

## Wisconsin's Standards for English Language Arts: Where We've Been and Where We're Going

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NOTE: A version of this article is available at <https://dpi.wi.gov/ela/standards>. The online version includes links to additional resources, including links to the standards reviewed from other states.

In 1998, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) published *Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for English Language Arts*, which had been adopted by State Superintendent Benson. The standards included reading, writing, oral language, language, media and technology, and research and inquiry at grades 4, 8, and 12. About 10 years later, DPI convened a group of Wisconsin educators to update the ELA standards. At the same time, The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and National Governors' Association (NGA) joined together in a bipartisan effort with almost every state represented to convene a group to write English language arts standards for each grade level that reflected college and career goals for literacy, publishing the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (CCSS ELA) in 2010. Following a process that engaged Wisconsin educators in review and providing feedback, State Superintendent Evers formally adopted the Common Core State Standards in June 2010.

In an effort to expand transparency and engagement in reviewing and revising Wisconsin academic standards, State Superintendent Evers authorized and appointed the State Superintendent's Standards Review Council. Beginning in 2016, each set of academic standards was put into a seven year

review cycle, giving Wisconsin a process to keep standards in all content areas current and relevant.

*Wisconsin's Standards for English Language Arts* are scheduled for review and possible revision in 2019.

### **Wisconsin's Standards Review Process**

The ELA standards review and revision process includes multiple opportunities for public and stakeholder participation. A digital survey will be available during July and August of 2019. The survey will ask for input about the current standards and the need for revision. Based on the input, the Council will provide the State Superintendent with a recommendation regarding the need to revise the current standards; the State Superintendent could start a revision process for ELA. More information on how to become a part of the revision process would then be distributed to the ELA community. The last opportunity to give feedback on any revised standards will be during the winter of 2020, when a draft of revised standards are scheduled for release for public comment, and public hearings will be held. More information about the specific steps in the standards review process can be found at <https://dpi.wi.gov/standards>.

### **What Have Other States Done?**

In preparation for the review and possible revision of Wisconsin's Standards for English Language Arts, we asked, "What are other states doing?" We began by selecting states to investigate. First, we eliminated states that are using CCSS ELA as they were published in 2010; this is the majority of states including several of Wisconsin's neighbors (Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio). Next, we identified states that made revisions. Some states, such as Massachusetts and New York, made primarily superficial changes. Other states, like Kansas and Nebraska, made more substantial changes. Several states, such as Virginia and Texas, never adopted CCSS for ELA. Some states' decisions and/or changes were due to state-level legislation; other states, similar to Wisconsin, update their academic standards on a specific schedule. Our in-depth examination included: Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New York, Oklahoma, Virginia, and Texas.

The influence of CCSS ELA's organizational structure was apparent in the majority of standards we analyzed. Overall, states maintained the strands from CCSS for ELA (reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language); an emphasis on reading literature and reading informational text; and organization by grade level from kindergarten through grade eight and bands in high school (9 - 10 and 11 - 12). Most states we examined focused reading foundational skills in early grades. One state (Nebraska) included phonics and fluency in every grade level through grade 12. Another state (Oklahoma) used reading foundational skills standards to emphasize phonological awareness and phonics from kindergarten through grade two; in upper grades, these were replaced with standards for reading and writing processes. New York condensed CCSS ELA's reading literature and reading informational text standards into a single set of reading standards, specifying which apply to literature and which apply to informational text.

Several states added standards specific to independent reading (Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas); Kansas included standards about representation and diversity in reading. Oklahoma included standards about independent writing. New York included independent and wide reading in a supporting document. Two states (Virginia and Texas) included standards about personal responses to text, including connections. Several states (Indiana, Oklahoma, and Virginia) included standards about handwriting. States also added sections about multiple or digital literacies (Indiana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Virginia). (Note: In Wisconsin, digital literacy is a large part the *Wisconsin Standards for Information and Technology Literacy*, adopted in 2018.)

Some of the most striking features of the state-level standards we examined came not in the standards but in the documents and details that support the standards. Several states (Indiana, Massachusetts, and New York) included a glossary. Virginia began each grade-level with a statement about learning that is unique to that grade-level. Indiana began each strand with supporting and explanatory statements from the International Literacy Association (ILA) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). Oklahoma created a graphic to illustrate the integrated nature of English

language arts. Massachusetts included examples of what standards would look like in practice. In Wisconsin, some formatting details are part of the standards, but supporting documents are created after agreement is reached on the content of the standards and the standards are adopted by the State Superintendent.

### **Next Steps**

The formal process for ELA standards review is scheduled to begin with a survey in summer of 2019. If the State Superintendent determines it is necessary to revise the current standards for ELA, a formal adoption would happen in the Spring of 2020. From there, each district learns about the standards, determines whether to adopt the standards (this is a local decision), and aligns local instruction and assessment to the standards. With time, Wisconsin's statewide summative assessments - as required by federal law - will be aligned to the standards adopted at the state level. Throughout this process, DPI relies upon your expertise and experience. Complete the summer of 2019 survey, provide feedback on a draft of the standards (winter 2020), and contact us with additional suggestions.

### Supporting Resources:

- Current Wisconsin Standards for English Language Arts: <https://dpi.wi.gov/ela/standards>
- Wisconsin Statute about CCSS: 115.293(2)  
<http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/115/II/293/3>
- Standards revision process: <https://dpi.wi.gov/standards>
- Wisconsin's Standards for Information and Technology Literacy:  
<https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/imt/pdf/ITLStandardsFINALADOPTED.pdf>

### State standards reviewed for this article:

- Indiana: <https://www.doe.in.gov/standards/englishlanguage-arts>
- Kansas:  
<https://community.ksde.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=tzz1aDOC0v8%3d&tabid=5559&mid=13575>
- New York: <http://www.nysed.gov/next-generation-learning-standards>
- Oklahoma:  
[https://sde.ok.gov/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/documents/files/OAS-ELA-Final%20Version\\_0.pdf](https://sde.ok.gov/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/documents/files/OAS-ELA-Final%20Version_0.pdf)
- Texas:  
[https://tea.texas.gov/Academics/Subject\\_Areas/English\\_Language\\_Arts\\_and\\_Reading/English\\_Language\\_Arts\\_and\\_Reading/](https://tea.texas.gov/Academics/Subject_Areas/English_Language_Arts_and_Reading/English_Language_Arts_and_Reading/)
- Virginia: [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards\\_docs/english/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/english/index.shtml)

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