THE FLORIDA BENCHMARKS FOR EXCELLENT STUDENT THINKING (B.E.S.T.) STANDARDS
Parent Guide for Grade 4 English Language Arts

PREPARING FLORIDA CHILDREN FOR A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

The B.E.S.T. Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) are literacy standards for Florida students that will shape their education and make Florida the most literate state in the nation. The B.E.S.T. Standards will pave the way for Florida students to receive a world-class education and prepare them for a successful future.

Education leaders across the state of Florida improved the academic content standards, creating new expectations for what students need to know and be able to do. These benchmarks are goals that students are expected to achieve by the end of the school year. The B.E.S.T. Standards are designed to ensure that all students reach their greatest potential.

Preparing your child for success begins in Kindergarten and continues as your child moves up through each grade. This guide will support parents and families with children in fourth grade by helping you:

LEARN
about the B.E.S.T. Standards and why they matter for your child.

TALK
with your child’s teachers about what he/she will be learning in the classroom.

LOCATE
activities and resources to support your child’s learning in practical ways at home.

UNDERSTAND
important educational (academic) words that you will see in your child’s grade-level standards.

LEARN ABOUT THE FOURTH GRADE STANDARDS

YOUR CHILD WILL EXPLORE THE WORLD THROUGH TEXT BY:

• Using and applying knowledge of grade-level phonics and word-analysis skills to read and write single-syllable and multisyllabic words.
• Fluently read grade-level texts.
• Demonstrating legible cursive writing skills.
• Writing a personal or fictional narrative, write to make a claim and write expository texts that follow rules of standard English grammar, punctuation, capitalization and spelling.
• Improving writing by planning, revising and editing, with guidance and support from adults.

IN READING AND WRITING, YOUR CHILD WILL BE ABLE TO:

• Summarize a text to enhance comprehension.
• Explain how relevant details support the central idea.
• Explain how text features contribute to the meaning of the text.
• Explain how setting, events, conflict and character development contribute to the plot in a literary text.
• Figure out the meaning of unknown words using context clues, figurative language, word relationships, reference materials and/or background knowledge.
• Conduct research to answer a question, organizing information about the topic from multiple and valid sources.
LOCATE ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT LEARNING:

✓ Listen to your child read and reread a text at their reading level to build their fluency.
✓ Read aloud with your child for 20 minutes each day.
✓ Be a reading role model. If your child sees you reading he/she will see the importance of reading.
✓ Be frequent visitors to your local public library. Let him or her see you choosing, checking out, and enjoying books. Encourage your child to choose and check out books.
✓ Have your child research information about a topic. Encourage them to find books based on topics that they are interested in and that they would like to become an expert on. Talk about what is happening in the text. Have them write about what they learned.
✓ Have your child engage in real-world writing. Write a letter to a family member, write a short story, or have them keep a daily journal.
✓ Encourage your child to give detailed responses during conversations. Ask your child questions about what he/she sees and experiences. Be sure your questions call for sentence answers (more than yes/no answers).

FOURTH GRADE SUGGESTED BOOK LIST

Fish Cheeks by Amy Tan
Fort Mose: And the Story of the Man Who Built the First Free Black Settlement in Colonial America by Glennette Tilley Turner
The Declaration of Independence by Elaine Landau
Tales of the Odyssey (series) by Mary Pope Osborne
Mother Doesn’t Want a Dog by Judith Viorst
Halfway Down by A.A. Milne
The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis
The Castle in the Attic by Elizabeth Winthrop
Aaron and Alexander: The Most Famous Duel in American History by Don Brown
Homer Price by Robert McCloskey
The Story of Science: Aristotle Leads The Way by Joy Hakim
Who Would Win? (series) by Jerry Pallotta
Carry on, Mr. Bowditch by Jean Lee Latham
Johnny Tremain by Esther Forbes
The Wolf’s Story by Toby Forward
William Shakespeare and the Globe by Aliki
Casey at the Bat by Ernest Lawrence Thayer
Little House on the Prairie by Laura Ingalls Wilder
To Catch a Fish by Eloise Greenfield
Florida by Tamra Orr
Chester Nez and the Unbreakable Code: A Navajo Code Talker’s Story by Joseph Bruchac
On the Wings of Heroes by Richard Peck
Toliver’s Secret by Esther Wood Brady
Reaching for the Moon by Buzz Aldrin
Esperanza Rising by Pam Muñoz Ryan
Promises to Keep: How Jackie Robinson Changed America by Sharon Robinson
Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls
Where Was Patrick Henry on the 29th of May? by Jean Fritz

