



K-12 Writing Curriculum Review
West St. Paul - Mendota Heights - Eagan Area Schools
School District 197

Prepared by

Kate Skappel
Curriculum Coordinator

Adriana Henderson
Elementary Literacy Coordinator

June 2015

Background

The 2010 National K-12 Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects are a comprehensive set of academic standards ensuring that all students are college and career ready by the end of high school. Minnesota actively participated in the development of the National Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. Through the review of the 2003 Minnesota English Language Arts K-12 Academic Standards, Minnesota adopted the 2010 National K-12 Common Core State English Language Arts Standards, to be implemented in the 2012-13 school year. The implementation of the Standards include an additional 10-15% of content state's were given upon adoption of the Common Core State Standards or English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. Minnesota embedded additional content in regard to media literacy skills and American Indians to the newly adopted standards, referred to now as the K-12 Minnesota English Language Arts Standards.

The K-12 Minnesota English Language Arts Standards are organized into three main sections:

- (a.) standards for English Language Arts and literacy in History, Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects for grades kindergarten through grade 5
- (b.) standards for English Language Arts in grades 6 through grade 12
- (c.) standards for History, Social studies, Science and Technical Subjects for grades 6 through grade 12

The K-12 Minnesota English Language Arts Standards consist of four strands: Reading; Writing; Language and Speaking, Viewing, Listening, and Media Literacy Skills. Each strand features language progressions that are anchored in the college and career readiness standards. Within each strand are specific grade level benchmarks that increase in rigor and complexity Kindergarten through grade 12.

The processes for literacy development are closely connected throughout the main strands of the Minnesota English Language Arts Standards as an integrated model for literacy. The writing standards include knowledge and the use of three main text types of writing (narrative/creative, informational/explanatory, and argumentative/opinion); using a writing process; building research skills; presentation of information and ideas; and writing routinely over period of time. The language standards include the knowledge and application of writing conventions and vocabulary acquisition. The speaking, viewing, listening, and media literacy skills include the development of communication and collaboration skills using a diverse range of print, digital and media formats throughout content areas. The media literacy skills identify the integration of technology using various platforms and multimedia, with the application of keyboarding skills beginning in grade 3. The reading standards emphasize writing about reading with increased awareness and use beginning in grade 4 through grade 12.

It is the expectation that K-12 students show mastery of the Minnesota English Language Arts Standards and grade level benchmarks by the end of each school year. Students currently are not assessed in writing on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment. However, grade 11 students are administered the ACT Plus Writing. Starting in 2014-15, grade 11 students were administered the ACT Plus Writing as a part of the series of career and college readiness assessments administered to students. The ACT Plus Writing is a required graduation assessment providing information to grade 11 students, their parents, and educators regarding the level of preparedness for postsecondary success on a nationally recognized college entrance exam.

In year one of the curriculum review cycle, the writing review team identified areas of need in writing instruction. The first was a need for consistent writing instruction and resources. Through our analysis we learned that there are inconsistent daily writing opportunities across the elementary buildings and the six period day at the middle schools, particularly at grades seven and eight, limiting the amount of time for writing. Therefore, recommendations for the amount time students should spend writing needed to be developed for each grade level. Another need identified through the "unpacking" of standards was the lack of resources we currently have to teach the new Native American standards in English Language Arts.

Summary of Year 2

In the Fall 2014, the K-12 Writing Review Team developed and administered a writing survey to all K-12 staff who teach Language Arts Standards. K-12 English Language Arts teachers and secondary content area teachers participated in providing feedback and input on current writing instruction and practices, resources used, and professional development needs. The K-12 Writing team convened to review the survey results. The analysis of the writing survey was used in the decision-making process for determining next steps for continued professional development to ensure the implementation of the Minnesota English Language Arts Writing Standards. There were 77 respondents of the K-12 writing survey. The results completed by K-12 English Language Arts teachers indicated the following:

