

A Report of the National Council of Teachers of English Review Team on the February 2010 Draft of the Standards for English Language Arts: Grades K–12

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The NCTE Review Team, as was iterated in earlier reviews, comprises school-based classroom teachers, literacy coaches, and literacy specialists who represent diverse demographics and a variety of geographic regions, selected because of their integrity and expertise. This group, which has given immense effort to provide timely, specific, and high-quality feedback on this and previous drafts of the proposed K—12 Common Core Standards for Language Arts, represents many years of firsthand experience working with different versions of “common” standards, across eight different states. It is the combination of this rich background knowledge, in both literacy teaching and learning and our collective past experiences with standards, that has fueled the committee to approach each review task with intensity, thoroughness, and urgency, because we understand the reality that these proposed standards are likely to become what most teachers, ourselves included, will be asked to work with on a day-to-day basis in school districts and classrooms across the country. With this in mind, we offer, yet again, our thinking and suggestions to bring clarity, precision, and perspective to this document.

Section I of this review focuses on a few major concerns (which have dwindled considerably), and Section II addresses questions of rigor and then moves to more specific feedback regarding “fewer, clearer, and higher” aspects of the standards. It is noteworthy that every member of the committee was impressed with the number of significant changes in wording, substance, and intention across nearly all parts of the standards and across all grade levels. As you, the developers, head into the final revision stage of these documents, we sincerely hope that you will incorporate our final deliberations.

Section I: Concerns

Concern 1: Potential exclusion of narrative writing as an actual standard in Grades 9-CCR.

This looks to be a concession on the part of the developers in that narrative writing appears as an actual CCR standard, “Write well-structured narratives to describe real or imagined experiences, individuals, or events and how they develop over time” (p. 41), whereas it is still categorized differently in Grades 9-CCR: “*By high school, students often use narrative writing as a technique embedded within other genres, such as to inform and persuade or to make an argument. They may, for example, provide a brief anecdote to support a point made in an argument or a scenario to illustrate an explanation*” (p. 46). Because of the conflicting language, and the fact that Standard 3 (p. 46) is not truly a standard but rather a statement, we sincerely hope that this might just be an editing mistake. However, we offer additional strong language in support of inclusion. NCTE emphatically supports the inclusion of narrative writing across the 9–12 band, as has been iterated in every review our organization has provided. Author Edgar H. Schuster, writing in regard to the 9-CCR Writing Standards, agrees wholeheartedly and states that these standards, without narrative included, “are also woefully out of balance, in the direction of relatively

noncreative forms of writing” and further adds that “were those standards to be implemented K through 12, they would kill that spirit and diminish the role of imagination, which the poet Wallace Stevens once aptly described as “one of the forces of nature” in the world of words” *EdWeek*, February 3, 2010. Vol. 29, Issue 20, Pages 23–25.

Concern 2: Language that prescribes the use of decodable texts for emergent K–1 readers.

The language of the statement: “*Children at the kindergarten and grade 1 levels should be expected to independently read decodable texts that have been specifically written to correlate to their phonemic awareness, the phonics they are being taught, and their word knowledge*” (p. 31) has never appeared in previous drafts, and though it is merely a footnote on one page, it is nonetheless in direct conflict with many of the policy statements and beliefs of NCTE, as well as being refuted by a large body of research.

The arguments against decodable text are many and include:

