Speaking and Listening Standards for Grades 6–8

The six grade-level standards for the Speaking and Listening strand are organized in two domains: (1) Comprehension and Collaboration and (2) Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas. Using the protocol in figures 4.1 and 4.2, consider the following questions in your collaborative team.

- What is our current level of knowledge about this standard?
- How can we increase our expertise?
- How will we measure our growth?

Alternatively, you and your team may prefer to use the analysis questions from chapters 2 and 3 (pages 27 and 60). Whichever set of questions you select to guide your discussions, you will be working within a framework that enables you to better understand and implement the CCSS.

Comprehension and Collaboration

The three standards in this domain describe the dispositions and purposes of informal talk in the classroom (see table 4.1, page 106). Throughout grades 6–8, students are expected to be prepared to participate with peers, especially as it applies to the norms of discussion. For example, if any of the students in Ms. Harrison’s sixth-grade English class had failed to engage in collegial conversation, the quality of the group’s talk would have suffered. Instead, it was elevated because students were able to cite examples from the text of Lou Gehrig’s speech as evidence for their comments and questions.

Another notable feature of this domain is that its standards are intertwined with other domains of the Common Core ELA standards. For example, collaborative reading experiences provide students with opportunities to make meaning of a text with their peers. When students read and discuss texts together, they apply comprehension strategies and support the understanding of others. We use collaborative reading as an umbrella term to describe a number of peer-reading activities, including partner reading, literature circles, and reciprocal teaching. While each of these peer-reading arrangements possesses unique features, there are common elements.

First, students work in pairs or groups of no more than five. Second, the work they do is outside the immediate supervision of the teacher. Instead, they guide their own discussions and make decisions about how they will complete a task. A third element common to these collaborative reading practices is that students work with text to deepen their understanding of the content and the processes they use to comprehend. The Comprehension and Collaboration standards should be viewed through the lens of the content being taught, not held in isolation of other literacy and discipline-specific expectations.

Both anchor standard one (SL.CCR.1) and anchor standard two (SL.CCR.2) in this domain acknowledge the vital role of gaining information from other sources. In the previous domain, the attention is on how students gain information in conversations and discussions with others. In the second domain, the focus is on acquiring information from informational displays and other forms of multimedia technology. Anchor standard two (SL.CCR.2) reflects the increasing importance of visual and media literacies and
### Table 4.1: Speaking and Listening Standards for Domain Comprehension and Collaboration, Grades 6–8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anchor Standards</th>
<th>Grade 6 Standards</th>
<th>Grade 7 Standards</th>
<th>Grade 8 Standards</th>
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| **SL.CCR.1:** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others; ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. | **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.  
   a. Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.  
   b. Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.  
   c. Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion. | **SL.7.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.  
   a. Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.  
   b. Follow rules for collegial discussions, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.  
   c. Pose questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others’ questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed. | **SL.8.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.  
   a. Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.  
   b. Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.  
   c. Pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others’ questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations, and ideas. |
| SL.CCR.1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others; ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. | d. Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing. | d. Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modify their own views. | d. Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented. |
| SL.CCR.2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. | SL.6.2: Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (such as visually, quantitatively, or orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study. | SL.7.2: Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (such as visually, quantitatively, or orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study. | SL.8.2: Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (such as visually, quantitatively, or orally) and evaluate the motives (such as social, commercial, or political) behind its presentation. |
| SL.CCR.3: Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric. | SL.6.3: Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not. | SL.7.3: Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence. | SL.8.3: Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced. |

Source: Adapted from NGA & CCSSO, 2010a, pp. 48 and 49.
informational graphics for displaying and comprehending information (Frey & Fisher, 2008). The 21st century textbooks are filled with more photographs, charts, and diagrams than ever before. Even the ancillary materials rely on multimedia presentations. Short video clips are designed to build background knowledge at the beginning of a unit. Interviews with experts on the topic being studied supplement print resources. More than ever before, these print resources are being converted to digital texts.

However, these digital formats can tax the listening-comprehension skills of students. The eighth-grade version of standard two is especially challenging, as it asks students to consider the social, commercial, and political motives of the person or organization that has created the presentation.

Manuel Hinojosa, an eighth-grade English teacher, introduces media literacy early in the school year so that students can draw on this critical lens through all their learning. He begins by creating an online learning experience for students using My Pop Studio (www.mypopstudio.com), a free interactive game for middle school students. Mr. Hinojosa pairs students and assigns each group one of the site’s four learning environments: music studio, magazine studio, television studio, or digital studio.

According to Mr. Hinojosa, “In each of these online environments, students learn about how editing changes the message, whether it is by touching up a photograph, autotuning a song, or using product placement in a TV show. They also gain some knowledge about the role of public relations and marketing in a celebrity culture.”

After they have explored their assigned environment, individual students join groups with other learning environments to explore each studio. Each time, students reconvene in their original group, and the focus questions change.

“By the time students have explored each studio, they are getting to those critical-thinking questions about media. How is the message shaped and altered through editing and digital manipulation? What are the useful and harmful effects? And most importantly, how can we become sophisticated media consumers?” Mr. Hinojosa adds.

Activities like the one Mr. Hinojosa uses have the additional benefit of addressing standard three’s focus on critically analyzing a speaker’s arguments and claims. “One of the activities we do together is to analyze advertisements that are thinly disguised as journalism,” he says. “Some of the weekly celebrity and sports magazines are notorious for doing this. I love it when my students start to bring in examples. They say, ‘Mr. Hinojosa, look at this magazine story! It’s nothing but an ad!’” He chuckles, “Those are the days when I really know I’m having a positive effect on their thinking.”

**Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**

Standards four through six of this domain focus on the student’s ability to present information more formally. In addition, they describe the necessary skills the speaker should exhibit (see table 4.2). Efficient presentation skills, whether face-to-face or in a digital environment, require the speaker to follow these constructs:
Implementing the Common Core State Standards for Speaking and Listening and for Language

- Organize information into a logical sequence so that listeners and viewers can comprehend it
- Have deep and accurate subject knowledge of the topic
- Ensure graphically displayed information is coherent, accurate, well designed, grammatically correct, and free of misspellings
- Deliver information smoothly and give attention to the audience’s needs (for example, eye contact, elocution, and so on)

Table 4.2: Speaking and Listening Standards for Domain Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Grades 6–8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anchor Standards</th>
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<th>Grade 7 Standards</th>
<th>Grade 8 Standards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SL.CCR.4:</td>
<td>SL.6.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
<td>SL.7.4: Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.</td>
<td>SL.8.4: Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SL.CCR.5:</td>
<td>SL.6.5: Include multimedia components (like graphics, images, music, and sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.</td>
<td>SL.7.5: Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify claims and findings and emphasize salient points.</td>
<td>SL.8.5: Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SL.CCR.6:</td>
<td>SL.6.6: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.</td>
<td>SL.7.6: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grade 6 Language standards one and three for specific expectations.)</td>
<td>SL.8.6: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grade 8 Language standards one and three for specific expectations.)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from NGA & CCSSO, 2010a, pp. 48 and 49.
It’s helpful for collaborative teams to tie formal presentations to writing standards, as students must write presentations before delivering them. Given that there is a parallel emphasis on organization in the writing standards, students should be encouraged to convert written products into formal presentations. The **paragraph frame** is a useful instructional scaffold for doing both. It is a series of sentence stems intended to scaffold original writing while furnishing an organizational structure. Paragraph frames are not intended as a fill-in-the-blank exercise. Instead, they should be introduced after rich oral development of ideas and concepts. This preliminary stage of oral composition assists writers in organizing their own thoughts about a topic as they engage in informal talk (see standards one to three in table 4.1, page 106). The paragraph frame is introduced, and students are instructed to add original sentences within or after it. This procedure is more sophisticated than traditional story starters, which begin with a sentence stem, like “It was a dark and stormy night,” because it provides more structure for the writer. A paragraph frame might look like this:

“Many people call __________ a hero, but few know that __________. I was surprised to learn that __________, but I can see how this incident made __________ the person [he or she] became. Nevertheless, most biographical accounts of __________ don’t include this incident. That is unfortunate, because __________. I believe that if more people knew about __________, they would understand this heroic story more deeply.”

Notice that the frame establishes a direction for the writer without being prescriptive. Furthermore, the writer does not need to use these sentences in sequence but can add his or her own original writing within the frame. Once written, these paragraph frames organize formal presentations as well, especially in sequencing facts, events, or concepts in a logical order. Other sample paragraph frames appear in figure 4.3.

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Narrative</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Carla’s heart began to pound as she heard the __________. She trembled, thinking that __________ would be inevitable. Carla silently recounted the things she was most thankful for: __________, __________, and __________. She also listed her regrets: __________ and __________. Why is it that only when we are confronted with an awful event that we suddenly become reflective about our life?</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Biographical and Autobiographical</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>__________ has been the most life-changing event in my life. Before __________ occurred, I believed that __________. But after this happened, I would never look at the world in the same way again. Now I understood that __________.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Informative and Explanatory</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Without question, the development of the __________ has changed the world profoundly. Before __________ was invented, people had to rely on __________ to __________. However, the development of __________ has also had some unintended consequences. First and foremost, __________.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.3**: Sample paragraph frames for writing and formal presentations.
Anchor standard six (SL.CCR.6) for Speaking and Listening specifically references Language standards one and three on using the conventions of English in speech and in writing. In terms of the speaking portion of the standard, this means using the correct grammar and syntax of conventional English. This can be challenging for students who are learning English, or for some students with language disabilities that make learning English difficult. These students might require more support.

Seventh-grade teacher Robert Crenshaw uses a simple technique for supporting his students who require additional language support. “We do lots of group presentations in our class, because the collaboration is so valuable,” he says. “But it can be difficult for some students. We do what I like to call human captioning to draw on a little more support.” As groups organize their presentations into key ideas, they create sentence strips to match. These strips are written in complete sentences, and as a speaker discusses his or her portion of the speech, he or she holds the sentence strip under him. “Like when you watch a news program, and there’s that text on the bottom of the screen that gives the viewer the main idea of the topic,” Mr. Crenshaw explains. This has an added benefit for the speaker, as the back of the sentence strip is the place where he or she can write notes. “It keeps the speaker organized to state his ideas correctly, and it helps organize the listeners, too.” Mr. Crenshaw also uses presentation tools available on the computer for added support. “Students use these as a digital storytelling tool, but they also allow students to record their presentations. They speak into the built-in microphone and then play back the recording. If it doesn’t sound right to them, they can record it again,” says Mr. Crenshaw. “I encourage students to do this, because it’s so valuable to hear yourself. They get immediate feedback about whether their pronunciation, vocal quality, and syntax are sufficient.”