



UNIVERSITY OF  
**GEORGIA**  
Carl Vinson  
Institute of Government

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# Georgia K-12 English Language Arts Standards Review Process

## **Citizens Review Committee**

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Description of Committee Activities and Working Notes  
from the November 8, 2021 Meeting

# Georgia K-12 English Language Arts (ELA) Standards Review Process

## CITIZENS REVIEW COMMITTEE

### Description of Committee Activities and Working Notes from the November 8, 2021 Meeting

The meeting was convened by Georgia Department of Education Chief of Staff Matt Jones, who welcomed the group and provided remarks about the standards review process.

The committee received an orientation about the K-12 English Language Arts (ELA) Standards Review Process, including a rationale for the review, proposed timeline, and overview of the three committees involved in the process, the Citizens Review Committee, Academic Review Committee and Working Committee of Teachers.

- **Citizens Review Committee:** composed of 13 members appointed by the Governor and State School Superintendent, representing parents, students, business leaders, educators and concerned citizens.
  - Roles and Responsibilities:
    - Be a voice - providing feedback, insight and input on behalf of Georgia's students, parents, business leaders and concerned citizens.
    - Articulate the English Language Arts (ELA) Standards Review Process and the roles of the Academic Review Committee and Working Committee of Teachers.
    - Inform the work of the Working Committee of Teachers by reviewing the results of the stakeholder survey for English Language Arts, providing feedback and adding key themes or observations about the survey.
    - Review the recommended revisions of the revised standards made by the Working Committee of Teachers and provide feedback.



## CITIZENS REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jim Arnold  
George Bratcher  
Tina Engberg  
Melvin Everson  
Barbara Grogan  
Stacey Gyorgyi  
Lisa Marie Haygood

Hayley Howell  
Davis Knox  
Santiago Marques  
Isabella Martinez  
Arianne Weldon  
Ellen Wiley

- **Academic Review Committee**: composed of members appointed by the Governor and State School Superintendent, representing higher education (Technical College System of Georgia and University System of Georgia), pre-K (Department of Early Care and Learning), business and industry, child development experts and educators.
  - Roles and Responsibilities:
    - Ensure post-secondary readiness
    - Age appropriateness
- **Working Committee of Teachers**: composed of more than 200 English Language Arts teachers from across Georgia organized in teams of 8-12 members for each grade level and high school course. Members appointed by the Governor, State School Superintendent, Georgia State Board of Education and Georgia Department of Education.
  - Roles and Responsibilities:
    - Review and revise the current K-12 English Language Arts standards
    - Make recommendations to the Citizens and Academic Review Committees, State School Superintendent and Georgia State Board of Education.



## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS SURVEY 2019

The primary purpose of the November 8, 2021 meeting of the Citizens Review Committee was to inform the work of the Working Committee of Teachers by reviewing the results of the stakeholder survey for English Language Arts, providing feedback and adding key themes or observations about the survey.

Before delving into the review process, the committee was provided a copy of the survey and background information regarding its development. This included a cursory review and opportunity for clarifying questions for the following survey terms:

- Developmentally appropriate;
- Language terminology that is accessible;
- Clear and concise language terminology;
- Appropriate level of relevance for the age/grade level;
- Balance between the number of standards versus time to teach them;
- Key concepts and skills;
- Cohesive instructional sequence;
- Creativity and autonomy in the classroom;
- Preparation for college, careers and life;
- Level of rigor;
- Emphasis on standards; and,
- Standards drive instruction.

## REVIEW OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS SURVEY 2019

English Language Arts survey results were organized into seven grade/content areas (K-5, 6-8, 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Literature, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Literature, American Literature, World Literature and British Literature) as posted on the Georgia Department of Education’s website under Mathematics and ELA Standards Process behind the tab “English Language Arts Results.” Members of the Citizens Review Committee were organized into seven small groups and assigned one of the grade/content survey results areas. To the extent possible, small groups represented a cross section of stakeholder types (i.e. parents, educators, business, etc.) represented on the committee.



## Review Methodology

Each group was provided survey results for the grade/content area assigned as posted on the Georgia Department of Education’s website under Mathematics and ELA Standards Process behind the tab “English Language Arts Results.” Survey results were designated as either “parent responses” or “ELA teacher responses.” Group members were then asked to perform the following tasks.