- This statement embodies early concerns of NCTE about including lists of books, even as a resource, because this would seriously limit the choices that local authorities should have in determining the types and qualities of texts used for the populations they serve. This should not be prescribed in these standards but is a local decision entirely. Members of Congress, in your December briefings on the Hill, voiced this very concern about the loss of local control, which NCTE has vehemently warned against as well.
- NCTE strongly rejects the notion that children at this stage of reading development, or at any stage, be limited to using only decodable texts for reading. Having students read only texts specifically written to correlate to the child’s knowledge is nearly impossible to achieve. There is literally no way to produce a text which correlates precisely with any one student unless each teacher writes such texts for individuals. Furthermore, such texts would be so unnatural due to limits of language structures and word choices that they would be meaningless and unreadable. Research by Martens et al. from Towson University shows that children taught with such materials are actually handicapped in their development. The same research demonstrates that these children read better when given predictable texts and books with more natural language than with decodable texts. The What Works Clearinghouse, a website launched in 2002 by the Institute of Education Sciences within the U.S. Department of Education, was established specifically “to provide educators, policymakers, researchers, and the public with a central and trusted source of scientific evidence about ‘what works’ in education.” This resource, valued for its neutral and nonpartisan reviews of scientifically based research, offers insight and support for our thinking. According to research available at

this website, reading interventions such as Lindamood Phonemic Sequencing (LIPS)[®] and Wilson Reading System[®], both of which emphasize letter-sound correspondence, segmenting and blending word parts and using decodable texts matched to this instruction actually have no significant positive effects on reading comprehension and only small positive effects on improving alphabets (What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/beginning%5Freading/wrs/> and http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/beginning_reading/add_lips/). Conversely, interventions such as Reading Recovery[®], which embeds the teaching of letter sounds and segmenting/blending word parts into continuous reading and writing while using texts that are predictable and contain natural language, has a significantly positive impact on reading comprehension. In fact, the approaches used in Reading Recovery have received the highest scores of positive effects for both comprehension and alphabets, with “strong evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence”(What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/Topic.aspx?tid=01#s=1>).

Concern 3: Volume of indicators in Kindergarten through Grade 3.

Although we appreciate the vast reduction in the number of standards from Draft 1 to the present draft, we continue to have concerns about the inclusion of the Foundations section, which will likely be interpreted as expectations to be met *in addition to* the K–3 Grade-Level Standards for Reading, Writing, Listening & Speaking and Language Sections. Within the Foundations section alone, no less than 24 additional concepts for Kindergarten, 20 additional concepts for Grade 1, and 12 each for Grades 2 and 3 have been added, additions that do not appear for any other grade-level bands. To illustrate this point, we refer to the Kindergarten Foundation Standard 2b: “*Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables in spoken words*” (p. 14). In this simple line of text are multiple actions: counting syllables, pronouncing syllables, blending syllables, and segmenting syllables, each requiring specific teaching and time. Additionally, in Standard 2e, “*Demonstrate phonemic awareness by isolating and pronouncing the initial, medial vowel, and final phonemes (sounds) in three-phoneme (CVC) words*” (p. 14), there are additional multiple steps: isolating initial phonemes, isolating medial vowel phonemes, isolating ending phonemes. As has been stated previously, there are many redundancies in the Foundations section and/or places where actions can be combined, and therefore, the stated goal of “fewer” is grossly unrealized for these grade levels. Ironically, the very section of the standards that purports to develop the “*Foundations*” of reading may in fact, due to sheer number, hinder reading development, as the time and teaching required

to cover all aspects would detract significantly from focusing on the other “higher” standards within the reading and writing sections.

More important, these additional “Foundations” seem to represent beliefs and research that maintain that children must first learn the foundations before they actually learn to read or write, an approach with which we disagree. However, history shows that little is accomplished by rehashing philosophical differences, so let us instead look at the evidence behind why we approach with much caution the inclusion of so many “foundations” standards. Though the shortcomings of DIBELS are well known, with the developers and others formerly serving in the Department of Education still under investigation by the Inspector General, our core concern lies within the well-documented failures of Reading First described in the *Reading First Impact Study Final Report: Executive Summary* (November, 2008). As you recall, in all Reading First schools, the reading curricula and materials used *had* to focus on the five essential components of reading instruction as defined in the Reading First legislation: (1) phonemic awareness, (2) phonics, (3) vocabulary, (4) fluency, and (5) comprehension; they also *had* to include methods of instruction that came solely from scientifically based research (p. vi). In these schools, many teachers and critics cautioned that an overemphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency would have little or no results on comprehension and, indeed, they were correct. A comprehensive list of the findings regarding comprehension and decoding published in this report are listed below:

