

Arizona English Language Arts (ELA) Standards Revision – Expert Panel Review

Reviewer Name

Elizabeth Pope

As you conduct your review of the **introduction**, please consider the following questions.

- A. Does the introduction provide sufficient information and guidance on how to read the standards?
- B. Does the introduction provide sufficient information on how the standards are structured?
- C. Is there anything missing that should be included in the introduction?

1. Please provide feedback on the introduction section. Include strengths as well as suggestions for refinements.

- A. The introduction does a good job clearly defining some key details and differences that should aid in reading, understanding and implementing the ELA standards. Detailed information such as the delineation between the standards and the curriculum and instructional methods that may be employed to help students reach the standards by the end of the year seem like important and useful definitions. It may be helpful to use a consistent set of terminology or abbreviations throughout the introduction so that readers can easily connect information from one section to the next as well as become more familiar with the language and structure of the standards. For example, when explaining the progression of expectations related to reading increasingly complex texts on page 3, the second sentence begins with “Standard 10” in reference to the Reading Anchor Standard (R.10). It may be helpful to refer to this as “Anchor Standard 10” and include the abbreviated form (R.10) so that readers can easily understand that this is the “standard 10” being discussed. The same suggesting applies to page 4 when discussing “Standard 9” in writing.
- B. The detailed information about the structure of the standards on pages 6 and 7 is mostly clear and helpful. In the diagram “How to Read the Arizona English Language Arts Standards” it may be helpful to provide a brief explanation or list of strands and clusters. It may not be clear to those who are unfamiliar with this language how an Anchor Standard is different from a Strand or that a Cluster is sort of a sub-category within and Strand. Clarifying the language of the ELA and Math standards seems especially since it is a different format and different language than the “Concept, Strand, and PO” used in the Social Studies, Science, etc. standards.
- C. Aside from defining Anchor Standard, Strand, Cluster, and Standard it may also be helpful to somehow link this to the language used in the older/other standards that still use the Concept, Strand, PO language. This may be outside the scope of the ELA Standards revision project but I know that it is something some pre-service teachers and new teachers find confusing and difficult.

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conduct your review of the **glossary**, please consider the following questions.

- A. Does the glossary identify key terms and resources?
- B. Do the definitions provide sufficient guidance for practitioners?
- C. Is there anything missing that should be included in the glossary?

2. Please provide feedback on the glossary section. Include strengths as well as suggestions for refinements.

A. The glossary seems quite comprehensive and provides important details and supportive information about some of the new ideas and skills introduced in this version of the ELA standards (defining the 3 parts of text complexity, providing specific phonetic and orthographic examples for the new Reading Foundational Skills standards). While the explanation of the uses of e.g. and i.e. within the standards is helpful I'm not sure the glossary is the most helpful/logical place. This may be something to include as a footnote on the actual standards pages to be sure that readers see it and understand why the different abbreviations are used in differing contexts within the standards.

B. Definitions and examples provided in the glossary are succinct and provide practitioners with basic information needed to understand and implement important aspects of the ELA standards. The definition for text complexity is particularly useful as it explicitly states that there are several variables unique to individual readers that play an important role in determining actual text complexity. While quantitative measures are useful they are by no means the only indicator of actual text complexity for a reader. Including the qualitative measures and the reader and task indicators provides a much more comprehensive and likely more accurate assessment of text complexity for students. Including these as part of the three-part model for determining text complexity also allows practitioners to make proper instructional modifications for students with varying experiences with texts and students at various developmental levels within a given grade. The three-part model is a good way for practitioners to be able to tailor their reading instruction and instructional tasks to the variety of students' individual needs while still working within the frame of the grade-level standards.

C. It may be helpful to include definitions of or some guidelines as to what qualifies as reading "proficiency" and what reading "independently" means. Both of these terms are used in the Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity cluster of standards in the Reading Standards for Literature strand without any kind of clear definition of what proficiency and independence look like.

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conduct your review of the standards, please consider the following questions.

