

2016 Revised Arizona English Language Arts Standards - Overview

The purpose of this document is to outline changes in the 2016 Revision of the Arizona English Language Arts Standards document and to highlight how the changes have solved the concerns that have been expressed related to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Arizona thanks the educators, parents and community members for their full participation throughout this process. The new standards represent standards which will improve educational outcomes for all Arizona students.

Issue One: Literature in secondary English Language Arts courses is underemphasized in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

- **The arbitrary designation of time spent on informational text and literary text has been removed.** The Common Core State Standards recommended that a student’s reading in high school be unequally distributed. At the secondary level, the writers of CCSS recommended that 70% of a student’s exposure to reading be focused on informational text while only 30% of the student’s exposure to reading be focused on literary texts. In many cases, educators read this suggestion as a mandate to be carried out solely within the English classroom. This is inappropriate. The Revised Arizona English Language Arts Academic Standards have removed this restriction allowing local school boards, in collaboration with their communities, to appropriate types of reading as well as the time spent engaging in the reading of both informational and literary texts.
- **The standards for Grades 6-12 Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (CCSS Literacy Standards) have been eliminated.** Rather, as the Department continues revision of the academic content area subject, literacy standards will be integrated into content areas where and when they are appropriate. This change removes the arbitrary nature of the literacy standards, allows teachers to focus on literacy as it is appropriate to the discipline, and returns control of literacy instruction to the local school board. The removal of the CCSS Literacy Standards removed 30 standards from every grade from sixth through twelfth.

Issue Two: Students are not expected to learn cursive.

- **Writing Foundational Standards have been added to kindergarten through fifth grade.** Through the writing foundational standards, students will learn both print and cursive in a developmentally appropriate fashion. Arizona is the only state who has responded to the call for the return of cursive instruction to its classrooms. This change resulted in the addition of three writing foundational standards each in Kindergarten through third grade and one standard in both fourth and fifth grades.

Issue Three: Kindergarten CCSS are not developmentally appropriate.

- **Extra support for kindergarten students has been built into the revised standards** that did not previously contain such support. Previously, the CCSS expected kindergarteners to obtain independent mastery of many standards. While some of our learners are certainly capable of reaching this standard, it is an unreasonable expectation of all learners. As a result, either the phrase “with prompting and support” or “with guidance and support” has been added to eight of the kindergarten standards.
- **In the revised standards, one standard has been removed from kindergarten and moved to grade one** upon the advice of a child development technical expert.

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Issue Four: Phonics is not emphasized in the CCSS.

- **Phonics standards found with the reading foundational standards have been improved and phonics guidance is included in the glossary section.** The improvement of the phonics standards resulted in the revision of eight of the nine phonics related standards in kindergarten through grade five.
- **The new, Arizona-specific writing foundational standards compliment phonics instruction** effectively linking reading to writing in a developmentally appropriate manner. Arizona will be the only state in the nation with a dedicated foundational writing strand of standards.

Issue Five: Text complexity expectations in the CCSS rely only upon a Lexile determination.

- **New text complexity expectations are outlined within the revised Arizona English Language Arts standards.** This text complexity expectations expand the definition of text complexity to take into account literary themes, time-period specific sentence structure and word usage, and age-appropriateness. Lexile determinations may continue to be a portion of text complexity decisions; however, this new method for determining text complexity allows the instructor, school boards and parents to evaluate the texts holistically to make better judgements about appropriateness and complexity.

Issue Six: The CCSS dictated curriculum and instruction.

- **The revised Arizona English Language Arts standards have removed many of the CCSS curriculum and instruction recommendations.** Arizona is a local control state, and the inclusion of specific text recommendations was inappropriate and misleading. Though the writers of the CCSS intended these texts as examples, many interpreted these examples as mandates. This misleading inclusion of example texts resulted in the removal of many Arizona-related texts, founding documents, and classic literary pieces from curricula. By removing examples, this area of confusion is eliminated and local control of curriculum choices is restored.

Summary of Revisions:

Kindergarten: 21 of 44 of the original CCSS have been revised (48%). (Three foundational writing standards have been added.)

1st Grade: 14 of 43 of the original CCSS have been revised (33%). (Three foundational writing standards have been added.)

2nd Grade: 12 of 42 of the original CCSS have been revised (29%). (Three foundational writing standards have been added.)

3rd Grade: 13 of 44 of the original CCSS have been revised (30%). (Three foundational writing standards have been added.)

4th Grade: 13 of 44 of the original CCSS have been revised (30%). (One foundational writing standard has been added.)

5th Grade: 11 of 44 of the original CCSS have been revised (25%). (One foundational writing standard has been added.)

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6th Grade: All 30 (100%) of the CCSS Literacy Standards have been eliminated. 8 of 42 of the original CCSS have been revised (19%).

7th Grade: All 30 (100%) of the CCSS Literacy Standards have been eliminated. 8 of 42 of the original CCSS have been revised (19%).

8th Grade: All 30 (100%) of the CCSS Literacy Standards have been eliminated. 9 of 42 of the original CCSS have been revised (21%).

9-10th Grade Band: All 30 (100%) of the CCSS Literacy Standards have been eliminated. 15 of 42 of the original CCSS have been revised (36%).

11-12th Grade Band: All 30 (100%) of the CCSS Literacy Standards have been eliminated. 25 of 42 of the original CCSS have been revised (60%).

Overall Changes: 149 of 471 of the original CCSS have been revised (32%). 299 of 621 of the CCSS with the CCSS Literacy Standards have been revised (48%).