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Feedback (K-Grade 5)

**Guidelines for Expert Feedback on the Spanish Language Arts and Reading
Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills**

Please review the current Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Spanish language arts and reading, kindergarten - grade 6 and English I and II for Speakers of Other Languages, as applicable, and respond to the following questions. In your feedback please indicate the specific grade level/course and student expectation number you are referring to, as appropriate.

1. Does each grade level or course follow a complete and logical development of English language arts and reading concepts?

At the Kindergarten level, Reading/Beginning Reading Skills/Print Awareness, Phonological Awareness, and Phonics are currently presented as isolated skills. In this sense, ELA Organizations' Recommendations for TEKS Framework in which Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening are presented in an interconnected manner makes sense. This integration will de-emphasize what currently happens in many early childhood classrooms. That is, many teachers focus on rote repetition or practice of skills in isolation, such as the separation of spoken multi-syllabic words or the study of the letter of the week. The proposed framework makes it clear that a context in which authentic activities are designed is always crucial.

Integration of skills will eliminate repetition. For example, the skill related to the use of abbreviations appears three times in 2nd grade:

2.2 (G) Identify and read abbreviations (**Reading/Beginning Reading Skills/Phonics**)

2.22 (E) Identify, read, and write abbreviations (**Oral and Written Conventions/Handwriting, Capitalization, and Punctuation**).

2.23 (A) Identify, read and write abbreviations (Oral and Written Conventions/Spelling).

2. Have the correct vocabulary and terminology been used throughout the TEKS?

I would like to draw attention to the expression “well-known” which in the elementary level TEKS is used as follows:

Well-known folktale or fable (K.6 B)

Well-known story of fable (1.7 A)

Well-known fables, legends (2.6 A)

Suggestion: eliminate the words “well-know” as they imply that students possess similar background knowledge/experiences. What is “**well-known**” for part of the student population may be completely “**unknown**” for certain groups, specifically students who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

3. Is the level of rigor appropriate for each grade level?

A main concern with the level of rigor of the current TEKS and expectations relates to the cognitive demand embedded in many verbs throughout the document: “**recognize**”, “**identify and sort pictures**”; “**recognize that new words are created when syllables are changed**”..., “**decode**”, “**become familiar with...**” etc., Although it is important that students master knowledge and demonstrate comprehension, it is also crucial that they engage in complex thinking. With this in mind, a suggestion is to maintain these expectations, but to enhance them with a connection to real-life situations, stories, culturally relevant literature, self-generated projects, etc.

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

K.17 (C) indicates that students are expected to “use punctuation at the beginning (when appropriate) and at the end of a sentence.”

I believe this expectation makes reference to interrogative and exclamatory sentences. If this is the case, then I would suggest to clearly state it.

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The following objective: “Listening and Speaking/Teamwork” at the Kindergarten level K. 23 states that students “work productively with others in teams. Students continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to follow agreed-upon rules for discussion, including taking turns and speaking one at a time.’

Suggestion: Because, according to the literature (Otto, 2014), “children who have oral language competencies will be more successful in communicating with both teachers and peers. Their success in carrying on conversations and in responding in learning activities will contribute to further success at school” (p. 19), I suggest that this objective includes expectations that gradually allows students to successful work productively with others. This can be achieved be initially providing practice in dyadic conversations/tasks or what is known as paired learning. With this, young children will have access to a safe space in which to practice prerequisite skills such as taking turns, eye contact, modulating speaking rate and volume, etc. The expectation can tentatively read:

K.23 Students are expected to:

(A) initiate, maintain, and discontinue a conversation in pairs adhering to social conventions such as greeting, stating the purpose of the discussion, and saying “thank you”.

(B) discuss/complete academic tasks (structured and semi-structured) in pairs.

In the same way, students at the 5th grade level can be expected to participate in **structured and semi-structured** “student-led discussions...” as indicated in 5.29.

Rationale: There will be tasks that require interactions in which a defined set of rules and steps are to be followed.

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Expectation 1.22 (J) and 2.23 (J) related to Oral and Written Conventions/Spelling indicate that “students use resources to find correct spellings”. This expectation can include the words “print and electronic resources” to make it consistent with the upper grade levels.

Expectation 2.16 (C) can be more specific. Students are expected to “identify various written conventions for using digital media (e.g., email, website, video game)”.

I am not sure this is self-explanatory.

Expectation 2.24 (B) indicates that students “decide what sources of information might be relevant to answer these questions.”

Suggestion: Modify this expectation so that it can stand alone. In its current state, one needs to refer to the previous expectation to understand what “these questions” refers to.

5. Are the TEKS aligned horizontally and vertically? If not, what gaps should be addressed?

In terms of vertical alignment, the Reading/Media Literacy objective, which basically reads the same in the different grade levels includes and expectation that in 5th grade (5.14) indicates that students “will explain how messages conveyed in various forms of

media are presented differently (e.g., documentaries, online information, televised news)”.