- A. Does each standard clearly state what students should know and be able to do?
- B. Can the standards be measured?
- C. Are there any ambiguous or unclear words/phrases (some, a few, follow, understand...)?
- D. Do the standards in each section have sufficient **breadth of content or skill**?
- E. Do the standards in each section have sufficient **depth of content and rigor**?
- F. Is there meaningful alignment and development of skills/knowledge across the standard from one grade level to the next?
- G. Are the standards written with clear student expectations that would be interpreted and implemented consistently across the state?

3. Please provide feedback on the Reading Literature (RL) Strand. Include strengths as well as suggestions for refinements.

In particular reference to the standards for grades K-3 in the Reading Literature Strand:

A. Most of the standards clearly state what students should know or be able to do by the end of a given grade level. Standard 1.RL.5 states that students should be able to explain the differences between various types of texts “drawing on a wide reading of a range of text types”. This phrase is unclear. Does this mean that students should have read a variety of different text types and be able to reference those when describing the main differences between the types of texts?

B. The only standards in this strand that may cause practitioners potential trouble in terms of clear and observable measurement/assessment are those for grades 2 and 3 in the Range of Reading Level of Text Complexity. The terms “proficient” and “independent” are used without any guidelines or measureable descriptors of what constitutes a proficient and an independent reader.

C. The Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity cluster for grades 2 and 3 (2.RL.10 and 3.RL.10) states that students need to be able to read and comprehend “proficiently and independently”. These terms are somewhat ambiguous and can be difficult to measure unless these terms are in some way operationalized. It may be helpful to clarify if “proficiency” corresponds to a certain fluency percentage (is it comparable to a 95% fluency rate?) and what qualifies as “independent”. Does this mean that the student reads quietly on their own, that they don’t need help reading new/unfamiliar words? Operationalizing these terms is especially important when the standards are tied to state tests. If there is a standard measure of “proficiency” being used for evaluation at the state level then practitioners, parents, and students should be made aware of these expectations. For example, if the AZ Merit is to be the measure by which student mastery of the standards is assessed then practitioners need to have a clear idea of the skill level that is expected of students, or considered “proficient”, on the test.

D. The standards in this strand cover a variety of skills and topics related specifically to literature. In grades K-3 this strand helps students gain comprehensive knowledge of important literary elements, how language is used to convey meaning, various types of literature and then challenges them to apply these skills and knowledge in increasingly complex ways. For example students move from identifying characters, plots, and themes in kindergarten to comparing these elements across different works in third grade.

E. The progression of the standards across grade levels allows for a great deal of depth in content and rigor between grades K-3. Within each grade level the depth of content may not be as apparent as it is when examining the standards across grade levels. However, the expectations at each grade level are sufficiently complex given students’ developmental levels in each grade. Student expectations are progressively and appropriately more complex throughout each grade level.

F. The standards in this strand progress in a logical manner across grade levels. The expectations follow an appropriate progression of complexity given students’ cognitive and language development in grades K-3. The standards are aligned in such a way across grades K-3 so that students are introduced to basic concepts, skills, and knowledge related to literature and then scaffold through each grade level to be able to apply those skills and knowledge in an increasingly more complex way that allows them to become active participants when reading literary works. The cognitive and linguistic expectations in this strand match the skill and developmental levels typical of students at each age/grade level. For example, all standards related to the Anchor Standard R.4 focus on the development of students’ metalinguistic skills as readers. In Kindergarten students are learning how to answer and ask questions about new/unknown words. In Kindergarten children are still thinking in a very literal and concrete manner and their vocabularies are also growing at a rapid rate. Helping them to identify new words and building their vocabulary through literature seems highly appropriate. By the third grade most students have begun to realize that words can have multiple meanings. As it is now developmentally appropriate, students in the third grade are learning to distinguish literal from nonliteral phrases in literary works, which allows them to leverage their current metalinguistic skills, and continue to build upon them.

G. The only standards that I think may be subject to inconsistency in implementation in this strand are again those in the Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity. Even though text complexity is something that is greatly affected by the skill level of the individual reader (as explained in the glossary), as discussed above, having some type of metric to determine what “proficient” and “independent” mean within those individual parameters is necessary to ensure consistent expectations for students given their individual abilities and skill levels.

4. Please provide feedback on the Reading Informational (RI) Text Strand. Include strengths as well as suggestions for refinements.

