



Here's How

State Sustainability Strategies

FOR STATE LEADERS

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State Standards

Integrating the Components of Effective Reading Instruction into State Content Standards

Standards are the primary drivers of instruction; they represent consensus within a state on what students should know and be able to do. Scientifically based reading instruction is much more likely to be sustained and scaled up when (a) teaching to the standards and (b) addressing the five components of effective reading instruction established by the National Reading Panel— are the same thing.

The Process: Standards Development and Revision

Standards are not fixed and immutable, but normally undergo periodic review and revision. When standards were first developed, states convened commissions by content area and wrestled with questions such as whether to write standards by grade cluster or by grade level and what the appropriate “grain size” for standards was, *i.e.*, how detailed standards should

be. States wrote standards in a variety of ways and have taken a number of approaches to make standards into more effective tools for teachers. For example, many states have (1) added performance indicators by grade level (2) identified “power standards” (3) written voluntary curricula with grade level expectations (4) written performance level descriptions

for their state tests and (5) established banks of released items and examples of proficient student work.

Ensuring that all teachers know what to teach and what proficient student performance looks like is a complicated, long-term endeavor.

Our State Standards: Are we on target to support scientifically based reading instruction?

The first consideration for reviewing state standards to support sustainability is the degree to which standards correlate with the five components of effective reading instruction.

The correlation of state standards and important reading content has been twice studied, first by the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (Wixson and

Dutro, 1998) and also by RMC Research Corp in a study required by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Section 1205 (Schenck, Walker, and Nagel, 2005). These two studies addressed the following types of questions, which are relevant to any state wishing to review its content standards for representation of the components of

effective instruction of reading (1)the extent to which all five components are covered, (2) if the right skills are represented at the right grade levels, and (3) if the standards representing each area provide an appropriate level of detail with sufficient specificity to promote alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

(See ARE WE ON TARGET? Page 2)

Are we on target to support scientifically based reading instruction? (cont. from page 1)

RMC's 2005 study employed an expert panel to review reading standards of a sample of 20 states. Some of the key findings were:

- Comprehension standards were judged to cover most or all of the appropriate content in 90% of the states, followed by phonics, (80%), vocabulary (60%), phonemic awareness (60%), and fluency (55%).
- Most standards representing each component were judged to be placed at the appropriate grade by most of the states.
- Most states (75%) provide an appropriate level of detail for comprehension standards, followed by vocabulary (70%), phonics (60%), phonemic awareness (50%), and fluency (35%). In most cases when standards were judged as not having an appropriate level of detail, it was because they were too broad.
- All of the 20 sampled states make comprehension clearly visible in their organization of reading standards. Almost all (18) make some of the other elements visible. Half make all five components visible and they tend to do so at relatively high levels within the organizational hierarchy.
- For each of the five components, states with larger numbers of standards have standards that provide better coverage, are more likely to be at an appropriate grade level, and are written more often at an appropriate level of detail.
- Both the number and the quality of reading standards—within and across the five elements—were directly related to the degree of component visibility within the organization of the reading standards.

What additional supports can states provide?

Beyond standards-related infrastructures themselves, states sometimes provide guidance to districts on processes for (1) developing curriculum maps and pacing guides and (2) reviewing and selecting textbooks or support/intervention programs. For example, the state of Washington reviewed many core programs K-3 and 4-10 and produced documents for each of those levels that identify the degree of alignment of each of the programs with the state's reading standards (EALRs) and GLEs. The Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) makes the point that quality, standards-aligned instructional materials are one indispensable tool teachers truly need in order to teach a systematic, explicit beginning reading program. If students are fluent readers by the end of first grade, research validates that they will have the necessary prerequisite skills to focus on *reading to learn* in subsequent grade levels and throughout life.

The stated goal of the *English and Spanish K-3 Core/Comprehensive Reading Instructional Materials Review* (2006) is to provide districts with a more complete report of the alignment of programs that teach beginning reading. The review was also completed to create a qualified menu of programs from which the cohort of Reading First schools would choose. *Grades 4-10 Core/Comprehensive Reading Instructional Materials Review* (2007) looks at materials for upper grades. What is unique about each of these two documents and the process that was used to develop them is the state's focus on using the state's content standards and GLEs for reading as the central guide to analyze the curriculum materials.

References

Schenck, E. A., Walker, D. R., Nagel, C. R., & Webb, L. C. (2005). *Analysis of State K-3 Reading Standards and Assessments: Final Report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Wixson, K. K., & Dutro, E., (1998). *Standards for Primary-grade Reading: An Analysis of State Frameworks* (CIERA report #3-001). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement.

How do I get started?

The best way to start is by locating staff within the SEA with responsibility for reading/English language arts standards and begin a conversation to learn about how the standards were developed, any regular opportunities for revision, and whether the state has ever analyzed its standards for correlation with the five components of effective reading instruction. Building interest, buy-in, support for the importance of such activities are the prerequisites for standards revision. Once the political will and support is in place, you can plan for and carry out the logistics of review and revision.

Washington State: Standards to Support Reading

Component of Standards	How It Supports Effective Reading Instruction
EALRs (Essential Academic Learning Requirements)	Washington's content standards, the Essential Academic Learning Requirements® (EALRs) are broad, overarching statements of what learners should know and be able to do. The four EALRs for reading apply to all grades and form the basis for the Grade Level Expectations, which are much more detailed. The EALRs were initially developed beginning with the Basic Education Act of 1993, preceding the report of the National Reading Panel and the current focus on the elements of effective reading instruction.
GLEs (Grade Level Expectations)	The Grade Level Expectations® (GLEs) describe the precise knowledge and skills that students must acquire from kindergarten through high school. They demonstrate a high level of specificity which teachers can use to plan effective reading lessons. The GLEs were developed at the same time that the state was adopting its vision for effective reading instruction, the Washington State K-12 Reading Model. The state very intentionally incorporated the five elements of effective reading instruction throughout the strands and levels of the GLEs.
Online Grade Level Resources	The Online Grade Level Resources are designed to support instruction using the EALRs/GLEs by providing materials and resources aligned to the Grade Level Expectations (GLEs). The web site provides a variety of resources based on the GLEs, including instructional units based on specific GLEs, classroom instructional activities, simple rubrics, and other assessments of student learning.
WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) Strands and Stems	The Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) measures student learning of the state's academic standards. Students are tested each spring in grades 3-8 and 10 in reading and math. Students also are tested in writing in grades 4, 7 and 10 and science in grades 5, 8 and 10. The Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) website includes links to specific reading related strands and stems® taken from the WASL.
Reading Content Area Professional Development Needs Assessment Tool	Teacher professional development needs are defined by student learning needs. The OSPI website provides a needs assessment tool® that enables teachers at each grade level to use that knowledge to plan professional development and to determine areas for inclusion in their professional growth plan.

Sustainability is the ability of a program to operate on its core beliefs and values (its reading culture) and use them to guide essential and inevitable program adaptations over time while maintaining improved outcomes.

Adapted from Century and Levy, 2002

Read and Learn More

CIERA Report #3-001
"Standards for Primary-Grade Reading: An Analysis of State Frameworks"

Analysis of State K-3 Reading Standards and Assessments



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