SUPPLEMENTAL READING OPTIONS

Black Beauty by Anna Sewell
Heidi by Johanna Spyri
The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett
The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams Bianco
The Black Stallion by Walter Farley
The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame
The Legend of Sleepy Hollow by Washington Irving
Anne of Green Gables by Lucy Maud Montgomery
Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson
Ralph S. Mouse by Beverly Cleary
Mary Poppins by P.L. Travers
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl
TALK TO YOUR CHILD’S TEACHER

Remember, you are your child’s first teacher. Think about a conference as a “team meeting” in which you will discover the special contributions each of you can bring to your fourth grader’s success. Here are some questions you could ask to prompt discussions:

- In the area of literacy, what are my child’s strengths? How are those strengths supported during instruction?
- Where is my child struggling and how can I help?
- What literacy skills should my child have mastered at this point? Has my child mastered them? Can I see an example of a task in reading and writing that my child is working through?
- What topics in connection to science and social studies is my child learning about through reading?
- What types of books is my child reading during independent reading? Are they limited to a specific reading level? Can I see an example of the type of texts my child is reading independently?
- Can my child show you that they understand what they are reading and learning through talking and writing? If not, what challenges are they facing?

EDUCATIONAL (ACADEMIC) WORDS TO KNOW

**AUTOMATICITY:** When reading, it is the ability to read words quickly and accurately.

**BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE (PRIOR KNOWLEDGE):** Information that is important to understanding a situation or problem; what you already know from experience.

**CENTRAL IDEA:** What the text is mostly about and connects the ideas found throughout the text.

**CLAIM:** To say that something is true or is a fact, although you cannot prove it and other people might not believe it.

**CONTEXT CLUES:** Context clues are hints that an author gives to help define a difficult or unusual word within a book. The clue may appear within the same sentence as the word or it may follow in the next sentence. Because most vocabulary is gained through reading, it is important that students are able to recognize and take advantage of context clues.

**DECODING:** Translating a word from print to speech by using knowledge of letter-sound relationships; also, the act of reading a new word by sounding it out.

**EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION:** Teacher/parent-led interactive instruction that is direct and includes a clear explanation of the targeted skill.

**FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE:** When you use a word or phrase that does not have its normal everyday literal meaning.

**FLUENCY:** Fluency is defined as the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression.

**MULTISYLLABIC WORDS:** A syllable is a unit of pronunciation having one vowel sound (a, e, i, o, u), with or without surrounding consonants (e.g., m, n, s, t) that form the whole or a part of a word. A multisyllabic word is a word of many syllables (e.g., there are two syllables in water and three in inferno).

**NARRATIVE:** A story that is told in full detail.

**PHONICS:** Teaches students how to connect sounds of letters or groups of letters in order to read words.

**PLOT:** The way that an author arranges the events, in a meaningful way, to shape the story.

**READING LEVEL:** Independent reading level is the highest level at which a reader has adequate background knowledge for the topic and can read text very quickly with very few errors.

**SUMMARIZE:** To express or cover the main points briefly.

**SYSTEMATIC INSTRUCTION:** A carefully thought out and planned sequence of instruction.

**TEXT FEATURES:** The parts of a story or article that are not the main body of the text; includes the title, headings, captions, graphs, maps, glossaries and/or illustrations.

**VALID SOURCE:** A source that is truthful in respect to the information presented.