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First, I'd like to thank the writing committees for the hard work you have done thus far. I have read through all the drafts, and I can see that you all have tried to take into account all the important components of our large and cumbersome content. I appreciate you very much. I wanted you to hear and read that first because my answers below typically point out flaws.

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

Yes, I do believe that, on the whole, the revisions reflect complete courses of study.

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

(2) Comprehension In my initial feedback, I suggested that the TEKS agree with what literacy experts across the nation assert are the strategies readers employ when making meaning of text: monitoring for meaning, asking questions, drawing inferences, synthesizing, making connections, determining importance, activating schema, and creating sensory images. (Anderson and Pearson, 1984; Pearson, et al 1992; Keene and Zimmerman, 1997; Harvey and Goudvis, 2000 and so many more). I appreciate that the writing teams have incorporated these comprehension strategies into the body of the TEKS.

Problems still exist with terminology in the comprehension strand, however. All grade levels have a similar SE that says something like, "combine information from the text and the reader's schema in order to create a new understanding." This is problematic because this wording is really a definition of an *inference*, which is already listed as a reading strategy. What is meant here is *synthesize*, so I recommend using the correct verbiage. Additionally, synthesizing involves putting together more elements than just the "text and the reader's schema to create a new understanding." Synthesizing can be creating a new understanding by combining two elements in the same text, combining three elements from different texts, combining information gleaned from the news with the text, etc. The SE should simply state what we expect students to be able to do – *synthesize*.

Also, some of the comprehension strategies have the emphasis on the wrong part, and they aren't parallel. Example "search for connections" is not the comprehension strategy. Making connections aids in comprehension, not searching. Please make the verbs in the comprehension strand the actual strategy that students use in comprehension. Same point for "sort through information..." Readers determine importance by sorting through information. Sorting is not a reading strategy. Readers make and confirm predictions by using text features, elements, and structure. Readers visualize sensory images to interpret and analyze text.

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“Establish purpose for reading...and monitor comprehension...” Those are two different things and should be separated. After “monitor comprehension,” delete “making connections.” Readers monitor comprehension and make adjustments when necessary. Making connections could be used as a fix-up strategy, but it is out of place here.

Summarize, paraphrase, and retell should not be part of the comprehension strand. The knowledge and skill statement says “students use metacognitive skills to comprehend increasingly complex texts.” Summarizing, paraphrasing, and retelling, while they are important strategies that aid in demonstrating comprehension, are not metacognitive strategies that aid in comprehension. Additionally, the concept of summarizing appears in many places throughout the documents, so teams need to decide exactly where it goes and keep it there.

(5) Multiple Genres and (7) Composition and Presentation As stated in my initial feedback on our current TEKS, I would like the writing committees to take time to identify specifically what genres our students will write. There is considerable disconnect in the draft TEKS. The first issue is an alignment issue. Does writing belong in the multiple text strand or in the composition and presentation strand? In English I, I can flip between those two strands and figure out the types of writing my students would produce. I.5.G, H, and I specify that students should “apply rhetorical techniques and craft....to informational, literary, and argumentative texts” and then I.7.F and G specify writing “informational essays” and “a multi-genre composition.” Why in separate places? While I can infer the meaning of a multi-genre essay, I don’t think that is what we need to say. We have struggled for many years to specifically define an expository essay because it was such a vague and unused (and now misused) term, and I worry that we’ll be introducing another vague, undefined term that would set us back again.

I strongly urge the writing committees to utilize the terminology that the rest of the country uses and only that language. In college, in the rest of the country, and in real life, we write argumentative texts, analytical texts (literary, rhetorical), informational texts, and narrative texts. The high school writing committee should lead the charge in deciding where writing belongs (which strand) then lead the other teams in vertical alignment. Students in kindergarten through 12th grade should write all of these genres, and committees should define specifically how students increase their skill as writers of each genre as they move through the grades. For example, at what grade should writers of argumentative text master counterargument? At what grade should writers of literary analysis master thematic analysis? I realize that writing poetry is not included in the list above, but writing teams can add that genre where they feel appropriate, increasing student expectations through the grade levels.

