should organize the school day to meet with students in small groups in order to ensure all students receive the instruction they need to advance their skills and knowledge. As necessary, they should draw on the expertise of specialists and collaborate with colleagues to best serve all students. The *ELA/ELD Framework* highlights the benefits to students of shared responsibility for students' progress. Furthermore, it recognizes the

importance of strong school and district leadership and of communication and collaboration with families. See chapter 11 of the *ELA/ELD Framework* for discussions.

The *ELA/ELD Framework* emphasizes that students should be provided excellent *first teaching* in the general education classroom. As noted previously, instruction should be well organized, carefully sequenced, engaging, and appropriately paced for the individual learners. Moreover, it should be adapted on an ongoing basis to address students' existing needs and secure their progress toward learning goals. Therefore, excellent first teaching requires that teachers are skilled in the use of assessment, particularly formative assessment. Teachers use what they know about the learners to plan and modify instruction. See chapter 8 of the *ELA/ELD Framework*, especially pages 822-825 and 829-834, for more information on formative assessment.

Children who are not progressing as expected in the context of excellent, responsive first teaching should be provided additional targeted instruction and support without delay. For example, if a child is experiencing difficulty segmenting phonemes in spoken words after excellent, differentiated instruction, additional assistance should be provided that targets that skill. If a child is having difficulty identifying multisyllabic words after excellent, differentiated instruction, additional instructional attention should be given to developing that skill. Timely appropriate supplemental instruction is crucial. See the Supporting Students Strategically sections of chapters 3-7 and chapter 9 of the *ELA/ELD Framework* for research-based recommendations.

A few students will need even more support than the provision of supplemental instruction to the core program. Because the achievement of the foundational skills lays the groundwork for independence with reading and writing, it is imperative that students who are experiencing significant difficulty receive more intensive and highly targeted intervention by highly skilled educators. Notably, this vital instructional attention to students' needs in foundational skills ***should not preclude students' participation in other aspects of ELA/literacy instruction nor in learning experiences in other content areas***. Creative and collaborative efforts among educators is crucial for accomplishing the provision of both the needed intensive instruction and the comprehensive curriculum.

Schools should be well organized and prepared to support the range of learners in achieving the foundational skills, as well as all aspects of ELA/literacy and ELD instruction and all curricular areas. Figure 6, condensed from pages 913-914 of chapter 9 of the *ELA/ELD Framework*, summarizes the three tiers of increasing levels of instructional support for students. It is based on the Response to Intervention model, which is an important component of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support described in chapter 9 of the *ELA/ELD Framework*. Use of the model has a large effect size on student achievement (Hattie 2009).

Figure 6. Multi-Tiered System of Supports: Increasing Levels of Support

Tier 1: Tier 1 core/universal instruction, also known as *first teaching*, is excellent differentiated instruction delivered to all students. The goal is that students receive high quality standards-aligned instruction, using culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, that meets the full range of student needs. Universal screening and formative assessment processes guide teachers in determining students' progress.

Tier 2: Tier 2 is strategic/targeted, *additional* instruction and supports provided to those students who are not progressing or responding to Tier 1 efforts as expected. Students are provided more time and more focused instruction directed to specific learning needs and their progress is monitored frequently. Additional instruction is expected to be temporary because students are expected to make significant enough growth to succeed in Tier 1.

Tier 3: Tier 3 consists of intensive *intervention*, which is anticipated to be necessary for very few students. Students who receive these services are those who have experienced difficulty with grade-level standards in the general education curriculum and have not benefitted from the Tier 2 supplemental instruction they received. The goal is to accelerate students' progress so they can return to and succeed in the core instructional program, that is, Tier 1.

Assessment

Students' progress in acquisition of the reading foundational skills of print concepts, phonological awareness, decoding and word recognition, and fluency (along with related skills in other CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy strands) should be monitored carefully. Screening assessments should occur early in the year, and identification of students' existing skills and knowledge should drive instructional planning. Formative assessment processes as well as interim and, as needed, diagnostic assessments of learners' developing skills should be used throughout the year.

Formative assessment is ongoing as teachers interact with students on a daily basis and carefully observe their performance and responses to instruction. Formative assessment processes inform instructional decisions in the moment and in the days ahead. Interim assessments are periodic and a schedule should be locally determined. Interim assessments should be regularly conducted so that next steps for students are determined in timely fashion. Diagnostic assessments should be used as needs arise.

Curriculum materials at all grades and the Smarter Balanced system (beginning in grade three) provide interim and annual assessments. Some teachers and districts may use assessments from other sources; these should be examined carefully for validity and appropriateness for the group of students. One source of information about the quality of commercially available tools is the Center on Response to Intervention's review of assessments in collaboration with the National Center on Intensive Intervention, which is available at www.rti4success.org/resources/tools-charts. Caution should be used when assessing the progress of English learners because results may not accurately reflect their skills and knowledge. See chapter 8 of the *ELA/ELD Framework* for a discussion of assessment.

Conclusion

The *ELA/ELD Framework* makes clear that acquisition of the foundational skills should not to be left to chance for any student. Students who understand the written system and use decoding skills effortlessly reap notable benefits: They can devote their mental energy to meaning making and therefore experience the joy and satisfaction of engagement with text. They can independently access a wide variety of texts, and wide reading contributes to further skill development, vocabulary enrichment, and content acquisition (Brady 2012). Furthermore, they can use written language for their own purposes as readers and writers, which is fulfilling and empowering. Of course, students need to be provided classroom settings and instructional programs that promote these aspects of literacy development.

The *ELA/ELD Framework* identifies five key themes that cut across the strands of standards: Meaning Making, Language Development, Effective Expression, Content Knowledge, and Foundational Skills. These themes are richly intertwined and interdependent. Instruction in the foundational skills is imperative in that it provides access to text; instruction in the other themes provides beginning readers with the very reasons to learn how the code works. Learners discover that print is entertaining and informative, humorous and moving, and reflects their lives and expands their worlds. They learn they can use print to convey their own ideas, to share knowledge, and to express themselves.

This document began with the assertion that the foundational skills are the foundation upon which other standards may be most richly achieved. It ends with a complementary assertion: Progress in the other themes—Meaning Making, Language Development, Effective Expression, and Content Knowledge—propels progress in the foundational skills. Instruction in each of the themes is essential. Foundational skills should be taught early and well so that every student has access to printed language. Meaning making, language development, effective expression, and content knowledge, too, should be given systematic attention from the start of schooling. California's children deserve no less.

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