- Reading First did not produce a statistically significant impact on student reading comprehension test scores in grades one, two or three. (p. v)
- There was no consistent pattern of effects over time in the impact estimates for reading instruction in grade one or in reading comprehension in any grade. There appeared to be a systematic decline in reading instruction impacts in grade two over time. (p. vi)
- Reading First produced a positive and statistically significant impact on decoding among first grade students tested in one school year (spring 2007). The impact was equivalent to an effect size of 0.17 standard deviations. (p. vi)
- There is no statistically significant site-to-site variation in impacts, either by grade or overall, for classroom reading instruction or student reading comprehension. (p. vi)
- There is a positive association between time spent on the five essential components of reading instruction promoted by the program and reading comprehension measured by the SAT 10, but these findings are sensitive to both model specification and the sample used to estimate the relationship. (p. vi)
- There was no relationship between reading comprehension and the number of years a student was exposed to RF. (p. xiii)
- Reading First had no statistically significant impacts on student engagement with print. (p. xii)

- There were no statistically significant impacts of Reading First on the availability of differentiated instructional materials for struggling readers or on teachers' reported use of assessments to inform classroom practice for grouping, diagnostic, and progress monitoring purposes. (p. xiii)
- Reading First had no statistically significant impact on students' reading comprehension scaled scores or the percentages of students whose reading comprehension scores were at or above grade level in grades one, two or three. The average first, second, and third grade student in Reading First schools was reading at the 44th, 39th, and 39th percentile respectively on the end-of-the-year assessment (on average over the three years of data collection). (p. xiii)
- Reading First had a positive and statistically significant impact on average scores on the TOSWRF, a measure of decoding skill, equivalent to 2.5 standard score points, or an effect size of 0.17 standard deviations (See Exhibit ES.5). Because the test of students' decoding skills was only administered in a single grade and a single year, it is not possible to provide an estimate of Reading First's overall impact on decoding skills across multiple grades and across all three years of data collection, as was done for reading comprehension. (p. xiii)

Clearly, you can see why we are deeply concerned about overemphasizing—drawing time, materials, and instructional resources—the very elements that have had minimal or no positive effects on comprehension and student achievement.

Concern 4: Exclusion of metacognitive strategies.

In the introduction sections of the Core Standards, the developers state the following: *“By focusing on required achievements, the Standards leave room for teachers, curriculum developers, and states to determine how those goals should be reached and what additional topics should be addressed. Thus, the Standards do not specify such things as a particular writing process or the kinds of metacognitive strategies that students may need to use to monitor and direct their thinking and learning. Teachers are thus free to provide students with whatever tools and knowledge their professional judgment and experience identify as most helpful for meeting the goals set out in the Standards”* (p. 3). While the NCTE Review Team agrees with the intention of allowing teachers, curriculum directors, and states to have autonomy in what might be taught in addition to these core standards, we find it curious that something so highly regarded as metacognition, a truly 21st century skill, is overtly omitted while other, far less rigorous standards are included as essential. The developers claim that *“the Standards also draw on the most important international models as well as research and input from numerous sources, including scholars, assessment developers, professional organizations, and educators from kindergarten through college. In their design and content, the Standards represent a synthesis of the best elements of standards-related work to date and an important advance over that previous work”* (p. 2). Given this statement, the fact that such an important and impressive body of research regarding the role of strategies and metacognition in reading development has