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This same approach should be taken for reading genres. Will we make distinctions based on fiction/nonfiction, literary/informational, or some other categories? I see merits to all, so I would charge the teams with deciding on the categories and subcategories and then writing the TEKS to ensure that as students progress as readers, they are taught the specific skills and strategies they need to successfully read the texts that they encounter. I understand that we are integrating, but we must have specific SE's that will teach students to read and understand specific components of each genre. Depending on the genre distinctions, teams need to make decisions, just like in writing genres. I see that some of these things have been addressed in (6) author's purpose and craft and some have been addressed in (5) multiple genres. I worry that our attempt at integration will leave teachers confused.

Specific issues with terminology I am not going to identify every time that verbiage is not consistent because I believe that the writing teams can clean this up when given the overall suggestion and then the time to do so. Example, 7.3.B "...using quotations when appropriate..." This is one sample of a time when consistent verbiage isn't used throughout. Most grade levels use *text evidence*, which is more accurate.

1.1.A.ii "identifying all upper- and lower-case letters fluently." In kindergarten, students are expected to do this already. The addition of the word *fluently* doesn't make sense. What is the difference between identifying upper- and lower-case letters and identifying them fluently? I'm not sure how you identify something *fluently*. Take it out all together since it is mastered in kindergarten or appropriately define the progression that you intend students to make.

K.5.D and E and other places throughout grade levels, "read, respond to and dictate or write informational text attending to topic, details, title, illustrations and structure *including descriptive and sequential*" This is awkward phrasing. Does this mean descriptive and sequential structure? Why just those two types of structure? It seems like it should say, "including description and sequence." I'm not sure the purpose of that limiting phrase there.

3.5.A "...and theme or lesson learned." Does that mean students should either "read and respond" to the *theme* or to the *lesson learned*? Or does that imply that theme is the same thing as lesson learned? Theme is not the same as lesson learned. Teams should clearly define and consistently use terms throughout the TEKS. Students at all grade levels can learn and use appropriate content terms like thesis, theme, etc. We don't need to dumb-down words or concepts.

I.5.F "graphical sources" Does this mean graph, charts, etc. or graphic novels? Or something entirely different?

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In several grade levels, English IV as an example, IV.3.E “free writing” is listed as a note taking strategy. I have never seen or heard free writing used to take notes. Free writing is typically used for idea generating not note taking.

K.7.v add personal before “pronouns” to avoid prescriptive “such as” at the end.

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

7.5.I – “distinguish factual claims from commonplace assertions and opinions.” Distinguishing fact from opinion is also taught in 4th grade, so I don’t think it is appropriate to have it in 7th grade, even with the addition of commonplace assertions, the SE seems too easy and unnecessary.

6.7.T, 7.7.R, and I.7.U are all the same. How can we show growth through the grade levels? This is a concept that should begin in elementary school. 6th grade is too late to begin commonly confused terms.

In my initial feedback, I included several examples of places where things were inappropriate in our current TEKS, and I don’t see that this has been addressed. So I will quote my original feedback: “The SE’s addressing theme need some modification because they don’t match what is expected of readers reading on grade level. See [current] K.6.B vertically through IV.2.A. Students reading on grade level should be able to identify and describe implicit themes by 4th grade (TEKS have this in 6th 6.3.A) then they should identify and describe multiple themes by 5th grade (TEKS have this in 7th grade 7.3.A). This is important because the books that the students are reading in 4th and 5th grade, if they are reading on grade level, contain multiple implicit themes, so we need to begin students in doing that work earlier.” I searched through the draft TEKS and was unable to see where theme identification, both implicit and explicit, are introduced and mastered. Admittedly, I could have overlooked it, and I apologize if I did.

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

As a broad statement, elementary school seems much more specific, prescriptive, and detailed; middle school is sparse and out of alignment in most places; and high school is more vague and nuanced.

Many grade levels include extremely specific information after the words “such as” or “including.” This is unnecessary and poses several problems. First, the TEKS become

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cumbersome and wordy. Examples 1.1.C: All of the examples following “such as” or “including” are unnecessary in each SE. 1.1.C.i can be streamlined to say “decoding and encoding consonants.” Teachers know consonant sounds; and if they don’t, they shouldn’t be teaching 1st grade. 1.1.C.iii should say, “decoding and encoding consonant blends.” While I agree that sometimes teachers need explanations and definitions of some highly nuanced concepts or terms, providing simple examples of blends, idioms, adages, pronouns, etc. is insulting to educational professionals. 5.1.B is an example, specifically 5.1.B.vi “such as ‘green with envy’” and “look before you leap.” Also, 2.7.F.vi, “pronouns such as he, him; and...” (the fact that the SE isn’t complete is another issue) Lastly, by defining SE’s with such specificity, local school districts have no authority to make decisions that are appropriate for their respective students. Texas is a diverse state, and each district needs a measure of leeway in defining what is best for their students. K.1.C.ii doesn’t need to specify that only these specific consonant and vowel patterns are appropriate for decoding and encoding. 5.1.B.i specifically defines which Greek and Latin roots students should know. Why those? And why only those? This is limiting and prescriptive to districts. I assume that writing teams did these kinds of things because they wanted to limit and define what is testable on STAAR, but I am concerned about the unintended consequences of limiting our instruction to these VERY specific examples. Our students will have very limited knowledge and experience, and some teachers will resort to “drill and kill” in order to ensure that students know those specifics.

