



Texas College Readiness Standards Observations and Recommendations Prepared by E³ Alliance

General Comments on Texas College Readiness Standards

In 2006, the 79th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1 which became “Advancement of College Readiness in Curriculum” in the Texas Education Code. Under this section, the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board were required to create Vertical Teams dedicated to aligning the state education curriculum across K-12 and Higher Education in order to ensure students graduating from Texas high schools were college ready. These Vertical Teams convened around the core subjects of English Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, Social Science and Cross Disciplinary Skills. These teams have met throughout 2007 to create the College Readiness Standards (CRS). The Draft Standards prepared by the Education Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) were made public on October 25, 2007.

The E³ Alliance commends an extraordinary effort and a resulting comprehensive and thoughtful set of college readiness standards. The effort to include both knowledge-based and cross-disciplinary skills provides a deeper understanding of what it takes to be successful in higher education today.

Further, these College Readiness Standards were developed for a specific purpose: *to identify the standards needed to succeed in college-entry coursework*. This level of specificity allows for the standards to draw parameters around criteria for higher education success from the K-12 perspective. Toward that end, the level of specificity in the identified standards makes the cross-walk with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) a simpler process.

E³ Alliance recommends some further refinement in the following Core Competencies and an additional section to Cross-Disciplinary Competencies. These are intended to be general recommendations; we leave the review of specific indicators and examples to subject matter experts.

English/Language Arts Standards

The *Reading and Writing Sections* do not address that these standards are for “digital natives” and nothing in them addresses the high volume of media that students will encounter post-secondary

- Nothing in standards address viewing/representing of information
- Does not allow for deconstruction of a message
- Does not address the five critical questions for media

- No reference to the different types of media students encounter on a daily basis

The *Writing and Reading* Sections do not contain reference to the ability to read technical manuals/material or to compose technical writing. Both skill sets are not only necessary for many post secondary subjects, but are fundamental forms of literacy for many technical and manual forms of labor. According to Lexile measures, technical manuals for entry-level workers often require greater reading comprehension skills than literature and college-level text books.

E³ Alliance recommends that this measure be added to both the Writing and Reading components with the following language:

- A. Mastering appropriate language relevant to purpose of a given document or task. Understanding and paraphrasing technical texts.
- B. Composing a written document providing instructions and using language appropriate to the instructed task.

Under the standard of “Speaking,” E³ Alliance recommends renaming this section Effective Communication. Under Effective Communication, we recommend that a third substandard labeled “Understand the importance of non-verbal communication” be included.

Components used to measure effective non-verbal communication are:

- A. Use non-verbal communication to increase effective speaking in a variety of settings.
 - a. Demonstrate how use of tone changes content of message.
 - b. Use facial and body expression to communicate importance of message.
- B. Understand the importance of nonverbal communication in developing personal relationships
 - a. Analyze examples of nonverbal communication and their effect on messaging
 - b. Analyze how nonverbal communication effects group participation and performance.

At high level review, the E³ Alliance finds the standards developed for both the **Math and Science** portions of the College Readiness Standards to be relatively comprehensive and currently has no recommended modifications to these sections. We leave specific review to subject matter experts.

Social Science Standards

E³ Alliance recommends that in addition to the close attention to comparison and contrast of various forms of government and ideologies that specific standards be developed to assess students’ knowledge in American forms of government and foundational principles of American democracy. In close correlation, Texas governance structure should also be addressed. We leave specific revisions to subject matter experts.

For the standard “Change & continuity of political ideologies, constitutions, and political behavior” there is no reference for clearly defining ideology as a concept. E³ Alliance recommends that this standard begin with a new component as follows:

1. Understand and apply the concept of ideology in politics and culture.
 - a. Define ideology in a political and cultural context.
 - b. Compare and contrast major ideologies across Eastern and Western societies.

For the component, “Understanding the importance of civic responsibility” there is no criterion that references actual service. E³ Alliance recommends adding a fourth criterion as follows:

6. Understanding the importance of civic responsibility.
 - a. Participated in some form of service learning such as volunteerism, public forum participation, community service, faith-based community activities, voting or moot-voting.

E³ Alliance recommends removing Effective Communication from Social Science and incorporating into the Foundational Skill Criteria.

Cross-Discipline Standards

E³ Alliance strongly endorses the inclusion of these cross discipline standards that reach beyond knowledge-based skills and serve as indicators of a student’s social, behavioral, financial and intellectual preparedness for the college experience. Toward this effort, E³ Alliance would like to make additional recommendations that rely heavily on the research of Dr. Clair Ellen Weinstein of the University of Texas, College of Education, Education Psychology Department. Specifically, Dr. Weinstein has developed a rubric for strategic learning that includes measures in “Skill, Will, and Self-Regulation.”¹ She then places these measures in the larger context of the learning environment.