been utterly ignored is astounding. Adding to this confusion is another statement: “*a particular standard was included in the document only when the best available evidence indicated that its mastery was essential for students to be college and career ready in a twenty-first-century, globally competitive society*” (p. 2). This statement is rather hard to swallow in light of the fact that there are standards included, which seem to have no basis in research. One such example is that of the Grade 1 Literature Standard 8, “*Identify words in a story that link events sequentially (e.g., before/after, later, since).*” We find it highly suspect that *this* standard was included based upon evidence that its mastery was essential for students to be college and career-ready in the 21st century, while any references to metacognitive reading strategies were omitted. The exclusion of metacognitive strategy instruction negates a vast body of reading research, both quantitative and qualitative, which has demonstrated overwhelmingly that children benefit from direct strategy instruction. As stated in our earlier reviews, according to the National Reading Panel Report, “The general finding is that when readers are given cognitive strategy instruction, they make significant gains on measures of reading comprehension over students trained with conventional instruction procedures (Pressley et al., 1989; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994; Rosenshine, Meister, & Chapman, 1996)” (2000, p. 4–40). Also, “The empirical evidence reviewed favors the conclusion that teaching a variety of reading comprehension strategies leads to increased learning of the strategies, to specific transfer of learning, to increased retention and understanding of new passages, and, in some cases, to general improvements in comprehension” (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 4–6). In fact, the effect of strategy instruction on increasing children’s comprehension of texts (the ultimate goal of reading instruction) is far superior to instruction which emphasizes word decoding and sound segmentation and blending, which has less effect on comprehension. (See *Reading First Impact Study* above.)

Removing metacognitive strategy references entirely while retaining multiple references to decoding strategies represents a privileging that is potentially harmful to overall reading development. It is not a question of whether one or the other should be taught—both aspects deserve attention. Omission of strategy language represents a grave concern and jeopardizes the viability of these standards to be able to achieve their intended outcome. Metacognitive strategies such as making connections, seeing relationships between items, questioning and determining importance, as well as demonstrating an awareness of one’s thinking, are all needed for success in the 21st century. Furthermore, a review of the high school standards of the ten nations/regions identified by your organizations as exemplars for international benchmarking shows that 70% of these standards make direct reference to metacognitive strategies as being important, even at the high school level.

Suggestion: We strongly recommend that including language supportive of strategy instruction is necessary for the developers to have achieved their expressed goals of being internationally benchmarked, producing higher standards, using available research, and preparing students for the 21st century. Add specific references across the standards regarding metacognitive strategies, such as language featured in the Standards from Ontario, Canada, or Singapore, listed on your website.

<p>From: The Ontario Curriculum, English, 2007. p. 50</p>	<p>From: Singapore: English Language Syllabus, 2001. p. 63</p>
<p><i>Metacognition 4.1 Explain which of a variety of strategies they found most helpful before, during, and after reading, then evaluate their strengths and weaknesses as readers to help identify the steps they can take to improve their skills (e.g., record their reflections about how often and how proficiently they use various strategies; set targets for improving their use of particular strategies; confer with the teacher to develop new strategies for understanding more challenging texts)</i></p>	<p><i>“Use reading strategies to construct meaning</i></p> <p><i>a) Use phonological awareness strategies:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>- Use known parts of a word to make sense of the whole word</i> <i>- Read aloud to check pronunciation and understanding</i> <p><i>b) Use meaning-based strategies:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>- Construct meaning from visuals: pictures, diagrams, symbols, graphs</i> <i>- Monitor and confirm understanding of texts read, e.g., re-read, read on</i> <i>- Use knowledge of cohesive devices: connectors to do with time, sequence, contrast, reason, choice, place, condition, cause-and-effect, purpose</i> <i>- Use contextual clues: visuals, headings, sub-headings, word formation, punctuation</i> <i>- Use prior knowledge: familiar words, word association, knowledge of the topic / similes / idioms / proverbs</i> <i>- Skim for gist</i> <i>- Scan for specific information</i>

Figure 1

Concern 5: Appendix A is missing.