On the other hand, a few SE’s are so vague that I struggle to see how teachers will craft a lesson and measure student success. II.3.A “communicate insights gained about oneself, others, or the world from reading specific texts.” I.4.D “analyze, evaluate, and validate collaborations” What does validating collaborations look like? 8.3.A “explain how texts evoke personal responses.” Texts do evoke personal responses, but how would a teacher teach a student to explain how that text evoked a personal response? I’m not sure I know how a text evokes a personal response. I agree that it does, but what would be the purpose of explaining that. How would a teacher measure that explanation? 7.6.H “determine the figurative meaning of phrases and analyze how an author’s use of language creates imagery, appeals to the senses, and suggests mood.” *Phrases* is too vague. What kinds of phrases?

5.5.C is confusing. “explain different forms of third-person points of view in stories and write imaginative stories that include...” Why are those two things connected with *and*? Those are two different things that should be separated.

2.7.D is too prescriptive “using a teacher-developed rubric” We cannot say that all writing has to be edited using a teacher-developed rubric. Districts must have control of that. Often in my classroom, my students and I co-created a rubric.

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2.7.H should read “distinguish *between* declarative and interrogative sentences”

2.7.K needs editing.

3.1.B. “develop new vocabulary and demonstrate understanding by (vi) using print and digital reference materials to determine meanings...and encoding to validate understanding of unknown words.” I don’t understand “encoding to validate understanding of unknown words.” How does encoding validate understanding of unknown words?

3.8.C “gather evidence from available sources (natural and personal) as well as from interviews with local experts.” We cannot specify that children need to interview local experts. That is outside the scope of the TEKS. Additionally, define “natural sources” from which a student would gather evidence.

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

The vertical alignment is an absolute mess. I will point out a few specifics, but I believe that given the opportunity the writing teams will be able to correct this. I suggest that the current writing teams break into “strand committees” so that each strand committee is comprised of people from grade level committees. So all the people from the grade level committees would break into strand committees to solve the vertical alignment issue. . So for strand 1 foundational skills, there would be representatives from the K-2 team, the 3-5 team, the 6-8 team, and the 9-12 team. Those team members could represent the grade level team and then create strands that are vertically aligned.

It seems clear that for the most part each team has operated without input from the other grade levels. An example, strand 2 comprehension: each set of grade level teams has the same specific student expectations in a completely different order. It seems like a simple fix, so I will assume that when given the opportunity to collaborate that they will align them so that every grade level’s “A” is text features, and all “B’s” are establish purpose, etc., or whatever order they decide as long as it is consistent vertically.

3.C in grades K-5 is not aligned. K-2: “describe mental images that support interpretations and analysis of text.” 3rd: “describe mental images that support interpretations of text.” 4-5: “describe mental images that support interpretations and analysis of text.” These kinds of little misalignment things exist THROUGHOUT the document. I am not going to go into detail about every single one, but I would like for the writing teams to have ample time to work together to iron out those details.

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While that is a minor fix, there are pretty serious gaps and misalignments throughout. There is little consistency across grade levels about what exactly each strand should contain. The collaboration strand is an example. Some grade levels have simply moved the current speaking and listening TEKS to this strand, and some grades did not. Clearly there isn't an agreement across the strand about the meaning of collaboration and therefore the student expectations are all over the place. 6.4.C says, "give an organized presentation with a specific point of view, employing eye contact, speaking rate, volume...." Giving a presentation does not demonstrate collaboration. The knowledge and skill statement says, "Students prepare for and participate productively in diverse interactions, building on others' ideas and expressing their own viewpoints clearly in a variety of contexts." 6.4.C should be moved to presentation. When rethinking the collaboration strand, writing teams must take good care not to turn this strand into a "prescribed teaching method." Example is 1.4.E, "produce collaborative products such as posters, texts, drawings." I wholeheartedly agree that students must know collaboration and learn requisite collaborative skills, so writing teams should outline what collaborative knowledge and skills looks like then define the student expectations that would demonstrate that knowledge and skills, not prescribe a method of group work that could potentially produce inauthentic outcomes like posters.

