

Common Core's English Language Arts Standards

Testimony for a hearing in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

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I thank Wisconsin legislators for the opportunity to comment on Common Core's English Language Arts Standards. My testimony begins with a few remarks on Common Core's Validation Committee, on which I served from 2009-2010. I then offer five general comments followed by conclusions based on a lengthy analysis of these English Language Arts Standards, in Appendix A. I end with recommendations to Wisconsin's legislators and governor.

Appendix A provides 40 pages of comments on Common Core's individual standards for vocabulary and reading in eight grades—kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, grade 3, grades 9/10 and grades 11/12—and in the “Anchor Standards.” I comment only on the vocabulary and reading standards (for informational and literary texts) because these are the most damaging of its ELA standards.

Common Core's Validation Committee

Common Core's K-12 standards, it is regularly claimed, emerged from a state-led process in which experts and educators were well represented. But the people who wrote the standards did not represent the relevant stakeholders. Nor were they qualified to draft standards intended to “transform instruction for every child.” And the Validation Committee that was created to put the seal of approval on the drafters' work was useless if not misleading, both in its membership and in the procedures they had to follow. The lack of an authentic validation of Common Core's so-called college-readiness standards (i.e., by a committee consisting largely of discipline-based higher education experts who teach undergraduate mathematics or English/humanities courses) before state boards of education voted to adopt these standards suggests their votes had no legal basis.

General Comments

1. *Most of Common Core's college-readiness and grade-level reading standards are content-free skills.* Skills training alone doesn't prepare students for college. They need a fund of content knowledge. But Common Core's ELA standards (and its literacy standards for other subjects) do not specify the literary/historical knowledge that students need. They provide no list of recommended authors or works, just examples of “complexity.” They require no British literature aside from Shakespeare. They require no authors from the ancient world or selected pieces from the Bible as literature so that students can learn about their influence on English and American literature. They do not require study of the history of the English language. Without requirements in these areas, students are not prepared for college coursework.

2. *Common Core's ELA standards stress writing more than reading at every grade level—to the detriment of every subject in the curriculum.* There are more writing than reading standards at every grade level in Common Core. This is the opposite of what an academically sound reading/English curriculum should contain, as suggested by a large body of research on the development of reading and writing skills. The foundation for good writing is good reading. Students should spend far more time in and outside of school on reading than on writing to improve reading in every subject of the curriculum.

3. Common Core's writing standards are developmentally inappropriate at many grade levels. Adults have a much better idea of what "claims," "relevant evidence," and academic "arguments" are. Most elementary children have a limited understanding of these concepts and find it difficult to compose an argument with claims and evidence. It would be difficult for children to do so even if Common Core's writing standards were linked to appropriate reading standards and prose models. But they are not. Nor does the document clarify the difference between an academic argument (explanatory writing) and opinion-based writing or persuasive writing, confusing teachers and students alike. Worse yet, Common Core's writing standards stress emotion-laden, opinion-based writing in the elementary grades. This kind of writing is not helpful to the development of critical or analytical thinking, and it establishes a very bad habit in very young children. There is no research evidence to support this kind of pedagogy.

4. Common Core expects English teachers to spend at least half of their reading instructional time at every grade level on informational texts—a percentage from which students cannot benefit intellectually. Common Core lists 10 reading standards for informational texts and 9 standards for literary texts at every grade level. However, there is NO body of information that English teachers are responsible for teaching, unlike science teachers, for example, who are charged with teaching information about science. English teachers are trained—by college English departments and teacher preparation programs—to teach the four major genres of literature (poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction) and the elements of rhetoric, not a large body of information about the English language.

5. Common Core reduces opportunities for students to develop critical thinking. Critical, or analytical, thinking is developed in the English class when teachers teach students how to read between the lines of complex literary works. Analytical thinking is facilitated by the knowledge that students acquire in other ways and in other subjects because it cannot take place in an intellectual vacuum." As noted in a 2006 ACT report titled "Reading Between the Lines:" "complexity is laden with literary features." According to ACT, it involves "literary devices," "tone," "ambiguity," "elaborate" structure, "intricate language," and unclear intentions. Critical thinking applied to low-complexity texts, ACT concluded, is inferior to critical thinking applied to high-complexity texts. By reducing literary study in the English class in order to increase informational reading, Common Core not only reduces the opportunity for students to learn how to do critical thinking, Common Core, in effect, retards college readiness.

Conclusions from the Analysis of Individual Standards in Appendix A

1. Most of the statements that appear as vocabulary, reading, and literature standards in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards document are not standards at all. They point to no particular level of reading difficulty, very little cultural knowledge, and few intellectual objectives. These statements are best described as skills or strategies when they can be understood at all. They therefore cannot be described as rigorous standards.

