

**The Review and Revision of New York State Standards, with Specific Focus on the  
ELA/ESL Standards and Performance Indicators**

***A Chronological Summary, November 2007-November 2009***

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This summary provides a brief chronological survey of the review and revision of the English Language Arts and English as a Second Language Standards and Performance Indicators during the timeframe from November, 2007 – November, 2009. We will reflect on some of the highlights including the innovative approaches taken, significant challenges and the future steps needed to engage students and teachers in the implementation of the Standards. The English Language Arts and the English as a Second Language Standards panel, appointed by the Regents Standards Review Committee, was led by Co-Chairs John Harmon and Dr. Bonne August. An ESL workgroup was headed by Estee Lopez, with the assistance of Dr. August. These formal committees were supported by senior and mid-level managers of the State Education Department led by Jean Stevens, Associate Commissioner of Education and by the New York Comprehensive Center (NYCC) including Larry Hirsch, Director; Janice Imundi, Research Associate, and staff. A research base for the work was provided by a team of nationally recognized researchers, including Dr. Michael Kamil Stanford University (Chair, Research Team); Dr. Dorothy Strickland, Rutgers University; Dr. Catherine Snow, Harvard University; Dr. Frank Vellutino, SUNY, Albany; and Dr. Nell Duke, Michigan State University. The Regents Standards Initiative was chaired by Regent Saul Cohen, formerly President of Queens College, and coordinated by Dr. Walter Sullivan, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Director of the Center for Educational Policy and Practice at The College of New Rochelle. They worked closely with the SED, the NYCC, the ELA/ESL panel and Regents Steering Committee, helping to develop the model of a systemic approach to framing content standards, as well as laying out the implementation time table.

**CHRONOLOGICAL VIEW WITH RELATED DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE**

**NOVEMBER, 2007**

SED senior staff worked with the NYCC to create a structure and establish a cycle for regular review of the State's content learning standards as required by Chapter 54 of the Legislature, signed by Governor Spitzer. The cycle provided for a systematic review and revision of all of the Learning Standards in New York State, to begin with the English Language Arts and English as a Second Language. The process was implemented and external researchers were identified to provide a research-base for the work, which would be carried out in conjunction with numerous practitioners drawn from NYS schools, higher education institutions, and other stakeholders. Walter Sullivan was selected by Regent Cohen and approved by the Board of Regents to lead this effort as Coordinator of the Standards Review Initiative. He reports directly to Regent Cohen in all issues relative to this initiative.

### **DECEMBER, 2007**

Regent Cohen, Walter Sullivan and then Vice Chancellor Tisch met with Michael Cohen, President of *Achieve Inc.* to discuss the feasibility of engaging the services of *Achieve Inc.* based on the criteria established by *Achieve* in terms of “backmapping” for college readiness.

### **JANUARY, 2008-MARCH, 2008**

Coordinator Sullivan and Chairperson Cohen selected John Harmon and Dr. Bonne August as the co-chairs for the first content learning standard review, as well as members recommended for the ELA/ESL panel, who were subsequently approved by the Standards Review Committee. Over \$600,000 was appropriated for Standards revision by the Legislature, but because of New York State’s fiscal crisis only half of the funds could be used; the remainder was frozen by the State’s Division of the Budget.

### **MARCH 10, 2008**

Opening “kickoff” for the Regents Standards review committee work took place at the UFT headquarters in New York City. SED staff and researchers, along with some Regents, participated in this all day session and orientation to the work of the Standards. [The Standards Review Working Principles](#), which have guided the work, were introduced.

