



# Literacy Standards Review Team

## Meeting Notes

**Date: Wednesday, April 27, 2016**

**Time: 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

**Location: West Des Moines Learning Center, West Des Moines, Iowa**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

- Vickie Antsey, Griswold Community School District
- Sandra Beisker, Dubuque Community School District
- Sarah Brown Wessling, Johnston Community School District
- Lauren Burt, Meredith Corporation
- Bridget Castelluccio, Cedar Rapids Community School District
- Kara Dietrich, Ballard Community School District
- Salli Forbes, University of Northern Iowa
- Dixie Forcht, South Tama Community School District
- Carol Glackin, Morningside College
- Mendy Haefs, St. Patrick Elementary School, Sheldon
- Liz Hansen, Grinnell-Newburg Community School District
- Laura Johnson, Grant Wood Area Education Agency
- Heather Lundquist, Atlantic Community School District
- Kelsey Meyer, Grundy Center Community School District
- Kristine Milburn, West Des Moines Community School District
- Erin Miller, Ames Community School District
- Kathy Perret, Northwest Area Education Agency
- Jonathan Rogers, Iowa City Community School District
- Janelle Thompson, Heartland Area Education Agency
- Molly Tripp, A-H-S-T Community School District
- Josh Wager, Des Moines Public Schools

Committee members who were absent: Beth Baker-Brodersen from Des Moines Area Community College; Sally Huddle from Iowa Wesleyan University; and Deborah Reed from Iowa Reading Research Center.

Also in attendance were Rebecca Bates, a consultant with Midwest Comprehensive Center; Rita Martens, administrative consultant for the Department of Education's Bureau of Standards and Curriculum; Erika Cook, bureau chief for Standards and Literacy; Sandy Nelson, with the

Bureau of Learner Strategies and Supports; and Melissa Walker, writer for the review committee.

**Agenda item: Guest Speaker David Chivers, president and publisher of Des Moines Register, and committee discussion about Chivers' presentation**

**Notes:**

Liz Hansen, co-chairwoman of the review committee and representative from the Grinnell-Newburg Community School District, gave a brief introduction to prepare members for guest speaker David Chivers, president and publisher of the Des Moines Register.

Hansen briefly discussed the year 2010 and the big events from news to music to movies. She explained that was the year the current literacy standards were adopted and that much had changed since that time, so it was important they continue their revision in order to create standards that will weather the test of time.

The committee watched the video "Did you Know 2016" to learn more about the digital age in preparation for Chivers' presentation on digital communication. The committee then briefly discussed the video and statistics from it.

Committee member Lauren Burt introduced Chivers to the committee and shared information about his background. The purpose of Chivers' presentation was to arm the committee with information they needed to ensure the Literacy Standards prepare students with the digital communications skills they need for college and career.

Chivers shared information about his background and education: He's a graduate of North High School in Des Moines and attended Central College. He has a master's in business administration from the University of Iowa and a master's degree in integrated marketing. He's also completed course work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

He explained his passion for education and that he thinks rhetoric associated with it should focus more on the future and less on the past. The majority of his presentation dealt with digital literacy and how it's used in the news industry. Digital literacy is the ability to find, evaluate, utilize, share and create content using information technologies and the Internet.

Chivers said there is significant coverage about this election cycle and how candidates have social media platforms and how social media will play a role in the outcome of the election. He thinks social media has shifted the dynamic of how campaigns are operated and won.

He explained the difference between digital and media literacy. Media literacy focuses on teaching youth to be critically engaged consumers of media, while digital literacy is more about enabling youth to participate in digital media in wise, safe and ethical ways. He said educators need to be focused on teaching youth these things and less on the mechanics of finding, using and sharing. He explained how this relates to his own young daughters and how they're wired to quickly pick up on how to use digital technology. Today's students are connected consumers in a way that they will be teaching adults the mechanics of and how to use new devices.

Chivers said he believes educators should focus on helping students to evaluate, create and discern between different types of messages and sources, so they can understand the difference between credible and non-credible sources, the role of marketing, and plagiarism.

versus original work. The line between what is considered plagiarism is shifting as information in this “e-mix” world where thoughts and content are reinvented and republished with only part of it being the pre-mixed work.

Students know how to use digital tools but the questions that need to be addressed are

- 1) What is the best medium to communicate the message? I.e. videos are ever-evolving with many now watching videos on Facebook without sound, so text is being introduced.
- 2) How does writing for digital platforms differ from other types of writing? Committee members inquired as to whether there is a style guide for online writing standards. Chivers said there are a few books, and the Associated Press is working on a guide, but digital writing is quickly evolving for what is considered acceptable and grammatically correct. Abbreviations and texting are making their way into everyday conversation and used in articles and writings for fairly prominent publications. Technology is becoming something that’s not just being used; it’s evolving the way people interact with each other.