At the time of this review, Appendix A, which was to provide a clearer understanding of text complexity, was still not available. NCTE then restricts commentary to earlier iterations in former reviews, namely our concerns that more clarity be added regarding the uses of “Exemplar Texts.” Our point here is that while the principle of accelerating text complexity is valid, the teacher’s role in matching text to developmental levels of readers could easily be usurped by core lists and the rating systems explained in earlier documents. Again, NCTE supports the careful consideration that teachers and local school officials, who know individuals and groups of students well, should have final say in choosing appropriate reading materials. This belief is supported by the statement within the Standards document: “*By focusing on*

required achievements, the Standards leave room for teachers, curriculum developers, and states to determine how those goals should be reached” (p. 3).

Section II: Specific Feedback and Suggestions

1. Does the document present a rigorous, yet reasonable continuum of expectations for student learning in each discipline?

Positive Directions: All members of the review team voiced that, with few exceptions, this draft does represent a rigorous and reasonable continuum of expectations for student learning in each discipline. Though earlier drafts did not contain such structures, the formatting of this document, how it is physically laid out in grade-level bands, affords users of the documents the ability to clearly see these progressions. Additionally, the NCTE Review Team supports the inclusion of carefully worded statements about ELLs and Students with Disabilities. We particularly applaud the language regarding English Language Learners because it highlights two important understandings regarding this group: (1) that ELLs *“bring with them many resources that enhance their education and can serve as resources for schools and society...[and] have first language and literacy knowledge and skills that boost their acquisition of language and literacy in a second language; additionally, they bring an array of talents and cultural practices and perspectives that enrich our schools and our society”*; and (2) recognition of the fact that language development takes many years and additional instructional support: *“However, because ELLs are acquiring English language proficiency and content area knowledge concurrently, some students will require additional time and all will require appropriate instructional support and aligned assessments. Additionally, the development of native-like proficiency in English takes many years and will not be achieved by all ELLs, especially for those students who start schooling in the United States in the later grades. Teachers should recognize that it is possible to achieve the standards for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language without manifesting native-like control of conventions and vocabulary”* (p. 6). Our only concern here is that the term “native-like proficiency” seems to be somewhat ethnocentric, as if persons born in the United States *are* the standard. The term “native” is also open to interpretation, and there certainly must be other terms that would convey your intended meaning more clearly.

Concern 1-1 with continuum of expectations: Grade 2, Standard 2 (p. 12), *“Identify the focus of each paragraph in a multi-paragraph text,”* seems out of step with what is expected in grades above and below Grade 2, where the focus is on the entire text. The counterpart for Grade 1 says, *“Describe the*

main topic of a text and identify key details,” which is a higher level expectation than the Grade 2 Standard.

Suggestion 1-1: Perhaps revise language to suggest that students at G1 are able to identify main ideas of texts, while G2 students are able to identify main ideas and supporting details of sections of a text, and G3 students are able to identify the main ideas and supporting details of an entire text.

Concern 1-2 continuum of expectations: Grade 4, Language Standard 1c (p. 29) states: *“Produce complete sentences, avoiding fragments and run-ons,”* while the counterpart for Grade 3, Language Standard 1c (p. 29), states: *“Produce simple, compound, and complex sentences.”* These standards seem to be reversed in order of difficulty in that producing a complete sentence would usually precede using more complexity in sentence structure. Additionally, in both standards there is another issue with the concept of completeness—many times in speaking and writing we do not use complete sentences for emphasis. Period. See?