### **EARLY SPRING, 2008**

The Regents Standards Steering Committee met with Superintendents of Schools from three high-performing school districts in New York State, focusing on their use of high standards of excellence in their school districts. The Steering Committee discussed commonalities in these high-performing districts with a view toward developing the State Standards Initiative. Other important activities of the Steering Committee included:

- Presentation by Valerie Greenhill, Vice-President of *The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning* to the Steering Committee relative to the national work of *The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning*.
- College Board presentation to the Steering Committee relative to their standards in terms of College Readiness.
- *Achieve Inc.* presentation to the Steering Committee relative to its review of the 1996 ELA Standards and the 2005 addenda to the Standards and Performance Indicators, as well as its recommendations on the development of new ELA Standards.
- Discussion of the rationale and decisions relative to the creation of six (6) Public Fora in New York State.
- Building and approving “Core Working Principles” which will undergird all of the Standards and direct the work of the various Content Standards review committees.

- Career and Technical Education and Career Development (CDOS) was designated as the second content learning area to be reviewed and revised. An extraordinary panel was brought together to begin the work. Matt Crosson, President of the Long Island Business Association and Bernard P. Pierorazio, Superintendent of Schools in Yonkers, along with Jerald Wolfgang, a leading career and technical administrator from upstate were selected to lead this review. The first meeting was held at Hunter College in NYC; unfortunately, because state monies were frozen, the CDOS standards work was placed in abeyance. Simultaneously, a Career and Technical SED committee met to address a number of implementation issues.
  
- Approval by The Regents Standards Steering Committee
  - I. Approved the contract for the evaluation work of *Achieve Inc.* charged with reviewing the 1996 standards and performance indicators to be completed by September 1, 2008. *Achieve Inc.* presented a detailed evaluation of the New York State ELA standards with mathematical values from 0= non-existent; 1-2= moderately found in standards; 3= significantly found in the standards \* *Achieve* criteria is based on six variables. DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE: [Achieve Inc. evaluation](#); Walter Sullivan’s [Summary of Achieve report](#); co-chair, John Harmon’s report entitled, “[Zero Review](#)” analyzes the items that were deemed “0” in the *Achieve* evaluation. NOTE: *Achieve Inc.* and the College Board had not addressed the areas of Pre-K – grade 3 in their national work since they begin their benchmarking work at grade 4. This is a critical developmental period relative to children’s learning. In addition, no attention was devoted to English Language learners.
  - II. Approval of a contract with *The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning* was executed authorizing a review of the work of the ELA/ESL panel using *The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning* criteria as the foundation for evaluation. After the contract was executed, *The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century* did a comprehensive review of the work completed by the panel as of December, 2008. DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE: [Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Comprehensive Report](#) utilizing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century criteria; [Walter Sullivan & Meghan Troy’s analysis](#) and organization of the “[P21 Recommendations: Summary and Responses](#)” document, shared with the members of the ELA/ESL panel; follow-up incorporation of some of the recommendations of *The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century* variables and recommendations in the work as well as conference calls with Valerie Greenhill and Judy Stewart from *The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning*.
  
- Six Public Fora Held In Buffalo, Syracuse, Adirondack Region, Long Island, Westchester and New York City
  - I. Each public forum began with a brief presentation and overview of the purpose of the fora (interactive). Participants responded to three focused questions:
    - a. Response relative to the content and substance of the present ELA standards
    - b. Response relative to the present organizational format of the Standards
    - c. Response to the assessment of the present Standards and Performance Indicators

- II. 1000 individuals throughout NYS participated in this interactive process and responded to the above focused questions. They included teachers, school administrators, school board and PTA leaders, and other interested parties. A major critique of the current standards was that the Performance Indicators were not aligned with the Standards, the Curriculum Guidance documents were not aligned with the Performance Indicators, and the standardized tests were poorly aligned with the Standards. Moreover, the materials were repetitive, and were somewhat ignored in recent years. There was also widespread criticism of the reliance on standardized testing for graduation requirements as well as general concern relative to over-testing.
- III. DOCUMENTS : [SED Summary of Results in Three Areas](#); [Walter Sullivan's Summary Analysis](#)
- IV. Incorporation of themes by co-chairs August and Harmon and the ELA panel

### **SPRING 2008-WINTER 2009**

Under the leadership of Co-Chairs John Harmon and Bonne August, with the assistance of Janice Imundi, the ELA/ESL Panel met in Albany in April, June, July, September, October, and November 2008 and January and February 2009, with extensive work between meetings, to draft the new standards and performance indicators. The co-chairs reported to the Steering Committee regularly.