Chivers said he thinks the most important aspect of technology is making sure it’s used in wise, ethical and safe ways, and ensuring there are limits to its accessibility. He posed these questions:

- 1) Who will be able to see what I post?
- 2) Will anyone be embarrassed or hurt by it?
- 3) What will my family or teachers say if they see what I post?
- 4) How would I feel if the head of my dream job or school sees what I post?
- 5) How would I feel if what I post is all over the news?
- 6) Am I proud of what I’m posting?
- 7) Do I have a clear conscience about what I’m posting?
- 8) How would I feel if someone posted this about me?

He talks to his own children about whom they share things and who is following them on social media. The biggest caution is to “pause before you post,” but that in today’s society, one needs to assume that everyone will see everything a person posts to the Internet and that it will last infinitely with the various storage capabilities such as iCloud. His other personal publishing guidelines included considering how people could use what one posts against them to cause harm; not publishing inappropriate language or gestures so people don’t judge the person negatively as a result; and not publishing something the person didn’t create.

In his profession, Chivers explained that digital capabilities have changed the way the Register tells stories. The company still produces a print newspaper, but more is done digitally. A recent series called “Harvest of Change” was the newspapers’ first voyage into virtual reality. The candidate’s soapbox at the Iowa State Fair was shot in 360-degree video. A series called “Lost Schools” was published in print, but it also included online video that was produced into a documentary and shown at a local theater. The media company produced its first podcast called “Three Tickets” regarding the Iowa Caucuses. It had more than 60,000 listeners and garnered national attention.

Chivers said students are already experimenting with technology; they need educators to help them with guidelines and the boundaries for how they continue to do this.

The review committee then asked Chivers questions about and discussed how audience for digital literacy and how it’s different, whether the end result is for social media or academics; how writing for a digital platform is different with shorter paragraphs, sub-headlines and simpler

sentence structure; how the rise of the digital web will create a new world for artistic people and present new ways for designers to tell stories; how students should be taught to use sources that are truly informative and accurate and not just ones that pop up in a “Google” or web engine search; and how the digital literacy standards are written in a way that they will not immediately become outdated.

Jonathan Rogers, a committee member who is a high school journalism teacher in the Iowa City Community School District, asked for advice about how to convince and encourage other journalism teachers to move forward with technology and past the age of only writing newspaper articles. He said there were about 10-15 schools in the state that are showing students how to produce digital news.

Chivers explained that no one will be hired to work in a newsroom simply to write articles. Register reporters recently underwent a refresher on how to shoot and edit video from their cell phones. A journalism student who graduates from college has to be versatile and prepared to tell stories in different ways and formats. He suggested showing other journalism teachers examples of the kind of work is being done in the professional world.

Carol Glackin, a committee member from Morningside College, referred to a book called “Proust and the Squid” by Dr. Maryanne Wolf that discusses how the digital age is restructuring the reading brain, and that a “digital” brain lacks the ability to read complex texts and deeply understand them. She said that as the committee moves forward, it’s important to ensure the standards don’t set aside the critical skills students need to read and become deep thinkers in lieu of focusing on the digital age.

Chivers agreed and said the standards need to include a balance of preparing students for professional development and professional skills but also retaining liberal arts schools with an emphasis on preparing students to become the next set of leaders.

Sarah Brown Wessling, a committee member from the Johnston Community School District, said there needs to be more ways to give teachers access to the digital world because many may be stuck in academia and teach from the textbook rather than personal experiences.

Chivers suggested more professional development that would give teachers access to professionals who are willing to share their experiences; and to invite teachers and students to shadow professionals in the digital environment.

The committee also discussed the use of search engines and online data sources to ensure students learn how to use credible sources for the information they publish. Chivers says sources such as EBSCO, Factiva, Google Scholar and GALILEO are credible sources. He says as a newsman, he also turns to credible news sources CNN or Fox News to double check a fact before it is published.

After Chivers’ presentation, the committee then discussed whether any changes needed to be made to the literacy standards to make them up to date and relative to digital communication. Kristine Milburn, a co-chairwoman of the review committee and representative from the West Des Moines Community School District, directed the committee to analyze the standards using the “Four As Protocol” – assume, agree, argue and act. Groups divided based on grade level for discussion.