In particular reference to the standards for grades K-3 in the Reading Informational Text Strand:

- A. The standards in this strand are all very clear in terms of stating what students should know or be able to do by the end of a given grade level with the exception of standards 2.RI.10 and 3.RI.10 (discussed further below).
- B. Like the Reading Standards for Literature, the only standards that would be difficult for practitioners to accurately measure and assess are those related to Anchor Standard RI.10 in grades 2 and 3. Again the standards state that students will be able to read “proficiently” and “independently” by the end of the year without providing a clear, operationalized definition of “proficient” or “independent”. Since both of these terms are used in relation to literature and informational texts it may also be necessary to define them specifically in relation to each type of text (is reading literature proficiently the same thing as reading informational texts proficiently?).
- C. The terms “proficiently” and “independently” in standards 2.RI.10 and 3.RI.10 are the only ambiguous words in the standards in the Reading Standards for Informational Text. Again it is important to define these terms for teachers, parents, and students and identify any differences from the “proficient” and “independent” reading of literary texts. For example, do students need to be able to read and interpret supplemental illustrations like graphs and maps accurately in order to be considered a “proficient” reader of informational texts?
- D. The standards in this strand cover a wide range of skills and topics related to informational texts. Not only are students expected to learn about the various parts of different informational texts but they are also expected to learn to use them in practical ways to help further their own understanding of the text itself. These skills are invaluable tools that reinforce students’ self-regulatory and metacognitive skills (such as monitoring their own understanding of the text while reading).
- E. As mentioned above the standards in this strand not only introduce students to a variety of informational texts and their features but students are also expected to learn to utilize these features to gain more knowledge or a deeper understanding of the material in the text. Just as the expectations in the Reading Standards for Literature did, the student expectations in the Reading Standards for Informational text get progressively more sophisticated and more complex with each grade level creating a greater depth of understanding of how to read and use informational text effectively.
- F. The progression of student expectations in the Reading Standards for Informational Text strand again follow a logical and developmentally appropriate progression from kindergarten to grade 3. The standards set forth the expectation that students be introduced to important aspects and features of informational texts as well as different types of informational texts and their corresponding purposes. The standards in this strand introduce skills early on (such as identifying reasons the author gives to support points in a text in kindergarten) that will become very important to students as they transition from learning to read to reading to learn. Skills such as asking and answering questions about key details, connecting pieces of information in a text are important foundational skills that will allow students to successfully read to learn.
- G. Most of the standards in the Reading Standards for Informational Text strand are written clearly in a manner that would make consistent implementation easy for practitioners across the state with the exception again of standards 2.RI.10 and 3.RI.10. The lack of clarity in defining “proficiency” and “independently” could make this standard very difficult to implement with consistency and measure with precision. Expectations/guidelines for what qualifies as a proficient and independent reader of informational text should be provided even if one is taking into account individual differences in skill level and experience of readers in a certain grade level or class.

5. Please provide feedback on the Reading Foundational (RF) Skills strand (Grades K-5). Include strengths as well as suggestions for refinements.

In particular reference to the standards for grades K-3 in the Reading Foundational Skills Strand:

- A. Each standard clearly states what students should be able to do with the exception of standards 1.RF.4, 2.RF.4, and 3.RF.4. All three of these standards in the Fluency cluster state that students will “read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension”. What constitutes a sufficient amount of fluency and accuracy should be clarified.
- B. All of the Reading Foundational Skills standards are observable and measurable with the exception of the Fluency cluster standards in grades 1, 2, and 3 as mentioned above. Even though the standard includes subparts (A, B, and C) none of those provide a clear and operationalized definition for what “sufficient accuracy and fluency” mean for each grade level. Without clear definitions of “sufficient accuracy and fluency” are practitioners cannot accurately assess student performance and progress.
- C. The only word that is somewhat ambiguous in the standards in the Reading Foundational Skills strand is, again, “sufficient”. Like “proficiency” and “independence” in the Literature and Informational Text strands, “sufficient” is vague at best and may mean a lot of different things to different practitioners. Some sort of definition or guidelines as to what constitutes a reader who demonstrates “sufficient accuracy and fluency” should be provided either within the standard or in the glossary.