Frequency of Writing Instruction

- 69% of teachers provided opportunities for students to write every day
- 33% of teachers stated they used a writer's workshop model often or daily when teaching writing

Writing Standards and Instruction

- 61% of teachers indicated they felt comfortable or very comfortable in teaching the Minnesota English Language Arts Standards
- **59% of teachers indicated they model his/her own writing to demonstrate think alouds, writing process, and author's craft**
- 87% of teachers stated that they strongly agree or agree that writing across the content areas benefits all students

Publishing Writing and Use of Technology

- 40% of teachers replied they provide a variety of opportunities for students to publish/present writing
- 51% of teachers indicated they offer opportunities for students to utilize technology in their writing

The survey results, along with the needs identified in year one, led us to explore curriculum resources that provide students in grades K-6 a consistent writer's workshop model of instruction. In grades 7-12, the writing text types are embedded with literature studies, as well as taught as independent units. The table below shows our K-12 Writing Program for all students:

School District 197 K-12 Writing Program

| | |
|-----|--|
| K-4 | Literacy Block (120-150 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 30-45 minutes of writing depending on the grade level |
| 5-6 | Social Studies with Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 65 minute class period will include writing routinely• Writing topics will be integrated with social studies topics (i.e. expository, opinion and/or persuasive) Digital Literacy and Citizenship <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 54 minute class covering digital literacy standards• Keyboarding instruction |
| 7-8 | Language Arts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 54 minute period every day for reading and writing instruction Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 54 minute class period every other day will include Reading, Writing, as well as Speaking, Viewing, Listening and Media Literacy Standards |

9-12

Required 4 Credits of English

- Grade 9: Language Arts 9/Advanced Language Arts 9
- Grade 10: American Literature/Advanced American Literature
- Grade 11: World Literature /Advanced World Literature
- Grade 12: Composition and Literature/Advanced Placement (AP) Composition and Literature

Elective Language Arts Options:

- Creative Writing
- Acting

Teachers on the review team worked to unpack the standards and identify the following components of the curriculum framework:

- Anchor Standard: The Minnesota English Language Arts Standards include ten anchor standards in reading, writing, as well as six language standards, and eight speaking, viewing, listening and media literacy standards. These overarching standards span all grade levels and provide an overall goal for student learning in the content area.
- Benchmark: The anchor standards are broken down into grade level benchmarks that dictate student proficiency by grade level. All benchmarks are aligned to an Anchor Standard.
- Knowledge and Content: What students need to be able to know and understand
- Learning Targets: A statement that identifies what a student will be able to do. Learning targets are to be written in student friendly language and begin with "I can..."
- Academic Vocabulary: This section includes all academic vocabulary that students need to be able to meet the grade level benchmark.
- Curricular Connections and Resources: Includes a list of all resources that are used to teach this benchmark.
- Assessments: Quizzes, tests and performance tasks used to assess this benchmark.

The framework documents will be used by teachers to direct instructional planning and assessment practices in writing.

As identified in the needs analysis, a consistent resource was needed for a writer's workshop model in grades K-6. Our Elementary Literacy Coordinator researched various writing programs supporting a writer's workshop model. We brought two research based resources for the review team to evaluate. *Lucy Calkins: Units of Study* and *Being A Writer, 2nd Edition* were evaluated using the [curriculum review rubric](#) (see appendix C). The team recommended the adoption of *Being A Writer, 2nd Edition* from the Center for the Collaborative Classroom. [Being A Writer](#) was chosen for the following reasons:

- Meets standards for all grade levels and text types in grades K-6
- Provides supports for various learning needs (ESL, Special Education)
- Provides students opportunities to reflect on the writing process and develop a sense of community in writing
- Provides various forms of assessment including formative, summative and performance tasks
- Lessons are delivered in a writer's workshop model (whole group modeling, independent writing time/conferencing and sharing)
- All resources are available in a digital format for teachers to access and deliver instruction
- Includes mentor texts for all text types to provide a real life example of each type of writing
- Digital and print materials are organized in a user-friendly format for teachers and students
- Grammar lessons are embedded into the unit lessons taught throughout the writing process