2. The Common Core standards are not "fewer, clearer, and deeper." They may appear to be fewer in number because very different objectives or activities are often bundled incoherently into one "standard." As a result, they are not clearer, nor are they necessarily deeper. It is frequently the case that the statements are not easily interpretable.

3. Many of Common Core's ELA standards are poorly written. They need to be revised by experienced, well-trained high school English teachers for clarity and readability before they are used to guide curriculum development anywhere.

4. The vocabulary standards, which should be the strongest set of ELA standards because of the importance of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension, are weak and poorly written. Moreover, they often contain inappropriate pedagogical advice. This advice is a particular disservice to children who need strong vocabulary development.

Summary

- (1) Common Core's ELA standards are NOT rigorous. They were designed to allow mid-level grade 11 students to enroll in credit-bearing courses in a non-selective college.
- (2) Common Core's standards are NOT internationally benchmarked and will not make any of our students competitive.
- (3) There is NO research to support Common Core's stress on writing instead of reading.
- (4) There is NO research to support Common Core's stress on informational reading instead of literary study in the English class.
- (5) There is no research to support the value of "cold" reading of historical documents, a bizarre pedagogy promoted by the chief architect of Common Core's ELA standards.
- (6) Available research suggests exactly the opposite of what Common Core's chief architect promotes in the ELA classroom.

Recommendations

Wisconsin's legislators and governor should require:

1. Adoption of ELA and mathematics standards from states whose standards were internationally benchmarked and first-class (e.g., California, Indiana, Massachusetts). Wisconsin could adopt Minnesota's mathematics standards, which are not Common Core's because mathematicians at Minnesota's own universities successfully protested adoption of Common Core's math standards
2. Entrance exams tailored to Wisconsin's own institutions of higher education. Wisconsin's legislators could ask engineering, science, and mathematics faculty at their own colleges/universities to design and approve an entrance test in mathematics and science for admission to their own state institutions. They could also ask this faculty to design with Wisconsin high school math and science teachers the syllabi for the advanced mathematics and science courses high school students take. Why should federal education policy-makers, test developers, Wisconsin's department of education staff, or even the governor mandate low admission requirements in mathematics or science to Wisconsin's own colleges and universities? Common Core's college readiness level may be at about grade 8 or lower when a cut score is decided upon.
3. No state assessments based on and or aligned to Common Core's standards. It would be a waste of money to base state assessments on standards that needs to be completely revised.
4. Two different types of high school diplomas. Not all high school students want to go to college or can do the reading and writing required in authentic college coursework. Many have other talents and interests and should be provided with the opportunity to choose a meaningful four-year high school curriculum that is not college-oriented. One diploma, like the old New York Regents Diploma, would be for students willing to do advanced work in mathematics, science, and English, and the legislature would need to specify that the coursework leading to these advanced courses be made available in every high school in the state. The other could be the Common Core Minimal Competency Diploma.
5. Review and revision if needed of all state standards at least every 5 to 7 years by identified Wisconsin teachers, discipline-based experts in the arts and sciences, and parents. All state

assessments should also be reviewed by Wisconsin teachers and discipline-based experts in the arts and sciences before the tests are given.

6. Alternative high school curricula for students to choose among. Many students would be interested in acquiring a set of occupational skills for a trade they find interesting. Students who don't like to read and write don't usually want to go to college. They need a course of studies that interests them at the same time that they take required coursework in basic subjects (e.g., U.S. history and English), so that they are employable when they graduate from high school and capable of performing basic civic responsibilities.

7. A radical restructuring and reform of Wisconsin's teacher and administrator training programs to ensure that its schools are staffed by teachers and administrators with stronger academic credentials than they now have. Raising the floor for all children in all demographic groups should be our primary educational goal, not closing demographic gaps among these groups. The only thing we know from education research on teacher effectiveness is that effective teachers know the subject matter they teach. We need to raise the academic bar for every prospective teacher we admit to a teacher training program in an education school. That is the first step in raising student achievement in this country, not a set of paper standards.

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Appendix A: Comments on Individual Common Core ELA Standards

ANCHOR STANDARDS K-12 for Vocabulary and Reading

Comment: Not one of these “anchor standards” is a standard.

LACC.K12.L.3.4

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

Comments: The major problem with this Anchor Standard is that it is not a standard. It contains no guidelines to cultural content or level of reading difficulty, stresses use of context clues, and offers no clue about appropriate use of a general or specialized reference.

LACC.K12.L.3.5

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

Comments: Again, this is not a standard and offers no guidelines to cultural content or level of reading difficulty.

LACC.K12.L.3.6

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

Comments: Not a standard but a vague aspiration. It can apply to anything. What is the college readiness level? We are never shown exactly what is. Moreover, it is poorly written; how does one “gather vocabulary knowledge...”?