- D./E. The addition of the Reading Foundational Skills strand seems like a good way to include some basic yet critical skills related to phonics and print concepts. The addition of these standards compliments the Literature and Informational Text standards nicely. Helping students develop a solid understanding of phonetic rules and patterns is hugely important for students’ reading, writing, and spelling skills. The Reading Foundational Skills strand allows students to learn and practice increasingly difficult and irregular phonetic skills as they progress through the early elementary grades providing both ample breadth and depth of print skills, phonetic skills, and fluency skills.
- F. The progression of the Reading Foundational Skills standards is logical and builds in terms of complexity of the skills expected of students at each grade level. As students become familiar with print concepts those skills are no longer included in the standards and the phonetic skills become increasingly more complicated (dealing with irregular sounds, spellings, etc.). The progression of the standards compliments the natural development of students’ language and vocabulary skills between grades K-3. As students are becoming increasingly more fluent readers and are beginning to read to learn it makes sense to include content that will help them continue to develop and improve these skills.
- G. Almost all of the standards in the Reading Foundational Skills are easy to interpret and should be easy to implement with consistency across the state. Standard K.RF.3 part C states that students should be able to “read the 50 most common high-frequency words by site from a research based list”. It may be helpful to include examples of what these “research based lists” are (Dolch, etc.). The standards in that same cluster for grades 1-3 (1.RF.4, 2.RF.4, and 3.RF.4) may be difficult to implement consistently as well die to the vagueness of the wording “Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency..” What one teacher considers sufficiently fluent and accurate for one student may not be considered sufficient by another teacher or may not be “sufficient” enough to perform well on standards based assessments. Clearly defining what skills/level is considered “sufficient” would help increase consistent expectations and implementation.

6. Please provide feedback on the Writing (W) strand. Include strengths as well as suggestions for refinements.

In particular reference to the standards for grades K-3 in the Writing Strand:

- A. In general the Writing standards clearly state what students are expected to know/do. There are a few standards that use some ambiguous terminology such as “effective technique” in standard 3.W.3 that aren’t quite as clear as the other standards. However, the supporting information given related to this standard in parts A-D gives readers/practitioners a reasonably clear idea of what students are expected to do that would constitute “effective technique” when composing a narrative piece.
- B. The majority of the standards can be clearly measured and assessed. Some of the wording in the Text Types and Purposes cluster in grades 1 and 2 is rather vague and would be difficult to measure. Providing specific guidelines to clarify the expectations would make assessing and measuring student progress toward these standards much more feasible. For example, how many details qualify as “some detail”? Is one enough or should students include more than one? If the expectation is more than one, how many? It may be helpful to provide an acceptable range if a specific number isn’t appropriate in terms of the intended expectation.
- C. All of the standards in the Text Types and Purposes cluster in grade 1 use the word “some” without providing any measurable guidelines outlining or explaining what “some” is. Expecting that students provide “some sense of closure” or including “some facts” or “some details” is very open to interpretation. What does “some sense of closure” mean? When a student ends a piece with “the end” would that be considered “some sense of closure”? Is one fact or one detail considered “some” or are they expected to include more than one? Standard 2.W.3 states that students need to include a “well-elaborated event or short sequence of events”. What constitutes a “well elaborated event”?
- D./E. The breadth of skills expected of students in the younger grades related to writing various forms of text may be a bit beyond their developmental capabilities. Young children are typically writing as a means of telling the reader something or giving information. Even though the purpose of the writing may be different (to tell a story, to explain how to do something) the tone of the writing may be one of knowledge telling across all types of texts. Not until the later elementary years and into adolescence to students typically develop the ability to move beyond knowledge telling and into more of a knowledge transformation where they are effectively able to teach the reader something through their writing. It is important to keep this in mind as much of the writing young children do will sound the same even though they have intended to write for differing purposes. Students will likely understand that there are a wide variety of texts each with their own structure and tone that are related to the purpose before they are really able to replicate the tone of each different type and expand beyond stating facts or details.
- F. The progression of skills related to writing flows logically from one grade level to the next with slight increases in the complexity of skills expected of students. The main focus seems to be to introduce students to various types of writing as well as the editing and research processes. There is no mention of the planning phase of writing in these grade levels though. It seems as though planning ideas, details, facts, etc. would be a key component in learning how to write for differing purposes. Including a standard that addresses the use of planning strategies/skills would likely be helpful for students since they are being asked to compose different types of texts with very specific elements such as introductions and concluding statements.
- G. With the exception of the ambiguous phrases mentioned above (sections C and D above), the Writing standards should be easily interpreted and implemented by various practitioners across the state. Replacing vague language such as “some sense of closure” or “some details” would help increase the consistency of expectations for students across the state.

