

2024-2026 Tennessee English Language Arts Standards Revision: Executive Summary

To the Tennessee General Assembly, the Tennessee State Board of Education, and the people of the great state of Tennessee:

The English Language Arts (ELA) Standards Recommendation Committee (SRC) met throughout September and October 2025 to finalize the review of the K-12 ELA Standards, as well as the standards for all ELA elective courses. The SRC was guided by the following principles in our deliberation and decision-making:

- Increasing academic rigor across grade levels to keep pace with the increasing literacy demands on our society and workforce.
- Maintaining consistency in the academic language used in the standards to facilitate student and teacher use.

The revisions proposed by the SRC were developed in accordance with these principles.

The SRC also recognized that its work was the culmination of a multi-year standards review process. This process began when the Tennessee State Board of Education (SBE) collected extensive input on the current ELA standards from stakeholders statewide—including parents, teachers, administrators, other education professionals, and the general public—through a survey. Then, multiple committees of expert educators from across the state proposed revised standards in response to the public feedback. The SBE then administered another survey, which collected meaningful public feedback on the standards proposed by these committees. Representatives from the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) also offered invaluable suggestions on the newly proposed standards. The SRC carefully considered recommendations and feedback from all of these sources when finalizing the proposed standards.

Noteworthy decisions made in developing the proposed standards include the following:

- Emphasizing student interest in text selection and writing.
- Integrating contemporary research into the ELA Standards and the supporting language in the ELA Standards document.
- Reaffirming the importance of key elements within the existing standards, including the teaching of cursive writing.
- Introducing a new Speaking and Listening Standard focused on listening and notetaking.
- Improving vertical alignment of the Writing Standards.
- Adding supporting language specifying expectations for digital use.
- Differentiating between exhaustive and inexhaustive lists within the standards.
- Eliminating and/or combining standards considered to be redundant with other standards.
- Modernizing and creating consistency across Elective Standards.

- Making the ELA Standards document, including the glossary and appendix, more accessible and applicable for new and growing educators by including new infographics and citing existing TDOE implementation resources (e.g., Standards Guides).

The SRC ultimately determined that some wishes outlined by stakeholders throughout the standards review process were outside the scope of our committee. The SRC did note many concerns surrounding the limited classroom time available to teach the Writing Standards with the sufficient breadth and depth necessary for students to achieve mastery of the content. Therefore, the committee requests an examination of current state approaches to assessing writing. We propose that, for applicable grade levels, the mode of writing to be tested on the ELA End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments be announced shortly before the test is administered. This announcement would provide clarity for educators when preparing students for assessment and allow for more authentic reflections of student content mastery. Additionally, we propose that revisions be made to the writing rubrics for the EOC Assessments, establishing clearer distinctions in performance expected across grade levels.

The SRC also recognized that, to continue promoting literacy in the State of Tennessee, educators must have the necessary professional development and classroom support to foster student success. Therefore, the committee requests that additional resources and classroom time be devoted to the rigorous literacy instruction vital for equipping students to meet their college and career goals.

In summary, the SRC believes that the proposed standards will help Tennessee students move from the top 50% of performers in the country to the top 10%. We humbly submit these standards for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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