

Expert Feedback on the English Language Arts and Reading Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

The following responses to the guiding questions are general in nature. Attached to these responses in a separate document is a table with more specific feedback on some of the individual standards. Please note that while most of the standards may be listed on the table, comments are provided only for those which may require attention for revision or consideration. Specific grade levels for both general and specific review comments are included.

1. Does each grade level or course follow a complete and logical development of English language arts and reading concepts?
 - With the exception of comprehension skills presented separately, there is a logical sequence.
 - There are some concepts that are captured across multiple standards and this is fine, but perhaps, a cross-reference would be helpful. For example, some of the written conventions appear in two strands as well as vocabulary, discussion, and making connections.

2. Have the correct vocabulary and terminology been used throughout the TEKS?
 - For the most part, yes, terminology and vocabulary are consistent; however, because similar words are used for student expectations, it may be difficult to determine how one grade level is differentiated from the next. For example, see the last sequence under Reading/Media Literacy: it appears that synonyms are used to differentiate between middle and high school (e.g., analyze, assess, evaluate) and thus, it is unclear how these differ across grade levels.
 - More specificity or additional details may be required to determine the differences between grade levels.

3. Is the level of rigor appropriate for each grade level?
 - The wording of some SEs does not reflect rigor and at times, is ambiguous. Specific examples are noted in the table (e.g., “recognize” is insufficient, and “identify” alone without citing or discussing evidence lacks rigor).
 - Some terms are vague or ambiguous or not consistent within strands or grade levels (e.g., evaluate vs. analyze vs. assess, improve, make inferences, etc.).
 - Terms should be as tight and explicit as possible so they can be taught and measured in similar ways.

4. Are the student expectations (SEs) clear and specific?

- There are some that could be tightened for clarity and specificity. See the attached table for some recommendations.
5. Are the TEKS aligned horizontally and vertically? If not, what gaps should be addressed?
- It is unclear why Figure 19, which addresses Reading Comprehension, is included as a separate table of TEKS and SEs. Perhaps these should be included as part of the reading section, but labeled as Reading Comprehension Skills and Strategies. Some of these overlap with other TEKS in the Reading Strand (e.g., “connect meaning to a personal experience” [K-6(B) and 1-7(A) is not dissimilar enough from K (F) under Reading/Comprehension Skills, Figure 19). There are several other examples relating to making inferences, retelling, etc. Many of these SEs sound more like comprehension monitoring or assessment tasks, rather than comprehension strategy instruction and use. For more focused attention on determining whether students are using strategies to support their abilities to perform skills such as retelling, making inferences, summarizing, etc., more emphasis should be placed on having students demonstrate *how* they are able to demonstrate the skills (as in C in which students monitor and adjust, use background knowledge, etc.). Student expectations may require that students explain orally or in writing, how they are able to comprehend once they can demonstrate that they do indeed comprehend.
 - Because Figure 19 is organized by grade level and has similarities across grade levels by SE or standard, it may be best to include these in the main Reading strand and focus on more differentiation between grade levels so teachers understand what is expected at grade level and how these differ across them.
6. Can all student expectations reasonably be taught within the amount of time typically allotted for the grade level or high school course prior to the end of the school year or prior to a state assessment?
- As written, I believe they can all be taught within the allotted time.
 - There are some SEs that can be integrated into others or deleted to minimize unnecessary instructional time (e.g., focus on some of the print concepts in 1 and 2, some PA in 1, moving some of the phonics from 1st to K and 2nd to 1st, etc.).
7. Are there student expectations that can be eliminated in order to streamline the standards?
- Yes. I've noted a few on the accompanying table.
8. Are there specific areas that need to be updated to reflect current research?

