



Program Description

Program Type 1: Basic ELA

Newsela Threads & Themes ELA/ELD for California is a comprehensive English Language Arts (ELA) and connected English Language Development (ELD) curriculum built for the 2026 California ELA/ELD adoption (Program 1: Basic ELA). Grounded in the California ELA Framework, *Threads & Themes* was designed to provide systematic, intentional instruction that features high-quality knowledge-building texts rooted in culturally and linguistically-sustaining practices, ensuring students see their identities reflected while expanding their worldviews. The materials are grounded in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to ensure universal access to grade-level rigor. The curriculum utilizes an asset-based pedagogy that honors diverse identities, home languages, and lived experiences of all students. By recognizing multilingualism and prior knowledge assets and providing the necessary scaffolds for all learners, including Multilingual Learners (MLLs) and striving readers, *Threads & Themes* supports students in independently navigating high text complexity in order to achieve grade-level success.

Instructional Philosophy & Design Framework

The curriculum architecture was developed with experts in English Language Arts and English Language Development to align with research-informed practices (often referred to as the Science of Literacy) and how these practices apply to secondary learners.

Core Pedagogical Pillars

- Evidence-Based Comprehensive Literacy:** *Newsela Threads & Themes* integrates the full range of processes required for proficient reading, writing, speaking, and language development. Instruction systematically builds on established foundational skills, including decoding, spelling, and fluency, while simultaneously improving grade-appropriate language comprehension, vocabulary, syntax awareness, and background knowledge through engagement with complex texts and purposeful writing. Reading, discussion, and writing are taught as mutually reinforcing practices so that students build knowledge, strengthen comprehension, and communicate ideas effectively.
- Access to Rigorous Literacy Learning:** Every student deserves access to meaningful grade-level texts and ideas. Scaffolds, routines, and explicit instruction maintain high expectations while making complex reading and writing tasks achievable for all learners. Integrated ELD instruction further ensures multilingual learners develop academic English while drawing on their full linguistic repertoires through translanguaging, academic discourse, and linguistically sustaining practices.
- Inquiry-Forward, Knowledge-Building Arcs:** Instruction is organized into four units that build knowledge over time through inquiry, investigation, and engagement with rich texts and sources. By utilizing high-quality,

connected, authentic text sets, students explore meaningful topics through sequences of reading, discussion, research, and writing that deepen understanding across lessons and investigative arcs. Within these arcs, the curriculum fosters student agency and choice through independent reading selections and student-led research pathways, allowing learners to pursue personal interests, accumulate knowledge, analyze ideas from multiple perspectives, and apply what they learn to increasingly complex questions about the world.

4. **Explicit, Integrated Writing:** Writing instruction is scaffolded and integrated throughout the curriculum as both a tool for learning and a discipline to be mastered. Powered by evidence-based writing frameworks, students are provided with metacognitive "maps" to support planning, drafting, revising, and reflecting so that writing becomes a central pathway for thinking, learning, and expressing understanding across the unit.

Curriculum Architecture & Unit Structure

Threads and Themes is designed for instructional coherence, utilizing a scaffolded framework that ensures a seamless transition between daily lessons and long-term inquiry goals. This intentional design provides a consistent environment where students can focus on deep conceptual inquiry and the mastery of complex texts.

The Three-Year Inquiry Progression

Across grades 6-8, the curriculum scaffolds to build students' knowledge, moving students through a vertical progression from personal exploration to systemic understanding:

Grade	Theme	Focus for Inquiry
6	Self & Story	Exploring identity, curiosity, and empathy through the power of shared stories.
7	Belonging & Witness	Investigating how identity, history, and fairness come into focus when we learn to see beyond ourselves.
8	Systems & Stewardship	Examining how power, memory, and civic action shape the stories we know and the stories carried forward.

The 4-Unit Arc: A Journey of Inquiry

Each grade is organized into a four-unit, knowledge-building journey. Each 6-8 week unit is anchored by a high-interest grade-level text that serves as the "knowledge vehicle" for sustained inquiry and connected investigation. This architecture is intentionally mapped to the five key themes of the California ELA/ELD Framework: *Meaning Making, Language Development, Effective Expression, Content Knowledge, and Foundational Skills*. Every unit follows a deliberate instructional arc that culminates in an inquiry-based performance task. Serving as the unit capstone, these tasks require students to synthesize knowledge, exercise agency, and apply their learning to real-world challenges.