Suggested change:

Align this objective so that all grade levels include an expectation related to the analysis and/or identification of different forms of online content/information.

Additionally, the objective related to Research/Gathering Sources can be adjusted to include an expectation that indicates that data can be gathered from online sources in all grade levels. Currently, only grades 3-5 (at the elementary level) make reference to online searches, online sources and, web pages. This can be an expectation for all grade levels “with adult assistance” in grades K and 1 as currently stated.

Beginning in 1st grade, students are expected to write letters “that use appropriate conventions”. This is part of the Writing/Expository and Procedural Texts Objective: 1.19 (B), 2.19 (B), 3.20 (B), 4.18 (B), and 5.18 (B).

With today’s technological advances and the use of mobile devices, the practice of old fashioned ‘letter writing’ has become the exception rather than the rule. With this in mind, the suggestion is to add the word “email” to those expectations that make reference to letters. Expectation 5.18 (B) for example, can read as follows:

Write formal and informal letters **and emails** or **electronic mail communications** that convey ideas, include important information, demonstrate a sense of closure, and use appropriate conventions (e.g., date, salutation, closing);

Rationale:

As a professor at the college level, I have noticed that students are not necessarily aware that formal emails, sent to people the writer does not know at a personal level, are similar to formal letters and must include salutation, closing, etc. in addition to formal language. Knowing that formal emails use different vocabulary to informal emails is a skill that will allow students to successfully navigate the academic world. Concrete examples of formal/informal vocabulary should be identified (perhaps this can be an expectation):

Example

Formal:

I would appreciate if you...

Informal:

Can you...?

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For the purpose of consistency across grade levels, the following suggestion is made:

Include the words “printed or electronic” before the word “dictionary” in the following TEKS expectations 4.2 (E), 3.4 (E), 2.5 (D), and 1.6 (E).

Rationale: numerous electronic programs and web-based applications are available to young children that allow them to access dictionaries, thesaurus, etc. The expectation in 2nd grade for example, would read:

2.5 (D) alphabetize a series of words and use a dictionary or a glossary (**printed or electronic**) to find words.

In grade 4, objective 2.D (Reading/Vocabulary Development, students are expected to “identify the meaning of common idioms”.

Suggestion: change to “identify the meaning of common idioms in the local context and across cultures”

Rationale:

This will guide educators so that they initially draw from student’ funds of knowledge and then transition and make connection to idioms that may be unfamiliar to them (culturally).

Kindergarten includes research objectives that include: Research Plan and Gathering Sources.

Suggestion: Include: **Synthesizing Information and Organizing and Presenting Ideas** just like other grades.

Rationale: Given that kindergarteners are already expected to design ask questions and gather evidence, wouldn’t it make sense to have students present their ideas/information to small and/or large groups and create a display (with adult guidance)? This would provide opportunities to use language for a variety of purposes and to acquire pragmatic knowledge of language.

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?

Yes, if integrated in meaningful ways.

7. Are there student expectations that can be eliminated in order to streamline the standards?

Suggestion:

Eliminate expectation 2.19 (C) write brief comments on literary or informational texts.

Or clarify: What type of comments? What is the purpose of those comments?

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Cursive script. There are only two instances in which the use of cursive script is mentioned: 4.21 (A) and 3.23 (A). This is an example of an expectation that can be eliminated as it is not relevant to children in this era of technological advances.

Additionally, it is not addressed through out the different grade levels.

8. Are there specific areas that need to be updated to reflect current research?

A more deliberate connection with 21st Century skills is important. Skills such as collaboration and communication for example, are not sufficiently addressed. In Kindergarten, for instance, only the last objective (K.23 Listening and Speaking/Teamwork), makes reference to the expectation that students will work productively with others.

9. Are the College and Career Readiness Standards adequately and appropriately addressed throughout the TEKS?

The purposeful integration of all skills is not evident in the current TEKS. This integration would be more in line with the College and Career Readiness Standards.

10. Do you have any other suggestions for ways in which the English language arts and reading TEKS can be improved?

It is suggested the concept of the “tacit subject” be considered in the following objectives that make reference to the expectation that students use “complete sentences”

3.22 (B)

4.20 (B)

5.20 (C)

In many cases the subject in Spanish may be “tacit”. Sentences such as: “Escuchamos música” are complete and correct and the subject is tacitly included.

Objective 5.2 (D) indicates that students are expected to identify and explain the meaning of common idioms, adages, and other sayings.

Suggestion:

Children begin to understand figurative language at a very young age (preschool).

Sayings (dichos), riddles (adivinanzas), tongue twisters (trabalenguas) are a very important component in many cultures. They are used as a way to teach lessons of daily life and as a source of enjoyment. Perhaps the expectation could be to initially identify the meaning. Then, explain what these resources mean. Finally, they can be expected to use them in meaningful contexts.

Rhymes, chants, riddles provide a cultural context that increases children’s awareness of sound patterns and can be introduced as early as Kindergarten. Current TEKS objectives introduce them in 3rd grade.