7. Please provide feedback on the Writing Foundational (WF) Skills strand (Grades K-3). Include strengths as well as suggestions for refinements.

In particular reference to the standards for grades K-3 in the Writing Foundational Skills Strand:

- A. The Writings Standards Foundations Skills clearly state what students are expected to do. The standards are written in clear, observable, and measurable terms. The Reading Foundational Skills Glossary also serves as a helpful reference and provides examples and definitions of specific phonetic patterns included in the Writing Standards Foundations Skills.
- B. All of the standards in this strand are written in a manner that allows practitioners to measure them easily and relatively precisely. Since most of the standards address specific, individual skills (write upper and lower case skills, write the 20 most frequently used words accurately) measurement and assessment should be relatively easy. The only standard in grades K-3 that may be difficult to measure is part B of 2.WF.1, which indicates that students should be able to “write with sufficient fluency to support composition”. “Sufficient fluency” is very vague and would be difficult to measure objectively.
- C. As mentioned above standard 2.WF.1(b) uses the phrase “sufficient fluency” in reference to writing speed, which is rather ambiguous and highly subjective. In grade 2 many students may still be developing the control and fine motor skills needed to be able to write legibly and quickly. While some students may be able to write quickly and legibly others may still be mastering the fine motor control needed in order to write legibly. The way this standard is written it sounds as if the focus is on writing speed which may not be the best approach developmentally to helping students practice and develop their skills. The rest of the standards in this strand are quite specific and clearly state the skills and behaviors that students are expected to perform in relation to handwriting, conventions, and spelling.
- D./E. Like the Reading Standards Foundational Skills the Writing Standards Foundation Skills are a great addition to the ELA standards. Explicitly teaching skills related to handwriting, conventions, grammar, and spelling explicitly to students and allowing students to practice them throughout the first four years of school will support their development in the other areas of reading and writing. The phonetic and linguistic skills in each grade level are appropriate for students in grades K-3 in terms of cognitive and language development. The skills in the kindergarten and grade 1 standards should help students develop skills that will allow them to begin expressing their ideas through writing. As their motor and language skills develop the expectations outlined in the grades 2 and 3 standards should allow students to continue to develop their abilities to express their ideas through writing with more complexity and greater accuracy (in terms of spelling and grammar). As students are learning more about language, the skills addressed in these standards support students’ abilities to transfer these skills into their writing.
- F. The standards in this strand follow a meaningful and logical progression across grade levels that, for the most part, are in alignment with developmental processes of students in these grade levels. The portions of the standards that relate to language (grammar and vocabulary) align with developmental markers related to language development in children ages 5-9. The skills related to motor development (handwriting) are mostly congruent with motor skill development of children at these ages. As mentioned above, the standard in grade 2 that states students should be able to “write with sufficient fluency to support composition” may be a bit outside the range of some students in grade 2. Some students may be able to write legibly and with fluidity but may still need extra time to do so as they are still working on developing fine motor control.
- G. The Writing Standards Foundational Skills should be easily implemented with consistency across the state. Most of these standards address rules of the English language that are not likely subject to different interpretations among practitioners.

8. Please provide feedback on the Speaking and Listening (SL) strand. Include strengths as well as suggestions for refinements.

