

Position Statement on English Language Arts Education
Connecticut State Board of Education
December 3, 2008

The Connecticut State Board of Education believes a high-quality, comprehensive prekindergarten-12 English language arts program is essential for students to develop the skills needed to comprehend and communicate effectively. The development of language, upon which all learning is built, plays a critical role in students' ability to acquire strong literacy skills, which include reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and presenting. Explicit instruction in oral language development provides students with the foundation for comprehending text and communicating effectively. Thus, teachers serve an essential role in developing students' reading and writing skills. Additionally, teachers must have expectations of high achievement for all students and provide challenging and rigorous instruction based on state standards as delineated in the English language arts curriculum documents.

Quality language arts education must be part of the core curriculum for all Connecticut students. By the end of high school, all graduates should be able to develop and communicate ideas and opinions through reading, interpreting and evaluating texts in various content areas. Likewise, students should be able to recognize the influences of individual, social, cultural and historical contexts on readers and writers. To that end, students will be able to use language to think critically, solve problems in everyday life and prepare to enter a diverse, global workforce.

All teachers and administrators share the responsibility for teaching and supporting reading. They are obligated to ensure that students have access to intellectually and emotionally engaging, and culturally relevant curriculum that fosters students' natural curiosity about the world. Likewise, administrators and teachers are obligated to ensure that students have meaningful opportunities to integrate 21st Century Skills (e.g., technology, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, creativity) and literacy skills within all content areas.

To guarantee the delivery of a rigorous and relevant English language arts program, the Board advocates for the provision of adequate time, appropriate resources and opportunities for administrators, teachers and staff to participate in ongoing, job-embedded professional development.

English language arts education is strengthened by meaningful partnerships among families, school districts, community organizations, businesses and universities. Each of these stakeholders is necessary to fulfill the Board's vision of English language arts education as preparation for life, advanced studies and careers for all students. To sustain this collaborative effort, the Board developed "Guidelines for Policymakers," a set of recommendations describing the roles and responsibilities for a high-quality, comprehensive prekindergarten-12 English language arts education program. These guidelines are outlined in a corresponding document.

Components of a High-Quality English Language Arts Education System: Guidelines for Policymakers

December 3, 2008

The Connecticut State Board of Education, in its 2008 *Position Statement on English Language Arts Education*, calls for a systematic approach toward ensuring every Connecticut student receives a high-quality, comprehensive, aligned prekindergarten-12 literacy education. The Board provides the following guidelines to support collaboration among the state's various stakeholders to build coordinated English language arts educational programming.

Department of Education's Responsibilities:

1. Provide a vision for prekindergarten-12 English language arts instruction aligned with college entry requirements for all of Connecticut's public school districts.
2. Provide prekindergarten-12 English language arts nationally-based standards, grade-level expectations; curriculum models; instructional strategies; sample lesson plans; and formative and summative assessments, which clearly identify a comprehensive, aligned progression of key literacy knowledge, concepts and abilities all Connecticut's public school students must attain.
3. Provide ongoing, systematic, job-embedded English language arts professional development opportunities for all Connecticut educators.
4. Ensure all English language arts grade-level teachers hold the appropriate certificate for their assignment.
5. Partner with higher education institutions and business and industry to strengthen reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and presenting competencies in Connecticut's students.

School Districts' Responsibilities:

1. Implement high-quality, comprehensive district prekindergarten-12 English language arts curriculum, instruction and assessments aligned with state expectations.
2. Provide safe, effective, literacy-rich learning environments at all grade levels.
3. Provide varied fiction and nonfiction texts, instructional materials and supporting technology at all grade levels.
4. Provide students technological access to English language arts coursework through online programs.
5. Provide administrators, teachers and staff with ongoing, job-embedded English language arts professional development opportunities in literacy content, pedagogy and cross-content connections.
6. Ensure high-quality instruction and alignment with school district goals, and provide administrators, teachers and staff members from school district affiliated prekindergarten programs opportunities to engage in job-embedded professional development and other curriculum-related activities.
7. Employ highly qualified English language arts teachers who are knowledgeable about literacy content, methods and pedagogy, including culturally responsive diagnosis, measurement and assessment.
8. Provide time for English language arts teachers to collaborate and develop high-quality literacy lessons at all grade levels.
9. Provide opportunities for all teachers to meet with literacy coaches to discuss literacy-rich lessons, assessments and data.
10. Provide time for English language arts teachers to collaborate on the development of formative and summative assessments that monitor student achievement.

11. Provide time for English language arts teachers to evaluate student work, and analyze and evaluate the resulting data to inform future instruction.
12. Inform and seek input from families about the English language arts curriculum, instructional methods and expectations for student learning.
13. Encourage community participation in English language arts events during and beyond the school day to promote the importance of literacy and encourage student interest in literary activities.

Early Childhood

1. Provide personnel affiliated with satellite programs opportunities for high-quality, job-embedded professional development.
2. Provide a high-quality, comprehensive program to support a solid foundation for language and literacy for all learners.
3. Provide for a language-rich environment in all classrooms.
4. Provide and require administrators, teachers and staff to use scientifically-based methods to gather information about how learners develop literacy skills.

Elementary

1. Ensure instructional time for English language arts is at least 120 minutes daily as recommended by the *Report of the National Reading Panel, (2000)*.
2. Maintain class sizes to support instructional excellence.
3. Provide multiple and varied opportunities every day to engage with varied, culturally responsive fiction and nonfiction texts.
4. Provide a language-rich environment in all classrooms.
5. Provide district-sponsored English language arts competitions and enrichment activities.
6. Provide and require administrators, teachers and staff to use scientifically-based methods to gather information about how learners develop literacy skills.