From the discussion:

- Terminology in the standards needed to be reviewed to incorporate terms such as “platform” in regards to digital literacy
- More action needs to be taken to add professional development and access to materials that help teachers instruct students about digital literacy
- There could be gaps between beginning teachers who are digital natives and veteran teachers who are more novices when it comes to using some of the technology that is available – how do they address this gap so teachers are sharing knowledge and helping one another? What are the ways to combine a veteran teacher’s knowledge of citing information and using credible sources with a new teacher’s understanding of ways to develop this information digitally?
- The technology aspects of the standards need to be integrated into what is already asked and across the board (not just in 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills), so teachers don’t feel as though they have an entirely new set of standards to teach students. The standards should be revised in a way that it enhances what is already being taught.
- Business professionals should become part of the professional development or be invited into the classroom to share how technology is used in the professional world on a day-to-day basis.

#### **Agenda item: Issues with the English Language Arts Standards from Literature**

**Notes:** The committee broke into groups and read a series of articles and other literature related to issues various authors had with the Common Core in ELA. Then their findings were recorded and presented through a gallery walk. Here were the readings:

- Pondiscio, R., & Mahnken, K. (2014, September 24). Leveled reading: the making of a literacy myth [Web log post] <http://edexcellence.net/articles/leveled-reading-the-making-of-a-literacy-myth>
- Chicago Teachers Union. (2014, July). Arguments against the Common Core. Retrieved from <http://www.ctunet.com/guest-center/research/text/CTU-Common-Core-Position-Paper.pdf>
- VanTassel-Baska, J. (2015, January). Arguments for and against the Common Core State Standards. *Gifted Child Today*, 38, 60-62. Retrieved from <http://gct.sagepub.com/content/38/1/60.full.pdf+html>
- Price, B. D., (2013, September 13). Close reading is close to a con. *American Thinker*. Retrieved from [http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2013/09/close\\_reading\\_is\\_close\\_to\\_a\\_con.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2013/09/close_reading_is_close_to_a_con.html)
- Williams, J. P. (2014, February 27). Who is fighting against Common Core? *U.S. News*. Retrieved from <http://www.usnews.com/news/special-reports/a-guide-to-common-core/articles/2014/02/27/who-is-fighting-against-common-core>
- Moats, L. (2015, Spring). Many children left behind? The Common Core and students with reading difficulties. *Perspective on Language*. Retrieved from <http://www.onlinedigeditions.com/article/Many+Children+Left+Behind%3F+The+Common+Core+and+Students+with+Reading+Difficultie/2013453/0/article.html>
- Simmons, A. (2016, April 5). Literature’s Emotional Lessons. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/04/educating-teenagers-emotions-through-literature/476790/>

**Notes:** Sandy Nelson, with the Bureau of Learner Strategies and Supports, briefly discussed the pieces of literature and assigned the readings to various groups. Each committee member read his or her reading and then met within a group to discuss the article and create key points to share with the larger group. Points were written on paper and then each group presented its findings and ideas during a gallery walk to the rest of the committee.

Key points from each reading:

### **Literature's Emotional Lessons**

- 1) Points out the separation of literature and emotional connections in light of solely teaching skills is a "bad thing"
- 2) Looks at what you are missing: understand social behavior and trends
- 3) Makes classic literature relevant to today through relationships and emotions
- 4) Addresses critical issues of society ... building good citizens, life lessons through character experiences, emotional value ... chance to grow personally and connect to others' experiences (understand their point of view);
- 5) Gives a chance to teach or discuss morals and values
- 6) Emphasizes understanding and evaluation of the author's message
- 7) Develops a love of books and thinkers

### **Perspectives on Language – Many Children Left Behind?**

- 1) Gives states freedom to implement as "see fit"
- 2) Funds from federal government, not a curriculum set of guidelines
- 3) Quality teachers who are well-versed and trained in reading instruction and strategies
- 4) Standards are set at one level, which leaves out low and high-performing students
- 5) Lack/misplacement of foundational skills
- 6) What does mastery look like?

### **Arguments against the Common Core – by the Chicago Teachers Union**

- 1) Close Reading – over emphasis of technique = neglects student connections and other important purposes (i.e. reading for pleasure)
- 2) Developmental Appropriateness – does not support and encourage active, hands-on learning and play and project based = too skills based (i.e. – early childhood reading primarily for pleasure)
- 3) Testing – too much emphasis on testing = too much time on computer; role of teacher diminishes (instructor, coach and facilitator)
- 4) Corporate reform – focus on capitalist economic needs but not necessarily children's learning needs; no teachers authored original standards, most work done by test and textbook publishers.
- 5) Implementation and Roll Out – roll out core all at once even though standards are sequential; and no provisions for support for teachers and students within EL, special education, economically disadvantaged.