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1.

- Teacher response survey results - Individually review the survey data from English Language Arts teachers. Then as a group, let the following questions guide your discussion.
    - What does the data suggest?
    - What are assumptions your group can make?
  - Discuss and post your observations on chart paper.
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2.

- Parent response survey results - Individually review the survey data from parents. Then as a group, let the following questions guide your discussion.
    - What does the data suggest?
    - What are assumptions your group can make?
  - Discuss and post your observations on chart paper.
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3.

- Next, group members were provided for their assigned grade/content area a copy of the document “Key Findings of the Stakeholder Survey on the Georgia Standards of Excellence for English Language Arts” as posted on the Georgia Department of Education’s website under Mathematics and ELA Standards Process behind the tab “Key Findings from the English Language Arts Survey.” Directions for this activity were as follows: Individually review the “overall trends” and data from the teachers and parents from your content area. Then, as a group discuss the trend data. Are there any similarities/differences between your group’s observations and the trend information? Other reflections?
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4.

- Finally, group members were asked to complete a summarizing activity. Directions were as follows: Based on observations made during the previous three activities, are there “themes” or key points your group would like to pass on to the Working Committee of Teachers? Discuss and post your observations on chart paper.
  - At the conclusion of this activity, each group reported out observations and reflections.
  - Following the reports, committee members were asked to walk around the room to view responses from the seven grade/content groups in preparation for the culminating session of the day.
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## **WORKING NOTES OF THE CITIZENS REVIEW COMMITTEE - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS SURVEY REVIEW**

The information in this section presents the observations of the seven grade/content groups regarding the four activities described in the section, Review of the English Language Arts Survey 2019. *The content was captured as stated from the flip chart paper notes.* The key findings (Activity 3) and themes/key points (Activity 4) information were combined for reporting purposes.

### **K-5 English Language Arts**

#### Teachers

- Teachers felt ELA standards were accessible.
- Teachers were split on standards being developmentally appropriate.
- Teachers did not feel they had time to teach/learn standards.
- Teachers were split on standards being clear and concise.
- Teachers felt standards were too rigorous for student age level.

#### Parents

- Parents do not agree ELA standards are accessible to them or the students.
- Parents believe the standards are accessible to teachers.
- Parents feel they are not clear and concise.
- Parents do not feel they are age/grade relevant or developmentally appropriate.
- Parents feel there is not enough time to teach/learn.
- Parents do not feel they are prepared for college, careers, or life.



- Parents felt standards are too rigorous for grade level.
- Parents felt too much emphasis on the standards.

#### Key Findings, Themes/Key Points

- K-5 standards are of highest concern.
- Both question how relevant standards are to assigned age/grade level.
- Top concern is number of standards vs. time available to teach.
- They both agreed standards were accessible to teachers.
- They both agreed there was not enough time to teach/learn current standards.
- Both agreed standards are too rigorous for grade level.

### **6-8 English Language Arts**

#### Teachers

- 50% not accessible to parents.
- 51% not accessible to students.
- 67% not enough time!
- 42% not cohesive.
- 38.5% fosters creativity.
- 67% prepares for college.
- 35% prepares for career.
- 35% prepares for life.

#### Parents

- I am unconvinced most parents understand the term “developmentally appropriate”.
- Disagree/strongly disagree in almost every area is more than 50%.
- Figure strongly agree and agree without neutral and parents overwhelmingly dislike ELA CC (Common Core) standards.
- Accessible to teachers is the only exception.

#### Key Findings, Themes/Key Points

- Less than 50% of all parent and teacher respondents expressed approval or support for Common Core standards.
- 1965 ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) prohibits the adoption of national standards.



- Education, like politics, must be local. CC (Common Core is the poster child for why this is true.
- Common Core was presented as an opportunity to compare states and localities by test scores and to allow portability for students who moved. No one ever states clearly why these were desirable qualities by which we should judge education.