In particular reference to the standards for grades K-3 in the Speaking and Listening Strand:

- A. The Speaking and Listening standards at each grade level (K-3) clearly state what students should know and be able to do.
- B. The standards in the Speaking and Listening strand include observable and measureable behaviors that students demonstrate frequently in the classroom. Practitioners should be able to observe and measure these skills in many different contexts in a given day.
- C. The Speaking and Listening standards are written very clearly and describe various actions and behaviors associated with being an active speaker and listener. The standards list specific behaviors that students are expected to demonstrate as listeners and speakers for both the purposes of learning/clarifying information as well as presenting ideas and information.
- D./E. Speaking and listening are behaviors that happen all the time in classrooms. Having standards that highlight the behaviors of effective speakers and listeners not only allows student to learn and practice these skills, but they also provide alternative ways for students to practice skills addressed by other ELA standards. This type of varied and distributed practice is essential for mastery learning in classrooms. The speaking and listening standards begin with somewhat of a narrower focus in kindergarten and then expand as the grade levels progress, including both a wider variety of speaking and listening skills as well as increasingly more complex skills (such as researching and preparing ideas to bring to a discussion and explaining their own ideas).
- F. The skills in the Speaking and Listening strand progress across grade levels in a meaningful and logical ways. The progression of the skills associated with speaking and learning standards are also closely aligned with the skills and knowledge that students are learning and expected to demonstrate in other strands of the ELA standards. The speaking and listening standards allow students to practice skills related to being an active and critical reader as well as verbally demonstrate many of the same skills addressed by the writing standards.
- G. The expectations in the Speaking and Listening strand are clear and should be implemented with relative ease and consistency across the state. Including standards for speaking and listening provides practitioners with specific skills that will not only help students become better communicators but that also support the development of skills in other strands of the ELA standards.

9. Please provide feedback on the Language (L) strand. Include strengths as well as suggestions for refinements.

In particular reference to the standards for grades K-3 in the Language Strand:

- A. The standards in the Language strand clearly state what students are expected to know and do in relation to conventions of the English language, vocabulary, and the use of language in various contexts.
- B. The Language standards are all written using observable and measureable language. The standards include specific skills related to conventions of the English language and vocabulary that are easily observed and assessed (such as knowing various types of punctuation and identifying root words). At each grade level there is ample opportunity for students to experience and practice the specific skills related to the Language Standards in various contexts in a given day making them easy to measure and assess.

C. The skills included in the Language standards are expressed clearly, without ambiguous or vague wording. These standards address very specific skills related to conventions, language use, and vocabulary. The specificity of the skills makes the expectations very clear.

D./E. In terms of breadth and depth in relation to developmental appropriateness of the Language standards, they mostly follow the progression of language and vocabulary development of students in grades K-3. In kindergarten students are still adding words to their vocabulary at a rather rapid pace and have started applying the rules and conventions of the English language more accurately than before. ~~Standard K.L.4 states that kindergarten students should be able to “determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases”.~~ This may be outside the scope of some kindergartener’s developmental abilities. Kindergarten students might recognize that a word or phrase that contains multiple meaning words doesn’t make sense or may be confused by a word that has multiple meanings but they may not be ready developmentally to truly understand that words that sound and look the same can actually mean different things. This is an important skill to introduce students to at this age/grade but they may not be ready to master it until first or second grade. The standards in the Language strand for grades 1-3 align with typical cognitive and language development nicely. The breadth and depth of the skills matches the typical development of vocabulary and language for students in these grade levels. For example, in second grade students are expected to “compare formal and informal uses of English”. According to theories of language development this is around the time that students are learning the differences between formal and informal language and are beginning to speak to different people or groups of people using different language and language patterns (they speak to their peers more informally than they do their teachers).

F. The standards in the Language strand progress in a clear and meaningful way across grades K-3. As mentioned above, the skills addressed are mostly developmentally appropriate for students in each grade and follow the natural progression of cognitive and language development. Many of the skills included in the Language strand are skills that students will already begin to develop naturally and will improve with instruction and practice. The Language Standards also allow students to continue to develop skills that will support their reading, writing, and communication skills development. As students’ language skills improve and their understanding of the English language becomes more comprehensive they become better reader, writers, listeners, and speakers.

G. The Language Standards are written in a manner that should be easy for practitioners to understand and implement consistently across the state. Most of the standards address specific rules or skills that require little beyond literal interpretation by practitioners.

10. Please provide any additional comments about this draft that you want the revision committee to consider.