

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STANDARDS REVISION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May 2015, Governor Chris Christie called on the New Jersey Department of Education to review the English Language Arts and mathematics standards, known as the Common Core State Standards and adopted by the New Jersey State Board in 2010. The department was charged with ensuring that the standards reflect the needs of all New Jersey students.

At the direction of Governor Chris Christie and under the leadership of Commissioner David Hespe, the New Jersey Department of Education assembled a Standards Review Committee (SRC) to review and submit recommendations for revisions and edits to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. The SRC members were nominated by professional organizations, colleges and universities, schools and parent organizations, and business and industry to represent all stakeholders. The committee was asked to manage the process of standards revisions, to review and provide feedback to sub-committees working on the draft revisions, and to submit any recommendations that would impact the implementation of standards. The committee was also asked to ensure that the standards meet the expectations for New Jersey students.

Three sub-committees were formed (K-2, Grades 3-12 ELA and Grades 3-12 mathematics) with a broad representation of educators, ensuring grade level representation, content expertise, geographic representation, and interests of *all* students. The members were self-nominated, and brought expertise, enthusiasm, knowledge of standards and curriculum, and classroom experience with the current standards to the process. Their charge was to critically review the standards with an eye to clarity, coherence and focus, and to make revisions that would improve curriculum development and teaching in New Jersey.

Committee members were chosen in August and the work of the committees began in September, culminating in final revisions submitted to the SRC on December 15, 2015. The SRC reviewed the final documents and made recommendations for implementation.

During the revision process, the SRC heard comments from the public via three regional listening tours and three focus groups as well as an through an online survey, held in September 2015. Additional comments were solicited following the listening tours for those unable to attend the regional sessions. The SRC considered all suggestions and ideas in

developing both their recommendations to enhance the standards as well as to ensure fidelity of implementation.

The State Board of Education will begin the approval process for these changes at its January meeting. The Board will conduct public testimony sessions with the goal of final approval in the spring.

In addition, the Department will be recommending a name change to the standards. Under the heading of our current standards, New Jersey Core Content Standards, sit the Common Core State Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, and the 7 other content area standards: history/social studies, visual/performing arts, comprehensive health and physical education, world language, technology, and 21st century life and careers. This fragmented structure has made it confusing for educators and has not supported the important interconnectedness of the standards for instruction and learning. The Department is proposing changing the name of the content standards to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards to bring clarity, coherence, and context to the critical importance of how these standards work together across content areas and grade levels to best prepare New Jersey students for college and career readiness.

The full report and its appendix reflect these revisions and recommendations.

K-2 ELA Standards – Major Revisions

One major revision to K-2 ELA standards is the move of Standard RF.2.3.d from grade 2 to grade 1. The sub-committee believes that it is developmentally appropriate to expect grade 1 students to “Distinguish long and short vowels when reading regularly spelled one-syllable words.”

Another substantial revision, and one that is in keeping with New Jersey’s emphasis on reader engagement, is the addition of “self reflection” in the revision to W.K.5. That standard now reads “With guidance and support from adults, strengthen writing through response and self reflection utilizing questions and suggestions from peers. “Self reflection” was also added to W.2.5 which now reads “With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed through self reflection, revising and editing.”

Early childhood educators believe that this revision returns the focus of the reader’s engagement with text to its rightful place in standards without compromising the balance of the standards.

K-2 standards have adopted some of the language of the American Association of School Librarians when revising standards. Anchor Standard 1, for example, incorporates self reflection and background knowledge.

English Language Arts Standards, Grades 3-12 – Major Revisions

A major revision to the standards is also reflected in ELA Anchor Standard 1, with the addition of the phrase “and relevant connections”.

It is important to note that the Common Core slants heavily in the direction of close reading of unfamiliar text. Our educators know that this is not the only way to read and comprehend a passage. New Jersey understands and is committed to the importance of background knowledge, social context, historical perspective and a reader’s personal response to the written word. Robust discussions have taken place in both the work of the subcommittees, the discussions of the SRC, and, most important, in feedback during the listening tours. In fact, this attention to reading by using learned strategies for making connections, is one suggestion that we have heard from our educators since the adoption of the Common Core. Through this clarifying revision, we hope to strengthen the standard to incorporate close reading into all classrooms alongside other developmentally and grade appropriate approaches to reading. Guidance for the implementation will be included in our outreach and work with school districts.

