

English Language Arts and Reading College and Career Readiness Plan of Action

Background

At the request of Senator Florence Shapiro, Chair of the Senate Education Committee, and Representative Rob Eissler, Chair of the House Public Education Committee, Commissioner Robert Scott directed the Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff to work with representatives from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to develop a plan of action to further define college and career readiness standards (CCRS) as they relate to English III. The plan specified that a committee of English language arts and reading content specialists do the following:

- create a list of standards in the new English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for English III that are critical to college and career readiness,
- identify the specific Texas CCRS with which these critical TEKS standards align,
- compare the identified critical CCRS to various established national CCRS, and
- draft preliminary performance expectations associated with these critical CCRS.

Process

The first all-day meeting was held on March 6, 2009. Dave Spence, President of the Southern Regional Education Board, provided the committee with background information on the initiative, including the Legislature's end goal: that the identified critical CCRS and preliminary performance expectations will be used for assessment, teacher preparation, professional development, and instructional materials. The impact of accomplishing this goal is that all Texas educators can develop a better understanding of what changes are needed in K–12 education to ensure that students are college and career ready.

The English language arts committee attending the March 6th meeting included Victoria Young, TEA Director of Reading, Writing, and Social Studies Assessments, Student Assessment Division; Kerry Ballast, TEA Assistant Director, English Language Arts and Reading, Curriculum Division; Evelyn Hiatt, THECB Deputy Assistant Commissioner for P–16 Initiatives; Lynette Heckman, THECB Director, College Readiness Initiatives; Dr. Mark Noe, Associate Professor of English, University of Texas Pan American; and Jennifer Dean, Ph.D., Executive Director, K–12 Assessments, Educational Testing Service. Catherine Stapleton, a reading specialist in the Student Assessment Division, served as notetaker. The meeting was facilitated by Joseph Kulhanek, Ph.D., TEA Director, College and Career Readiness Program, Curriculum Division and Michele Moore Harkrider, TEA Senior Policy Advisor to Deputy Commissioner Lizzette Reynolds.

The English III TEKS are comprised of 68 standards. The committee began its work by discussing the specific reading, writing, and research knowledge and skills necessary for college and career readiness. This was followed by a committee review of each TEKS standard to determine the degree with which that standard was critical to post-secondary readiness. The committee was careful to identify only those TEKS that students would need to master to ensure that they would be ready to take credit-bearing courses in college or successfully enter the workplace. Ultimately committee members identified 25 English III TEKS standards as most critical to post-secondary readiness.

During the second half of the day's meeting, the committee examined the CCRS to identify the specific college-readiness standards with which the 25 critical TEKS standards aligned. After a close examination and discussion of the CCRS document, the committee assigned each critical TEKS standard to one or more college-readiness English language arts or cross-disciplinary CCRS.

At the end of the meeting, committee members agreed to individually compare the critical TEKS/CCRS alignment to national college readiness standards prior to the second meeting.

The second all-day English language arts meeting took place on April 13, 2009. Attendees at this meeting included Victoria Young, TEA Director of Reading, Writing, and Social Studies Assessments, Student Assessment Division; Sarah Crippen, TEA Director, English Language Arts and Reading, Curriculum Division; Evelyn Hiatt, Deputy Assistant Commissioner of P16 Initiatives; Lynette Heckman, THECB Director, College Readiness Initiatives; Wendy Lerner Lym, Associate Professor of English, Austin Community College; Evelyn Hiatt, THECB Deputy Assistant Commissioner for P-16 Initiatives; Lynette Heckman, THECB Director, College Readiness Initiatives and Jennifer Dean, Ph.D., Executive Director, K-12 Assessments, Educational Testing Service. Dr. Mark Noe, Associate Professor of English, University of Texas Pan American, was available via conference call. Steve Wilder, an English language arts specialist in the Student Assessment Division, served as notetaker. The meeting was facilitated by Joseph Kulhanek, Ph.D., TEA Director, College and Career Readiness Program, Curriculum Division and Michele Moore Harkrider, TEA Senior Policy Advisor to Deputy Commissioner Lizzette Reynolds.

During the April 13th meeting, the committee examined national English language arts and reading college and career readiness standards from ACT, the American Diploma Project, the College Board, and Standards for Success to determine which national standards aligned to the critical TEKS and Texas CCRS already identified. The committee found that a strong alignment existed between the national college and career readiness standards and the identified TEKS/CCRS. This alignment provided valid and convincing evidence that the identified TEKS/CCRS are critical to students' post-secondary success.

The committee spent the last part of the April 13th meeting discussing the development of preliminary performance expectations. These describe, as specifically as possible, what the student must do to demonstrate mastery of the critical TEKS and their associated college and career readiness standard. Thus, these expectations state the performance level necessary for students to be college and career ready. After drafting preliminary performance expectations for the first four TEKS and their associated college

and career readiness standards, the committee made the decision to divide into three teams to draft the remaining 21 performance expectations. The individual members on each team created an initial draft and then sent the draft to other team members for review. Once the team was satisfied with its draft of a performance expectation, the draft was sent to the entire committee for review. On May 6, 2009, the committee finalized all 25 preliminary performance expectations via conference call.

Emergent Themes

- The English III TEKS are rigorous and will prepare a student to be college and career ready.
- The requested CCRS performance levels are clearly identifiable within the English III TEKS.
- The English III TEKS are clearly aligned with the English Language Arts CCRS.
- The English III TEKS are clearly aligned with national CCRS.