### **Leveled Reading: The Making of a Literacy Myth**

The article explores the use of leveled texts versus complex text for reading instruction. Authors explore the sparse evidence for the use of leveled texts in contrast to the more extensive evidence for using complex text in improving reading comprehension. Fisher and Frey acknowledge there is not much evidence for using leveled reading beyond the primary grades.

- 1) If we use leveled texts in the primary grades, we do we stop?
- 2) How care paired-reading experiences better provide students with opportunities to learn from complex texts?
- 3) Where is the balance between leveled texts and complex texts in reading instruction?
- 4) How can we give struggling readers opportunities to learn from complex texts?
- 5) How can we best encourage students to read widely and deeply?

### **Close Reading is close to a con**

- 1) CCSS wants more close reading
- 2) Too much close reading can preclude reading for pleasure
- 3) Just because kids may read below grade level doesn't mean can't close read (disagree with author)
- 4) Close reading or no reading (polarizing bias)
- 5) Unfairly characterizes non-fiction

### **Arguments for and against Common Core State Standards**

- 1) Arguments for are followed by arguments against and rebuttals
- 2) Standards don't limit gifted students
- 3) Comments on differentiation and CCSS

### **Who Is Fighting Against Common Core?**

- 1) Right-wing CCSS = liberal agenda
- 2) Liberals fear high states testing and atmosphere NCLB
- 3) Politicized/polarizing article
- 4) There are claims with minimal or absent evidence.

Each table then discussed the pages and analyzed the readings again using the Four As Protocol. Table discussions were presented to the entire review committee:

### **Assume**

- Pleasure vs. academic reading
- Corporate reform
- Training
- Leveling
- The shift to nonfiction is confusing
- All students need to learn the standards
- Teachers don't have flexibility; i.e. close reading
- There is money in education – impacts

- Information/misinformation and over directions confuse teachers from main goal
- The standards are the “what” not the how
- Types test and how kids engage with them
- Foundational skills – kids need the background
- Need for strong teachers – moved away from holistic approach to skill and drill

### **Agree**

- Too much testing
- How do levels work
- Should have standards
- Maybe the Chicago public schools has a point with the business argument
- Reading is important
- Text engagement – see Common Core as isolated reading behavior and then miss out on the emotion
- Is the focus assessment driven?

### **Argue**

- Evidence-based writing? These were poorly written articles
- There were too many articles against close reading; close reading is the end-all, be all
- Standards don't exclude anyone
- We need to make space for teaching “other” things (emotional lessons)
- Strike a balance and offer multiple perspectives
- The commercialization of the Common Core

### **Act**

- Limited exposure to different texts and genres
- Standards are killing the emotion tied to reading
- Standards are new. They should be built sequentially, so the younger students have been exposed the whole time
- How do you measure mastery of skills?
- Not limiting students on what they can and cannot read
- The politics of testing and assessing concerns
- Understand arguments and help educate all
- Evidence-based for leveled reading is huge
- The standards represent the floor, not the ceiling
- Avoid skill and drill
- Beware of Common Core commercial products
- Implementation should begin at the lowest level and grow
- Introduction to standards can address fears about implementation
- Purpose statement can include suggestions that address “including but not limited to ...” to allow flexibility
- Address anxiety surrounding assessment

## Summarize your thinking

- Implementation of Common Core is all over the board, and interpretation of standards and instruction varies greatly, leaving ample room for misinterpretation.

### Agenda item: Iowa-Specific Standards

**Notes:** The committee reviewed and revised the Iowa-specific standards and then completed individual reflection and discussed the topic in small groups.

Rita Martens, administrative consultant for the Department of Education's Bureau of Standards and Curriculum, said almost from day one, she has received complaints about the Iowa-specific standards in literacy:

- 1) Stylistically, they aren't the same as the other standards
- 2) Everything is already in the standards
- 3) Take what they want to add and weave it into some of the other standards

Martens presented the review committee with a copy of the Iowa –specific standards and notes to determine whether the additions need to stay, whether there's a better way to make them stylistically more appropriate, or if they need to be woven into another standard.