On May 1, 2015, all elementary teachers who will teach or support the teaching of writing attended professional development on the new writing resource, *Being A Writer, 2nd Ed.* The session, conducted by trainers from the Center for Collaborative Classroom, included a summary of the writing review process, the structure of a writer's workshop class period, modeling of a lesson and exploration of the digital resources for teachers. This training was replicated for grade five and six teachers later in May, with time to begin a scope and sequence.

An overview of the new writing curriculum and the process used to adopt the resources was provided to all specialist teachers in order to ensure all teachers have information about the process. Teachers in this group read articles and

watched videos about communication and comprehension skills in various contexts. Teachers identified where in their content they foster these skills at each grade level. Both face to face conversations and online posts were used to facilitate this session.

Next Steps

Future Professional Development Topics

- Implementing grade level scope and sequence for *Being a Writer, 2nd Ed.* (K-6)
- Writer's Workshop Model
- MN ELA Writing Standards (text types, writing process, integrating technology)
- Embedding grammar into instruction
- Utilizing writing assessments and norming student writing

Parent Resources

Parent resources will be shared with families regarding the adoption of the new K-6 writing program, *Being a Writer, 2nd Edition*. The developmental writing stages and unit family letters in English and Spanish outlining the student writing goals will be communicated with K-6 families regarding the adoption of *Being a Writer, 2nd Edition*. Additionally, families can learn more about our K-12 writing program and the grade level writing outcomes on the District website on the Curriculum page; see Appendix B regarding [K-12 Grade Level outcomes](#).

Common Assessments

During the 2015-16 school year we will work with grade level teams to develop common assessments for each text type in the writing standards. K-6 common assessments will come from *Being A Writer, 2nd Ed.* curriculum resource. Common assessments in grades 7-12 will be developed by teachers using grade level standards and learning targets, with an initial focus on the transition from 8th to 9th grade.

Appendix A: Curriculum Review Team: K-12 Writing

| Elementary | Middle School | High School | Administration |
|--|--|---|--|
| Tiffany Bradner - Moreland Lindsey Deiderich – Moreland Jennifer Hogan – Somerset Polly Saatzer - Garlough Debbi Krohn – Garlough Allison Laing – Somerset Andrea Saenz – Garlough Thomas Schwister – Mendota Krista Seipel – Somerset Ruth Underdahl – Pilot Knob Candice Whelan – Mendota Mai Yang – Pilot Knob | Emily Abbott – HMS Angela Corbett – FHMS Patrick Hibbard – FHMS Kristine Jacobs – FHMS Leah Martin – HMS Kristi Cooper -- HMS Erin Schmidt – HMS Thomas Smith - HMS Jenna St. Fluer – FHMS | Jesse Emery Heather Gardner Joanna Imm Julie Johnson Dan McCormick Erica Ramisch Glenn Skov Kelly Smalstig | Thomas Benson Adriana Henderson Kate Skappel |

Appendix B: K-12 Grade Level Outcomes

School District 197 provides a challenging educational environment that instills in each student a lifelong passion for learning, empowers all students to achieve their personal goals and academic potential, and prepares them to be responsible citizens in an interconnected world. Our work aligns with our Core Purpose, we produce Outcomes That Matter To All in grade levels.

