

## **Iowa Core Introduction to Literacy Transcript**

### **Slide 1**

My name is Rita Martens and I am the Department of Education's lead consultant for the Iowa Core. In this presentation I provide an orientation to the new Iowa Core standards in literacy. This is part of a series of planned webcasts orienting teachers and administrators to the new Iowa Core in literacy and mathematics.

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An examination of the new Iowa Core K-12 Literacy standards makes their goal very clear: for more students to graduate from high school prepared to meet the literacy challenges of college and career. The standards were developed by the National Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers and represent an important step in implementing a standards based approach to education in this country.

The college- and career-readiness standards, the K-8 grade specific standards, and the 9-12 grade-span standards were designed to meet the following criteria:

- Aligned with college and work expectations;
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- Informed by top-performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and,
- Evidence and/or research-based.

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For the grades of kindergarten through five, one set of standards covers English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. For grades six through twelve, we find a set that covers English language arts and another set is the Standards for Literacy in History, Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. Each section is divided into strands. K-5 and grades 6-12 have Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language strands; the 6-12 history/social studies, science, and technical subjects section focuses on Reading and Writing.

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Each College and Career Readiness Standard has an accompanying grade- or grade span-specific standard that identifies the grade- or span-appropriate end-of-year expectation.

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This is an example of the structure. As you examine the standards, you'll see that the College and Career Readiness Standards provide the overarching structure for all the standards and are consistent K-12. The grade or grade-span specific standards demonstrate increasing complexity as one moves up the grades.

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The reading standards establish a “staircase” of increasing complexity in what students must be able to read so that all students are ready for the demands of college and career-level reading no later than the end of high school. The standards also require the progressive development of reading comprehension so that students advancing through the grades are able to gain more from whatever they read. According to one of the appendices supporting the Literacy standards, the ability to navigate complex texts is what differentiates college-ready students from others.

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The authors of the standards contend that K–12 students are, in general, given considerable scaffolding—assistance from teachers, class discussions, and the texts themselves—with reading that is already less complex overall than that found in the workplace or college classroom. What is more, students today are asked to read very little expository text which is the vast majority of what they are required to read in college and the workplace. This is the reason for the standards’ strong emphasis on increasing text complexity as a key requirement in reading.

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The Standards define a three-part model for determining how easy or difficult a particular text is to read.

*(1) The qualitative dimensions and qualitative factors* refer to those aspects of text complexity best determined by the human reader, such as levels of meaning or purpose; structure; language conventionality and clarity; and knowledge demands.

*(2) The quantitative dimensions and quantitative factors* refer to those aspects of text complexity, such as word length or frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion that are today typically measured by computer software.

*(3) Reader considerations*, such as motivation, knowledge, and experience, and *task considerations*, such as purpose and complexity, must also be considered when determining whether a text is appropriate for a given student. Those assessments are best made by the teacher.

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The standards aim to align instruction with the NAEP Framework so that, in the future, many more students can meet the requirements of college and career readiness. In K-5, the standards follow NAEP’s lead in balancing the reading of literature with the reading of information texts, including texts in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. In accord with NAEP’s growing emphasis on informational texts in the higher grades, the standards demand that a significant amount of reading of informational texts take place in and outside the ELA classroom. Fulfilling the Standards for 6-12 ELA requires much greater attention to a specific category of information text – literary nonfiction – than has been traditional.

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The writing standards address three types of text.

Of special emphasis is argument. In English language arts, students make claims about the worth or meaning of literary works. They defend their interpretations or judgments with evidence from the text(s) they are writing about. In history/social studies, students analyze evidence from multiple primary and secondary sources to advance a claim that is best supported by the evidence. In science, students make claims in the form of statements or conclusions that answer questions or address problems. Using data in a scientifically acceptable form, students marshal evidence in support of their claims. Although young children are not able to produce fully developed logical arguments, they develop a variety of methods to extend and elaborate their work by providing examples, offering reasons for their assertions, and explaining cause and effect. These kinds of expository structures are steps on the road to argument. In grades K–5, the term “opinion” is used to refer to this developing form of argument.

Informational/explanatory writing conveys information accurately. To produce this kind of writing, students use a variety of techniques to convey information, such as naming, defining, describing, or differentiating different parts, or comparing and contrasting ideas or concepts.

The third type, narrative writing, conveys experience, either real or imagined, and uses time as its structure. It can be used for many purposes, such as to inform, instruct, persuade, or entertain. In English language arts, students produce narratives that take the form of creative fictional stories, memoirs, anecdotes, and autobiographies.