LACC.K12.R.1.1

Strand: Reading

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Comments: This is an empty, culture-free skill; it can apply to the *Three Little Pigs* or to *Moby-Dick*. It is not a standard because it indicates no cultural content, content knowledge, or reading level.

LACC.K12.R.1.2

Strand: Reading

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Comments: This is an empty, culture-free skill; it can apply to the *Three Little Pigs* or to *Moby-Dick*. It is not a standard.

LACC.K12.R.1.3

Strand: Reading

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Comments: This is tortured prose and is not a standard. Whoever wrote or approved this should be sentenced to an English composition course.

LACC.K12.R.2.4

Strand: Reading

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Comments: Not a standard. It is an empty, culture-free skill.

LACC.K12.R.2.5

Strand: Reading

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

Comments: Again, a culture- and content-free skill, not a standard.

LACC.K12.R.2.6

Strand: Reading

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Comments: The authors need to give an example of what this empty skill means in practice.

LACC.K12.R.3.7

Strand: Reading

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Comments: An empty culture-free skill. Not a standard.

LACC.K12.R.3.8

Strand: Reading

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Comments: Students cannot evaluate the specific claims in a text in an English class unless they have knowledge of the subject. English teachers do not teach the content of other subjects; they are prepared to teach about literature. It is an empty skill and cannot be graded objectively.

LACC.K12.R.3.9

Strand: Reading

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Comments: The authors need to give a useful example of this empty statement. On what grounds/issues/features are students to compare approaches?

LACC.K12.R.4.10

Strand: Reading

Standard: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Description: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Comments: Not a standard by any definition of a standard.

KINDERGARTEN

LACC.K.L.3.4

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on kindergarten reading and content.

- a. Identify new meanings for familiar words and apply them accurately (e.g., knowing duck is a bird and learning the verb to duck). **The two “ducks” are probably equally known to children. If the authors couldn’t come up with a better illustration, that suggests there’s a problem with the “standard.”**
- b. Use the most frequently occurring inflections and affixes (e.g., *-ed*, *-s*, *re-*, *un-*, *pre-*, *-ful*, *-less*) as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word. **The authors clearly never taught kindergarten.**

Comments: See above.

LACC.K.L.3.5

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: With guidance and support from adults, explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

- a. Sort common objects into categories (e.g., shapes, foods) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.

- b. Demonstrate understanding of frequently occurring verbs and adjectives by relating them to their opposites (antonyms).
- c. Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., note places at school that are colorful).
- d. Distinguish shades of meaning among verbs describing the same general action (e.g., *walk, march, strut, prance*) by acting out the meanings. **If the authors couldn't come up with authentic kindergarten examples, there is obviously something wrong with the standard. "walk" and "march" do not describe the same general action.**

Comments: If all this is to be done with guidance and support from adults, then they are not standards.

LACC.K.L.3.6

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.

Comments: What else would kindergartners be using if speaking out loud? The authors clearly couldn't figure out a real standard.

LACC.K.RL.1.1

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

Comments: This is not a standard.

LACC.K.RL.1.2

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.

Comments: This is not a standard.

LACC.K.RL.1.3

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story

Comments: . **This is not a standard.**

LACC.K.RL.2.4

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

Comments: **How do you compel a kindergartner to ask a question about an unknown word?**

LACC.K.RL.2.5

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Recognize common types of texts (e.g., storybooks, poems).

Comments: **A real standard would have asked a kindergartner to distinguish a story from a poem.**

LACC.K.RL.2.6

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story

Comments: **Not a standard.**

LACC.K.RL.3.7

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).

Comments: **Not a standard.**

LACC.K.RL.3.9

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.K.RL.4.10

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Description: Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.K.RI.1.1

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.K.RI.1.2

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: With prompting and support, identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.

Comments: not a standard.

LACC.K.RI.1.3

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: With prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.K.RI.2.4

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.K.RI.2.5

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book.

Comments: At last, a real standard.

LACC.K.RI.2.6

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Name the author and illustrator of a text and define the role of each in presenting the ideas or information in a text.

Comments: What does this mean? What has the author done? What has the illustrator done? This is not understandable English for a standard.

LACC.K.RI.3.7

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person, place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts).

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.K.RI.3.8

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: With prompting and support, identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.K.RI.3.9

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: With prompting and support, identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., in illustrations, descriptions, or procedures).

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.K.RI.4.10

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Description: Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Comments: Not a standard.

Grade 1

LACC.1.L.3.4

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grade 1 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.

- a. Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- b. Use frequently occurring affixes as a clue to the meaning of a word.
- c. Identify frequently occurring root words (e.g., look) and their inflectional forms (e.g., looks, looked, looking).

