
English Language Arts Standards

The Background:

In October 2014, Governor Haslam announced the creation of a standards review website that would be open to the public to review and offer feedback on what Tennessee students should know and be able to do by the end of each K-12 school year in both mathematics and English language arts (ELA). At the time of that announcement, the Governor also laid out a comprehensive standards review process. This process was further expounded upon by the 109th General Assembly in Public Chapter 423, which charged the State Board of Education with overseeing the review of math and ELA standards that would culminate in replacing the Common Core State Standards with rigorous Tennessee Education Standards.

The initial standards review public website opened in November 2014 and was continuously open until April 2015. Thousands of people responded to the standards resulting in 131,424 reviews and 20,344 comments. After the data was compiled, it was reviewed by a committee of math and ELA educators. The educators that comprised these two teams reviewed every individual standard and revised them using the public feedback as well as their expertise.

The revised set of standards was posted for another period of public feedback throughout fall 2015. The Standards Recommendation Committee (SRC), appointed by the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Speaker of the House of Representatives, reviewed the revised standards and heard feedback from across the state through regional meetings and roundtables with educators, parents, the higher education community, and other stakeholders. The SRC used the feedback collected via a website and roundtables to guide their final recommendations for additional standards revisions. The standards then underwent another round of revision based on the specific recommendations of the SRC. The SRC approved the new standards at their January 20, 2016 meeting.

The ELA standards contain grades K-12 standards. A key change in the new standards focuses on a new layout designed to highlight the vertical progression of the standards from one grade to the next. The inclusion of a Foundational Literacy strand that emphasizes the holistic nature of literacy instruction in the early grades is another key shift. Finally, the standards have also been revised to highlight teacher autonomy by removing curricular examples.

Since first reading of the standards, the State Board staff reviewed additional feedback submitted to State Board of Education members from the public. Changes since first reading include the following items:

- **Clarification regarding the progression of standards:** A statement was added to introduction of the standards to clarify that the standards are a progression and that teachers are expected to build upon previous years' standards as they implement standards for their current grade.
- **Grammatical changes:** Several changes have been made throughout the standards document to ensure that proper and consistent language and formatting are used.

- **Changes to glossary definitions:** New definitions for the terms “central idea” and “theme” were added to glossary to further clarify the difference between the two terms.

The Recommendation:

The SBE staff recommends adoption of this item on final reading.