According to the standard’s definition, the narrative category does not include all of the possible forms of creative writing. The Standards leave the inclusion of those types up to teacher discretion.

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The ability to write logical arguments based on substantive claims, sound reasoning, and relevant evidence is a cornerstone of the writing standards, with opinion writing—a basic form of argument—extending down into the earliest grades.

Again, here we see the impact of the goal of college and career readiness. Of those who enter college, presently only 20 percent are prepared to write such logical arguments, which is the predominant type of writing higher education calls upon them to produce.

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NAEP outlines a distribution across the grades of the core purposes and types of student writing. The 2011 NAEP framework, like the standards, cultivates the development of three types of writing: writing to persuade, to explain, and to convey real or imagined experience. Evidence concerning the demands of college and career readiness concurs with NAEP's shifting emphases: standards for grades 9-12 describe writing in all three forms, but the overwhelming focus should be on arguments and informative/explanatory texts.

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Annotated samples of student writing accompany the standards and help establish adequate performance levels in writing arguments, informational/explanatory texts, and narratives in the various grades. The authors of the standards considered this appendix critical in helping teachers understand the level of performance demanded by the standards.

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The standards require that students gain, evaluate, and present increasingly complex information, ideas, and evidence through listening and speaking as well as through media.

An important focus of the speaking and listening standards is academic discussion in one-on-one, small-group, and whole-class settings. Formal presentations are one important way such talk occurs, but so is the more informal discussion that takes place as students collaborate to answer questions, build understanding, and solve problems.

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If literacy levels are to improve, the aims of the English language arts classroom, especially in the earliest grades, must include oral language in a purposeful way because it helps students master the printed word. Besides having intrinsic value as modes of communication, listening and speaking are necessary prerequisites of reading and writing. The interrelationship between oral and written language is illustrated in this table, using the distinction linguists make between *receptive language* (*language that is heard, processed, and understood by an individual*) and *expressive language* (*language that is generated and produced by an individual*).

Oral language development is the foundation for written language development; in other words, oral language is primary and written language builds on it. Children's oral language competence is strongly predictive of their skill level in learning to read and write: listening and speaking vocabulary and even mastery of syntax set boundaries as to what children can read and understand no matter how well they can decode.

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The standards expect that students will grow their vocabularies through a mix of conversations, direct instruction, and reading. The standards will help students determine word meanings, appreciate the nuances of words, and steadily expand their repertoire of words and phrases.

The standards' emphasis on grammar helps prepare students for real life college and career experience. The standards recognize that students must be able to use formal English in their writing and speaking but that they must also be able to make informed, skillful choices among the many ways to express themselves through language.

Vocabulary and conventions are treated in their own strand not because skills in these areas should be handled in isolation but because their use extends across reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

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Just as media and technology are integrated in school and life in the twenty-first century, skills related to media use (both critical analysis and production of media) are integrated throughout the standards.

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The Standards insist that instruction in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language be a shared responsibility within the school. The K–5 standards include expectations for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language applicable to a range of subjects, including but not limited to ELA. The grades 6–12 standards are divided into two sections, one for ELA and the other for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. This division reflects the unique, time-honored place of ELA teachers in developing students' literacy skills while at the same time recognizing that teachers in other areas must have a role in this development as well.

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These new Iowa literacy standards can be found at the Iowa Core Web site: [www.corecurriculum.iowa.gov](http://www.corecurriculum.iowa.gov). If you scroll down the page, you'll find two Word documents. The first is the new literacy standards for grades K-12.

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Each state was given the option of adding up to 15 percent additional content to the standards. Iowa chose to exercise this option and conducted a collaborative process to determine what the additional content would be. The results of an alignment study helped us determine what parts of the original Iowa Core in literacy were not covered by the Common Core Standards. We began with this list, and engaged a number of literacy experts in a discussion about what needed to be added. In the end, a few, very carefully selected additions were made.

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As you scroll through these documents, you'll find the new grade or grade-span-specific content with the low-specific content indicated with an IA designation.

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Teachers will find a lot of information important in fully understanding the standards presented in appendices. You can find the appendices I referred during this presentation at [www.corestandards.org/the-standards](http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards).

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If you have questions or concerns, don't hesitate to contact me. My contact information is listed here.

The Department understands and appreciates the hard work required of educators in implementing these standards. Thank you for taking the time to listen to this presentation.