



# VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

---

# AGENDA ITEM

**Agenda Item:** F

**Date:** January 25, 2024

**Title:** First Review of the Proposed 2024 English *Standards of Learning*

**Presenter:** Dr. Marcey Sorensen, Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning

## **Purpose of Presentation**

Action required by state or federal law or regulation.

## **Executive Summary**

The Draft 2024 English *Standards of Learning* describe the Commonwealth’s expectations for student learning and achievement in grades K-12 literacy and English Language Arts. Periodic revisions of the standards are necessary to update content, clarify important concepts, and reflect current scientific research and best practices in literacy and English Language Arts education. The *Code of Virginia* requires a review of Virginia’s *Standards of Learning* (SOL) every seven years. New academic content *Standards of Learning* for English were first developed in 1995. They were revised in 2002, 2010, and again in 2017. The *Standards of Quality* require the Board of Education to review the *Standards of Learning* on a regular schedule. The current [English Standards of Learning](#) were adopted by the Board of Education in 2017.

This item aligns with Priority 1 of the Board’s *Comprehensive Plan 2024–2029*: to set and help every learner meet high expectations.

The Draft 2024 English *Standards of Learning* being presented to the Virginia Board of Education today for first review are a comprehensive set of standards achieved through the collaboration of many stakeholders, including parents, K-12 educators, community and business members, national experts, and faculty at institutions of higher education. The set of standards being presented in draft form represent six elementary grade levels (K-5), three middle school grade levels (6-8), and four high school grade levels (9-12).

The *English Standards of Learning* are not intended to encompass the entire curriculum for a given grade level. School divisions are encouraged to incorporate the standards into division-selected high quality instructional materials and curriculum (HQIM).

Through the engagement of a broad array of stakeholders, valuable input and feedback informed a revised set of standards that represent the best in class for all students in the Commonwealth. The proposed revisions to the standards will raise academic expectations for students and schools and provide a coherent and vertically articulated set of expectations to educators and families. Instruction based on high quality standards will ensure that all students have access to educational opportunities that prepare them for success in the workplace, communities, and our democracy. Strong academic standards ensure readiness for all learners in successful post-secondary pursuits.

### **Action Requested**

Action will be requested at a future meeting: March 28, 2024

### **Superintendent's Recommendation**

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education receive for first review the proposed revisions to the 2017 *English Standards of Learning*.

### **Previous Review or Action**

Previous review or action.

**Date:** February 2, 2023

**Action:** Report on the [Timeline for the English Standards of Learning and Revision Process](#).

### **Background Information and Statutory Authority**

Section [22.1-253.13:1](#) B of the *Code of Virginia* requires a review of the Board's *Standards of Learning* every seven years:

The Board of Education shall establish a regular schedule, in a manner it deems appropriate, for the review and revision as may be necessary of the Standards of Learning in all subject areas. Such review of each subject area shall occur at least once every seven years. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the Board from conducting such review and revision on a more frequent basis.

Additionally, the *Virginia Literacy Act* requires the K-8 *Standards of Learning* to be aligned with "evidence-based literacy instruction" and "science-based reading research," which guided the revision of the *English Standards of Learning*. The [Virginia Literacy Act](#) states the following:

Evidence-based literacy instruction means structured instructional practices, including sequential, systematic, explicit, and cumulative teaching, that (i) are based on reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence consistent with science-based reading research; (ii) are used in core or general instruction, supplemental instruction, intervention services, and intensive intervention services; (iii) have a demonstrated record of success in

adequately increasing students' reading competency, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension and in building mastery of the foundational reading skills of phonological and phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, phonics, spelling, and text reading fluency; and (iv) are able to be differentiated in order to meet the individual needs of students.

Science-based reading research means research that (i) applies rigorous, systematic, and objective observational or experimental procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading and writing difficulties, and (ii) explains how proficient reading and writing develop, why some children have difficulties developing key literacy skills, and how schools can best assess and instruct early literacy, including the use of evidence-based literacy instruction practices to promote reading and writing achievement.

In accordance with the timeline, the Virginia Department of Education (“VDOE”) produced a draft of the 2024 *English Standards of Learning*. The Draft 2024 *English Standards of Learning* includes the following:

- Introduction statements
- Guiding principles
- Grade-level introductions
- Content Strands and Standards of Learning
- Appendix: Guidance on Text Complexity and Range of Reading

The following list summarizes the actions involved in the review and revision process:

- Received written public comments from stakeholders, including parents, educators, community members, and business members on the review and revision of the 2017 *English Standards of Learning*
- Received input from stakeholders, including parents, educators, community members, faculty from higher education, members of Virginia Association of Teachers of English (VATE) and Virginia State Literacy Association (VSLA), and business members on the 2017 *English Standards of Learning* at community engagement sessions held both virtually and in locations across the Commonwealth
- Convened a review committee of K-12 educators to review public comments and make recommendations for revisions to the standards
  - Comprised of 52 educators, including classroom teachers, special education teachers, reading specialists, administrators, and school division English supervisors
  - Members represented all eight Superintendents’ Regions

- VDOE staff from the Office of Humanities served in an advisory capacity
- Convened an English Education Advisory Board to review public comments and institutes of higher education feedback and make recommendations for revisions to the standards
  - Comprised of 33 representatives from education, institutes of higher education, businesses, parents, community stakeholders, and the military.
- Developed a draft of the proposed standards
- Received feedback from external reviewers on the proposed draft of the standards
  - Invited faculty from two-year and four-year institutions of higher education, national experts, and staff from Virginia Literacy Partnerships at the University of Virginia to participate in the external review process

Content in the Draft 2024 English *Standards of Learning* is organized into strands to provide clarity for learning expectations and to better support connections in concepts across grades. Content in the elementary standards is organized into strands that address specific foundational skills in reading and writing, which are identified as:

Foundations for Reading (FFR) to include:

- Print Concepts (K);
- Phonological and Phonemic Awareness (K-2);
- Phonics and Word Analysis (K-5); and

Writing Foundations (WF) to include:

- Handwriting (K-5); and
- Spelling (K-5).