## 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Literature

### Teachers

- The standards appear to be developmentally appropriate.
- The parents and students need more accessibility/understanding.
- The language used should be more concise, clear, and cohesive.
- If the language were easier to understand, it would encourage more creativity and autonomy.
- Needs to equally prepare for life and career as they do for college.
- Over 95% feel the standard does drive the instruction.
- An assumption is, if the standard is good, this is a positive.
- Less than 30% feel they have enough time to teach and learn (this area receives the lowest positive rating).

### Parents

- Overall, similar to teacher responses, though all are ranked less positive than the teachers.
  - Developmentally appropriate, accessibility to teachers, and prepare for college
    - These 3 survey areas were significantly lower for parents.
  - There is an assumption that teachers should be trained to know these more appropriately.
  - These 3 survey areas received very low rankings from parents:
    - Time to teach/learn
    - Prepare for careers
    - Prepare for life
  - There is an assumption that with more time, teachers could teach more applicability for career and life.
  - Parents feel standards drive the instruction, if there are good standards this is not an issue.



### Key Findings, Themes/Key Points

- Overall, parents and teachers feel similar on the points, such as, parents and students need more access, more time to teach and learn, and want to prepare students more for career and life.
- The teachers want to maneuver in the direction the parents want, but they have to go by the standard.
  - Need to reach agreeable standards.
- Time availability
- Teaching for careers/life

## **10th Grade Literature**

### Teachers

- Examination of levels of classes
  - Advanced and AP students show readiness; regular Lit/Comp do not
- Examine resources and communication for parents/students
- Teachers like material, want more time w/ flexibility, autonomy, styles, creativity
- Career and life prep lacking

### Parents

- Developmentally appropriate - too much/too little? (What are parents actually saying?)
- Parents align with teacher thought process, BUT feel more strongly about it
- More time needed to teach
- More autonomy
- Language class level disparity
- Better communication for relevance and rigor
  - Job of DOE (Department of Education) would greatly improve chance of message being received

### Key Findings, Themes/Key Points

- Parents are considerably more unhappy than teachers
- Similar responses
- Want more time for Lit/Comp - where does it come from?
- Lower level classes require more attention and improvement
- We need to work to get parent buy-in and accessibility
- Parent buy-in and accessibility could be improved with DOE providing central resource for standards



- DOE explanation of relevance and rigor
- Links to resources for additional help
- Time constraint impacts everyone

## American Literature

### Teachers

- Current standards have high approval in accessibility to teachers and being developmentally appropriate.
- Focus needs to be on time to teach/learn, which would impact student accessibility.
- Low parent accessibility directly affects student performance.
  - Engaging parent accessibility and making American Lit more accessible to parents can increase student and parent accessibility.
- Choose American literature subjects/books that can support career/life preparedness.
- Time to teach concern indicates an overabundance of material for rote memorization.

### Parents

- Data suggests:
  - No glaring, single issue
  - Lowest rating: time to teach and learn
  - Survey results suggest too much material and lack of student interest and engagement
- Parent data suggest:
  - Too much homework
- Developmentally appropriate was given a lower percentage:
  - Seems to suggest more time should be spent on earlier years and on fewer pieces of material.
  - Let students build confidence and allow them more time to creatively digest materials.
  - More time on less materials to build foundation interest in American Literature.
  - American lit could be one of the most important subjects students should develop interest in.



## Key Findings, Themes/Key Points

- Trend Similarities:
  - Standards are preparing students for college more than careers and life.
  - Time to teach/learn is low compared to the number of standards.
  - Current standards are not fostering creativity and autonomy.
  - Concerns of sequencing throughout K-12 for American Literature, which can impact comprehension and long-term interest.
- Based on trends:
  - Highest concern is time to teach and learn.
  - American literature provides college preparedness, but concerns on whether career and life preparedness is provided.
  - How do the standards foster creativity as well as long-term interest in American lit?
  - How do the standards prepare them for life?
  - Make American Literature more accessible to parents which correlates to student accessibility and success.

## **World Literature**

### Teachers

- Engagement between WL teachers and parents on the standards - collaboration mechanism is needed to foster a better understanding.
- New administrative requirements brought on by the new standards have a negative impact on quality teaching.
- New standards are not preparing students for new emerging careers or college readiness.
- Standards have reduced creativity.

