
ELA/Literacy Professional Development Activity

Examining Grade Level ELA Standards with Understanding Proficiency Tools

Overview

In this activity, participants will consider grade-specific standards and the Smarter Balanced full-write rubric to identify the skills and concepts they cover and then examine a set of scored student work samples — that is, anchor papers — for the related grade level to look for the degree to which they reflect the standards. Additionally, participants will look at how standards change across grade levels, examining what the progressions mean. As a final but critical step, participants will use state-specific English Language Development (ELD) or English Language Proficiency Standards (ELP) standards to discuss supporting diverse learners.

This activity is set up for grade-level teams but could easily be modified to accommodate cross-grade teams.

The pace of this activity is intended to be fairly quick, with the review of the standards and student work examples serving as a starting point for deeper subsequent conversation and action within or across grade-level teams.

Objectives

Participants will:

- * Describe skills and concepts in grade-specific standards
- * Examine and discuss evidence of student proficiency in anchor papers
- * Examine and discuss differences in specificity between the standards and the rubric
- * Describe skills and concepts in grade-adjacent standards, noting progressions from one grade level to the next
- * Examine and discuss guidance provided by state-specific English Language Development (ELD) or English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards, as well as by IEPs and 504 plans

Time

ACTIVITY OPTION 1

- * 90 minutes

ACTIVITY OPTION 2

- * 3 hours
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Activity Option 1

(90 minutes)

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

Preparation:

- * Select one of the Smarter Balanced performance tasks that is appropriate for the grade level of the teachers in your group. You can view tasks in the scoring guides, available on each ELA/Literacy grade-level page of Understanding Proficiency.
- * Choose which dimension of the full-write rubric you want teachers to focus on for this task: either *Organization and Purpose* or *Evidence and Elaboration* (for narrative writing, this latter dimension is called *Development and Elaboration*).
- * Prepare the following materials as separate handouts for each participant:
 - Grade-level set of scored student samples for the writing dimension you selected, using only examples of score points 3 and 4. These can be found on each ELA/Literacy grade-level page.
 - Standards document that shows the adjacent grade bands for the grade level represented by your teachers. Alternatively, you may wish to use a document that clearly shows the progressions, such as this one created by the Tulare County Office of Education in California: http://commoncore.tcoe.org/content/public/doc/tcoe_ela_learning_progressions.pdf
 - State ELP or ELD standards document

Activity Option 1 (continued)

FACILITATING THE ACTIVITY

Setting the Stage

(10 minutes)

Presenter says:

In the Smarter Balanced Assessment System, the full-write rubrics apply to multiple grades: grades 3 through 5 for Opinion and Informational writing; grades 6 through 11 for Argumentative and Explanatory writing; and grades 3 through 8 for narrative writing. The standards, however, embody an expectation for progress in student learning from grade to grade, reflecting slight year-to-year changes that guide how student writing should advance toward college and career readiness. In our session today we want to:

- 1. examine what your grade-level standards say;*
- 2. examine the how the anchor papers show evidence of students attaining the standards as well as the differences between the standards and the rubric;*
- 3. examine the progression in expectations for student learning that is reflected in standards year to year; and*
- 4. examine guidance on supporting our diverse learners.*

Then, orient participants to their materials.

Examining Grade-Level Standards

(20 minutes)

Presenter says:

The first step is for us to examine our grade-specific standards and come to a common understanding of what they mean.

Ask participants to:

- * Focus on the writing dimension you selected, either *Organization and Purpose* or *Evidence and Elaboration* (*Development and Elaboration* for narrative), reviewing the rubric and highlighting the standards to which that dimension aligns.*

Activity Option 1 (continued)

- * Find those standards in your standards document. Look closely at the standards in your grade level. **With a partner or small group, discuss how the concepts and skills specified in your grade-specific standards would look in student writing. Brainstorm a few concrete examples.**
 - For example, in grade 8, standard W.8.1c specifies: *Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.* What would this look like in student writing? It may look like students using specific text connectives appropriate for argumentative writing within and between sentences and paragraphs. These text connectives may consist of words that introduce different claims (e.g., *first, in addition, finally*), counterclaims (e.g., *however, on the other hand, nevertheless*), and evidence (e.g., *to illustrate, for example*). Students may also use more subtle text connectives, such as pronouns that refer to nouns introduced earlier in the text, and more specific text connectives that relate only to the context in which they are writing (e.g., *Because Dr. Field's example is widely applicable . . .*).