Comments: Most of these are inappropriate in grade 1 and poorly written. Beginning readers should be asked to sound out and identify written words whose meanings are already known to them. They should not be asked to rely on context as their first “strategy” in grade 1. Either it’s a word to sound out or it’s a “sight” word. Kids can and should be taught to identify inflectional forms in grade 1, but that these forms

(e.g., *ed*, *ly*) are not the source of the word's meaning (which comes usually from the base word).

LACC.1.L.3.5

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: With guidance and support from adults, demonstrate understanding word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

- a. Sort words into categories (e.g., colors, clothing) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent. **This makes no sense. If they don't understand the concept, they can't sort the words right. Who wrote this?**
- b. Define words by category and by one or more key attributes (e.g., a duck is a bird that swims; a tiger is a large cat with stripes).
- c. Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., note places at home that are cozy).
- d. Distinguish shades of meaning among verbs differing in manner (e.g., look, peek, glance, stare, glare, scowl) **In grade 1?** and adjectives differing in intensity (e.g., large, gigantic) by defining or choosing them or by acting out the meanings.

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.1.L.3.6

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using frequently occurring conjunctions to signal simple relationships (e.g., I named my hamster Nibblet *because* she nibbles too much because she likes that.).

Comments: Overall, this is not an English sentence.

LACC.1.RI.1.1

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.1.RI.1.2

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.

Comments: While this is a useful skill, the level of reading difficulty is what matters. And there's no clue about that here.

LACC.1.RI.1.3

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.

Comments: This is not a standard. It may be a strategy a teacher uses.

LACC.1.RI.2.4

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.1.RI.2.5

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Know and use various text features (e.g., headings, tables of contents, glossaries, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text.

Comments: This can be a standard.

LACC.1.RI.2.6

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Distinguish between information provided by pictures or other illustrations and information provided by the words in a text.

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.1.RI.3.7

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas.

Comments: Not a standard. It is a strategy to get kids talking.

LACC.1.RI.3.8

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.

Comments: How does this differ from identifying details?

LACC.1.RI.3.9

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., in illustrations, descriptions, or procedures).

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.1.RI.4.10

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Description: With prompting and support, read informational texts appropriately complex for grade 1.

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.1.RL.1.1

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

Comments: **Not a standard.**

LACC.1.RL.1.2

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

Comments: **Not a standard as is, but could be turned into one.**

LACC.1.RL.1.3

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

Comments: **Not a standard as is. To identify characters, setting, or major events in a story is a standard. To describe them is fuzzy.**

LACC.1.RL.2.4

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

Comments: **At last, another standard.**

LACC.1.RL.2.5

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Explain major differences between books that tell stories and books that give information, drawing on a wide reading of a range of text types.

Comments: **This is not a standard for grade 1.**

LACC.1.RL.2.6

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Identify who is telling the story at various points in a text.

Comments: We need an example to make sense of this for grade 1.

LACC.1.RL.3.7

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.1.RL.3.9

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.

Comments: Not a standard as is. On what grounds are kids to compare and contrast?

LACC.1.RL.4.10

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Description: With prompting and support, read prose and poetry of appropriate complexity for grade 1.

Comments: Not a standard.

Grade 2

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 2 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.

- a. Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase. **Not as the first strategy in grade 2. Kids should be asked to sound out words to see if they recognize them. The words should be in their own vocabulary. The meaning is not the issue at this grade level. Identification of a written word is.**
- b. Determine the meaning of the new word formed when a known prefix is added to a known word (e.g., happy/unhappy, tell/retell). **This is a standard.**
- c. Use a known root word as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word with the same root (e.g., addition, additional). **“additional” is not in grade 2 material. We need a real example to understand if this can be done in grade 2.**
- d. Use knowledge of the meaning of individual words to predict the meaning of compound words (e.g., birdhouse, lighthouse, housefly; bookshelf, notebook, bookmark). **This is a standard.**
- e. Use glossaries and beginning dictionaries, both print and digital, to determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases. **This is not a standard. Kids need first to identify the difference between glossaries and dictionaries.**

Comments: This is very poorly done. Most of what is here is inappropriate in grade 2, or simply wrong.

LACC.2.L.3.5

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

- a. Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., *describe foods that are spicy or juicy*).
- b. Distinguish shades of meaning among closely related verbs (e.g., *toss, throw, hurl*) and closely related adjectives (e.g., *thin, slender, skinny, scrawny*). In grade 2?

Comments: This is not a standard. (a) depends on the child’s experiences and the words may have different meanings across experiences. (b) needs grade 2 examples.

LACC.2.L.3.6

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using adjectives and adverbs to describe (e.g., *When other kids are happy that makes me happy*). This is an example?

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.2.RI.1.1

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Ask and answer such questions as *who, what, where, when, why,* and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

Comments: Not a standard

LACC.2.RI.1.2

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Identify the main topic of a multiparagraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text.

Comments: Who wrote this? Is it asking kids to identify the topic sentence in a paragraph? That should come first.

LACC.2.RI.1.3

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.

Comments: This is not a standard, and it is not an activity for second graders.

LACC.2.RI.2.4

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Determine the meaning of words and phrases in a text relevant to a *grade 2 topic or subject area*.

Comments: This is not a standard. How are kids to “determine the meaning”?

LACC.2.RI.2.5

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Know and use various text features (e.g., captions, bold print, subheadings, glossaries, indexes, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text efficiently.

Comments: This could be a standard if written correctly.

LACC.2.RI.2.6

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe.

Comments: This is a standard, but what do all the words in the second clause mean?

LACC.2.RI.3.7

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Explain how specific images (e.g., a diagram showing how a machine works) contribute to and clarify a text.

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.2.RI.3.8

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Describe how reasons support specific points the author makes in a text.

Comments: Doesn't make sense. To ask young children to describe HOW reasons support something is metalinguistic, not for grade 2.

LACC.2.RI.3.9

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Compare and contrast the most important points presented by two texts on the same topic.

Comments: Not a standard. What are the grounds for comparing and contrasting?

LACC.2.RI.4.10

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Description: By the end of year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the grades 2–3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

Comments: Not a standard.

LACC.2.RL.1.1

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Ask and answer such questions as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

Comments: Not a standard. These are a teacher’s questioning strategies.

LACC.2.RL.1.2

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.

Comments: Why should grade 2 students be retelling a folktale?

LACC.2.RL.1.3

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

Comments: Not a standard. This is a teacher’s discussion strategy.

LACC.2.RL.2.4

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song.

Comments: If kids were asked to identify these aspects of language use in a text, that would have been a grade 2 standard. As is, this is a discussion strategy.

LACC.2.RL.2.5

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

Comments: Not a standard. Kids have to be taught what the different structural features of a story are first. This really makes no sense. How would one describe the “overall structure” of *The Three Little Pigs*?

LACC.2.RL.2.6

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.

Comments: Not a standard. Moreover, a different voice doesn't mean a different point of view. Who wrote this?

LACC.2.RL.3.7

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

Comments: What does this mean? Use “words” that are in a text to understand it? Who wrote this?

LACC.2.RL.3.9

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Compare and contrast two or more versions of the same story (e.g., Cinderella stories) by different authors or from different cultures.

Comments: Again, what are the grounds for comparing or contrasting. Not a standard as is.

LACC.2.RL.4.10

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Description: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories and poetry, in the grades 2–3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

Comments: Not a standard.

Grade 3

LACC.3.L.3.4

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning word and phrases based on grade 3 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

- a. Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- b. Determine the meaning of the new word formed when a known affix is added to a known word (e.g., *agreeable/disagreeable*, *comfortable/uncomfortable*, *care/careless*, *heat/preheat*).
- c. Use a known root word as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word with the same root (e.g., *company*, *companion*).
- d. Use glossaries or beginning dictionaries, both print and digital, to determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.

Comments: This is getting closer to being a standard suitable for grade 3 (for b and c). But d is still poor. Kids and teachers need to know the differences between glossaries and beginning dictionaries and when to use them. Glossaries are for technical terms in a subject and give the precise meaning in that subject, while beginning dictionaries give the common meanings of a word that may include the technical meaning. The standards writers seem not to understand these differences, possibly because of their lack of teaching experience and general knowledge.

LACC.3.L.3.5

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

- a. Distinguish the literal and nonliteral meanings of words and phrases in context (e.g., *take steps*).
- b. Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., *describe people who are friendly or helpful*).
- c. Distinguish shades of meaning among related words that describe states of mind or degrees of certainty (e.g., *knew, believed, suspected, heard, wondered*).

Comments: Only a is a standard for grade 3 but should mention “idiom”, which is what “take steps” is. The other 2 are bizarre, especially c, for grade 3. In fact, c sounds like something for adult ESL learners.

LACC.3.L.3.6

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate conversational, general academic, and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships (e.g., *After dinner that night we went looking for them*).

Comments: Not a standard.

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

Comments: Not a standard as is. How does one compel a student to ask a question?

LACC.3.RI.1.2

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

Comments: Close to a standard but kids are going to get into tangles to explain how a key detail supports the main idea. Begins to become metaphysical, again. Teachers need to be trained to demonstrate what they mean before asking kids to do the “how” part.

LACC.3.RI.1.3

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

Comments: What does this mean? The standards writers should have given an example appropriate to grade 3.

LACC.3.RI.2.4

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 3 topic or subject area.

Comments: How are kids to determine them? Not a standard.

