

Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for English Language Arts Revision Overview

Nebraska Revised Statute [79-760.01](#) requires the State Board of Education to “develop a plan to review and update standards for reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies” every seven years. Content area standards that are measurable, appropriately rigorous, and scaffolded become the framework for locally determined curricula. Guided by local and national resources, including an [evaluation of state standards](#) by the Fordham Institute (2018), a group of Nebraska educators is working to revise the 2014 English Language Arts (ELA) standards, “[Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for English Language Arts](#).”

The standards revision process began in the Spring of 2020 with Public Input Survey #1 (Appendix 1). The survey was disseminated through the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) website and directly to groups including the Nebraska English Language Arts Literacy Cadre, the Nebraska MTSS network, District Assessment Contacts, and District Curriculum Contacts. The survey was also sent to state and national literacy experts identified by the NDE's ELA and Reading Specialists. State literacy experts are individuals with specialized training in literacy and who work closely and extensively with Nebraska educators. Likewise, the identified national literacy experts have previously collaborated with both NDE and Nebraska educators as well as conducted and published literacy research.

Public Input Survey #1 sought feedback on the 2014 ELA standards including the content of the standards, or the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, and the rigor, or cognitive complexity, of the standards. The questions were organized into four grade bands—K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12, respectively, and responses were made either individually or in groups (i.e. ESU staff developers, a school ELA department, etc.). The survey was open from March 2, 2020 through October 6, 2020 and received a total of 1,068 responses. The majority of respondents identified as educators (e.g. Pre-K-12 educators, school or district administrators, postsecondary education representatives) followed by parents and business/industry representatives.

Next, Nebraska literacy leaders identified Nebraska educators as potential writers for the standards revision. The potential writers were to have ELA teaching experience, possess knowledge of standards and curriculum, and represent elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. Nominees completed an application and the NDE collected information to ensure writers represented geographic locations across the state (i.e. rural, urban, and suburban districts), various grade levels from Pre-K to post-secondary, public and non-public schools, content area expertise (i.e. math, science, social studies, ELA), and ESU regions. Writers were selected by the NDE's ELA and Reading Specialists. The teams were organized according to the individuals' areas of expertise, and they convened virtually between November 2020 – March 2021 to review current standards, consider public input, and identify recommended revisions.

In late March and early April 2021, Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) identified by members of the writing teams and NDE content area specialists reviewed possible revisions. The SMEs have specialized knowledge in literacy, content area standards, and understanding of how literacy instruction impacts their respective contexts. For example, an alternative school program director was invited to review

the standards and offer perspective on how they might affect teaching and learning in his unique context. A series of virtual meetings was conducted in April 2021 in which drafts of recommended revisions were shared with the SMEs and additional feedback collected. In April and May 2021, members of the writing teams continued to incorporate further recommendations into the working draft.

The process described above resulted in the following recommended revisions to the 2014 ELA standards (Table 1). While the current (2014) standards reflect the teaching and learning implications of these revisions, the writing teams provided clarity and rigor as guided by stakeholder and SME feedback.

Following a public release of Draft #1 on June 16, 2020, Public Input Survey #2 will open to collect feedback on the proposed draft. The survey will remain open from June 16, 2021 through July 7, 2021 (three weeks), and the feedback collected will be used to develop Draft #2. Additional input feedback can be shared via the ELA Standards Input Email (nde.elastandardsinput@nebraska.gov). The anticipated approval date for the standards is September 2021.

Table 1

Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for English Language Arts Recommended Revisions

Recommendation	Rationale
Reorganization of reading types into Prose and Poetry—Informational Text types	Based on feedback from teachers and other stakeholders, and how other state standards have addressed the need to differentiate between text types, the revised standards will include side-by-side indicators for Prose and Poetry and Informational/Expository text types.
Addition of K-12 Text Complexity Standard	The current Reading Comprehension standard (LA K-12.1.6) refers to students comprehending <i>grade-level</i> literary and informational texts, however, is without clear guidance on the measures of text complexity within a grade or grade band. Current standards also do not demonstrate how the complexity of text should increase across the grades. The 2009 reading framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the 2006 <i>study Reading Between the Lines: What the ACT Reveals About College Readiness in Reading</i> both underscore the need for students to read a range of increasingly complex literary and informational texts to achieve college and career readiness.
Re-organization of writing strands	The current Writing Mode standard (LA K-12.2.2.a), <i>Communicate information and ideas effectively in analytic, descriptive, informative, narrative, poetic, persuasive, and reflective modes...</i> does not progress in rigor through the grades, nor does it provide characteristics or purposes of each. Survey data indicated the need to provide specificity in how students build knowledge and skills to communicate proficiently in each of these modes across the grades.
Language revisions	Survey data indicated that because the current standards do not provide a clear roadmap for developmentally appropriate skills related to grammar, usage, and mechanics, students do not experience a coherent K-12 learning experience. The writing teams wrote indicators to address essential skills at each grade level.
Embedding of Multiple Literacies	The current ELA standards provide a 2-strand sequence of grade-level standards and indicators related to digital citizenship and information fluency. Because these skills are realized in the context of reading and writing, the indicators are now embedded accordingly.
Re-categorization of Speaking & Listening	A series of futuring panels with Nebraska business and industry leaders is ongoing. The panels are opportunities for Nebraska business and industry leaders to discuss competencies of prepared high school graduates entering the workforce. These discussions have revealed the need for stronger written and verbal communication skills. To that end, the Speaking and Listening standards have been re-categorized and more closely aligned to Nebraska's Career Readiness standards so that they may be adopted and used within other content areas.

