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Feedback (K-Grade 5)
**Guidelines for Expert Feedback on the English Language Arts and
Reading Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills**

Please review the current Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for English language arts and reading, kindergarten - grade 12, 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?

Kindergarten-Introduction-2 (B) indicates that “ELL students should use the knowledge of their first language (e.g., cognates) to further vocabulary development”

Suggestions: change to “ELL students should use the knowledge of their first language or languages (e.g., cognates) to further vocabulary development.”

Additionally, add an “s” to “language” in the following statement: ELLs must learn how rhetorical devices in English differ from those in their native language (s)

Rationale: Many children begin their schooling as bilingual learners. In other words, they already speak two or more languages.

K.21 A (21) Listening and Speaking/Listening. Students use comprehension skills to listen attentively to others in formal and informal settings. Students continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to:

(A) listen attentively by facing speakers and asking questions to clarify information; and

Suggestion: At the kindergarten level and possibly first grade, emphasis can be placed in advancing from listening attentively by facing one speaker and practicing this skill with one listening partner at a time. Later, listening to several speakers can be introduced.

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

I am not sure if this comment responds to the question above. However, 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?**

Yes

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

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 (E) and 2.23 (F) 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 an 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** 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

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?

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

In reference to ELLs, the introduction (2 C) indicates that “ELLs must learn how rhetorical devices in English differ from those in their native language.” It is critical to

understand that all different aspects of students' native language (phonological, syntactic, semantic, morphemic, and pragmatic) and the English language may vary significantly. Therefore, ELLs may produce expressions (written or oral) that reflect the characteristics of their native language. For example, a student may produce a sentence that omits the subject.

Objective 5.2 (E) 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.