TEKS, ELAR Review, July 2015

- Yes. Noted in the table, particularly related to PA and phonics, and the integration of reading and writing.
 - Some of the labeling for informational/expository text may need to be changed?
9. Are the College and Career Readiness Standards adequately and appropriately addressed throughout the TEKS?
- The integration of reading and writing across content areas appears to be stronger in the CCRS and CDS documents. Perhaps, a cross-reference would help content area teachers in middle and high school access appropriate ELAR standards that may also be addressed in content areas.
10. Do you have any other suggestions for ways in which the English language arts and reading TEKS can be improved?
- A stronger emphasis on the integration of reading and writing is needed. While the CCRS and CDS address the integration perhaps more explicitly, it appears to lack the emphasis it deserves. Perhaps there could be more cross-reference within ELAR?
 - The focus on technology needs to be included at the kindergarten level.
 - There appears to be a misalignment of some standards in terms of expectations. For example, K students are expected to accomplish research standards as they relate to asking questions, determining appropriate sources, and gathering information, which are all appropriate, but there are some standards that seem to include lower expectations (e.g., print concepts).
 - Consider embedding research into reading and writing as reading and writing are the vehicles or skills necessary to conduct research. The ability to collect and synthesize information or data is accomplished with both reciprocal processes.
 - The labeling of strands and student expectations is confusing, especially when reviewing TEKS vertically. It might make more sense to label the sub-strands with a numeral and the expectations as letters to make it easier to look at continuity across grade levels for a particular skill area. For example, for Reading/Vocabulary Development, the numbers should be the same for every grade level for which it applies (5 for all). The following is an example of recommended change for Strands and numbering for Reading only, but the same may apply for other strands (this helps with vertical alignment as well as reinforcing the expectation that certain skills should be accomplished by a certain GL):

Grade Levels	Strand	Number*
K-1	Reading/Beginning Reading Skills/Print Awareness	1

TEKS, ELAR Review, July 2015

K-1	Reading/Beginning Reading Skills/Phonological Awareness	2
K-3	Reading/Beginning Reading Skills/Phonics	3
K-3	Reading/Beginning Reading/Strategies	4
K-8	Reading/Fluency (see note in table about adding a few items for K)	5
K-12	Reading/Vocabulary Development (beginning this strand with number 6 reinforces the expectation that beginning reading skills should be accomplished by grade 3).	6
K-12	Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text (Theme and Genre)	7
K-12	Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text (Poetry)	8
K-12	Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text (Drama)	9
K-12	Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text (Fiction)	10
K-12	Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text (Literary Nonfiction)	11
K-12	Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text (Sensory Language)	12
K-12	Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text (Independent Reading)	13
K-12	Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text (Culture and History)	14
K-12	Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text (Expository Text)	15
3-12	Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text (Persuasive Text)	16
K-12	Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text (Procedural Text)	17
K-12	Reading/Media Literacy	18

*NOTE: These strand numbers would be adjusted based on any revision or reorganization of strands. The main point is that the strand numbers should remain consistent across all grade levels regardless of whether a GL has a strand as part of student expectations or not. This suggestion may alleviate confusion for teachers who will refer to the ELAR TEKS across grade levels (e.g., Special education teachers, multi-age classroom teachers, ELL or Bilingual teachers, etc.).

TEKS, ELAR Review Table

GL	Strand	Action recommended	Comment
Reading			
K-2	Beginning Reading/ Print Awareness	Focus on most of these only for K, some for 1.	The only SE assigned to 2nd grade relates to features of a sentence and these are captured in OWC, 22 (C) (i), (ii), and (iii).
		1 (D) for 1st grade.	The same comment above related to features of a sentence can be addressed with OWC for 1st grade as well.
		Delete 1(A) and 1 (E) from grade 1 because these will be accomplished in K through word and text reading.	I believe many of these are accomplished before K and if not, they are addressed more during assessment and modeling rather than explicit teaching.
	Reading/Beginning Reading Skills/ Phonological Awareness		
K	2(H)-	Add medial and final sound.	Modify this SE to reflect all positions of phonemes for K and delete it for 1. Because students will be expected to work with letter-sound correspondences, they will develop this skill more completely in print.
1	2A -orally generate a series of original rhyming words using a variety of phonograms (e.g., -ake, -ant, -ain) and consonant blends (e.g., bl, st, tr);	Delete this as a separate SE or sub-strand.	If students aren't able to generate rhymes like this by the end of K, instruction or assessment does not need to continue as it is more important that the student use knowledge of L-S relationships to read the words.

