

# Secondary English-Language Arts Glossary

Source citations for glossary entries are provided as footnotes in this section.

**academic language:** Oral and written language used for academic purposes. Academic language is the means by which students develop and express content understandings. Academic language represents the language of the discipline that students need to learn and use to participate and engage in meaningful ways in the content area. There are **language demands** that teachers need to consider as they plan to support student learning of content. These **language demands** include **vocabulary, language functions, syntax, and discourse.**

**discourse:** Discourse includes the structures of written and oral language, as well as how members of the discipline talk, write, and participate in knowledge construction. Discipline-specific discourse has distinctive features or ways of structuring oral or written language (text structures) that provide useful ways for the content to be communicated.<sup>8</sup> In English-Language Arts, language structures include words, grammar and mechanics, text structures, writing processes, and genres. If the language function is to persuade, then appropriate language structures include claims, supporting evidence, and counterarguments.

**language demands:**<sup>9</sup> Specific ways that academic language (vocabulary, functions, discourse, syntax) is used by students to participate in learning tasks through reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking to demonstrate their disciplinary understanding.

**language functions:** The content and language focus of the learning task represented by the active verbs within the learning outcomes. Common language functions in English-Language Arts include **reading/listening** for main ideas and details; **analyzing and interpreting** characters and plots; **writing** narrative, informational, or poetic text; **using presentation skills** to present a play, a speech, or do a dramatic reading; **evaluating and interpreting** an author's purpose, message, and use of language choice, setting, mood, tone, and other literary strategies; **comparing ideas** within and between texts; and **making sense of unfamiliar vocabulary** through pictures, word parts, and contextual clues.

**language supports:** Strategies that are used to build students' academic language within a learning task. Strategies involve both modeling the appropriate language for the students to use in a learning task as well as opportunities for guided practice and independent practice. Strategies include think pair share, choral response, word walls, modeling, graphic organizers, and so on.

■ **syntax:** The set of conventions for organizing symbols, words, and phrases together into structures (e.g., sentences, graphs, tables).<sup>10</sup>

■ **vocabulary:** Includes words and phrases that are used within disciplines including: (1) words and phrases with subject-specific meanings that differ from meanings used in everyday life (e.g., table); (2) general academic vocabulary used across disciplines (e.g., compare, analyze, evaluate); and (3) subject-specific words defined for use in the discipline.<sup>11</sup>

**artifacts:** Authentic work completed by you and your students, including lesson plans, copies of instructional and assessment materials, video clips of your teaching, and student work samples. Artifacts are submitted as part of your evidence.

**assessment (formal and informal):** “[R]efer[s] to all those activities undertaken by teachers and by their students . . . that provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities.”<sup>12</sup> Assessments provide evidence of students’ prior knowledge, thinking, or learning in order to evaluate what students understand and how they are thinking. Informal assessments may include such things as student questions and responses during instruction and teacher observations of students as they work. Formal assessments may include such things as quizzes, homework assignments, journals, and projects.

**assets (knowledge of students):**

**personal:** Refers to specific background information that students bring to the learning environment. Students may bring interests, knowledge, everyday experiences, family backgrounds, and so on, that a teacher can draw upon to support learning.

**cultural:** Refers to the cultural backgrounds and practices that students bring to the learning environment, such as traditions, languages, world views, literature, art, and so on, that a teacher can draw upon to support learning.

**community:** Refers to common backgrounds and experiences that students bring from the community where they live, such as resources, local landmarks, community events, practices, and so on, that a teacher can draw upon to support learning.

**central focus:** A description of the important understandings and core concepts that you want students to develop within the learning segment. The central focus should go beyond a list of facts and skills, align with content standards and learning objectives, and address the subject-specific components in the learning segment. For example, the subject-specific components for secondary English-Language Arts include construction of explicit and inferred meaning from text and analysis of themes and ideas. A central focus for the learning segment might be analyzing the author’s use of language to develop theme within a complex text. The learning segment would focus on conceptual understanding of figurative language and characterization, citing evidence, and appropriate reasoning.