This is one example of inconsistencies among strands, but the problem exists in several others. (8) Inquiry and research is another strand that teams need to address. It seems that elementary has a focus on research as a product and high school has a focus on the inquiry process. The high school team should lead the discussion to vertically align the TEKS in this strand. The inquiry process is an essential set of skills that our learners need. Again, writing teams will be able to correct these issues given the time.

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?

No. Although I do see that there has been some work done to trim the content to high priority standards, I challenge the writing teams to again make revisions that will make each course reasonable for the year. First and fifth grades are completely out of line. There are still so many TEKS in those grade levels. My original feedback included a longer explanation of why the TEKS aren't "coverable" in one year, and my opinion remains the same. I am hopeful that vertical alignment will aid in eliminating redundancy within a grade level.

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

(3) Response This strand seems redundant. The skills addressed in the response strand in K-5 are skills that are addressed in the comprehension strand. Both strands begin with

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listening, speaking, reading, and writing but then each strand just focuses on only half of those. The response strand is the output and the comprehension strand the input; so if we are seeking integration, combine them to eliminate redundancy. 6th-12th appear to have a different idea about what this strand means, so I could see more use for it were it aligned vertically with specific and unique SE's.

I have already written about this specific idea, but I will address it again because unfortunately the problem still exists. Analogies do not need to appear in the TEKS. Here is my initial feedback: "I see the importance of analogies as a way to teach students word relationships, but there seems to be an emphasis on analogies for the sake of analogies. I don't see that as useful for college and career readiness, especially since the SAT has removed analogies from their test in 2005." See 4.1.B.v, 5.1.B.v. This is something we need to let go.

Decide where things go and put them there and only there. Example synthesis: In 8th grade, synthesis appears in 7.2.A and 5.A. If we are truly trying to integrate reading, writing, speaking, and listening, we must be attentive to not repeating strategies in different strands. *Synthesis* is one examples, but many skills and strategies are repeated in several places in the TEKS.

2.7.I "write legibly leaving appropriate margins for readability." Students should write legibly. "Margins for readability" isn't something to plop in 2nd grade. There are times we don't leave appropriate margins, and really I don't see that being that specific is necessary, and this idea is out of alignment with the rest of the handwriting TEKS.

7.6.F and 7.6.G are exactly the same.

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

There is a significant problem with the knowledge and skill statement for strand 1 "Students develop word structure knowledge through phonological awareness, print concepts, and phonics to decode and encode texts." Phonics and phonological awareness are very appropriate for early grades (kindergarten, 1st grade, and possibly 2nd grade). However, including those skills through 12th grade is highly inappropriate; and, quite frankly, contradicts all research. I suggest wording the knowledge and skill to include appropriate knowledge and skills for all grade levels.

The phrase "in context and in isolation" must be eliminated from 1st grade. I cannot overstate how detrimental this will be to instruction. The TEKS are telling teachers to teach in isolation and to use worksheets. We should **NEVER** instruct our educators to teach something in

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isolation. We are stepping back 100 years in education. Not only is this unconscionable, but it is prescriptively defining teaching methods. I'm also not advocating leaving "in context" because that is inherent in the educational process.

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

Yes, the CCRS have been adequately addressed.

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

Kindergarten has a paragraph in the introduction that addresses Texas Education Code that the other grade levels don't have.

Writing teams first need to come to agreement about what exactly fits under each strand. They need to make an outline that clearly defines what will go where. This work cannot go anywhere unless that is taken care of. There needs to be a predictable structure in each strand.

Example:

(3) Multiple genres

A. Fiction texts

i. elements of fiction reading (structure and language)

ii. elements of fiction writing

B. Cultural texts

i. elements of cultural texts (structure of language)

C. Poetry

i. elements of poetry (structure and language)

ii. elements of poetry writing

D. Narrative nonfiction or literary nonfiction

i. elements of genre

ii. elements of personal narrative

Teams do not have to adopt this structure at all, but they should definitely take time to specifically delineate what goes where and what will make sense to students and teachers.