TEKS, ELAR Review Table

1	2D-blend spoken phonemes to form one- and two-syllable words, including adjacent consonants blends (e.g., spr);		Focus need only be on one-syllable words for this because once students are working with multi-syllable words, it is more important to focus on the syllable chunk since this is what they'll be focusing on when reading them.
1			
K	Reading/Beginning Reading Skills/ Phonics		
K-1	3A(iv)	Include consonant digraphs “th” (both voiced and unvoiced), “sh,” “ch,” and “wh” in K sequence.	These digraphs are commonly taught in K and are represented in words included on common high frequency word lists.
K	3(A) identify the common sounds that letters represent, including consonants and short vowels;		Short vowel sounds are taught as most common sounds and are taught in K. As soon as students learn the first vowel, they can begin to read real words. While this is listed as a separate SE, the next one is the one that focuses on using letter-sound knowledge to decode CVC words.
K	3(B) use knowledge of letter-sound relationships to decode regular words in text and independent of content (e.g., VC, CVC, CCVC, and CVCC words);		Note: While K students can decode 4-sound words with adjacent consonants, it can be more difficult in terms of phonemic difficulty. Consider splitting these into 2 SEs to reflect this differentiation.

TEKS, ELAR Review Table

K	3(C) recognize that read new words that are created when letters-letter-sounds are changed, manipulated (substituted, added, or deleted);		Slight wording change, but more explicit to reflect the SE.
K	3D-identify and read at least 25 high-frequency words from a commonly used list in isolation and in connected text.		Just need “read.” Reading in isolation is good for initial teaching and some practice, but reading them in connected text is necessary.
1	3Aiii	Change “blends” to “adjacent consonant sounds” to encourage teaching as separate sounds and not as one unit like digraphs are taught.	The term “blends” may cause confusion for some because really, all sounds when combined to form words are intended to be blended together in the process of decoding.
K-1	3A(iv)	Include consonant digraphs “th” (both voiced and unvoiced), “sh,” “ch,” and “wh” in K sequence.	These digraphs are commonly taught in K and are represented in words included on common high frequency word lists.

TEKS, ELAR Review Table

1	<p>3A(v)-vowel digraphs including oo as in foot, oo as in moon, ea as in eat, ea as in bread, ee, ow as in how, ow as in snow, ou as in out, ay, ai, aw, au, ew, oa, ie as in chief, ie as in pie, and -igh; and</p>	<p>Split into 2 standards: decode words in context and in isolation . . . , including long vowels with multiple spellings (/oa/ spelled as o, oe, oa, oCe as in home, ow; /ee/ spelled as e, ee, ea, eCe; /ie/ spelled as ie, iCe, igh, iCC as in find or wild; /ay/ spelled ai, ay, aCe, a, etc.) decode words in context and in isolation . . . including variant vowel sounds (/oo/ as in moon, good, /ow/ spelled ow or ou as in town and shout; /au/ spelled au or aw as in haul and paw; /oy/ spelled oy or oi as in toy or oil.</p>	
1		<p>Add this standard: Decode words that contain r-controlled vowel sounds and various spellings in one-and two-syllable words (/er/ spelled ir, ur, er as in fir, hurt, her, other [spelled or in word, world, worth]; /ar/ spelled ar as in farm, hard; /or/ spelled or as in for and cord).</p>	<p>Teaching the r-controlled vowels early is particularly helpful as students begin to read multi-syllable words.</p>
1	<p>3 (B) combine sounds from letters and common spelling patterns (e.g., consonant blends, long- and short-vowel patterns) to create and read real recognizable words;</p>		

TEKS, ELAR Review Table

1	3 (C) use read two-syllable words with common syllabication patterns to decode words , including: (list syllable types and only 2-syllable examples as included in current version).		<p>The slight change in wording is recommended to be sure the focus is on students reading these words with syllable types and not on teaching students to recognize or label the syllable types (not necessary in first grade).</p> <p>Single syllable words with these syllable types are taught in the context of single syllable decoding of words containing various spellings for long or variant vowels (e.g., he, kite, car).</p>
1	3 (D) decode words with common spelling patterns (e.g., -ink, -onk, -ick)	Delete this as a separate SE or sub-strand.	<p>If the letter-sounds are taught explicitly, then that will eliminate the need to focus on isolated spelling patterns such as these. It is recommended that students learn the sounds and spellings and decode words that include them, but not necessarily by word families to avoid students tendency to rely on oral rhyming when words are presented in word family lists rather than decoding and focusing on all letter sounds and patterns.</p>
	Beginning Reading/ Strategies		
K	Reading/Fluency	Add these two for K: “Identify letter sounds and names with automaticity.” Read brief, simple decodable text with CVC words and a few sight words with automaticity.	Students are reading CVC words and HF words in K and will be reading in text so fluency can be addressed at this early level.
K	Reading/ Vocabulary Development	All grade levels	This strand needs a sequence for students to determine meaning using other strategies besides dictionary/thesaurus use (strategy with the least research support).