**commentary:** Submitted as part of each task and, along with artifacts, make up your evidence. The commentaries should be written to explain the rationale behind your teaching decisions and to analyze and reflect on what you have learned about your teaching practice and your students’ learning.

**complex text:** According to the Common Core State Standards,<sup>13</sup> can be measured by three dimensions: (1) The qualitative dimensions which include the meaning, purpose, structure, language conventions, and knowledge demands of the text for the reader; (2) The quantitative dimensions, such as word length or frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion of the text; and (3) The reader and task dimensions, which are variable specific to the readers, such as motivation, prior knowledge and experience, and the particular purpose and tasks to be done with the texts.

**electronic submission:** Your evidence is submitted electronically through the electronic portfolio management system used by your teacher preparation program. Your submission must conform to the specifications listed in the Secondary English-Language Arts Evidence Chart.

**engaging students in learning:** Using instructional and motivational strategies that promote students' active involvement in learning tasks that increase their knowledge, skills, and abilities related to specific learning objectives. Engagement in learning contrasts with student participation in learning tasks that are not well designed and/or implemented and do not increase student learning.

**evidence:** Consists of **artifacts** that document how you planned and implemented instruction **AND commentaries** that explain your plans and what is seen in the video recording(s) or examine what you learned about your teaching practice and your students' learning. Evidence should demonstrate your ability to design lesson plans with instructional supports that deepen student learning, use knowledge of your students to inform instruction, foster a positive learning environment that promotes student learning, monitor and assess student progress toward learning objectives, and analyze your teaching effectiveness. Your evidence must be submitted electronically using the electronic portfolio management system used by your teacher preparation program.

**evaluation criteria:** Performance indicators or dimensions that are used to assess evidence of student learning. They indicate the qualities by which levels of performance can be differentiated and that anchor judgments about the learner's degree of success on an assessment. Evaluation criteria can be represented in various ways, such as a rubric, a point system for different levels of performance, or rules for awarding full versus partial

credit. Evaluation criteria may examine correctness/accuracy, cognitive complexity, sophistication or elaboration of responses, or quality of explanations.

**learning environment:** The designed physical and emotional context, established and maintained throughout the learning segment to support a positive and productive learning experience for students.

**learning objectives:** Student learning outcomes to be achieved by the end of the lesson or learning segment.

**learning segment:** A set of 3–5 lessons that build one upon another toward a central focus, with a clearly defined beginning and end.

**learning task:** Includes activities, discussions, or other modes of participation that engage students to develop, practice, and apply skills and knowledge related to a specific learning goal. Learning tasks may be scaffolded to connect prior knowledge to new knowledge and often include formative assessment. A sample English-Language Arts learning task for students working with poetry could be: Identify examples of figurative language (e.g., metaphors, similes, personification); generate alternate examples of figurative language in opposition to those presented in the text; small group discussions about how the meaning of the poem changes when alternate examples are inserted; individual analysis of a new poem in terms of how figurative language helps the reader interpret the poem.

**patterns of learning:** Includes both quantitative and qualitative consistencies for different groups of students and individuals across the whole class. Quantitative patterns indicate the number of similar correct responses or errors across or within student assessments. Qualitative patterns include descriptions of understandings and/or misunderstandings, partial understandings, and/or perceptions and interpretations that underlie the quantitative patterns.

**prior academic learning and prerequisite skills:** Includes students' content knowledge and skills as well as academic experiences developed prior to the learning segment.

**rubrics:** Subject-specific evaluation criteria used to score your performance on edTPA. These rubrics are included in the handbook following the directions for each task. The descriptors in the five-level rubrics address a wide range of performance representing the knowledge and skills of a novice not ready to teach (Level 1) to the advanced practices of a highly accomplished beginner (Level 5).

**variety of learners:** Students in your class who may require different strategies or support. These students include but are not limited to students with IEPs, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students.