In kindergarten through grade twelve, the proposed *English Standards of Learning* are organized into eight additional content strands:

- Developing Skilled Readers and Building Reading Stamina
- Reading and Vocabulary
- Reading Literary Text
- Reading Informational Text
- Writing
- Language Usage
- Communication and Multimodal Literacies
- Research

The Draft 2024 English *Standards of Learning* provide a list of standards accompanied by a detailed list of the knowledge and skills associated with each standard.

The *English Standards of Learning* assessments are administered in grades three through eight, and once in high school (End-of-Course tests) and assessment items are developed to align to the content in the standards.

### Stakeholder Engagement

As part of the *English Standards of Learning* revision process, numerous opportunities for stakeholder input and feedback were provided. Stakeholder input and feedback was received and analyzed. The following provides information regarding the stakeholder input received about the current 2017 *English Standards of Learning*:

<b>Sources of Input-2017 English Standards of Learning</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
1. 30-Day Public Comment Period (electronic)	February-March 2023	88 submissions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 46 general comments</li> <li>• 42 additional grade level comments</li> </ul>
2. Tidewater Community Engagement Session	March 2023	7 attendees, 19 comments
3. Richmond Community Engagement Session	March 2023	11 attendees, 24 comments
4. Harrisonburg Community Engagement Session	March 2023	4 attendees, 13 comments
5. Virtual Community Engagement Session 1	March 2023	24 attendees, 55 comments
6. Virtual Community Engagement Session 2	March 2023	42 attendees, 59 comments
7. Virtual Community Engagement Session 3	March 2023	31 attendees, 101 comments
8. Virtual Community Engagement Session 4	March 2023	12 attendees, 20 comments

K-12 educators serving on standards review committees that met during summer 2023 reviewed and analyzed the stakeholder input regarding the current 2017 *English Standards of Learning* to inform the revision work. Common themes from the input received included:

Elementary:

- Explicit connection between the Standards and Science Based Reading Research (e.g., fluency, listening and speaking, phonemic awareness, and phonics scope).
- More explicit connection and standards relating to grammar and language usage in all grades.
- Teacher Notes are helpful, please keep.
- Appreciate that the skills spiral K-12.

- Include a more specific phonics scope across elementary extending into fourth and fifth grade.
- More specificity needed around blending sounds in kindergarten and first grade.
- Greater emphasis and explicit language needed on background building in early grade.

Secondary:

- Clarity needed on expectations for various writing types.
- Greater emphasis needed within the standards for the important connection between reading and writing and how they should be woven together.
- Language within standards should be consistent to show how grade build on one another.
- Keep Teacher Notes.
- Embed more opportunities for reading and reading authentic literature.
- Update Communication and Multimodal Literacy standards to reflect current digital media landscape as well has a greater importance on teaching these standards.
- Appreciate that the skills spiral K-12.

The VDOE also convened an English Education Advisory Board (EEAB) in September 2023 composed of parents, community members, business and workplace leaders, faculty from institutions of higher education, K-12 educators and leaders, and military personnel. The role of the committee is to serve in an advisory capacity during the revision process by analyzing stakeholder feedback, reviewing the first draft of the 2024 English *Standards of Learning* and providing recommendations regarding proposed changes to the standards.

Draft versions of the 2024 English *Standards of Learning* were presented to Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) from October 2023 through November 2023. The following IHEs provided feedback:

- James Madison University
- Shenandoah University
- Randolph-Macon College
- Mary Baldwin College
- Longwood University
- Liberty University
- Regent University
- Virginia State University
- Virginia Tech
- Virginia Wesleyan University
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- University of Richmond
- University of Virginia

Drafts of the elementary standards were provided to Virginia Literacy Partnerships (VLP) for review and feedback from September 2023 through November 2023.

The K-12 draft standards were also provided to a national expert for review and feedback regarding coherence, clarity, and vertical alignment from November 2023 through December 2023.

Revisions to the draft standards were made based on the feedback above.

### **Implementation and Communication**

Following the Board of Education's acceptance of the Draft 2024 English *Standards of Learning* for first review, the VDOE will receive public comment for at least 30 days before bringing the Draft 2024 English *Standards of Learning* to the Board of Education for final review in March 2024. During the public comment period, the Board of Education will host public hearings, both in-person and virtually on the Draft 2024 English *Standards of Learning*. The English Education Advisory Board will meet to review and consider the feedback received. It is anticipated that the review and revision process will be completed in March 2024 and the document will be posted via the VDOE website.

### **Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:**

The collection and analysis of public comment and additional revisions to the *English Standards of Learning* can be absorbed by the agency's existing resources at this time. If the agency is required to absorb additional responsibilities related to this activity, other services may be impacted.