Suggestion 1-2: Perhaps reversing or revising these standards would be appropriate. A possible revision to both might read:

- *Produce complete sentences, avoiding fragments and run-ons. Suggestion: Produce interesting and well-formed sentences appropriate to the context and purpose, avoiding unintentional fragments and run-ons.*
- *Produce simple, compound, and complex sentences. Suggestion: Produce a variety of sufficiently complex sentence lengths to express intended meanings while considering audience and purpose.*

2. Do these standards meet the stated criteria of “fewer, clearer, and higher” standards?

Positive Directions: The NCTE Review Team appreciates and notes significant revisions to previously unclear language in past drafts. The following suggestions represent yet more considerations for meeting your intended goals of “fewer, clearer, higher,” and rationales are categorized by their intentions. One issue that pervades all standards is the use of “e.g.” instead of “i.e.,” a detail that seems minor and well understood but is often taken literally. Though we are clear on the intended meaning of “e.g.,” or *exempli gratia*, as a preface to a list this abbreviation should indicate that it is not comprehensive but rather just a series of examples. In many states and districts, however, in former standards documents, these same “for example” lists were taken to be exclusive and finite. Perhaps a general statement regarding this in the “How to Read This Document” section would also clarify many confusions, including some that we may have in the chart below.

Revision Suggestions for “fewer, clearer, higher”

Page, Grade Level, & Standard #	Current Language	Suggestion	Issue/Rationale
p. 3	<i>Fulfilling the standards for 6–12 ELA requires much greater attention to literary nonfiction than has been traditional.</i>	Revise	Clearer: Throughout this section, all references, including those in the chart, are about “informational text,” and then the term appears once as “literary nonfiction.” To say that 6–12 would focus only on “literary nonfiction” would not be accurate as it is currently stated. Later in the documents, literary nonfiction text is defined more appropriately as a subcategory of informational texts.
p. 10 G1: 10 G2: 10 Note: Similar language appears throughout the K-CCR standards	<i>Demonstrate the capacity to read and reread independently and proficiently appropriate complex texts for grade 1.</i>	Revise	Higher: Demonstrating the capacity to read and actually doing it consistently are two very different things. The language used seems to leave open the unfortunate interpretation that if we saw a child reading appropriately once, s/he has “demonstrated capacity” to read independently, which is probably not your intention. Clearer: Remove the phrase “demonstrate the capacity to” entirely. Higher: Could language be added throughout the document to support the notion that we read for a range of purposes that include for

			pleasure and personal reasons? Without such language, we reduce reading to a routine which must be done to accomplish something, which is not the reason that the Publishing industry, on the whole, is a billion-dollar industry.
p. 10 G2: 2	<i>Identify morals or lessons in classic stories, fables, folktales, or myths.</i>	Revise	Clearer: Use of the term “classic” stories is vague—open to a narrowed interpretation of “classic” such as Greek myths. Deleting the word “classic” would allow for the “broad range of historical and cultural” texts (p. 16) called for in other portions of the document.
p. 10 G2: 4	<i>Identify regular beats, rhymes, and repeated lines that supply rhythm and meaning in poems, songs, and stories.</i>	Revise	Clearer/higher: This standard stills seems unclear as written. Regular beats, rhymes, and repeated lines do supply rhythm but don’t necessarily supply meaning. Perhaps “or” instead of “and” as in: Identify regular beats, rhymes, and repeated lines that supply rhythm or meaning in poems, songs, and stories.
p.10 G2: 8	<i>Identify words in a story that link events causally (e.g.,therefore, in order to, because).</i>	Revise or Delete	Higher/clearer: To what end would simply identifying words that link events together truly serve? As written, students would only have to make a list of or circle transitions in a text—a very low-level endeavor. Does this standard really attempt to get at something more meaningful such as: “Recognize the structures of fiction and notice how events are linked together causally”?
p. 10 G1: 8	<i>Identify words in a story that link events sequentially (e.g., before/after, later, since).</i>	Revise or Delete	Higher/clearer: What end would simply identifying words that link events sequentially really accomplish? I doubt that the intent here is to consider that children have met the standard when they circle or highlight words like “first,” “next,” “then,” or “last” but, as written, this is what is called for. Do you mean to address structures of texts and how fiction moves through time?
p. 11 G5: 4	<i>Understand words and phrases in a text that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g., Herculean, Pandora’s Box), drawing on a wide reading of myths.</i>	Revise	Clearer: Throughout the document, references to mythology or classical literature are numerous. Our concern here is that most references seem narrow and imply that literature representing Western thought is privileged in some way. The simple addition of language such as: Including myths and legends from a variety of cultures and periods would be more considerate of the vast quantity of literature that fits into this category than limiting examples, solely to the cultural values represented by European or, specifically, Greek mythology. Granted, your use of the “e.g.,” <i>exempli gratia</i> , should signal to readers of the documents that these are merely some examples of the possibilities, but historically, states and test makers particularly read “e.g.” as if the examples