Interdisciplinary Range

To ensure universal access to a wide range of genres and topics, the unit anchors are intentionally balanced across four distinct categories:

- **Contemporary:** Modern literature and relevant narratives.
- **Traditional/Canonical:** Classic works that provide a foundation in literary history.
- **STEAM:** Texts focusing on Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics.
- **Social Studies:** Investigating historical and civic themes.

Integrated ELD Instruction in Program 1

Newsela Threads & Themes offers a connected ELD curriculum with 180 days of parallel designated ELD instruction. To ensure Multilingual Learners participate equitably in the ELA classroom, the curriculum provides targeted linguistic scaffolding that builds into Core ELA themes, syntax, and vocabulary. By utilizing the same essential questions and anchor texts across both programs, instruction provides explicit language mapping that empowers students to bridge their primary-language assets with the academic demands of grade-level content.

Lesson Design & Routines

Every lesson in *Newsela Threads & Themes* follows a consistent, gradual release model to reduce cognitive load and maximize instructional time. Each day of instruction incorporates consistent routines and protocols to support coherence and ease of teaching.

The 50-Minute Daily Sequence:

1. **Launch (5 min):** The lesson opener is designed to activate students' prior knowledge and build engagement in the lesson's content. It typically involves brief tasks such as connecting to prior learning, reviewing homework, or sharing initial thoughts on the day's content objective.
2. **Literacy Lab (10 min):** This high-impact instructional block is focused on building foundational reading skills through targeted literacy accelerators, including vocabulary, morphology, language/syntax, and fluency within the context of grade-level texts. It also provides explicit writing instruction through direct teaching, modeling with exemplar sentences and paragraphs, guided practice, and peer feedback strategies.
3. **Learning in Action (30 min):** Students apply and practice the skills learned in the Literacy Lab while participating in activities such as close reading of a text, recursive writing, or Socratic Seminar.
4. **Look Back (5 min):** Students engage in metacognitive self-reflection and/or complete an exit ticket to evaluate student learning and progress toward lesson objectives.

Specialized Lesson Types:

The curriculum includes multiple, targeted lesson types throughout the academic year, each designed to meet specific skills, strategies, and learning goals. These include:

- **Spark Lessons:** High-engagement launches for units
- **Reading Lessons:** Close reading, evidence-gathering, and meaning-making

- **Writing Lessons:** Explicit instruction in the writing cycle and strategies
- **Research & Inquiry Lessons:** Source evaluation and information synthesis
- **Academic Discussion Lessons:** Structured protocols such as Socratic Seminars and Fishbowls
- **Presentation Lessons:** Opportunities to share research findings or performance tasks
- **Flex Day Lessons:** Built-in flexible learning days across all units that allow teachers to respond to ongoing student needs based on formative assessment and progress monitoring. Flex days offer data-driven, standards-aligned "Huddles" that provide small-group differentiation.

Curriculum Components & Configuration

Newsela Threads & Themes provides all core instructional materials in print and digital format. For the California review process, you will review the curriculum digitally. An alternative format, including print and digital, will be available for implementation.

Components:

1. Daily Instruction: Daily ELA lessons serve as the primary instructional entry point for teachers and students. Lessons are organized within units and provide access to core instructional activities along with short-form texts and resources that support knowledge building and literacy development.

- **Digital Teacher Experience:** Teachers access a built-in Teacher Guide that provides lesson instructions, Teacher Tips, integrated ELD strategies, differentiation options aligned to MTSS, and additional scaffolds to support diverse learners.
- **Digital Student Experience:** Students engage with lessons through reading, discussion, writing, and language activities connected to the unit topic. Short-form texts and structured supports help students build knowledge and participate in daily learning tasks.

2. The Assessment Suite: A comprehensive system for monitoring student progress through both standardized measures and authentic application of knowledge.

- **Formative Assessment and Daily Data:** Formative opportunities are embedded at the point of use within every day of instruction (such as standards-aligned Checks for Understanding and Confidence Continuum self-assessment reflection polls). These formative assessments provide quick insights to inform daily instruction and strategic student grouping for Flex Day "Huddles."
- **Summative Assessments:** Each unit includes two summative assessments that mirror the format and rigor of California's standardized exams. These assessments leverage tech-enhanced items (TEIs), including drag and drop, multi-select and sequence/ordering, to help ensure California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) readiness. By familiarizing students with these digital formats and the critical thinking they require, the program ensures California students are prepared for the specific demands of state testing environments.
- **Inquiry-Based Performance Tasks:** Each unit builds to and culminates in a major performance task where students apply their learning to a real-world inquiry. These tasks require students to synthesize information from multiple sources and demonstrate mastery through extended writing, presentations, or creative projects.