Secondary

1. Ensure instructional time for literacy (reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, presenting) across content areas (e.g., science, mathematics, social studies, career and technical education, world languages, health, arts) is at least 90-120 minutes daily as recommended in *Beyond the Blueprint, (2007)*.
2. Maintain class sizes to support instructional excellence.
3. Provide multiple and varied opportunities every day to engage with varied, culturally responsive fiction and nonfiction texts.
4. Develop students' abilities to question, explore, observe, synthesize and draw conclusions based on their understanding of text.
5. Provide opportunities for students to explore related careers (e.g., technical writing, creative writing, journalism, editor, teacher, web design, television, movies, theatre).
6. Provide district-sponsored English language arts competitions and enrichment activities.
7. Ensure the broadest possible offering of English language arts courses that allow students to continue to develop their abilities to read, write, listen, speak, view and present across all content areas.
8. Ensure all students have access to advanced English language arts courses and opportunities to interact with college-level curriculum.

9. Provide and require administrators, teachers and staff to use scientifically-based methods to gather information about how learners develop literacy skills.

Literacy Across the Content Areas

1. Expect a culture of literacy within all schools.
2. Require building-based literacy teams with representation from administrators, literacy specialists, teachers at all grade levels and content areas and literacy support staff.
3. Require the development of students' literacy (reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, presenting) skills across all content areas.
4. Require the collection, analysis and evaluation of student literacy data in all schools across all content areas.
5. Provide administrators, teachers and staff with time to collaborate around literacy initiatives.

Administrators' Responsibilities Prekindergarten-12:

1. Create a culture of literacy throughout the school.
2. Provide safe, effective, literacy-rich learning environments at all grade levels.
3. Provide varied fiction and nonfiction texts, instructional materials and supporting technology at all grade levels.
4. Provide students technological access to English language arts coursework through online programs.
5. Provide teachers and staff with ongoing, job-embedded English language arts professional development opportunities in literacy content, pedagogy and cross-content connections.
6. Remain current in literacy content, pedagogy and cross-content connections.
7. Implement a system of support for all students that includes supplemental and intensive English language arts interventions.
8. Appropriately assign highly qualified English language arts teachers who are knowledgeable about literacy content, methods and pedagogy.
9. Provide English language arts teacher leaders to coordinate and support literacy instruction at all grade levels.
10. Provide time for English language arts teachers to collaborate and develop high-quality literacy lessons at all grade levels.
11. Provide time for English language arts teachers to collaborate on the development of formative and summative assessments that monitor student achievement.
12. Provide time for English language arts teachers to evaluate student work, and analyze and evaluate the resulting data to inform future instruction.
13. Inform and seek input from families about the English language arts curriculum, instructional methods and expectations for student learning.
14. Create and maintain partnerships with various stakeholders, particularly parents.
15. Encourage community participation in English language arts events during and beyond the school day to promote the importance of literacy and encourage student interest in literary activities.

Teachers' Responsibilities:

1. Plan and implement instruction to support student understanding of literacy concepts.
2. Provide frequent and varied opportunities for students to read, write, listen, speak, view and present.
3. Stay current in literacy content and pedagogy.
4. Provide varied assessments and use the results to inform instruction.

5. Collaborate with peers to improve English language arts education for all students.
6. Recognize that children exhibit varying levels of readiness based on age, home environment and experiences.
7. Provide varied opportunities for children to hear, read, practice and model sophisticated vocabulary so they can use language as a communication tool.
8. Provide a literacy-rich environment.
9. Set high expectations for all students to ensure earlier and more equitable opportunities to read and write.
10. Foster more systematic and appropriate use of technological tools to enhance English language arts instruction.
11. Engage and support families in fostering children's literacy development and seek input from families to make meaningful connections to students' lives.

Families' and Community Members' Responsibilities:

1. Stimulate children's oral language skills by involving them in a variety of language-rich activities (e.g., conversations, songs, stories, responding to questions).
2. Encourage children's interests in English language arts by engaging them in speaking about what they are learning at school and how it relates to daily life, especially promoting reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and presenting skills.
3. Use community resources to support children's literacy development.
4. Work with teachers to support children's literacy learning in English language arts and across content areas.

Higher Education Institutions' Responsibilities:

1. Provide a rigorous literacy program, linked to national and state literacy standards, with depth and breadth to scientifically-based content and pedagogy, including cultural and cognitive learning style theory and research.
2. Provide pre-service teachers with experiences to use literacy data to support student development and inform instruction.
3. Provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to complete literacy and literacy across the content areas fieldwork in urban, suburban and rural schools as part of their degree programs.
4. Ensure pre-service teachers are placed with master teachers for their student teaching assignments.
5. Encourage higher education faculty participation in prekindergarten-16 literacy education reform.

Business and Industry Stakeholders' Responsibilities:

1. Engage students, schools and families in community-based activities to support and enhance literacy programming.
2. Develop ongoing, systematic partnerships with schools to support and enhance the literacy programming.
3. Provide mentoring and internships for teachers and students.

Libraries, Museums, and Arts Institutions' Responsibilities:

1. Develop ongoing, collaborative partnerships with schools, teachers, students and families to support and enhance literacy programming.
2. Collaborate with teachers to develop interdisciplinary lessons aligned with national, state and district standards.

3. Provide literacy enrichment experiences before and after school, on weekends, during school holidays and over the summer.
4. Make available summer reading texts and materials.

References

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Connecticut State Department of Education 2007. *Beyond the Blueprint: Literacy in Grades 4-12 and Across the Content Areas*. Hartford, CT: Connecticut State Department of Education.