

6-8 Language Continuums Guide

What are the Language Continuums?

Language Standards 1 and 2 include two continuums, one for grammar and one for conventions. The skills within each continuum are arranged by grade band rather than by grade to allow for multiple years of practice, differentiation, and scaffolding as needed. In the lower grade of the band, the teacher is introducing and modeling the skill. In the higher grade of the band, students are applying the skill to more complex text as they work toward mastery. Some skills, such as subject-verb agreement, may require continued attention each year.

How do I read them?

The Language Continuums, when read horizontally, show the progression of the grade level bands in grammar and conventions. When read vertically, they show the skills that are taught in the specific grade band. The supporting clarifications include suggestions for how to introduce, model, build, and recognize mastery for each skill.

What does instruction look like in the classroom?

The skills are arranged by grade band to allow for three years of practice and eventual mastery. Each bulleted skill is taught in all grades within the 6-8 grade band.

- Sixth Grade: The teacher introduces and models each skill using mentor texts. Students practice each skill and apply what they have learned to their writing.
- Seventh Grade: The teacher continues to build each skill, using scaffolding as needed to differentiate. Students practice and apply each skill in their writing.
- Eighth Grade: The teacher provides opportunities for students to apply each skill within their writing as they work toward mastery.

Formative assessment should provide teachers with an understanding of students' prior knowledge on a given skill. Teachers may build on this prior knowledge rather than reintroducing the skill each year. Teachers may find they do not need to begin with the suggestions in the "How to Introduce and Model" column of the continuum clarification document.

How do I know where my students fall within the grade band?

Pre-assessments and formative assessments throughout the year can be helpful in determining where students fall within the band.

- The use of formative assessment allows teachers to determine how well students have acquired learning and where they fall in the continuum.
- Teachers provide scaffolding based on formative assessments to meet students' needs within the continuum.
- Students' writing provides guiding information about their understanding.

How do I talk about the Language Continuums with colleagues?

Teacher communication and discussion within each grade level and among the grade levels is a vital component for ensuring student success. Through PLC work, teachers should develop a shared understanding of the skills and how the continuums and support documents can be used to support instruction.

Grade level PLCs

- Discuss and develop pre-assessments for each skill or group of skills to determine student readiness. Consider using flexible grouping after reviewing pre-assessment results.
- Revisit the continuum clarification document for suggested teaching strategies. Consider possible mentor texts.
- Discuss providing feedback to students about specific skill use within their writing. Consider developing a standards-based rubric.
- Reflect on student work to plan for next steps. Consider students who need scaffolding as well as students who need enrichment.

Vertical PLCs

- Discuss how each grade level can build on the previous grade level's instruction.
- Discuss the mentor texts and the strategies used to introduce and build skills.
- Look at the 4-5 grade band in the Language Continuums to determine which skills have previously been introduced.
- Look at the 4-5 grade band in the Language Continuums to determine which skills are introduced for the first time in the 6-8 grade band.