Toward this focus on a “Student as a Strategic Learner,” E³ Alliance recommends the following additions to the Cross Discipline Standards.

III) Self-Awareness as Learner

- A. Awareness of Learning Style
 - a. Student understands what learning strategies are most effective personally. (hands-on, engaged, applied, lecture, multimedia, etc.)
 - b. Student is aware of both strengths and weakness of these learning strategies and prepares to compensate for them.
- b. Self-Motivation and Intellectual Curiosity
 - a. Student has an understanding of why he or she is planning to attend intended form of higher education.
 - b. Student has developed academic goals and has a sense of what “achievement” means personally.
 - c. Student sets high expectations in accordance with academic and career interests.
- c. Managing Academic Time and Work
 - a. Understands and prioritizes class assignments and workloads in balance with other personal/social needs
 - b. Feels comfortable communicating with professor about questions or concerns about assignments

- c. Feels comfortable communicating with teacher to clarify instructions for assignments

IV) Higher Education Planning and Awareness

- A) Set Goals commensurate with personal interests and career aspirations.
 - a. Understands why and how pursuit of higher education fits into personal goals and aspirations.
 - b. Has some general ideas about career interests and opportunities based on personal goals, interests and aspirations.
 - c. Developed academic goals that match personal goals and career aspirations.
- B) Financial planning and preparation
 - a. Student has completed FAFSA if appropriate
 - b. Student has financing plan for higher education commensurate with degree aspirations
- C) Evaluate Progress toward Goals
 - a. Monitor progress toward higher education goals.
 - b. Respond to situations that may hinder or expedite progress toward goals.

In addition, E³ Alliance recommends that “Effective Communication:” be removed from Social Sciences and be added into the Foundation Skills Criteria as component “F”. Within “Effective Communication” E³ Alliance recommends adding a component on “Technology Integration” follows:

Under the standard “Effective Communication” in Social Science, E³ Alliance recommends adding a component entitled “Technology Integration”. In this new component the criteria for success would include:

- D. Technology Integration
 - 1. Develop documents using common software applications.
 - a. Create and conduct oral presentations using multimedia strategies.
 - b. Develop and conduct team projects using common software applications.
 - 2. Discern quality of information on the Internet and research source material.
 - a. Understand difference between sponsored links and non-sponsored links
 - b. Identify on-line academic scholarship
 - c. Research source material on-line and using electronic databases.

Recommendations Represent Input from the E³ Alliance

The E³ Alliance is a regional collaborative to create a research-based “blueprint” to align our education systems to better fulfill the potential of every citizen and in turn, increase economic outcomes and build a stronger economic future for our region. The E³ Alliance is the P-16 Council for the Central Texas region, incorporating the 5-county Austin/Round Rock MSA as well as surrounding districts that are part of the Austin Community College District. The seven traditional institutions of higher education in the Central Texas region, Region XIII Education Service Center, as well as target districts Austin, Bastrop, Del Valle, Eanes, Manor, Pflugerville, Round Rock, and San Marcos Consolidated are active members of the E³ Alliance. These entities, as well as are business partners including Austin Area Research Organization (AARO), WorkSource, the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, and the Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, have been made aware of, and in some cases participated in, the creation and review of this document. However, this input is

provided on behalf of the E³ Alliance and should not be deemed as representative of all of the desires of any individual institution.

¹ Weinstein, C.E. (2004) The Model for Strategic Learning. Dr. Weinstein has also created assessments at both the high school and college level called the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) that assesses a student's strength as a strategic learner.

Separate specific comments from Pflugerville ISD on College Readiness Standards are listed below.

Pflugerville ISD Response to the Draft Texas College Readiness Standards

General Comments

Pflugerville ISD provides rigorous and relevant instructional programs with an emphasis on career and college readiness for all students. We believe that a guaranteed and viable curriculum that is aligned to state standards is the most effective way to raise student achievement and ensure that students are prepared to enter college and be successful. To that end, we applaud the work of the Vertical Teams to develop College Readiness Standards. We also support the proposed future work of the Vertical Teams as they recommend strategies for curriculum alignment at the high school and college level. We believe that the choice of university/college or professor should not determine the knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn, but rather there should be a common and aligned set of standards that are articulated to students.

We do recommend that during the development process that careful attention is paid to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills and how they connect to the College Readiness Standards. Having multiple standards from different sources is problematic for district curriculum and assessment developers. It can also have the effect of causing confusion among teachers as to what exactly should be taught and what exactly will be tested. In their article, [Awash in a Sea of Standards](#)¹, Robert Marzano and John Kendall estimate that in order to adequately cover the content found in most state standards currently, schooling would have to be extended to kindergarten through grade 21. We believe the answer is not about creating separate sets of more standards, but rather, improving the standards we have in place.