Kindergarten students will:

- view themselves as writers by writing routinely and for a variety of purposes
- use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces, informational texts, narratives
- apply appropriate grade level language conventions in writing
- explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing with support from adults
- participate in shared research and writing projects
- recall information from experiences or gather information for shared writing
- communicate ideas collaboratively with peers

Grade 1 students will:

- view themselves as writers by writing routinely and for a variety of purposes
- write opinion pieces and informational texts
- write personal narratives and other creative texts (poems, short stories)
- learn about using a writing process that focuses on a topic
- apply appropriate grade level language conventions in writing
- use technology to produce and publish writing with support and guidance from adults
- conduct short research projects
- recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence
- report on a topic or text avoiding plagiarism
- create an individual or shared multimedia work for a specific purpose
- communicate ideas collaboratively in a variety of formats and media with support and guidance from adults

Grade 2 students will:

- view themselves as writers by writing routinely and for a variety of purposes
- write opinion pieces and informational texts
- write personal narratives and other creative texts (poems, short stories)
- learn about using a writing process that focuses on a topic
- apply appropriate grade level language conventions in writing
- use technology to produce and publish writing with support and guidance from adults
- conduct short research projects
- recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence
- report on a topic or text avoiding plagiarism
- create an individual or shared multimedia work for a specific purpose
- communicate ideas collaboratively in a variety of formats and media with support and guidance from adults

Grade 3 students will:

- view themselves as writers by writing routinely and for a variety of purposes
- write opinion pieces and informational texts
- write personal narratives and other creative texts (poems, short stories)
- use a writing process to develop and strengthen writing using grade level appropriate language conventions
- use technology to produce and publish writing
- apply keyboarding skills
- conduct short research projects
- recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence
- report on a topic or text avoiding plagiarism
- create an individual or shared multimedia work for a specific purpose
- communicate ideas collaboratively in a variety of formats and media

Grade 4 students will:

- view themselves as writers by writing routinely and for a variety of purposes
- write opinion pieces and informational texts
- write personal narratives and other creative texts (poems, short stories)
- use a writing process to develop and strengthen writing using appropriate grade level language conventions
- use technology to produce and publish writing
- apply keyboarding skills and type a minimum of a page in a single sitting
- conduct short research projects that use several resources
- recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital/online sources including the Internet
- take brief notes on sources, sort evidence, and report on a topic or text avoiding plagiarism
- draw evidence from literary or informational texts applying the MN ELA Grade 4 Reading Standards
- create an individual or shared multimedia work for a specific purpose
- communicate ideas collaboratively in a variety of formats and media

Grade 5 students will:

- view themselves as writers by writing routinely and for a variety of purposes
- write opinion pieces and informational texts
- write personal narratives and other creative texts (poems, short stories)
- produce writing in which the development and organization
- use a writing process to develop and strengthen writing using appropriate grade level language conventions
- use technology to produce and publish writing
- apply keyboarding skills and type a minimum of two pages in a single sitting
- conduct short research projects that use several resources
- recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital/online sources including the Internet
- take brief notes on sources, sort evidence, and report on a topic or text avoiding plagiarism
- draw evidence from literary or informational texts applying the MN ELA Grade 5 Reading Standards
- create an individual or shared multimedia work for a specific purpose
- communicate ideas collaboratively in a variety of formats and media

Grade 6 students will:

- view themselves as writers by writing routinely and for a variety of purposes
- write argumentative/persuasive pieces and informational texts
- write personal narratives and other creative texts (poems, short stories)
- produce writing in which the development and organization
- use a writing process to develop and strengthen writing using appropriate grade level language conventions
- use technology to produce and publish writing
- apply keyboarding skills
- conduct short research projects that use several resources
- recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital/online sources including the Internet
- assess the credibility of each source as well as quote or paraphrase information collected
- avoid plagiarism and provide basic bibliographic information for sources
- draw evidence from literary or informational texts applying the MN ELA Grade 6 Reading Standards
- create an individual or shared multimedia work for a specific purpose
- communicate ideas collaboratively in a variety of formats and media

Grade 7 students will:

- view themselves as writers by writing routinely and for a variety of purposes
- write argumentative/persuasive pieces and informational texts
- write personal narratives and other creative texts (poems, short stories)
- produce writing in which the development and organization
- use a writing process to develop and strengthen writing using appropriate grade level language conventions
- use technology to produce and publish writing
- apply keyboarding skills
- conduct short research projects that use several resources
- recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital/online sources including the Internet
- assess the credibility of each source as well as quote or paraphrase information collected
- avoid plagiarism and provide basic bibliographic information for sources
- draw evidence from literary or informational texts applying the MN ELA Grade 7 Reading Standards
- create an individual or shared multimedia work for a specific purpose
- communicate ideas collaboratively in a variety of formats and media

Grade 8 students will:

- view themselves as writers by writing routinely and for a variety of purposes
- write argumentative/persuasive pieces and informational texts
- write personal narratives and other creative texts (poems, short stories)
- produce writing in which the development and organization
- use a writing process to develop and strengthen writing using appropriate grade level language conventions
- use technology to produce and publish writing
- apply keyboarding skills
- conduct short research projects that use several resources
- recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital/online sources including the Internet
- assess the credibility of each source as well as quote or paraphrase information collected
- following a standard format for citation to avoid plagiarism
- draw evidence from literary or informational texts applying the MN ELA Grade 8 Reading Standards
- create an individual or shared multimedia work for a specific purpose
- communicate ideas collaboratively in a variety of formats and media

Grades 9-10 students will:

- view themselves as writers by writing routinely and for a variety of purposes
- write argumentative/persuasive pieces and informational texts
- write personal narratives and other creative texts (poems, short stories)
- use a writing process to produce clear, coherent writing across modes, appropriate to task, purpose, and audience by:
 - using evidence and reason
 - increasing awareness and application of conventions and attribution of sources
 - using a scaffolded process that makes sense
- use technology to produce and publish writing
- apply keyboarding skills
- conduct short as well as more sustained research projects
- gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources including:
 - using search terms effectively
 - assessing the credibility and accuracy of each source
 - quoting or paraphrasing the data and conclusions of others
 - following a standard format for citation to avoid plagiarism
- draw evidence from literary or informational texts applying the MN ELA Grade 9-10 Reading Standards
- create an individual or shared multimedia work for a specific purpose
- communicate ideas collaboratively in a variety of formats and media

Grades 11-12 students will:

- view themselves as writers by writing routinely and for a variety of purposes
- write argumentative/persuasive pieces and informational texts
- write personal narratives and other creative texts (poems, short stories)
- use an independent writing process to produce clear, coherent writing across modes, appropriate to task, purpose, and audience by:
 - effectively using evidence and reasoning
 - independently and accurately use appropriate conventions
 - synthesize information from multiple sources
- use technology to produce and publish writing
- apply keyboarding skills
- conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem using an inquiry approach appropriate to task
- gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources including:
 - using search terms effectively
 - assessing the credibility and accuracy of each source
 - quoting or paraphrasing the data and conclusions of others
 - following a standard format for citation to avoid plagiarism
- draw evidence from literary or informational texts applying the MN ELA Grade 11-12 Reading Standards
- create an individual or shared multimedia work for a specific purpose
- communicate ideas collaboratively in a variety of formats and media

Appendix C: Curriculum Review Rubric

CURRICULUM RESOURCE REVIEW

| CONTENT | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>Minnesota Standards Alignment Content is aligned with state content standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope and Sequence is clear and aligned. | The resource is aligned with the state content standards | The resource is somewhat aligned with the state content standards | The resource lacks alignment with the state content standards |
| <p>Learning Styles Instructional materials consider students':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied learning abilities • Special needs • ELL needs • Varied learning styles | The materials are consistently accessible to diverse learners, providing opportunities for all students to achieve. | The materials are often accessible to diverse learners, providing some opportunities for all students to achieve. | The materials are not accessible to diverse learners, providing limited opportunities for all students to achieve. |