LACC.3.RI.2.5

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Use text features and search tools (e.g., key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently.

Comments: Could be turned into a standard, but it is not one as is.

LACC.3.RI.2.6

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author of a text.

Comments: Not sure what this means in grade 3 without an example.

LACC.3.RI.3.7

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

Comments: **Not a standard. Not sensible, either. How does one use “words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text”?** If the statement had simply said “understand information in a map,” that would have been a standard.

LACC.3.RI.3.8

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence).

Comments: **What exactly are grade 3 students to do? A metalinguistic analysis?**

LACC.3.RI.3.9

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.

Comments: **Not a standard. No grounds for the comparison are given.**

LACC.3.RI.4.10

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Description: By the end of the year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, at the high end of the grades 2–3 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Comments: **Not a standard. Just an aspiration.**

LACC.3.RL.1.1

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

Comments: **Not a standard. This would be part of classroom discussion.**

LACC.3.RL.1.2

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

Comments: **Not a standard in grade 3. Retelling short stories is a classroom activity for K or I kids. If the statement asked kids to determine the moral lesson of a story, that would be a standard.**

LACC.3.RL.1.3

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

Comments: **Not a standard. Kids in grade 3 can be asked to identify characters in a story or to identify the motivation (from a multiple-choice array). But to explain HOW their actions contribute to ... is not a standard because it cannot be assessed objectively. Nor is it clear what grade 3 kids are to write. Teachers need to demonstrate first how they would respond—to multiple examples of characters whose actions “contribute” to later events.**

LACC.3.RL.2.4

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

Comments: A standard if it asks kids to distinguish a literal from a non-literal meaning.

LACC.3.RL.2.5

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections.

Comments: Not a standard as is. If a student is asked to use the correct term to identify a piece of a text, that could be a standard. But so what? The rest is not a standard. Ask a group of grade 3 teachers to demonstrate their own responses in writing first.

LACC.3.RL.2.6

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.

Comments: What does this mean? An example of a relevant text for grade 3 is necessary to understand what is wanted here.

LACC.3.RL.3.7

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).

Comments: This is inappropriate in grade 3. They should be well past looking at a story's illustrations for information by now (for a test).

LACC.3.RL.3.9

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Compare and contrast the themes, settings, and plots of stories written by the same author about the same or similar characters (e.g., in books from a series).

Comments: On what grounds are these elements to be compared and contrasted?

LACC.3.RL.4.10

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Description: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 2–3 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Comments: Not a standard. Just aspirations.

Grades 9/10

LACC.910.L.3.4

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 9–10 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

- a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- b. Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., *analyze, analysis, analytical; advocate, advocacy*).
- c. Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, or its etymology.
- d. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

Comments: This is a very poorly written vocabulary standard, giving very poor pedagogical advice to teachers. Context (a) is unlikely to help high school students determine the meaning of an important unknown word in a grade-level text. The second item (b) is about spelling and grammatical usage. The third item (c) is wrong advice. One uses glossaries for the precise meaning of a technical word in a particular subject. Thesauri help writers find a word with the right nuance for a piece of writing; dictionaries give all the common meanings of a word, starting with the

most frequent one. There has been no standard earlier asking students to identify the purposes of each of these different types of reference materials. As for (d), I still don't understand what the student is to do and why. If I think "malicious" means something bad, do I check "bad" in a dictionary? Context may or may not tell me if my guess is right.

LACC.910.L.3.5

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

- a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.
- b. Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

Comments: (a) could be a standard if students are first taught to identify euphemisms or oxymorons. But examples are badly needed for (b). What does it mean?

LACC.910.L.3.6

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Comments: Not a standard but a vague aspiration. It can apply to anything. What is the college readiness level? We are never shown exactly what is. Moreover, it is poorly written; how does one "gather vocabulary knowledge...? This is a repetition of the "anchor standard." The standards-writers ran out of steam, it seems.

LACC.910.RL.1.1

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Comments: A poorly written English sentence. There has been no progression for this “standard” through the grades. What criteria determine whether the student has pointed to “strong and thorough” evidence?

LACC.910.RL.1.2

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Comments: A jumble of several activities. How does a grade 9 student analyze in detail the development of a theme over the course of a novel? A summary of a text is a different thing altogether. This wretched sentence should have been totally rewritten by a well-trained high school English teacher.

LACC.910.RL.1.3

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

Comments: With the right grades 9/10 texts, this is a standard.

LACC.910.RL.2.4

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

Comments: Another massive jumble of ideas. Each part of this monstrous statement asks for something different. First, figurative and connotative meanings of words in a text; next, the “cumulative” impact of some or all of the words in a text on meaning and tone (what does this mean?); finally, indications of time and place, and then indications of formality of tone. Badly needs to be rewritten by someone who likes

the English language. And how did this document morph into personal response here (“impact”)?