### Parents

- Are the standards so complex that normal school hours or days do not support full understanding and mastery of the concepts?
- Are the standards so complex the students cannot visualize the positive impact on their development for a career or college?
- Standards implementations are not relevant with the students that'll prepare them for a career or college
- Standards can't be taught on a level that reaches all students.



### Key Findings, Themes/Key Points

- Standards are geared more towards preparing students for college than careers or life (relevance).
- Clearer understanding of standards for teachers, parents, students
- Reduction in creativity and autonomy
- Aha moments
  - Get back to basics.
  - Parents need to be involved in their child's education regarding subject matters being taught.
  - Teach to learn not a test.
- Understanding standards:
  - Career vs college paths
  - Creative autonomy
  - Teach to reach all learning levels

### **British Literature**

#### Teachers

- It is age appropriate
- Not accessible to parents/students
- Not enough time to teach/learn
- May lack cohesive instruction
- Lacks overall impact
- Does not prepare for life/careers

#### Parents

- Not enough time to teach/learn
- Does not allow for creativity and autonomy
- Has little overall impact
- Does not prepare for life
- Does not prepare for careers

### Key Findings, Themes/Key Points

- Not enough time to teach
- Lacks impact
- Does not prepare for life



- Does not prepare for careers
- Similarities:
  - Lacks impact
  - Not relevant for life/careers
  - Lack time to teach
- Differences:
  - Teachers believe material is developmentally appropriate/parents do not
  - Parents do not believe the material is age-level appropriate
  - Parents do not believe it will prepare students for college

## STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

For the culminating activities of the day, committee members were asked to “self-select,” organizing themselves into one of three stakeholder groups: business/government, parents and education/educators. *The content was captured as stated from the flip chart paper notes.*

- Activity 1 Directions:
  - Taking into consideration the information you have heard and seen today and *thinking about preparing students to apply English Language Arts knowledge beyond high school graduation*, list observations you would want the Working Committee of Teachers to know **from your stakeholder group’s perspective**. This information might reemphasize an observation made during the day or there could be a new observation.
  - Write observations on chart paper.

### Stakeholder Group: Business and Government

- Cleaner written/typed communication
- Read/write for actual comprehension
- Push for more reading
- Structured career Lit
- Full use of words- not “R” “Z”
- Analytical skills/critical thinking
- Additional development of “logical steps” thinking
- \*Ability to research\*



- Credible Sources

### Stakeholder Group: Parents

- Engagement is a leading measure of future learning and success.
- Writing, reading and spelling skill development is needed to be able to navigate digital literacy and real-world reading demands.

### Stakeholder Groups: Education/Educators

- Making sure teachers ensure students are strong readers when they graduate
  - Early intervention is the key to reading success for many children
  - Technology can be a good educational tool, even in reading
  - Every student's goal is not college
  - Making sure students are able to write well
- 
- Activity 2 Directions: Several terms have been used to describe a student's journey following high school graduation:
    - Post-secondary education
    - College and career ready
    - Workforce ready
    - Preparation for Life
    - Life-long learner

When thinking about revisions of the current K-12 Standards for ELA, list up to five observations the Working Committee of Teachers need to know about preparing students to apply ELA knowledge beyond high school graduation.

Write observations on chart paper.

### Stakeholder Group: Business and Government

- Kids prefer text to actual conversation, leads to weak verbal communication.
- Embrace technology while not depending on it.
- Creative/innovative writing/communication.
- Creativity lends itself to curiosity and continues learning.
- Failure is a learning tool for grit and experience.
- Business/technical lit.



### Stakeholder Group: Parents

- Explicit instruction in foundational reading skills, vocabulary, morphology is needed to raise reading, writing proficiency for later post school life.
- Evidence based approaches to teach reading more effectively with knowledge of 5 essential components of reading instruction as described in both ESSA and IDEA laws.

### Stakeholder Groups: Education/Educators

- Reading is critical no matter the student's educational path.
- Work on reading skills at an early age to make sure students are able to read well when they are older.
- Every job/career involves reading, writing, and tech.

At the conclusion of this activity, each group reported out observations and reflections.





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This information was compiled by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia.  
Released February 9, 2022