In addition, we also recommend that every effort be made to have the standards move away from student performance indicators that utilize low level thinking skills such as describe, define and identify, and instead focus on higher level thinking skills such as analyze and evaluate. We believe that any standard should increase clarity, specificity and provide a framework of relevance and real world application.

English/Language Arts Standards

Strengths in the Writing standards include: Writing process utilized for all aspects of writing; Variety of writing modes used for student success; Ample samples for a student corpus of works (with the exception of business and technical writing)

Concern: Neither technical nor business writing is addressed in the current standards and should be included (needs to be added)

Strengths in the Reading standards include: Reading process not followed other than previewing text; Vocabulary covered in a variety of approaches; Both main idea, details, and summary are addressed; Multi genres used to expose students to a wide variety of literature; Analysis of historical contexts, historical and social stereotypes analysis, and stylistic similarities and differences

Concern: No reference made to technical reading at all

Strengths in the Speaking standards include: Standards utilize Rosenblatt's transactional theory; Recognize how speech is transactional; Both individual and group oral presentation addressed; Both argument and debate included (interlocution)

Strengths in the Listening standards include: Standards utilize Rosenblatt's transactional theory; Critical listening addressed in a variety of ways; Both one-on-one and group listening scenarios used

Strengths in the Research standards include:

Variety of ways to formulate questions for inquiry; Organizational strategies addressed; Annotation of resources (both media and non media sources) with evaluation of credibility of said sources addressed; Evaluation of how resources represent multiple points of view; Use of quotations, paraphrase, and synopsis in research; Plagiarism addressed; Use of appropriate media/mode for presentation

General Concern of the English Language Arts Standards: Standards are for "digital natives" and nothing in them addresses the high volume of media that students will encounter post-secondary

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Mathematics Standards

We would like the standards to address the "spiraling" of content through the grade levels. It is always a challenge to determine which standards should be taught at each grade level.

Science Standards

Strengths: The standards are well written and useable. Both the content and process of science are addressed. This is a nice balance now because it appeared originally that the processes of science would dominate the standards. The standards clearly identify and state the expected content knowledge.

Suggestions: We would like the standards to address the "spiraling" of content through the grade levels. It is always a challenge to determine how much of a science area should be taught at each grade level. We would also like the standards to clearly state that more attention needs to be on teaching fewer topics at a deeper level – especially at the secondary level. Please remember that these will be used to help revise the TEKS in the coming years. Perhaps individuals who were part of the

development of this set of standards will be available to help explain or reinforce the content standards anticipated in the revised TEKS.

Social Science Standard

The purpose of social science education is widely misunderstood in today's society, even within the educational community itself, which tends to marginalize the social sciences. Many of us were taught the social sciences by reading textbooks and answering the questions at the end of the chapters rather than emulating the methodology of social scientist scholars. The College Readiness Standards, on the other hand, clearly articulates the goal and focus of the social sciences as promoting "a deeper and richer understanding of the human experience...[by imparting] a particular knowledge and skills that equip students to engage actively, thoughtfully, and responsibly with their community." The College Readiness Standards recognizes that although facts and data are important to the social sciences, the systematic acquisition and analysis of information is paramount to success at the collegiate level.

The Key Content ideas are appropriately focused on concepts rather than facts, but could use a stronger emphasis on problem solving in general and microeconomics as it applies to the individual. Most notably, the standards on "Diverse Human Perspectives and Experiences" values the experiences of all humans and will enable students to deconstruct multicultural concepts such as race, gender, and ethnicity.

- I. Interrelated Disciplines and Skills
- II. Diverse Human Perspectives and Experiences
- III. Interdependence of Global Communities
- IV. Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation of Information
- V. Effective Communication

Although it sounds simplistic, we believe that reversing the order of the Key Content ideas above is essential. The social sciences processes contain the rigor and relevance necessary to developing engaged, college-ready students. The skills of the social sciences, IV and V, should always come first and have the content of the social sciences, I-III, layered onto them. We will never be able to teach students every important detail or even concept within the social sciences, but we must give them the ability to solve problems and make decisions as citizens, scholars, and human beings, and the College Readiness Standards have paid attention to current scholarship and will advance the potential for not only preparing more students for college, but convincing more students of diverse backgrounds that they have a significant role to play as a collegian and beyond.

¹Marzano, R. J., & Kendall, J. S. (1998). *Awash in a sea of standards*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