Committee suggestions from the standards worksheets:

- 1) Remove standard IA.1: "Employ the full range of research-based comprehension strategies, including making connections, determining importance, questioning, visualizing, making inferences, summarizing and monitoring for comprehension." This is a strategy, not a learning standard.
- 2) Eliminate the addition of "Perform dramatic readings and presentations" to IA.1 and "Participate in public performances" to IA.2 because these are strategies, not learning standards.
- 3) Eliminate the addition of "Debate an issue from either side" from IA.3 because it's redundant to SL.1 and SL.3.
- 4) Eliminate IA.2 : "Read on-level text, both silently and orally, at an appropriate rate with accuracy and fluency to support comprehension" because fluency is an intervention, not a standard at grades seven through 12.
- 5) Retain as an Iowa standard the addition of "Prepare and conduct interviews" to IA.1, but add it with varying student or professional sources.
- 6) Standard IA.2: "Read on-level text, both silently and orally, at an appropriate rate with accuracy and fluency to support comprehension" should only be for grade levels kindergarten through six.
- 7) IA.1 is too broad and needs more professional development to inform instruction.
- 8) The addition of "Recite familiar stories, poems, nursery rhymes and lines of a play" to IA.1 for Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas for grades kindergarten, first and second, should include examples in the appendix.
- 9) Under the additions for Speaking and Listening, the common complaint is about leveling (same standards for grade six as grade 12).

- 10) Under additions “Prepare and conduct interviews,” “Participate in public performances” and Debate an issue from either side” to IA.1, part of the resistance might be due to teacher understanding and knowledge.
- 11) On page 1 under the note on range and content of student reading (K-5), committee questioned whether the standards need to be specific with the term “college and career readiness” because there is more to life. How is the “more” addressed?
- 12) On page 1 under the note on range and content of student reading (K-5), add “digital” to “exposure to visual media” to read “exposure to digital and visual media.”
- 13) On page 1 under the note on range and content of student writing (K-5), generalize the sentence where it readings “producing numerous pieces over short and extended time frames throughout the year.”
- 14) On page 2 under the note on range and student content of student speaking and listening (K-5), add the last sentence about digital texts to the statements about reading and writing.
- 15) On page 2 under the note on range and content of student reading (6-12 Literacy), edit the second paragraph to read: “Along with high-quality contemporary work, these texts should be chosen from among seminal U.S. documents, the classics of literature and drama, and world literature. The third paragraph should be edited to include “exposure to digital and visual media” or “digital, visual and media texts.”
- 16) IA.1 should be edited to read: “Employ a wide variety of research-based comprehension strategies, such as making connections, determining importance, questioning, visualizing, making inferences, summarizing and monitoring for comprehension.”
- 17) IA.2 needs to be graduated by grade; no gradient by grade.

#### **Agenda item: New glossary terms**

**Notes:** Hansen, the committee co-chairwoman, led the group through terms and definitions that have been added or revised. She said committee members can continue to make suggestions through the online parking lot.

Evidence – no changes

Literacy – added “viewing” to the definition

The term “digital literacy” was added as a result of Chivers’ presentation. Digital literacy – the ability to find, evaluate, utilize, share and create content using information technologies and the internet; enables participation with digital media in wise, safe and ethical ways.

The digital literacy definition may need to be tweaked because it was taken from the Cornell University website, and the committee doesn’t want to plagiarize.

Media literacy – focuses on creating critically engaged consumers of media

Literacy Standards – no changes

Shifts or Instructional shifts – no changes

Technical subjects – no changes

Text was revised to be – any material designed to convey a message, visual images, digital recording (audio and visual) charts, graphs, etc. may include fiction and informational.

Informational texts – “visual images” was added.

Definitions for primary and secondary sources were added to the glossary

Primary sources are authentic documents and objects created by witnesses or recorders who experienced the events or conditions being documented. Primary sources provide first-hand testimony or direct evidence concerning a topic under investigation.

Secondary sources are materials that report, digest, analyze, evaluate and interpret information contained within primary sources or other secondary sources. Secondary sources are created later by persons who did not experience first-hand or participate in the events or conditions under review.

Viewing was added – the act, ceremony or occasion of seeing, watching or inspecting.

The committee had questions about what “ceremony” meant and suggested changes because they thought the word would be confusing.

**Agenda item: Additional miscellaneous**

**Notes:** Martens informed committee members that the survey is still open, and more teachers, specifically elementary teachers and secondary non-core content area teachers are needed to take the survey.

The committee will review the data and make decisions regarding the standards at the May 25 meeting. Martens re-emphasized the importance of every committee member’s attendance at the meetings.

Committee members were given an exit ticket with questions and things that need to be explored or have further discussion to fill out and return to Martens.