LACC.910.RL.2.5

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Comments: **Instead of something understandable, like “what creates the surprise ending (or the reader’s reaction of horror) in an Edgar Allan Poe short story?”, we have another verbose statement that requires time to parse before the reader can figure out what a hapless grade 9 student is to do, depending on the text. How this can be a standard remains a mystery to me.**

LACC.910.RL.2.6

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

Comments: **Without an example, it is not clear on what grounds the grade 9 student is to analyze such a literary work, and how much wide reading must have occurred before the student can be asked to do this analysis. Not a standard.**

LACC.910.RL.3.7

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden’s “Musée des Beaux Arts” and Breughel’s Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).

Comments: **It would have been helpful if the person who contributed this verbiage actually explained what is stressed or absent in Auden’s poem and Breughel’s painting so we have some understanding of the grounds for this kind of analysis in grade 9 or 10. As is, this is simply a pretentious statement.**

LACC.910.RL.3.9

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

Comments: **Unless earlier readings or grades have provided the “source” material, this is undoable in a later grade. E.g., has an earlier grade read Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* so that grade 9 kids could understand what Shakespeare did in *Midsummer Night’s Dream*? If there aren’t some other examples possible, then this standard is misplaced in grade 9.**

LACC.910.RL.4.10

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Description:

By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Comments: **Not a standard. Just pious aspirations.**

LACC.910.RI.1.1

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Comments: **A poorly written English sentence. There has been no progression for this standard through the grades. What criteria determine whether the student has pointed to “strong and thorough” evidence?**

LACC.910.RI.1.2

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Comments: **A jumble of several activities. How does a grade 9 student analyze in detail the development of a central idea over the course of a text? A summary of a text is a different thing altogether. This wretched sentence should have been totally rewritten by a well-trained and experienced high school English teacher.**

LACC.910.RI.1.3

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

Comments: **A standard that most grade 9 students can't do.**

LACC.910.RI.2.4

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

Comments: **A jumble of different ideas that don't, ultimately, make sense. First, it asks for figurative , connotative, and technical meanings of words in a text; next, the "cumulative" impact of some or all of the words in a text on meaning and tone, which apparently may be exemplified by the language in a court opinion or a newspaper, however different such impact may be. This badly needs to be rewritten by someone who takes pride in how she/he uses the English language, and has some sympathy for teachers and students.**

Common Core's ELA standards may be fewer in number than what many states had (but not clearer or deeper) because, too often, very different objectives are bundled incoherently into one "standard." What is being dealt with in Part Two of this mess are genre and audience differences—not the impact of word choice on "meaning" and "tone."

LACC.910.RI.2.5

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).

Comments: This can pass as a standard.

LACC.910.RI.2.6

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

Comments: What exactly does this mean? If one defines “rhetoric” as the art of effective communication, what are we after here?

LACC.910.RI.3.7

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person’s life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

Comments: Why is this a standard? What have we learned by noting what details of, say, President Truman’s life are stressed in a biography by David McCullough or in a documentary on his life? What is the intellectual point of this?

LACC.910.RI.3.8

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

Comments: Exactly what kinds of texts do the authors of this standard have in mind for English teachers to use in grades 9 or 10? The authors should have been asked to provide a couple of classroom examples.

LACC.910.RI.3.9

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington’s Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”), including how they address related themes and concepts.

Comments: What are they analyzing these disparate texts for? And what exactly are the related “themes” in these documents? This kind of statement is not a standard.

LACC.910.RI.4.10

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Description:

By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Comments: Not a standard. Just a hope.

Grades 11/12

LACC.1112.L.3.4

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grades 11–12 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

- a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

- b. Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., conceive, conception, conceivable).
- c. Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage.
- d. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

Comments: This is a very poorly written and jumbled-up vocabulary standard (or set of ideas), giving very poor pedagogical advice to teachers. Context (a) is unlikely to help high school students determine the meaning of an unknown word in a grade-level text. The second item (b) is about spelling and grammatical usage. The third item (c) is wrong advice. One uses glossaries for the precise meaning of a technical word in a particular subject. Thesauri help writers find a word with the right nuance for a piece of writing; dictionaries give all the common meanings of a word, starting with the most frequent one. There has been no standard earlier asking students to identify the purposes of each of these different types of reference materials. As for (d), I still don't understand what the student is to do and why. If I think "malicious" means something bad, do I check "bad" in a dictionary? Context may or may not tell me if my guess is right.

LACC.1112.L.3.5

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

- a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.
- b. Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

Comments: (a) could be a standard if students are first taught to identify these figures of speech. But examples are badly needed for (b). What does it mean?

