

Maine Council for English Language Arts
Statement on the Teaching of Grammar

Adopted August 27, 2016

Teaching and using accurate, appropriate grammar is an ongoing concern of parents, teachers, and administrators across all grade levels. How and when to teach grammar is a frequent concern in discussions about student literacy on local, state, and national levels. However, grammar—which is only one element of many in the development of literate students—sometimes earns outsized attention in these conversations. Unexamined beliefs about grammar as a concept often emerge within these conversations. Some problematic misconceptions are that correcting a student’s grammar is a “quick fix”; that grammar, alone, is a good measure of the writing development of students; and that knowledge of grammar automatically improves writing.

The Maine Council for English Language Arts believes grammar should not be taught in isolation. Grammar is one component of a complex task that takes place in the classroom through lessons in reading, writing, and speaking. Because knowledge of conventions, including syntax and mechanics, is essential to efficient communication on any level, The Maine Council for English Language Arts believes the following:

- Students learn grammar best through the use of authentic texts, as well as through a close reading of mentor texts.
- Grammar knowledge is applied as part of a strategic and purposeful use of language (that is, to thank someone for a gift, to inform a teacher about an upcoming absence) and so should be taught with that wider understanding in mind.
- Classroom teachers must draw from their knowledge of grammar and the needs of their students to determine how, when, and why to include direct grammar instruction in their classrooms.

In order to make informed decisions about grammar instruction, teachers need, and therefore school districts must support, sustained professional development that enhances their understanding of the teaching of grammar. Furthermore, pre-service teachers should have pedagogical and theoretical coursework and training in the teaching of grammar as part of their teacher preparation program.