

March 27, 2015

Barbara Cargill, Chair
State Board of Education
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Chairperson Cargill:

The process of review for ELA/R and SLA/R comes at a critical period in public education in Texas. In today's world of global competition for college acceptance and entry-level jobs in their chosen careers, our students require in-depth knowledge and skills to be fully prepared to compete and succeed. National and international student achievement comparisons (TIMSS, PISA, NAEP, SAT, ACT, etc.) tell us that our students—while showing progress in some areas—are not at the level of achievement that ensures they are fully prepared to succeed in the 21st century world they will encounter. To succeed in their world, our students must have a solid foundation in literacy skills and habits necessary to succeed in school, college, career, and life.

Rationale:

Profound learning occurs when students have multiple opportunities in meaningful experiences integrating critical competencies (digital and future-ready skills) and content knowledge essential for college and career readiness. The sheer number of standards creates a significant impediment to profound learning. Therefore, the development of high priority learning standards in ELA/R and SLA/R is essential.

Definition:

High-priority learning standards provide focus on the competencies, content knowledge, and skills essential for student success in a globally competitive environment. These standards provide an organizing framework empowering all students to achieve and demonstrate profound learning. High-priority learning standards in literacy are:

- Reflective of current research in the area of literacy and college and career readiness (TX-CCRS, ACT, SAT, AP, IB, etc.)
- Reflective of national and competitive international standards
- Inclusive of the essential knowledge and processes of literacy in English and Spanish
- Manageable in number
- Related within and across grade levels

Literacy Standards Design

High-priority literacy standards should provide a clear and coherent description of the content, depth of knowledge, and skills students are expected to master to be

prepared for success in college and careers. To this end, high-priority literacy standards should be designed with the following features and principles in mind:

1. Prioritize and focus on what matters most.

- Current ELA/R and SLA/R TEKS should be coalesced into fewer standards to ensure deep mastery of essential content from grade to grade in consideration of the recursive nature of literacy across grade level bands.
- ELA/R and SLA/R standards design should reflect the integrated nature of the components of literacy (reading, writing, listening, speaking and media).

2. Content, thinking, and skills all matter when it comes to standards design.

- In ELA/R and SLA/R, this means that standards design requires the integration of the literacy concepts, thinking, and skills.
- In ELA/R and SLA/R, this means that due to the recursive nature of literacy, while similar/same concepts occur across a grade band, the complexity of the text and the cognitive demand become increasingly more rigorous.
- ELA/R and SLA/R standards design should integrate authentic text types to provide for in-depth analysis.

3. Align standards with best evidence on college and career readiness.

- In ELA/R and SLA/R this means that design requires the integration of future-ready skills within the design of the literacy standards themselves (future-ready learning such as those described in college and career standards).
- In ELA/R and SLA/R, this means that standards design is backward mapped from college and career standards, resulting in a K-12 progression toward college- and career-ready literacy.

4. Recognize that standards design influences assessment design, assessment design influences instruction, and instructional decisions determine the level and type of learning opportunities provided to students.

- In ELA/R and SLA/R this means that standards design supports the use of more authentic, performance-based literacy assessment at the school, district, and state level to reflect real-world literacy practices and challenges.
- In ELA/R and SLA/R this means that the use of a variety of assessment types are needed to accurately reflect student progress toward standards achievement.

Literacy Standards Development Process

To ensure high-priority literacy standards are designed in accord with the features and characteristics noted above, the standards design process should:

- Ensure the TEKS review committee and expert reviewers include classroom teachers, curriculum developers, literacy directors, and higher education experts.
- Ensure the TEKS review committees and expert reviewers are provided opportunities for shared study and discussion of research/information related to college and career literacy and to their expectations for TEKS development

(as described above).

- Ensure that the TEKS review committees work horizontally and vertically to create an aligned articulation of the standards K-12.
- Ensure that the TEKS revision process draws upon the knowledge and research of known and respected experts in the fields of literacy and curriculum development.
- Ensure that the TEKS review committees, expert reviewers, and other advisors reflect the diversity of our state's student population and demographics.
- After the TEKS revision and adoption, a standards clarification document and implementation plan should be developed in collaboration with TEA, the TEKS review committees, the expert reviewers, and an external panel of practitioners in curriculum development and professional learning to support shared understanding and successful enactment of the standards across districts, schools, and classrooms.

Leaders of the organizations listed below request that members of the State Board of Education, the Texas Education Agency staff, the TEKS review committees and expert reviewers consider the concept of high-priority learning standards as described in this letter as guiding principles in the revision and development of ELA/R and SLA/R standards. Finally, we offer our support in working with you in the revision process, as appropriate.

Joint Statement Submitted on Behalf of the following Organizations:

Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA)
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Texas Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (TASCD)
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Coalition of English and Reading Supervisors of Texas (CREST)
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Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts (TCTELA)
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Olivia Hernandez, M.Ed., President

Texas Association for the Improvement of Reading (TAIR)
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National Writing Project of Texas (NWPT)
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