The following educators contributed to the revision of Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for English Language Arts

Foundations of Reading	Eileen Barks, Professional Developer, ESU #2 Nancy Christensen, Associate Professor of Education, Midland University Megan Fiedler, Facilitator of Curriculum and Assessment, Archdiocese of Omaha Ann Foster, Elementary Curriculum Coordinator, Lexington Public Schools Miki Holbeck, Coordinator of Early Literacy, Omaha Public Schools Maria Roden, Teaching and Learning Consultant, Omaha Public Schools Kristin Weaver, 1 st Grade Teacher, Loomis Public School
K-5 Reading: Prose and Poetry	Sasha Cervantes, Dean of Students, Omaha Public Schools Susan Evans, Teaching and Learning Coordinator, ESU #10 Sarah Hogle, Literacy Teacher Leader, Lincoln Public Schools Amy Mundil, Teaching & Learning Specialist, ESU #1 Dawn Spurck, Instructional Facilitator, Papillion LaVista Community Schools
K-5 Reading: Informational Text	Bianca Ayala, K-5 EL Teacher, Grand Island Public Schools Janet Foss, Educational Consultant, ESU #3 Tiffany Lafrentz, Elementary Teaching and Learning Consultant, Omaha Public Schools Jennifer Lemke, Assistant Professor, University of Nebraska-Omaha Deb Rodenburg, Director of Elementary Curriculum, Papillion LaVista Community Schools Kendra Ross, Reading Specialist, Walthill Public School
K-5 Writing/Speaking & Listening	Mary Jo McElhose, NeMTSS Quality Assurance/Education Consultant, Nebraska Department of Education Julie Kozisek, Professor of Education, Doane University Lisa Oltman, K-6 ELA Curriculum Specialist, Lincoln Public Schools Tina Raymond, Instructional Coach, Papillion LaVista Community Schools Joni Runge, Professional Development, ESU #5 Linda Safranek, Reading Coordinator/Elementary ELA Co-chair, Westside Community Schools Jennifer Sandberg, Title I Teacher/Curriculum Director, Sutherland Public Schools Tammy Verba, Kindergarten Teacher, Grand Island Public Schools
K-12 Language (grammar, usage, mechanics)	Kathryn Beberniss, 6-8 ELA Teacher, Garden County Schools Brittney Bills, Curriculum Coordinator, Grand Island Public Schools Amy Pinney, ELA Teacher, Scottsbluff Public Schools Kaiya West, Secondary ELA Teacher, Mitchell Public Schools
6-12 Reading: Prose and Poetry	Kathleen Brodine, English Teacher, Kearney High School Sue Ellen Herdt, English Teacher, Scottsbluff Public Schools Claudine Kennicutt, Regional Lead, ESU #4 Jen Madison, Teaching & Learning Specialist, ESU #4
6-12 Reading: Informational Text	Angie Aguallo, 8 th Grade ELA Teacher, Scottsbluff Public Schools Shelley Erikson, Secondary ELA Teaching & Learning Consultant, Omaha Public Schools Ebony McKiver, Social Studies Specialist, Nebraska Department of Education Molly Orton, Literacy Teacher Leader, Lincoln Public Schools Monique Schwehm, 5 th Grade Teacher, Lincoln Public Schools Caryn Zietlow, Professional Developer, ESU #2
6-12 Writing/Speaking & Listening	Rae Carlson, 9-12 ELA Teacher, Niobrara Public Schools Melissa Frans, Coordinator of High Ability Learning and Instructional Technology, Crete Public Schools Anne Hubbell, English Learner Specialist Title III, Nebraska Department of Education Julie Schik, ELA Lead Teacher, Omaha Public Schools Sara Zabrowski, Educational Consultant, ESU #3

The following subject matter experts were consulted on the content included in the revision of Nebraska's College and Career Ready Standards for English Language Arts.

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- Gerald Beach, Midlands University
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- Robert Brooke, University of Nebraska at Lincoln
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- Chelsea Feusner, Kearney Public Schools
- Dave Gibbons, Schuyler Community Schools
- Kate Hatch, ESU #11
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- Kelly Kingsley, Peru State University
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- Audrey Webb, Nebraska Department of Education
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