			were the preferred and only choices. A statement regarding the use of “e.g.” vs.” i.e.” would be helpful in some form within the document to avoid such a narrow reading of the standards.
p. 11 G5: 2	<i>Determine a theme of a poem, story, or drama, drawing on how the speaker in a poem or the characters in a story adapt or change in response to the challenges over the course of the text.</i>	Revise	Clearer: The language here is somewhat problematic in that use of poetry to determine character change requires a very narrow type of poetry. Many examples of celebrated poetry, Carl Sandburg’s “Fog,” for instance, or Robert Frost’s “Stopping by a Wood on a Snowy Evening,” do not contain a speaker who adapts or changes in response to the challenges described in the text. Perhaps a revision is warranted such as: Determine a theme of a poem, story, or drama, drawing on how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic or the characters in a story adapt or change in response to challenges described in the text.
p. 13 G4: 2 G5: 2	<i>Outline main ideas in a text and the details that support them.</i>	Revise	Clearer/higher: Use of the verb “outline” has multiple meanings and could be read to mean that students produce an outline only to meet this standard. A term such as “summarize” main ideas allows for broader interpretation suggesting that teachers might require a written or oral summary and expect students to identify transitions in texts, which is a higher expectation than outlining.
p. 15 G1: 4c G2: 4c G3: 4c	<i>Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.</i>	Revise	Higher/Clearer: Using “context” needs to be made clearer, as was demonstrated in the December 2009 Draft of Common Standards: Use meaning and flow of text to self-correct or confirm, rereading as necessary.
p. 15 G1: 4a G2: 4a G3: 4a	<i>Read on-level text with purpose and understanding.</i>	Revise	Clearer: Reading with purpose is vague. Higher: Reading only “on-level” texts seems to suggest that everyone develops at the same pace and could be read to discount the idea of differentiation—matching texts to children’s developing abilities. A student who is above level should not have to read only “on-level” texts, and a child who is significantly behind would not benefit from reading “on-level” texts either. Perhaps this could read: Read a range of texts appropriate to their developing reading ability.
p. 15 GK: 3d	<i>Distinguish between similarly spelled words by identifying the sounds of the letters that differ (e.g., bat vs. sat, cat vs. can, hit vs. hot).</i>	Delete	Fewer: The intention of this standard, that of distinguishing individual phonemes, is already represented in many other standards for this grade level.