- **Instructional Support Materials:** The assessment suite includes student-facing assessments, comprehensive answer keys, and high-quality exemplars. It also provides professional guidance for teachers on how to facilitate assessments and leverage data to drive meaningful differentiation and multi-tiered supports.

3. Flex Day Instruction and Resources: Data-Driven Differentiation

- Flex Days provide structured opportunities for teachers to respond to formative assessment data and student learning needs. During Flex Days, teachers may organize students into “Huddles” (targeted small group or whole class sessions) to teach key concepts, provide additional practice with essential skills, extend learning for students who are ready for greater challenge, or facilitate targeted small-group instruction. By embedding these opportunities within the unit structure, the program supports responsive teaching practices and contributes to a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) approach that helps ensure all students continue progressing toward grade-level expectations. Unlike programs that rely primarily on teacher-created adjustments, the curriculum intentionally builds structured opportunities for responsive instruction into the unit pacing so teachers can address emerging learning needs without disrupting the overall sequence of grade-level instruction.

4. Additional Curriculum Resources: *Newsela Threads & Themes* provides a robust suite of specialized resources to support the instructional framework and ensure compliance with California’s adoption criteria:

- **Specialized Instructional Guides:** Dedicated handbooks for Dyslexia support, MTSS, and ELD Professional Guidance.
- **Family and Community Engagement:** Resources including a Family Engagement Guide, Multilingual Home Connections and Community Asset Mapping tools to build culturally responsive bridges between the classroom, home and the community.
- **Resource and Navigation:** A Comprehensive Scope and Sequence, Program Navigation Guide, and Routines Protocols Appendix to ensure instructional consistency.

MTSS & Differentiation

Newsela Threads & Themes is built on a proactive **Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)** model. The curriculum ensures that Tier 1 instruction is accessible to all students while providing systematic pathways for additional support.

- **Data-Informed Monitoring:** Embedded Checks for Understanding throughout each lesson provide ongoing formative data, allowing teachers to monitor student progress within the core instructional block.
- **Responsive Flex Days:** Occurring every 5-7 days, Flex Days serve as the primary structure for Tier 1 differentiation. During this time, teachers utilize data to facilitate targeted instruction. Huddles are organized around the CA Framework themes: *Meaning Making, Language Development, Effective Expression, Content Knowledge, and Foundational Skills*.
- **Extended Support:** The curriculum provides specialized instructional support and guides for students with disabilities, including Dyslexia-specific accommodations. Guidance connecting to external screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tools further supports teachers in identifying students who may need additional Tier 2 or Tier 3 support beyond the core program.

ELA/ELD Integration & Accessibility

Newsela *Threads & Themes* integrates ELD and ELA instruction with clear lesson labeling and organization to support seamless planning and implementation – what we call an “Integrated-First Architecture.”

Lessons feature:

- **Dual Objectives:** An ELA Content Objective and an ELD Language Objective align to both CA CCSS and ELD standards.
- **Embedded Supports:** Woven directly into lesson components, these supports move students beyond surface-level understanding of vocabulary and language toward meaningful application in the context of the lesson's content. These include:
 - structured sentence frames for immediate practice,
 - contingent "If/Then" prompts that give teachers responsive moves based on what they observe students doing, and
 - Specific formative look/listen for that helps teachers assess whether students are accurately using target language structures and vocabulary to make meaning from the text.

Evidence-Based Literacy for All California Students

Newsela Threads & Themes offers a fully integrated, evidence-based curriculum for grades 6-8 that combines rigorous, grade-level texts with systematic language development. Through a consistent, streamlined structure, vertically aligned units, and integrated ELA and ELD instruction, educators and students gain access to meaningful, high-quality learning experiences. Lessons feature inquiry-based instruction, structured writing, knowledge-building, critical thinking, and purposeful differentiation, ensuring all California learners engage with grade-level rigor. By unifying research-based best practices with Newsela’s authentic content, *Threads & Theme* prepares California students for long-term academic success and a lifelong love of learning.