### **SEPTEMBER, 2008**

*Achieve Inc.* completed work and shared the results with the SRI Core Leadership Team.

### **DECEMBER, 2008**

Pre-K work done over the past year and a half by the SED unit led by Cindy Gallagher was merged with the draft K-12 Standards and Performance Indicators document by the ELA panel and researcher Dr. Dorothy Strickland. Work of the panel as of December, 2008 was sent to *The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning* for analysis and review.

### **FEBRUARY, 2009**

- *The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning* report was shared with the Standards Review Initiative team and some components were incorporated into the ELA work: DOCUMENT: [Harmon's Summary of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Report](#).
- ESL work group began work on the identification of ESL Performance Indicators with draft ELA Performance Indicators; ESL Team Leadership group met periodically from February through July under the leadership of Estee Lopez and Bonne August.
- The full ELA/ESL panel along with the expanded workgroup proceeded through several drafts of the Standards and Performance Indicators at this stage of the process.
- Dr. Jim Cummins, from The University of Toronto, serving as a consultant and special advisor to the ESL leadership group, made recommendations on the integration of ELA and ESL

Performance Indicators; 80 bilingual educators including BETAC directors have been involved in this complex process.

### **SPRING, 2009**

- Regent Cohen and Coordinator Sullivan presented preliminary findings to the Board of Regents.
- April, 2009 – Preliminary feedback session held at the College of New Rochelle. Educators and administrators from the region were invited to attend a forum to hear Drs. Cohen and Sullivan, Co-Chairs Harmon and August, and Estee Lopez, Co-Chair of the ESL Working Group, and Kate Hathaway a member of the ELA panel, presented on the progress on the revision of the Standards and to offer feedback, questions, and opinions regarding NYS Standards and Performance Indicators.
- A small core of the Panel continued to refine the Standards and Performance Indicators, based on the work done by the ELA/ESL panel.

\*\* Around this timeframe, we had a major challenge relative to payment reimbursement due to the State fiscal crises and the inability to renew contracts. This crisis occurred at approximately, the end of 2008 and continues unabated to the present day. Most of the participants have worked significant hours without commensurate reimbursement in many cases.

### **JUNE-JULY 2009**

- June 2: Preliminary ELA Standards and Performance Indicators on a grade-by-grade level sent to researchers Dr. Dorothy Strickland of Rutgers University and Dr. Catherine Snow of Harvard University for review and feedback as of June 2, 2009.
- June 3: Summary of all work discussed and distributed to the Regents Steering Committee with work accomplished; professors representing the various sectors of higher education in New York State met with the Standards Review Initiative Leadership Core group, Senior SED staff, Regent Cohen, etc. Associate Commissioner Joe Frey, selected the professors for this interactive session on the issue of “readiness for college work” and the standards.
- July: Feedback received from researchers with commendations and recommendations.  
\*DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE: [Researchers Commentary](#); Walter Sullivan’s summative review entitled, “[Salient Feedback from Researchers Strickland and Snow Relative to the ELA/ESL Draft Standards and Performance Indicators](#)”; Co-Chair Harmon’s [Harmon's General Summary of Researchers' Work](#), “[Summary of Dorothy Strickland’s response with Action Plan](#)” and [Summary of Catherine Snow’s response with Action Plan.](#)”