LACC.1112.L.3.6

Strand: Language Standards

Standard: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Description: Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career

readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Comments: Not a standard but a vague aspiration. It can apply to anything. What is the college readiness level? We are never shown exactly what is. Moreover, it is poorly written; how does one “gather vocabulary knowledge...? This is a repetition of the “anchor standard.”

LACC.1112.RL.1.1

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Comments: A poorly written standard. What criteria determine “strong and thorough textual evidence”? The last phrase asks for something very different, though, something that should have been a separate standard.

LACC.1112.RL.1.2

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

Comments: The first part of this bundled standard is one thing; a summary of a literary text is a different thing. We miss the hand of a well-trained high school English teacher.

LACC.1112.RL.1.3

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

Comments: Why is a standard (including the standard like this one in grades 9/10) asking for the “impact” of the author’s choices? If a personal interpretation is being requested, then this is not a standard at all. Students are simply being asked to

analyze their own responses. Do the standards-writers really know what they are saying?

LACC.1112.RL.2.4

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

Comments: Here again we are dealing with personal response. First, students are to determine word meanings in a text. Then they are to analyze their personal responses to specific words in the text, with (for some unknown reason) attention to words with multiple meanings. Why Shakespeare is to be included, we also don't know.

LACC.1112.RL.2.5

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

Comments: This is so wordy it is confusing in meaning. The stress on "choice" sounds like the literary author had alternatives in mind, although what they were we have no idea. Nevertheless, the standard wants students to figure out the meaning of what is in a story and its impact on them as readers. In sum, this is not a standard. Didn't the standards-writers know what "impact" means?

LACC.1112.RL.2.6

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

Comments: What is a “case”? A literary work? Couldn’t the standards writers simply expect students to distinguish satire, sarcasm, irony, and understatement from literal meaning?

LACC.1112.RL.3.7

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

Comments: On what grounds can grade 11 students evaluate different interpretations of the same work? What does this mean? As it is written, it is not a standard.

LACC.1112.RL.3.9

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.

Comments: The first part of this statement is an intellectual objective and an authentic standard. The purpose for the additional phrase is a mystery. What are the grounds for comparing two or more texts with “similar themes”?

LACC.1112.RL.4.10

Strand: Reading Standards for Literature

Standard: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Description:

By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11–CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Comments: Not a standard. Just pious aspirations.

LACC.1112.RI.1.1

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Comments: What criteria determine “strong and thorough textual evidence”? The last phrase asks for something very different, though, something that should have been a separate standard.

LACC.1112.RI.1.2

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

Comments: The first part of this standard is one thing; a summary of an informational text is a different thing.

LACC.1112.RI.1.3

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Key Ideas and Details

Description: Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

Comments: By grade 12, we should expect more than an analysis of how “specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop” over the course of a complex text. This is no more than a free-floating skill by now, and can be applied to a wide range of texts.

LACC.1112.RI.2.4

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).

Comments: Too many things going on in this statement. First, students are to figure out the figurative, connotative, and technical meaning of words in a text, and then figure out how an author “uses and refines” the meaning of a key term over the course of a text. Just one part would have been sufficient. E.g., what are the key terms in a text and what does the author mean by them? Never mind the first part, and never mind how the meaning is “refined”.

But there are more problems. On what grounds does a student “analyze” the author’s “refinement” of the meaning? The verbiage is overpowering, suggesting standards writers who don’t understand what a standard is or what they are saying.

LACC.1112.RI.2.5

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.

Comments: Not a standard. On what grounds can students evaluate the structure of any text, and on what grounds can they evaluate the “effectiveness” of the structure except on personal grounds?

LACC.1112.RI.2.6

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Craft and Structure

Description: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

Comments: Not a standard. Again, a reader-response approach, this time from the teacher’s perspective. Who or what has determined that the text is “particularly effective”?

LACC.1112.RI.3.7

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Comments: No grounds are given for the evaluation. Not a standard.

LACC.1112.RI.3.8

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., The Federalist, presidential addresses).

Comments: The grounds seem to be suggested here (constitutional principles), but where this has been taught earlier by an English teacher is unknown. It may not even have been taught in a U.S. history class. How do high school students “evaluate” legal reasoning in a Supreme Court opinion? They can be asked in a U.S. history class to explain the purpose and arguments in a speech or paper. But to evaluate means to have a basis for evaluation. Not an appropriate standard for an English class as written.

LACC.1112.RI.3.9

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Description: Analyze seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century foundational U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (including The Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address) for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.

Comments: Here the goals of an analysis are given: theme, purpose, and rhetorical features. However, how the Preamble to the Constitution and Bill of Rights acquired literary significance is not clear.

LACC.1112.RI.4.10

Strand: Reading Standards for Informational Text

Standard: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Description: By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

Comments: Not a standard.