p. 15 G1: 3c	<i>Understand that when consonants lie between two vowels in the middle of a word, it signals a new syllable.</i>	Delete	Fewer/Clearer: This standard does not represent information that is accurate; many words that technically fit this description are not two syllables and thus would cause undue confusion for teachers and students (e.g., mutes, kites, likes, Butte).
p. 15 G3 3c	<i>Understand that every syllable must have a vowel sound and use that knowledge to determine the number of syllables in a word.</i>	Delete or revise	Clearer/fewer: This standard is not necessary in its explanation. As demonstrated in earlier standards in K and G1, children are able to hear and count syllables without knowing about the vowel sound per syllable rule. This rule is not needed to accomplish the goal of counting syllables or syllable breaks. Also problematic is the reality that the most common “vowel sound” in multisyllable words is the neutral schwa.
p. 15 G2 3c, 3d	<i>Decode regularly spelled two-syllable words with long vowels. Decode words with common prefixes and suffixes.</i>	Revise and combine	Clearer/fewer: Decode multisyllable words including those with long vowels and common prefixes or suffixes.
p. 28 G2 5a	<i>Build real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., describe foods that are spicy or juicy).</i>	Revise or delete	Clearer: This standard is vague in intent and/or the actual meaning of what is expected. Is the intention “to use rich, varied language appropriate to the topic and author’s purpose”?
p. 30 G5: 4d	<i>Explain the meaning of common idioms, adages, and proverbs.</i>	Revise or delete	Clearer: Same as above.
p. 30 G4: 4d	<i>Paraphrase common idioms, adages, and proverbs.</i>	Revise or delete	Clearer: This standard is time-based and vague in that idioms, proverbs, and adages common today are not the same as those earlier periods. The notion of “common” is culturally based and may not represent the same ideas across linguistically diverse learners.
p. 36 G6: 8	<i>Describe the reasoning and rhetoric one character uses to persuade another.</i>	Revise	Clearer: Use of the term “rhetoric” here would be better termed “language” to avoid unnecessary jargon for teachers and students. Perhaps the standard could read: Describe the reasoning and language one character uses to resolve conflicts (which is usually what a character would be persuading another character about).
p. 40 G9 G10	<i>In grade 9, students focus on reading texts independently in the grades 9–10 text complexity band, with scaffolding likely required for texts at the high end of the range.</i> <i>In grade 10, students focus on reading texts independently in the grades 9–10 text complexity band (70 percent) and are introduced to texts in the grade 11–CCR text complexity band as “stretch” texts (30 percent), which will likely require scaffolding.</i>	Revise	Clearer: As written, the difference between a “stretch” text and a text at the high end of the range is somewhat unclear. For a grade 9 student, reading grade 10 text complexity may be challenging and require scaffolding. What is confusing is that the same student in grade 10, reading one grade level above, is reading a “stretch” text. These two concepts seem interchangeable, but the decision on the part of developers to distinguish them with different language is confusing and needs to be made parallel throughout or clarified.

<p>p. 43 G6: 3d G7: 3d G8: 3d</p>	<p><i>Use a variety of temporal words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, to shift from one time frame to another, and to show the relationships among events.</i></p>	<p>Revise</p>	<p>Clearer: Replace temporal words with “transitions” for clarity. This also avoids unnecessary jargon for teachers and students.</p>
<p>p. 44 G8: 10 Note: Similar language appears throughout the K-12 standards</p>	<p><i>Demonstrate the capacity to write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) to diverse audiences about grade 8 substantive and discipline-specific content.</i></p>	<p>Revise</p>	<p>Clearer: Use of “demonstrate capacity” is problematic for reasons stated above. Higher: Do we really want students to write only about grade 8 substantive and discipline-specific content? This phrase seems to narrow significantly the range of writing represented in other parts of the standards. A revision such as: “to a variety of audiences, about a variety of topics, including grade-substantive and discipline-specific content, and for a variety of purposes, including for personal expression.”</p>
<p>p. 49 G9-10: 3 G11-CCR: 3</p>	<p><i>Determine a speaker’s or presenter’s position or point of view on a topic by assessing his or her evidence, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone.</i></p>	<p>Revise</p>	<p>Clearer/Higher: Could there be some specific language referencing the ability to notice propaganda in speech?</p>
<p>p. 53 G11-CCR: 5a Note: A version of this standard appears from Grade 4 through 12.</p>	<p><i>Trace the network of uses and meanings that different words have and the interrelationships among those meanings and uses.</i></p>	<p>Delete or revise</p>	<p>Clearer/Fewer: This standard is extremely vague as written. It is probably already covered in G5: 5b. The CCR Standard 5 for Language is much clearer already: <i>Understand the nuances of and relationships among words.</i> If this standard must remain, replace “trace” with a more precise verb such as “identify” or “recount.”</p>

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