| STUDENT LEARNING | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>Engaging Prior Knowledge Instructional materials include <i>strategies</i> that help students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activate (think about) their current understanding of a concepts • Make explicit (e.g., write down) their understanding of a concept | The materials include many opportunities to engage prior knowledge | The materials include some opportunities to engage prior knowledge. | The materials include few opportunities to engage prior knowledge. |
| <p>Metacognition Instructional materials include <i>strategies</i> that help students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the goals of the chapter/unit as well as their own learning goals • Assess their own learning • Reflect, over time, on what and how they have learned | The materials include many opportunities to promote metacognition. | The materials include some opportunities to promote metacognition | The materials include few opportunities to promote metacognition. |
| <p>21st century skills The materials require that students become information literate; communication skills are incorporated and taught</p> | The materials include many opportunities to promote informational literacy. | The materials include some opportunities to promote informational literacy. | The materials include few opportunities to promote informational literacy. |

| ASSESSMENT | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>Quality High Quality Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure what students know and are able to do • Align with learning goals and the mode of instruction • Stress application of what student know and are able to do in new or different situations • Provide students the opportunity to assess their own learning | The instructional materials have many high-quality assessments | The instructional materials have some high-quality assessments | The instructional materials have few high-quality assessments |
| <p>Multiple Measures Examples of assessments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance tasks • Objective assessments • Constructed response questions • Project-based tasks • Portfolios | A wide variety of assessment measures and corresponding scoring guidelines (rubrics, answer keys) is provided | Some variety of assessment measures is provided. | Assessments are limited to a few different types . |
| <p>Use of Assessments Instructional materials include assessments that provide ways to modify instruction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments used for purposes other than determining student grades • Assessments designed to focus on learning as well as evaluation • Student work informs the design or redesign of teaching strategies or sequences | Most assessments inform both student understanding and instruction. | Some assessments inform both student understanding and instruction. | Few assessments inform both student understanding and instruction. |
| <p>Accessibility The three key characteristics of accessible assessments are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free from bias (gender, cultural) • Provide accommodations to differences • Provide accommodations for differences in learning styles and language proficiency | Most assessment tasks exhibit these three characteristics. | Some assessment tasks exhibit these three characteristics. | Few assessments tasks exhibit these three characteristics. |

| WORK TEACHERS DO | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>Effective Teaching Strategies Instructional materials support teacher's use of effective teaching <i>strategies</i> that prompt students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize in a variety of ways from texts, video, simulations and lecture • Learn in cooperative groups • Set learning goals from clearly identified goal present in the instructional materials, • Provide feedback to their peers and reflect on their own progress toward meeting learning goals, • Access prior knowledge and make connection to ideas using cues, questions and graphic organizers | The materials suggest many effective teaching strategies. | The materials suggest some effective teaching strategies. | The materials suggest few effective teaching strategies. |

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>Support for the Work Teachers Do</p> <p>Instructional materials that support the work teachers do provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pertinent content background information, • Examples of typical student conceptions, • Explanations of specific instructional models and teaching strategies to improve student understanding • Resources to assist and enhance instruction | Materials provide comprehensive support to help inform and enhance instruction. | Materials provide some support to help inform and enhance instruction. | Materials provide little support to help inform and enhance instruction. |
| The resource is easily navigated | Can be navigated with minimal training | Can be navigated with some training | Can be navigated with extensive training |
| DIGITAL DESIGN | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| The course is rich with supportive text, images, and multimedia. | Digital assets provide comprehensive text, images and multimedia. | Digital assets provide some text, images and multimedia | Digital assets provide minimal text, images and multimedia |
| Digital content is device and platform neutral when possible and documented when not. | Most of the content is device and platform neutral | Some of the content is device and platform neutral | Little of the content is device and platform neutral |
| Course materials and activities assume access to basic multi-media technology (computer, projector, and access to streamed multi-media content, such as YouTube.) | Course materials assume access to readily available technology . | Some course materials assume access to technology not readily available | Much of the course materials assume access to technology not readily available |

General Comments about the Course:

Suggestions: