

GRADE

8

What's my child learning in school?

Reading, Writing, and Math

*An Introduction to
Washington's Grade Level Expectations*



Washington State

PTA[®]

everychild.onevoice.[®]

Introduction

You know your child's shoe size, whether she likes mustard on sandwiches, how long it takes him to wake up in the morning, if she likes science, and, perhaps, what he wants to be when he grows up.

Do you know what your child is learning in eighth grade?

We know from research that when parents take an interest in their children's education, ask questions about their learning and show that they have high expectations, their children achieve more. With your child's future in mind, we created this publication to give some examples of what eighth graders in Washington are expected to learn in three important subjects: reading, writing, and mathematics. Washington state has put a lot of time and effort in deciding exactly what students should know when they graduate from high school. You may know a teacher, parent, or community member who was involved in this important and complex work. The examples you'll find here are taken from materials teachers use to create their classroom lessons. All of the state's schools and teachers are working hard to help students achieve these Grade Level Expectations, sometimes called G-L-Es.

Teachers use a variety of ways to measure student learning in their own classrooms. The Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) is a test used all across the state as a way to confirm that students have developed strong skills and knowledge. **Your student must achieve proficiency on the 10th-grade WASL in reading, writing, math, and science to graduate from high school.**

The more you learn about the Grade Level Expectations, the better prepared you will be to help your child succeed.



Reading

In eighth grade, your child will learn to read, analyze, interpret, and critique different kinds of materials: works of fiction such as novels and short stories and works of nonfiction such as newspaper, magazine, and Web-based articles. You should expect him or her to become skilled and purposeful in selecting reference materials for projects, reading computer manuals and legal documents, and understanding the requirements of job applications.

Here are some of the things your child should be able to do:

- Read aloud with accuracy and expression about 145–155 words per minute.
- Identify the theme or message and important details of a book, short story, or newspaper article.
- Interpret how some of the characters in a book influence the main character's personality and actions.
- Explain how an author uses sentence structure and word choice to create a specific tone or message.
- Examine and critique the logic and evidence an author uses to make an argument.

You can help

Talk with your child about what he or she likes to read: novels about young people, science fiction, comics, how-to manuals, and Web logs written by friends.

Pick out a word puzzle to do together — you'll both learn new words.

Ask your child to give a movie review for your family, describing the plot, character development, conflict, and techniques used to keep the story moving.

Your child may like to listen to words rather than read them. Buy or rent from the library books on tape. Talk about the difference between hearing words read and reading them yourself.

Show that reading is important by going to the library with your child. Check out books for everyone in the family.

Writing

In eighth grade, your child will learn how to decide what materials to use for writing assignments such as research reports and personal essays, be able to write for different purposes, and use different approaches depending on who is reading the writing. Learning how to improve his or her own written work is important at this grade level — and your child may ask you for help.

Here are some of the things your child should be able to do:

- Use a variety of ways to develop ideas for writing, such as keeping a journal, making an outline, and gathering information through interviews and reading materials.
- Write for a variety of reasons, such as to persuade a parent to allow him or her to go on a field trip, to cheer up a friend or relative in the hospital, or to endorse night-lights at a soccer field.
- Use specific details and examples to support a main idea or essay topic, such as data from science research or family stories.
- Use different “writers’ voices” for different purposes: first person (I, we) to defend a personal position or preference and third person (it, they) to describe a research project conducted by someone else.
- Use correct spelling and punctuation in a final draft, and know words that are frequently misspelled such as *receive* and *cemetery*.

You can help

Ask your child to keep a record of a family event and then write about it with lots of detail for another relative: a birthday celebration, a family vacation or weekend trip, or the annual attempt to clean out the garage.

Help your child find well-written materials on a topic he or she cares about: sports, movies, fitness, video games or music. Read a couple of articles together and decide what writing techniques the author is using.

When your child has a writing assignment in another subject, such as social studies or science, offer to read a draft of the report. Rather than make changes yourself, ask your child to look for places where something stated might be confusing or hard to understand. After changes are made, discuss the differences with your child and see if more changes are necessary.

Your child may prefer to talk through ideas before writing. Have your child write down ideas in a notebook to capture those thoughts, details, and descriptions. Then allow time for your child to talk about those ideas with you.

Mathematics

In eighth grade, your child should be very skilled in adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing numbers in various forms: whole numbers, fractions, and decimals, for example. Your child will learn how to solve problems involving right triangles using the Pythagorean Theorem ($a^2 + b^2 = c^2$) and solve two-step equations.

Here are some examples of the problems your child should be able to solve:

- Rafael is 5 feet tall and his shadow is 3 feet in length. At the same time and place, the shadow of a flag pole is 9 feet in length. Demonstrate a method for finding the height of the flag pole and then find the height of the flag pole.
- Start with the number 8, add 3, multiply by 6, subtract 3, divide by 7, and then take the square root of the number.
- Given the height and weight of six students, graph a scatterplot of the data, draw a trend line, and estimate the weight of a student who is 65 inches tall.
- If $n = 5$, use mathematical procedures to show that $n(3 + 2) = (n \times 3) + (n \times 2)$.

You can help

On a day when you're doing lots of projects or errands, have your child identify all the ways you are using math: comparing prices of items in different quantities at the grocery store, paying bills, and estimating whether the super-size popcorn at the movies is a good buy.

On another day, have your child identify all the ways he or she is using math (apart from doing homework).

Ask your child to find articles in the sports, business, or real estate section of the Sunday newspaper that require knowledge of math.

Talk with your child about what kind of math problems he or she most enjoys working on (for example, computation, measurement, geometric figures, solving equations, or probability).

Learning more

Your child's school is the place to start to get better informed about Grade Level Expectations. Each school in the state has copies of subject area manuals published by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction that show the progression of what students learn from kindergarten through 10th grade. These manuals provide several examples of "evidence" for each GLE: ways your child may show what has been learned. You can make an appointment to get better acquainted with what's being taught or ask for more information at a parent-teacher conference or school open house.

If you have access to the Internet, you can find all of the Grade Level Expectations for reading, math, writing, communications, and science, along with helpful examples and definitions of terms such as *genres* in literature and *bivariate data* in probability. To access this information:

- go to www.k12.wa.us/ealrs,
- click a circle to show the grade level you want, and
- choose a subject area from the drop-down menu.

If a word in a description is underlined, you can click on it to learn the word's meaning. Many of the descriptions also have examples. To view these, click on the *e*.

There is no shortage of online resources to refresh your memory of what you learned in school so that you can reinforce your child's studies. Two that offer specific help with definitions of terms and sample problems are <http://homeworkhelp.aol.com> and www.math.com.

Washington State

PTA[®]

everychild.one voice.[®]

This publication was developed with the assistance of volunteer parents by the Washington State PTA. Funding for development, editorial and design services was provided by Washington Mutual. Publication was made possible by a contribution of printing services from The Boeing Company.

Editorial and design: KSA-Plus Communications