

Arizona English Language Arts Standards Review

Executive Summary

Process and English Language Arts Workgroup Tasks

In November 2015, the English Language Arts Workgroup commenced meetings to review public comments related to the 2010 English Language Arts standards. Participation in the English Language Arts Workgroup was based on self-submitted applications. The workgroups functioned in an accordion model; members of the workgroup were fluid and participated at varying stages of the review process to add new voices and perspectives at each step. Subcommittee members were invited to participate at each workgroup meeting and lead their assigned grade-level review workgroup team. Applications for workgroup involvement opened in May 2015 and remain open until the standards are officially adopted. Monthly meetings of the full workgroup started in November 2015 and have continued through July 2016. Special projects/small workgroup meetings have also been held, and any draft materials produced by the smaller workgroup reported back to the full workgroup for discussion and consensus.

From November 2015 through January 2016, the English Language Arts Workgroup reviewed, interpreted, and categorized all public comments that were received on the 2010 standards, including comments that did not directly address the standards themselves. After categorizing public comments, the workgroups utilized this information to inform their decisions regarding the refinement or revision of the 2010 English Language Arts Standards.

Using the public comment data, academic research, and three criteria for the review process (clarity, cognitive demand, and measurability), workgroups reviewed all K-12 English Language Arts standards individually and across strands and grade levels. The English Language Arts Workgroups utilized the following definitions when reviewing all standards for clarity, cognitive demand and measurability:

CLARITY: The quality of being easily understood. (*Merriamwebster.com*)

- The standard is clear and understandable.
- The standard can be used by educators to clearly guide learning for students.
- The standard can be used by educators to build **student** understanding.
- Examples or parenthesis in/after the standard provide clarification or define the limit of the standard.

COGNITIVE DEMAND: Cognitive Demand represents the type of thinking and level of complexity of thought we expect students to engage in when learning. Cognitive Demand is about high levels of reasoning and thinking. Standards are written at different levels/ranges of cognitive demand.

- The standard has complexity of reasoning.
- The strand contains a range of cognitive demand/complexity of reasoning.

MEASUREABLE: Student progression towards mastery of the standards should be observable and verifiable.

- The standard can be measured through varied modes of assessments.

A final review by ***progression*** (purposeful sequencing of teaching and learning expectations across multiple developmental stages, ages, or grade levels¹) of content within and across grade levels occurred in June and July 2016. Additionally, the workgroup revisited the public comments multiple times to ensure that all data were utilized during the review period. The final meeting included final edits to the introduction, glossary, and standards with a final look at the progressions within and across strands and across grade levels.

Vote of support to release the draft for public comment

The final meeting also included an individual survey of all English Language Arts Workgroup members present on July 21st to vote in support of the release of the draft Arizona English Language Arts Standards for public review. All members present responded with strongly agree/agree that they supported the release of the current draft of the Arizona English Language Arts Standards for public review.

Key Issues Raised in Public Comments/ASDC and Workgroup Meetings and Addressed in the Draft English Language Arts Standards

- **The English Language Arts draft standards were vetted by Arizona educators.**
Over 100 Arizona English Language Arts educators from 9 counties donated 2,900 hours of their time to the review process. All revisions to the Arizona English Language Arts standards were completed and controlled by Arizona educators, who used public feedback from the people of Arizona to help guide their work.
- **The standards are not the curriculum.**
While the Arizona English Language Arts standards may be used as the basis for curriculum, the standards are not a curriculum. Therefore, identifying the sequence of instruction at each grade - what will be taught and for how long - requires concerted effort and attention at the district and school levels. The standards do not dictate any particular curriculum. Curricular tools, including textbooks and specific readings, are selected by the district/school and adopted through the local governing board.

¹ <http://edglossary.org/learning-progression/>

The Arizona Department of Education defines standards, curriculum, and instruction as:

Standards – What a student needs to know, understand, and be able to do by the end of each grade/course. Standards build across grade levels in a progression of increasing understanding and through a range of cognitive demand levels.

Curriculum –The resources used for teaching and learning the standards. Curricula are adopted at the local level by districts and schools. Curriculum refers to the **how** in teaching and learning the standards.

Instruction – The methods used by teachers to teach their students. Instructional techniques are employed by individual teachers in response to the needs of all the students in their classes to help them progress through the curriculum in order to master the standards. Instruction refers to the **how** in teaching and learning the standards.