While New Jersey teachers have been vigilant in their protection of teaching children to read through both informational text and literature, many educators also thought that informational text was valued to the exclusion of literature. The added phrase and planned accompanying guidance are meant to significantly highlight the importance of making connections when reading. They are also intended to highlight the use of varied genres, both when teaching students to read, and when preparing students for college and career. Some stakeholders remain concerned that by incorporating this phrase, we move away from close reading, and, additionally, move in another direction to value literature over informational text in our teaching. It is the position of the department that there is, and should be, room for *all* literacy instruction. Close reading, of unknown text, is important. Re-reading of known text builds fluency in young students. Background information is critical to making sense of the world, and there is a place for all of this in literacy instruction. The department does not believe that this is a diversion from the rigor that we want in our classrooms. We believe that building critical thinking and reading skills must be dependent on multiple genres, multiple approaches and multiple teaching and learning strategies. To that end, the sub-committees and SRC agree that adding this phrase strengthens the standard and better states the beliefs of New Jersey educators, borne out by decades of research and empirical evidence. The department is also cognizant of ensuring that the standards are not confused with instructional strategies. To that

end, the SRC recommends guidance by the department. (Recommendations will be included in the full report and available as an appendix.)

The SRC agreed to incorporate language from the American Association of School Librarians into Grade 3-12 ELA standards.

An example of this is the addition of the phrase “and reflect on” to the College and Career Ready (CCR) Anchor 9 across all grade levels. The rationale was to highlight the imperative that students need to make connections with the world, with their experiences and knowledge, and with other text.

The revision was also incorporated into Reading Literature standards 1 and 9 through the phrase “and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) central message/theme, lesson and/or moral”.

All grade levels added “with scaffolding as needed” to the CCR Anchor standard 10 to encourage districts to consider reader and task, qualitative and quantitative measures in text selection for classroom instruction.

There was a re-assignment of standards for Reading Literature with standard 4.9 and 5.9 being switched. The sub-committee recommends this in keeping with grade level expectations for students and thought that the progression was more logical with the switching of these grade level standards.

Reading Literature standard 1, grades 9-10, was revised to include the statement “including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain”. This statement currently appears in grades 11-12 and will remain there. The sub-committee thought that in preparing students for college and careers, this specific concept needs more attention earlier in a student’s high school experience.

CCR Writing standard 7 was revised as recommended across grade levels. Influenced by the recommendations of the Association of School Librarians, the sub-committee added “an inquiry based research process”.

K-2 Mathematics Standards

Revisions to the K-2 mathematics standards focused mostly on examples and word choices. The revisions serve to clarify standards and to provide examples more in line with developmentally appropriate instruction. The sub-committee members made few changes to the substance of the standards, with no changes to grade level placement.

Mathematics Standards 3-12

Revisions to the mathematics standards focused mostly on specific formulae, examples, and word choices. The revisions serve to clarify standards and to provide examples more in line with classroom instruction. The sub-committee members made few changes to the substance of the standards, with no changes to grade level placement.

New Jersey Department of Education will offer the following resources and support for implementation of the revised standards:

- A cross-walk which allows districts to align their local curriculum with the revised standards and make the changes to instruction in the classroom expeditiously.
- A curricular framework which will serve as a guide to curriculum development and alignment. The NJDOE will make recommendations as to sequencing of the standards across the school year and what students should be able to know and do in relationship to the standards as well as guidance on how districts can complete the framework with their local materials, assessments, and lesson/unit activities. We will provide Technical Assistance sessions on the framework, both live and via webinar, as well as work closely with the RAC teams, county education specialists and pilot districts.
- Blended Learning Modules which assist districts in how to use Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to support ongoing conversations around the cycle of teaching and learning (standards, curriculum, assessment, data, and reflection). These modules are hosted in an online platform with in-person and online expert, facilitated support.
- Achievement Coaches, trained by the NJDOE, will develop and present professional learning within their districts and with neighboring districts to support alignment and implementation of the revised standards.
- Our monthly newsletter will continue with tips for standards implementation and support for shifting instruction to meet the needs of all New Jersey students.
- Continued work with our organization and association partners to share messaging and support in a consistent and efficient manner across the state.