### **AUGUST 6, 2009**

- Meeting of the Core Group from the ELA/ESL panel including Co-Chairs Harmon and August, along with ESL Working Group Co-chair, Estee Lopez, Regent Cohen and Chancellor Tisch,

researcher Michael Kamil, and Walter Sullivan convened to review the reports of the researchers and the ESL work group and to discuss additional changes. The work was organized by grade bands: Pre-k-grade 4; grade 5-8; grades 9-12

#### **AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 2009**

- Co-chairs August and Harmon, and Janice Imundi from the NYCC, conducted an extensive review of the Performance Indicators for horizontal and vertical alignment.
- Adjustments of the Performance Indicators by ELA and ESL panelists continued until the end of September when the document was reviewed again by Co-Chairs August and Harmon and Janice Imundi of NYCC.
- Work has continued on the adjusted ELA Performance Indicators to make sure that they are integrated with the ESL Performance Indicators by members of the ELA panel in conjunction with the ESL Team leaders; items have been identified for possible inclusion in a Curriculum Guidance document that was scheduled to be developed by key members of the ELA/ESL panel during late summer-early fall of 2009, but that was placed on hold pending additional resources.

#### **MID-SEPTEMBER –NOVEMBER 2009**

- First Draft of the Pre-K-12 ELA/ESL integrated standards is completed. A number of format decisions to enhance usability remain to be addressed at a later date.
- Draft standards disseminated to professors from the four higher education sectors for feedback and recommendation: November 5, 2009.
- Draft standards reviewed by Dr. Dorothy Strickland, with some recommendations and suggestions. The review by Dr. Strickland was sent to the Co-chairs on November 12, 2009. These recommendations were incorporated into the draft document.
- Presentation to the full Board of Regents of the Draft Standards and Performance Indicators along with recommendations for next steps is scheduled for: December 14, 2009.
- The new ELA/ESL Standards were reviewed by educators, the Executive Board of the New York State Teachers of English, and NYS Teachers of English at their conference. Initial feedback was received by supervisors of English departments and Assistant Superintendents on Long Island, and ESL educators who attended the annual TESOL conference in November, 2009 at White Plains, NY. After the *Race to the Top Fund* application process has been completed, all educators in New York State will be asked to weigh in on the new standards and performance indicators.

## HIGHLIGHTS AND NEW APPROACHES RELATIVE TO THE WORK ON THE ELA/ESL STANDARDS

- The separation of LITERACY FROM LITERATURE is innovative and will have significant ramifications for the ELA/ESL Standards (even at the national level) as well as for all of New York State’s remaining Content Standards. This initiative may be the first time that a state has centered its Standards and Performance Indicator work on the separation of Literacy and Literature. A recent national Committee on High School Reform identified the issue of academic literacy in all subject areas as critical to the improvement in U.S. high schools (Gewertz, Catherine, “High School Teachers Said to Need Better Training”, Education Week, November 11, 2009).

DOCUMENT AVAILABLE: Walter Sullivan’s diagram of the Draft [Literacy and Literature Standards with Performance Indicators](#).

- The “[Standards Review Working Principles](#)” have been reviewed, discussed and approved by The Regents Steering Committee. The “[Standards Review Working Principles](#)” have guided the work of the ELA/ESL panel and can be utilized for future content standards. They are well conceived and provide a sense of dynamism to the work. These principles designate that all standards (Performance Indicators) must be measurable or demonstrable and must be supported by current research. They call for the integration of technology as well as the integration/awareness of cultural context.