Examining Grade-Level Anchor Papers

(20 minutes)

Presenter says:

Now that we've discussed in some depth what these standards look like in student writing, let's examine some anchor papers and discuss how these concepts and skills show up in the anchor papers.

Ask participants to:

- * Examine the anchor papers at the score points of 3 and 4. Discuss with a partner or in small groups:
 - What evidence do you see of students demonstrating proficiency in the standards? Where do you see room for more growth on the way to proficiency?
 - What are some of the differences between the specific grade-level expectations in the standards as compared to the rubric?

Activity Option 1 (continued)

Examining Standards Progressions

(20 minutes)

Presenter says:

Now that you've examined your grade-level standards and student anchor papers, let's look to see how those standards progress into the next grade level (or, if you've chosen to look at the previous grade, progress from the previous grade into your grade).

Ask participants to:

- * Look at the same standards you just examined for your grade in an adjacent grade. Discuss with a partner or in small groups:
 - How are the concepts and skills different in the standards for the adjacent grade than they are for the standards in your grade? What do these differences indicate about the progression from one grade to the next? What would these differences look like in student writing? Brainstorm a few concrete examples.
 - Given what the standards say students need to accomplish in the next grade level, what are the implications for teaching and learning writing in your grade level? Or, if you examined standards for the grade below, given what students were expected to accomplish in the previous grade level, what are the implications for teaching and learning writing in your grade?

Activity Option 1

(continued)

Examining Needs of Diverse Learners

(20 minutes)

Presenter says:

Now that we've gotten familiar with the expectations in your standards documents and the anchor papers, let's spend some time examining how the guidelines in the ELD (or ELP) standards can support your English Learners in attaining proficiency.

Ask participants to:

Individually, with a partner or in small groups, examine your ELD (or ELP) standards document and identify which standards would provide guidance on how to support your EL students in moving toward proficiency in this dimension on the rubric. Note to presenter: If teachers complete this individually, ask them to pause to discuss after each bulleted step.

- * Think about the English learners in your classroom. What is the level of English proficiency of each of your English learners (based on state data)? Given each of their proficiency levels and the guidelines specified in the standards, what are some ways you could support your ELs in working toward proficiency in this writing domain?
- * Think about the students in your classroom with IEPs and 504 plans. What writing support does the IEP and/or 504 designate? How will you support these students in working toward proficiency in this writing domain?
- * Think about any other students in your classroom. What barriers might exist for your students to work toward proficiency in this writing domain?

Activity Option 2

(3 hours)

Complete the 90-minute activity for one dimension and then repeat it for the second dimension.

Ideas for Next Steps

- * You could ask teachers to address the questions below, after first reviewing two anchor papers that represent the same writing type and were scored using the same rubric, one from their grade level and the other from an adjacent grade level, along with the related standards and full-write rubric. In the Understanding Proficiency materials, the options are Informational papers in grades 3 and 4 and Argumentative papers in grades 8 through 11. Have them answer the following questions:
 - Do you see evidence of skill progression from one grade to the next, even though the rubric remains the same? What evidence do you see of specific concepts and skills from the standards in student writing at each grade level?
- * You could then have teachers examine their own students' work using the same rubric used in the prior activity and taking into account the skills specified in their grade-specific standards. Have them address the following questions:
 - Which students are attaining proficiency based on the rubric (using the anchor papers on this site for guidance)?
 - Which students need additional support to attain proficiency?
 - Based on their performance against the rubric, what specific type of support do your students need?
 - How can the specific skills listed in the standards provide guidance on how to support students (looking at your grade-specific standards as well as those in adjacent grades)?
 - How can you use the ELD (or ELP) standards in your state for guidance on how to provide support for your English Learners?