- **The standards are not instructional practices.**

While the Arizona English Language Arts standards define the knowledge, understanding, and skills that need to be effectively taught and learned for *each and every* student to be ready for college and the workplace, the standards are not instructional practices. The educators and subject matter experts who worked on the English Language Arts Standards Subcommittee and Workgroup ensured that the Arizona English Language Arts standards are free from embedded pedagogy and instructional practices. The Arizona English Language Arts standards do not define how teachers should teach and must be complimented by well-developed, aligned, and appropriate curriculum materials, as well as effective instructional practices.

- **The grade-level horizontal alignment and K-12 vertical progression of the English Language Arts standards were reviewed and preserved.**

The English Language Arts Workgroup reviewed the horizontal alignment and vertical progression of the standards within and across grade levels. Modifications and refinements to standards were made if necessary to ensure a clear progression of learning within and across strands and grade levels.

- **The required percentages for the division of literary and information texts have been removed.**

There are no suggested or required percentages for the reading of literary and informational texts in the 2016 ELA Draft Standards, Introduction, or Glossary. Standards for the reading of literature and informational text remain, but it is up to the school/district and teacher to determine how much time is spent on each in the classroom.

- **The standards for text complexity in grades 2-12 now call for text complexity to be measured using quantitative and qualitative measures.**

The 2016 draft English Language Arts text complexity standards (RL.10 and RI.10) for grades 2-12 call for teachers to evaluate text complexity based on both quantitative (computerized scores) and qualitative (professional judgment of the content) measures. This new language allows teachers to combine an objective measure of a text with their own understanding of what is and is not appropriate for their grade-levels, while also preserving the expectation that students read progressively more challenging texts at each grade level.

Example:

- 6.RL.10 – By the end of the year, proficiently and independently read and comprehend literature, including stories, drama, and poetry, in a text complexity range determined by qualitative and quantitative measures appropriate to grade 6.
- 6.RI.10 – By the end of the year, proficiently and independently read and comprehend informational texts and nonfiction in a text complexity range determined by qualitative and quantitative measures appropriate to grade 6.

- **Examples that dictated curriculum were deleted from the English Language Arts standards.**

The 2010 Arizona English Language Arts standards contained some examples that did not define the limit of a specific standard or provide clarification to what students need to know by the end of a grade or course, but instead dictated that a specific author or work be taught at a specific grade level. Examples that dictated curricula were removed from the standards.

- **The K-5 Reading: Foundational Skills standards have been augmented to ensure a more explicit progression of reading skills for our youngest students.**

The K-5 Reading: Foundational Skills standards were augmented in grades K-5 to increase the focus on phonics and to ensure a more explicit progression of reading skills.

A clear example of this has been the addition of standards addressing the six syllable types.

- 1.RF.3.d – First grade – Recognize and apply all six syllable types when decoding grade-level texts.
- 2.RF.3.c – Second grade – Identify and apply all six syllable types to decode appropriate grade-level text.
- 3.RF.3.c – Third grade – Apply knowledge of the six syllable types to read grade-level words accurately.
- 4.RF.3.b and 5.RF.b – Apply knowledge of the six syllable patterns to read grade-level words accurately.
- Glossary – A table with the six syllable types is included in the glossary.

Standards addressing the six syllable types were not present in the 2010 ELA standards. These standards, as well as the table in the glossary, will assist teachers in helping ensure that their students have a clear understanding of how to apply knowledge of the six syllable types to accurately read words and texts. As students learn this skill initially, they will identify the six syllable types and apply that understanding as a discrete skill. As they encounter more practice with the six syllable types, they will eventually internalize the pattern, which will allow them to generalize a useful rule and strategy for any word or any text that they encounter.

- **A new K-3 Writing: Foundational Skills section, which includes standards for the reading and writing of cursive, has been added to the standards.**

The new Writing: Foundational Skills standards were built to ensure the effective teaching of writing by focusing on handwriting, sound-letter basics, and spelling. These standards were designed in conjunction with the augmenting of the Reading: Foundational Skills standards so that they support a student fully as he/she learns to read and write.

While other states have some individual standards that are similar to the standards found in this section, if adopted, Arizona will be the only state in the nation with a dedicated foundational writing strand.

The following example illustrates how the new foundational writing standards map out the progression of skills that lead from writing manuscript to cursive writing.

- K.WF.1.b – Write upper and lower case letters, with reference to a model.
- 1.WF.1.a – Write upper and lower case manuscript alphabet from memory using correct letter formation.
- 2.WF.1.a – Write legibly in manuscript.
- 2.WF.1.b – Write with sufficient fluency to support composition.
- 3.WF.1.a – Read and write cursive letters, upper and lower case.
- 3.WF.1.b – Transcribe ideas legibly in cursive and manuscript, with appropriate spacing and indentation.