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English Language Arts Proficiency-Based Graduation Hierarchy

Introduction

The exemplar Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirement (PBGR) Hierarchies support equity by providing a cohesive and coordinated vision of student-centered learning across Vermont schools. The hierarchies serve as a foundation for the implementation of standards adopted by the Vermont State Board of Education, Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems, flexible pathways, and personalized learning plans. The Agency of Education recognizes the considerable time and effort that educators and other stakeholders across the state have already put forth developing proficiency-based learning systems and this work is intended to serve as a resource for SU/SDs to consider as they reflect on the key concepts and skills that students should develop within each content area. It is important to note that while there is a separate hierarchy for each disciplinary content area, the hierarchies work together to support student proficiency in those attributes described in a [Vermont Portrait of a Graduate (PoG)](link).

The Hierarchy Development Process

The first step in the process of developing PBGR Hierarchies involved the creation of content area PoGs. The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) did this by reading the Vermont PoG through a content lens, comparing the PoG indicators with national content standards, and identifying those indicators that could best be addressed within that content area (e.g., A Vermont Portrait of a Graduate through the lens of [Social Studies](link)). The AOE integrated these content area PoGs, State board-approved national standards, and other research to define what it means to be literate within each disciplinary content area. Each literacy statement was pared down to its essential elements, resulting in one PBGR for each content area. Once the PBGR was developed, the AOE identified the Critical Proficiencies (CPs) that would support the teaching and learning related to that PBGR. The AOE developed Priority Performance Indicators (PPIs) for each CP, based on national standards, research, and input from the field. While the PPIs will be formally assessed to develop evidence of student proficiency, all standards have a place in the curriculum and in student learning. Throughout this process, attention was also given to how [transferable skills](link) could be interwoven throughout each PBGR Hierarchy. The construction of these hierarchies was an iterative process, taking on many different stages with educator feedback and internal review being essential components of that process.

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Proficiency-Based Graduation Hierarchy Development Process for English Language Arts

In 2020, Student Achievement Partners (SAP) put out guidance suggesting K-12 English Language Arts (ELA) educators focus their instructional time and efforts on those [Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for ELA](#) that directly address the major work of ELA and literacy instruction: learning to read; close reading of content-rich, complex texts; and reading a volume of information-rich texts to build knowledge and exposure to academic vocabulary in the content areas ([SAP, 2020](#)). The CPs identified in the ELA Hierarchy represent the four strands of the CCSS for ELA: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language; the accompanying PPIs are based on the CCSS College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for ELA. This helps with vertical alignment because the Anchor Standards can be easily adjusted to fit a specific grade band or level. Each PPI is composed of one or more Anchor Standards, either in whole or in part. The decisions about which standards to include in the PPIs were made based on input from research, including the [recommendations from SAP](#), as well as input from the field.

While not all standards have been prioritized, each standard is represented at least once in the ELA PBGR Hierarchy; the standards listed in parentheses following each PPI are the ones directly connected to that PPI, while the standards listed in italics are those that are recommended as supporting performance indicators, which can be used in teaching the PPI. For example, the PPI for reading called Textual Evidence is composed of Anchor Standard R1 in its entirety, with R2, 3, 9, and W9 recommended as supporting standards; Summary and Analysis, on the other hand, is a combination of Anchor Standards R2 and R3 with R9 recommended as a supporting standard.

It is important to note that, while the Common Core requires students to read complex literary and informational texts, a broader definition of text includes "any form of communication that humans create. Whenever humans engage in any act of communication, a text serves as the vehicle for communication" ([Purdue OWL, 2022](#)). This definition of text (which includes images, verbal communication, etc.) should be considered whenever literary or informational text is not specified.

Finally, there are some similar PPIs within the ELA and Social Studies Hierarchies. These similarities are intentional and indicate the interdisciplinary nature of the content areas. The standards themselves acknowledge the relationship between Social Studies and ELA:

- "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

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time recognizing that teachers in other areas must have a role in this development as well" ([CCSS, Key Design Consideration](#)).

- "[The College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards](#) begins with two narrative explanations: the Inquiry Arc, which provides the organizing structure for the document; and the Overview of English Language Arts/Literacy Common Core Connections, which highlights the important relationship between the C3 Framework and the Common Core State Standards for ELA/Literacy. Next, the C3 Framework presents the following four Dimensions: 1 Developing questions and planning inquiries; 2 Applying disciplinary concepts and tools; 3 Evaluating sources and using evidence; and 4 Communicating conclusions and taking informed action," (C3, p. 12). Clear overlap between ELA and Social Studies PPIs would be evident within C3 Dimensions 1, 3, and 4.

Rather than remove duplicative PPIs, providing multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency is a benefit to students. Where and when assessment and reporting happen should be determined at the SU/SD level.

English Language Arts Literacy PBGR

The English Language Arts (ELA) literate individual can engage with complex texts and communicate effectively with diverse audiences for a variety of purposes, clearly articulating their own point of view or message while considering its potential impact, and listening to the perspectives of others.

Critical Proficiency

Reading
Comprehend, interpret, analyze, and evaluate complex literary and informational texts.

Writing
Produce clear and coherent writing for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Speaking and Listening
Participate effectively in a range of discussions, collaborations, and presentations.

Language
Demonstrate understanding of the conventions of English, effective language use, and breadth and depth of vocabulary.

Priority Performance Indicators

Reading

Textual Evidence
Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence to support conclusions drawn from the text, analysis, reflection, and/or research. (R.1) *(R.2, 3 , 9) (W.9)*

Summary and Analysis
Summarize a text, including key supporting details; determine a central idea or theme; and analyze the development or interaction of individuals, events, or ideas. (R.2, 3) *(R.9)*

Craft and Structure
Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific parts relate to each other and the whole; assess how point of view or purpose, including an author's potential biases, shapes the content and style of a text. (R.5, 6) *(R.4)*

Writing

Production
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, style, and register are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (i.e., arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and/or narratives). (W.1-4) *(R.1, 3, 5) (W.5, 6, 9) (L.1, 2)*

Writing Process
Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or varying the approach. (W.5) *(W.1-4, 6) (L.1, 2)*

Research
Gather relevant information or evidence from multiple and diverse sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source (including potential for bias), and integrate the information or evidence, while avoiding plagiarism. (W.7-9) *(R.1, 6, 7, 8, 9)*

Speaking and Listening

Collaboration
Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, listening to and building on others' ideas, and expressing their own clearly and persuasively while considering potential impact. (SL.1) *(R.1) (W.6, 9)*

Comprehension and Evaluation
Comprehend and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats; evaluate a speaker's point of view, argument, reasoning, potential bias, and/or use of evidence and rhetoric. (SL.2, 3) *(R.6-8) (W.8, 9)*

Presentation
Present information, findings, and supporting evidence in such a way that the development, organization, style, register, and media are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (SL.4-6) *(R.1) (W4-6, 9) (L.1)*

Language

Conventions
Demonstrate understanding of the conventions of English grammar and usage when writing and speaking, as well as mechanics (capitalization, punctuation, and spelling) when writing. (L.1, 2) *(SL.6)*

Knowledge of Language
Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions differently across contexts and over time, make effective choices for meaning or style, and comprehend more fully. (L.3, 5) *(R.4)*

Vocabulary
Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for communicating at the college and career readiness level. (L.4, 6) *(R.4) (L.5)*