TEKS, ELAR Review Table

<p>Students understand new vocabulary and use it correctly when reading, speaking, and writing. Students are expected to:</p>		<p>Because students in K may have limited skill to read and write new vocabulary, they may be able to (and should be encouraged) to use new vocabulary when speaking, responding to questions, or discussing content in books read to them or material covered in other content areas.</p>
<p>(A) identify and use an increasing number of words that name objects, characters, persons, descriptive words, actions, directions, positions, sequences, and locations;</p>	<p>Add “common objects and characters.” Add “descriptive words.”</p>	<p>Oral vocabulary for kindergarten students should include all parts of speech, including nouns and adjectives. Strand/skill 8B expects students to “describe characters in a story” so this further supports the need to address nouns and characters and descriptive words.</p>
<p>(B) recognize that compound words are made up of shorter words;</p>	<p>Change to, “Identify the meanings of individual words that comprise compound words and explain why they make sense together as a compound word.”</p>	

TEKS, ELAR Review Table

	<p>(C) identify and sort pictures of objects into conceptual categories (e.g., colors, shapes, textures) and tell why they go together.</p>		<p>Because the focus is also on vocabulary use, an appropriate expectation would be for students to explain why objects go together and thus, have additional opportunities to use the vocabulary words they're learning. For example, teacher asks, why did you put these objects (or pictures) together? Student answers, "I put these together because they're the same color blue." or "I put these pictures together because these are things (tools) I use at school." If a student only names the objects and then puts them together, deeper vocabulary knowledge may be compromised.</p>
	<p>(D) use a picture dictionary to find words.</p>	<p>Change to "Sort illustrated vocabulary picture cards according to related meanings."</p>	
		<p>For grades 4-12, add, "demonstrate how the use of morphological units changes both meaning and pronunciation to reflect changes in parts of speech."</p>	<p>The ability to "flex" sounds based on inflectional and other morphological markers impacts meaning, pronunciation, and spelling. For example, understanding that example and exemplify are share the same root meaning, but the accent and even vowel choice changes as words shift for usage. (Perhaps not the best example for this, but hopefully, the idea is conveyed).</p>

TEKS, ELAR Review Table

	Reading/ Comprehension of Literary Text/		I recommend using this as the overall strand, but with the sub-strands and student expectations falling under this main strand. I arrived at this recommendation after thinking about Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language because focus on sensory language may likely be a part of most literary text and shouldn't be treated as a separate skill. Embedding into the overall strand will reinforce the importance of focusing on all genres and integrating through reading and writing. It applies for poetry, drama, literary nonfiction, etc. I also think that in order to ensure that students are reading independently across genres and paying attention to many elements, we would want independent reading to be a part of the overall strand and not a separate activity.
K	Reading/ Comprehension of Literary Text/Poetry		The vertical alignment document includes a SE; however, the original TEKS document does not include one (7A). 7A is a little vague in terms of SE's: consider changing to something like, "identifies rhyming pairs that are included in an ABAB pattern poem. Also, add 7B: Identify simple theme, character, or setting after listening to a short poem when not stated explicitly.
	Reading/ Comprehension of Literary Text/Drama		

TEKS, ELAR Review Table

K	Reading/ Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction		<p>Change 8A to “Identify the main character or idea and the most important thing about the main character or idea (e.g., Get the Gist). Change 8B to “Retell the main event of a story read aloud in three parts using transition words like, ‘First, then, and finally.’” Add 8C (to capture original 8B), “Describe characters in a story and provide reasons for using descriptors with evidence from story.” (e.g., The girl, Sally, was bossy because she kept telling others what to do, like . . .). Add 8D, “Identify a reason for an action in the story.” (e.g., He stopped playing because some kids were making fun of him).</p>
1	Reading/ Comprehension of Literary Text/ Literary Nonfiction		<p>Change 8A to “Identify the main character or idea and the most important thing about the main character or idea (e.g., Get the Gist). Change 8B to “Retell the main event of a story read aloud in three parts using transition words like, ‘First, then, and finally.’” Add 8C (to capture original 8B), “Describe characters in a story and provide reasons for using descriptors with evidence from story.” (e.g., The girl, Sally, was bossy because she kept telling others what to do, like . . .). Add 8D, “Identify a reason for an action in the story.” (e.g., He stopped playing because some kids were making fun of him).</p>
	Reading/ Comprehension of Literary Text/ Sensory Language		<p>Is it feasible to embed a focus on sensory language and imagery into other areas?</p>