DOCUMENT AVAILABLE: [Standards Review Working Principles](#)

- In the “[Standards Review Working Principles](#)”, we have defined three sets of standards that are critical for student success along with a single set of standards for all students. The three standards are as follows:
  - A. Student Content Learning Standards - presently completed in the first draft.
  - B. Teacher Knowledge Standards (which are necessary in order to deliver the “new” standards and will involve both teacher preparation and professional staff development)
  - C. System Infrastructure Standards (the capacity of a school to provide resources to implement the new standards at an appropriate level)

- The integration of ESL into the development of the ELA standards is a major breakthrough in New York State as well as in the nation. The Standards Review Working Principles states unequivocally that there will be a single set of standards for all students. Eighty ESL/Bilingual educators, led by Estee Lopez and the ESL Leadership Team, with the assistance of ELA Panel co-chair Bonne August, reviewed both the existing ESL material and the proposed draft standards, making extensive and detailed recommendations throughout the new standards document to ensure that the final standards and performance indicators would apply to all students. This represents the first time in NYS history that this level of integration has occurred. A few states such as Texas and California have attempted to lay out parallel ESL Performance indicators and ELA Performance Indicators, but in New York they are unified. A document is included to address the particular needs of beginning English language learners; however, virtually all of the

performance indicators are drawn from the ELA/ESL Standards document and are grouped according to the students' level of proficiency in English as well as their grade level.

- The draft standards have been reviewed by researchers Drs. Michael Kamil, Dorothy Strickland, Catherine Snow, Frank Vellutino, and Nell Duke. Jim Cummins has thus far served to advise, and we anticipate an amplification of his involvement because it is critical for future work on the proposed Curriculum Guidance document including scaffolding recommendations for ESL students.

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN: NEXT STEPS**

- The State Education Department is scheduled to complete the *Race to the Top Fund* application by January 19, 2010. The ELA/ESL work and the innovative approaches described above, attested to by researcher Michael Kamil and others, and should position New York State for a strong application. We recommend that NYS use the ELA/ESL Standards as evidence of what New York State has been able to accomplish over the past year and a half. It can also be shared in new partnerships with other states that New York may wish to develop.
- If the *Race to the Top Fund* had not intervened, we would have completed and refined the details of the ELA/ESL work particularly, in the area of format. The next step would be to share the ELA/ESL work with the field at large and to establish a system for collating the data and information gathered so that further adjustments could be made to the Standards and Performance Indicators. A focused survey has already been developed and discussed with the SRI Leadership Team along with a commitment from NYCC to facilitate its implementation when needed. After that process has been completed and approved by both the Regents Steering Committee and the Board of Regents, the Curriculum Guidance work could begin which essentially ties the Standards and Performance Indicators with the Core Curriculum, model lessons, professional development, etc. before a roll out to the field can occur. This was to have been followed by Teaching Standards and Infrastructure Standards development.
- With the *Race to the Top Fund* application looming large, we are confident that the innovative approaches identified above, all of which have been utilized in our standards work, could impact the National Common Standards in unique ways. We also believe, as demonstrated in the analysis and crosswalk prepared by Co-chair John Harmon, that there is a significant correlation between the new New York State standards and the National Common Core standards.
- Regent Cohen and Walter Sullivan have had a conference call with the President of *The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning*, Ken Kay and Vice-President, Valerie Greenhill. Ken Kay explained that he is interested in expanding their work into New York State in order to make it a Partner State.

**SOME CHALLENGES IN THE STANDARDS WORK THUS FAR**

**RESOURCES, RESOURCES, AND RESOURCES** - Although the review and revision of the ELA/ESL standards was approved by the Governor and by the legislature under Chapter 54 along with a significant budget for the work, sometime around November-December, 2008, the resources were frozen by DOB in spite of the efforts of SED Associate Commissioner, Jean Stevens, John Delaney and Deputy Commissioner Terry Savo. At that point in the process this critical work became a VOLUNTEER effort by competent and generous educators who themselves are working in full time positions of significant responsibility, e.g., Bonne August – Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs at New York City College of Technology/ CUNY (City Tech); John Harmon – Humanities Curriculum Coordinator of the Skaneateles Public Schools; Estee Lopez – ESL consultant and Instructor of Literacy Education, The College of New Rochelle; Walter Sullivan – Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Director of the Educational Center for Policy and Practice ,The College of New Rochelle. The time and effort has been matched by the zealous and committed work of Regent Cohen.