

Education Oversight Committee

Cyclical Review Process of South Carolina English/language Arts and Mathematics Academic Standards

I. Standards Review Process

In accordance with Act 200 and beginning in July 2014, the State Board of Education, in consultation with the Education Oversight Committee, will conduct a cyclical review of the South Carolina English/language arts and mathematics academic standards to ensure the standards are maintaining high expectations for learning and teaching. At the same time that the Education Oversight Committee will be conducting the cyclical review process of the standards, the State Department of Education will assemble a state team composed of English and mathematics experts, experts in testing, special needs, English language learners and early childhood from around the state to develop new standards and indicators in English/language arts and mathematics. These standards will form the basis for the South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards. The work of each group will inform the other at multiple points during the process.

As part of the cyclical review process by the Education Oversight Committee, Academic Standards Review Panels, made up of South Carolina parents, business and industry persons, community leaders, and educators, including special education teachers, will examine the South Carolina Academic Standards to determine their rigor and relevance. The Academic Standard Review panels will review the standards: English/language arts Panel, Mathematics Panel, and Parent/Community/Business Panel. As part of the review of the standards, the panels will have access to various documents to utilize during the review to include but not limited to *The State of the State Standards 2010* from the Fordham Institute, *International Standards Benchmarking Report (2010)*, Profile of the Graduate from TransformSC, and examples of exemplary standards developed from other states.

Recommendations for revisions to the standards will be developed by the Academic Standards Review Panels and shared with the state writing teams who will provide direction and suggestions to the teams in their development of new standards. The recommendations will also serve as a guidance document to the Education Oversight Committee and the South Carolina State Board of Education for consideration in their review and approval of the new standards. In addition, the Education Oversight Committee staff will keep the Education

Oversight Committee and the South Carolina Board of Education apprised of the status of the cyclical review process throughout the process.

II. Standards Review Criteria

Academic standards are statements of the most important, consensually determined expectations for student learning in a particular discipline. The academic standards in English/language arts and mathematics will be specific statements of content knowledge and skills that students need in order to meet particular grade level or high school area content area expectations.

The review of the English/language arts and mathematics academic standards will be conducted on the basis of criteria applied previously during cyclical reviews of academic standards in English/language arts, mathematics and science. The South Carolina Department of Education representatives, district and university curriculum leaders and Education Oversight Committee staff developed the criteria. Decisions on the criteria to be used were based on a comprehensive review of professional literature. The criteria include comprehensiveness/balance, rigor, and organization/communication. In general, the following questions will be utilized by the panels in their review of the standards to ensure the recommendations made will strengthen and support higher levels of learning and teaching.

- Do the standards define what all students should be know and be able to do at high levels?
- Are the standards aligned with national and world-class standards?
- Do the standards serve as a basis for the development of objective and reliable statewide assessments?
- Do the standards reflect the recognized essential concepts and basic knowledge of a particular discipline?
- Are the standards rigorous - that is, demanding and precise, requiring students to master challenging content and processes?
- Are the standards written at a level of specificity that will best inform instruction, neither so narrow as to be trivial nor so broad as to be meaningless?
- Are the standards aligned and specific across grade levels for content knowledge and skill development?

A. CRITERION ONE: COMPREHENSIVENESS/BALANCE

The criterion category for Comprehensiveness/Balance is concerned with how helpful the South Carolina Academic Standards document is to educators in designing a coherent curriculum. The criterion is directed at finding evidence that the standards document clearly communicates what constitutes English/language arts and mathematics content, that is, what all students should know and be able to do in English/language arts and mathematics by the time they graduate. The criterion includes consideration of the following areas:

- The standards address essential content and skills of English/language arts and mathematics;
- The standards are aligned across grades as appropriate for content and skills;
- The standards have an appropriate balance of the content and skills needed for mastery of each area; and
- The standards reflect diversity (especially for ethnicity and gender) as appropriate for the subject area.
- The number and scope of the standards for each grade level should be realistic for teaching, learning, and student mastery within the academic year

B. CRITERION TWO: RIGOR

This criterion calls for standards that require students to use thinking and problem-solving skills that go beyond knowledge and comprehension. Standards meeting this criterion require students to perform at both national and international benchmark levels.

- Standards should focus on cognitive content and skills (not affect);
- Standards should be developmentally appropriate for the grade level;
- Standards should include a sufficient number of standards that require application of learning (application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation);
- Standards should be informed by the content and skills in national and international standards; and,
- Standards should be written at a level of specificity that would best inform instruction for each grade level.

C. CRITERION THREE: ORGANIZATION/COMMUNICATION

The Organization/Communication criterion category stipulates that the expectations for students are to be clearly written and organized in a manner understandable to all audiences and by teachers, curriculum developers, and assessment writers. Organization includes the following components:

- The content and skills in the standards should be organized in a way that is easy for teachers to understand and follow;
- The format and wording should be consistent across grades;
- The expectations for student learning should be clearly and precisely stated for each grade; and,
- The standards should use the appropriate terminology of the field but be as jargon free as possible.
- The content and skills presented in the standards should be assessable (are observable and demonstrable).