

Explanation of the Teachers' Annotations

Today I present the English Language Arts and Reading Texas Knowledge and Skills document begun by the teacher writing teams and further refined by five “experts” chosen by the State Board of Education. During the past year the teachers, the leaders of the nine literacy organizations (CREST, TCTELA, TABE, TALE, TASA, ASCD, TAIR, Texas Writing Project and TABE) worked together with many web-based meetings. The five “experts” met over the course of the last five months both in person and on webinars, and finally the literacy organizations met to align the document both vertically and horizontally across the K-12 grade levels. Additional feedback from the TCTELA forum under Victoria Young, Regions 4 and 6, Fort Bend County, Barbara Cargill, Collaborative for Children, and Chairperson Donna Bahorich are included.

Even though the “experts” met several times, there was still not enough time for the final development of full alignment and final checks for developmentally appropriate standards. We greatly appreciate the four pages of careful suggestions from Victoria Young as well as the contributions from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the bilingual community. Presented here is the most recent copy from the work of the writing committee and the five “experts” who further aligned and refined the ELAR document. Below each cell is carefully crafted wording suggested by the nine professional organizations and Victoria Young who further refine both wording and alignment. Outlined below are suggestions that explain this well-crafted document.

The Introduction remains generally consistent with the change of eight to seven strands that currently exist: Foundational Skills, Comprehension, Response, Multi Genres, Author’s Purpose and Craft, Composition and Speaking, and Inquiry and Research. The introduction outlines the philosophical thinking for standards in today’s English language art and reading classroom, with a heavy emphasis upon thinking. The introduction explains the structure of the seven strands and how it parallels and augments the teaching and learning of the language arts. Furthermore, there is explicit attention paid to the English Language Learner (ELL), and to culture and the historical context of language and literature.

Strand One, Foundational Skills sets the stage for the importance of self-selected texts and oral language as the foundation of the language arts followed by the skills involved in learning to identify words, vocabulary development, fluency, and collaborate in the learning of the language arts.

- Self-selected text is placed at the beginning as per a request from nine members of the SBO.
- Summarization is deleted because it is covered under comprehension.
- Oral language is refined.
- Fluency wording is more carefully aligned.

Stand Two, Comprehension has very few suggested changes.

- The word “revise” is added to the reading process.
- The words “Self to Self, Self to Text and Self to Word” are added to the section on making connections because that is the language teachers and students know and use.
- Other changes to strand two only help make the wording of the experts’ draft more concise and accurate.

Strand Three, Response adds very few changes with only a few language changes for conciseness and accuracy. These few changes in this area address the THECB comments to have thinking stressed across the genres and processes.

Strand Four, Multi Genres adds the words “American, British and World literature” to the Knowledge and Skills statement because K-12 teachers draw from many resources, rather than listing possible genres which limit possibilities. Broad categories (story, drama and poetry) are preferable.

- The words “cultural and historical” are added.
- Multimodal is re-introduced as per requests from nine members of the SBOE because this is what students are reading today from many types of reading modes.
- Literary nonfiction is added to the Information section.

Strand Five, Author’s Purpose and Craft re-introduces the word “purpose” because purpose drives the reason for writing and reading, speaking, listening, and thinking.

- Teachers request that literary devices not be introduced until 3rd or 4th grades.
- There are over 160 rhetorical and literary devices used in literature, so teachers suggest that “such as” be used and no specific device required at particular grade levels. The readings dictate the literary devices to be studied and used in writing with mentor texts.

Strand Six, Composition and Presentation includes few changes.

- As per the THECB some consolidation is made in the grammar section.
- Presentation is placed back into the knowledge and skills because the same expectations are required for both composition and presentation.
- Changes in this section are only for clarity.
- Spelling is also entered here from K-12 with “adult assistance” in K-1. The encoding process is spelled out in the Foundation Strand One.

Strand Seven, Inquiry and Research includes only slight changes to align and clarify so that vocabulary is consistent across the grades.

Key Points about Teachers’ Annotations for Improvement to the December Experts’ Draft

- The framework of the seven strands allow local school districts flexibility for local curriculum design by integrating student expectations from any or all strands into units of study to meet specific needs of students.
- It is important to develop curriculum from an aligned document since skills are recursive and progressive, with no need to repeat specifics across grades.
- Some rows are combined to keep topics on the same lines and to group items so that they span the grade levels (editing for semicolon use collapsed into punctuating with semicolons).
- Some suggestions to move rows are made to show developmental progression of skills.

- Skills are higher order as a result of verb changes (using “analyze” rather than “identify” and “revise” rather than “correct”) and more rigorous as a result of moving skills to lower grades where appropriate (starting complex sentences in fourth grade rather than sixth grade).
- Phrasing is clearer (“text to text” rather than “ideas found in other texts”).
- Phrasing provides greater flexibility in teacher choice of texts and materials (using “such as” rather than “including,” or in some standards, removing examples altogether).
- Terms are clarified (“informational text” defined as literary nonfiction, historical, scientific, and technical; “information” defined as “viewed, heard or read”).
- Terms are consistent (using “thesis” in K-12 rather than confusion with grade band-specific “main idea”/“controlling idea”/“thesis”).
- Terms are holistic, encompassing a range of elements (using the term “personal connections”; using the term “features” to encompass print, graphic, and digital features).
- A knowledge and skills statement and additional expectations for collaboration omitted by the experts are added to Strand 1 (1.6) to situate the student expectations in a context.
- Skills are clearer as a result of removing redundancy (“work productively with others” rather than “work collaboratively with others”).
- The Multi Genres strand’s knowledge and skills statement addresses the need for diverse texts and includes American, British, and world authors because they are studied not only in literary texts but also in informational and argumentative texts at all grade levels instead of designated for specific grades in high school.
- The Multiple Genres strand is preceded by expectation (A) focusing on how forms and structures are the same and different within and across genres. The subcommittee charged with determining if the TEKS could be reasonably taught in one year suggests that (A) be struck from the proposed standards. If Multiple Genres (A) remains, students would not be able to master the proposed standard in a year.
- The Multi Genres strand integrates the two separate sub strands for literary elements and literary genre in the experts’ draft into sub strand (B) literary texts. Because of this reorganization, the numbering of recommended sub strands out-of-order will be corrected before publication.
- Text forms and structures are also addressed in the student expectations in Multiple Genres (B-literary, C-informative, D-argumentative, and E-multimodal) K-12 and in Author’s Purpose and Craft (B) for K-12.

- Multimodal texts (omitted in the experts' draft) is added to Strand 4 (E) in acknowledgment of how texts combine modes and ways in which modern texts have changed and will continue to change.