TEKS, ELAR Review Table

	<p>Reading/ Comprehension of Literary Text/ Independent Reading</p>	<p>Delete this as a separate SE or sub-strand.</p>	<p>See note above. In addition, Independent Reading should span K-12. While it may be inherently assumed beyond Grade 6 into other strands, particularly writing or research, it should be emphasized. Also, independent reading at K can be encouraged during the second half of K when students are expected to read CVC words and some non-decodable HF words (e.g., rereading practice, partner reading) and at higher levels for students who excel. Further, it should be embedded into Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text as well.</p>
		<p>If maintained separately, add “discussion” to list of examples.</p>	
	<p>Reading/ Comprehension of Informational Text/ Culture and History</p>		<p>There is no differentiation between a couple of levels (e.g., 1-2, 4-5, 7-8, etc.). If teachers dissect some of the standards or SEs to determine exactly what should be addressed, they may find that one was covered previously and not address it.</p>
	<p>Reading/ Comprehension of Informational Text/ Expository Text</p>		<p>5th grade standard seems high level compared to others above that grade level. I don’t see differentiation between grades from 7-12 (e.g., “make subtle inferences and draw complex conclusion . . .” vs. “Make and defend subtle inferences and complex conclusions . . .” ? Vague and ambiguous. Same is true for 9 (D) across 9-12. Need more evidence of connection between reading and writing, especially in 9-12, but preferably in 7-12.</p>
	<p>Reading/ Comprehension of Informational Text/ Persuasive Text</p>		

TEKS, ELAR Review Table

	Reading/ Comprehension of Informational Text/ Procedural Text		
	Reading/Media Literacy	Add at high school level “Use written language appropriate for purpose and platform (e.g., use short cuts and abbreviations for informal communication only).	Consider including focus on use of digital media in K and 1 also. Include apps beginning no later than 2nd grade. Terms for 5-12 are too similar to differentiate between student expectations.
Writing			
		Add “For an authentic purpose” when possible for writing tasks.	
		The inclusion of “Write short poems” for K validates an earlier suggestion to include a SE for poetry in K.	
Oral and Written Communication			
K		Add “when appropriate” after “speak in complete sentences to communicate.	Typical conversation or discussion for K students may not always demand complete sentences. The focus is should be on turn-taking, remaining on topic, and interpreting the questions adequately to provide the necessary information.
3			The focus on cursive writing instruction should be emphasized if this continues as a standard. I recommend that it be maintained.
K-12			Provide examples of all parts of speech and in particular all verb tenses (some teachers may be unfamiliar with these).
Research			

TEKS, ELAR Review Table

		Change words in SEs like, “Improve” because it’s too vague. Add something like, “Organize information collected and determine which pieces of information pertain to the research topic and questions.” This is at least appropriate for grades 3-6.	Overall, there needs to be more differentiation between grade levels to reflect growing skill development in this area, particularly from middle to high school and within high school.
		Add something like, “Generate an outline to guide additional research and information gathering to answer research questions” (for grades 7-9).	
Listening and Speaking			
K-12	Listening and Speaking/Listening	For K, Add, “Respond appropriately to questions or directions using oral language or gestures (to ensure active listening).”	
		For K, Add something like, “Use hand gestures to respond during a read aloud.”	This relates to general questions the teacher may ask or having students signal during various parts of a story or when listening for specific vocabulary words.
K-12	Listening and Speaking/Speaking	Add, “Students will use vocabulary (form) to match purpose of language use (function). For example, if the function or purpose is to describe, student will use descriptive words with correct syntax. If function or purpose is to persuade, student will use effective vocabulary such as urge, beg, implore, request, wish, etc.	While this applies across all grade levels, it may be difficult to determine specific vocabulary appropriate for functions at various grade levels. The standard should provide enough guidance for teachers to think about the purpose of “speaking” across multiple contexts and content areas, and teach vocabulary that will support development and student success.
K-12	Listening and Speaking/Teamwork		The purpose and procedures of brainstorming should be taught in at least high school and probably in middle school as well.