The New ELAR TEKS
Reconceptualizing Our Approach
to Literacy Development

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Content Standards

• Define what is important for schools to teach and for students to know and be able to demonstrate…but
• Are not simply a list of important knowledge and skills…rather
• Reflect a vision of what the curriculum should include in terms of content/skills priority and emphasis…and
• Provide a coherent structure to guide mindful teaching and meaningful learning
The Current TEKS

• Each literacy competency (content, skills, reading genres, writing purposes) articulated as a separate Knowledge and Skill

• 29 Knowledge and Skills altogether under Reading, Writing, Oral and Written Language Conventions, Research, Listening, Speaking, and Teamwork

The Current TEKS

• Relationships—or connections—across Knowledge and Skills and literacy domains are unclear/murky.
• The overarching goal—literacy—is not adequately addressed.
• Standards are organized using a “silo” approach to content standards, encouraging the isolated teaching and learning of content and skills.
The Current TEKS

- Text complexity is addressed only peripherally, so its role in literacy development has been widely misunderstood and underestimated.
- TEKS appear vertically linear, but vertical alignment (and therefore appropriate scaffolding) is often weak.

Understanding the New TEKS

Critical Topics

- Structure of Strands
- Important Literacy Principles
- Integration of Strands
- Vertical Alignment
Overall TEKS Structure

Seven major strands
S1: Foundational language skills
S2: Comprehension skills
S3: Response skills
S4: Multiple genres
S5: Author’s purpose and craft
S6: Composition
S7: Inquiry and research

Three TEKS Strands Having Substrands

Major Strand 1—Foundational Language Skills

- Oral language
- Beginning reading and writing (K–grade 5)
- Vocabulary
- Fluency (grades 1–8)
- Self-sustained reading
Three TEKS Strands Having Substrands

Major Strand 4—Multiple Genres
- Literary elements
- Genres

Major Strand 6—Composition
- Writing process
- Genres

The Numbering Problem—A Grade 7 Example

Strands and Substrands vs. Major Strands Only

- (Sub)Strands 1–4: Foundational Language Skills (Oral Language, Vocabulary, Fluency, Self-sustained Reading) [S1]
- Strand 5: Comprehension Skills [S2]
- Strand 6: Response Skills [S3]
- (Sub)Strands 7 and 8: Multiple Genres (Literary Elements and Genres) [S4]
- Strand 9: Author’s Purpose and Craft [S5]
- (Sub)Strands 10 and 11: Composition (Writing Process and Genres) [S6]
- Strand 12: Inquiry and Research [S7]
The Numbering Problem
Strands and Substrands vs. Major Strands Only

Think about the substrands in the Foundational Skills strand:
- Oral language
- Beginning reading and writing (K–grade 5)
- Vocabulary
- Fluency (grades 1–8)
- Self-sustained reading

Why do the overall number of strands in grade 2 differ from the number of strands in grade 7?

How do the substrands in Foundational Skills affect the number of strands in English I–IV?

New TEKS Structure

An important point to remember:

While each strand (and substrand) in the new TEKS represents a distinct literacy focus, the stands are not intended to be considered—or taught—separately.
Important Literacy Principles in the New TEKS

**Literacy Principle #1:** The interconnected nature of listening, speaking, reading, and writing must be central and explicit so that the skills central to literacy development are taught as both integrated and recursive.

**Literacy Principle #2:** Every strand must include thinking, since the development of literacy skills is dependent on students’ ability to think clearly, coherently, and flexibly about what they are reading, writing, viewing, listening to, and discussing.

**Literacy Principle #3:** The role of text complexity in literacy development (and in the differentiation of certain skills from grade to grade) must be central and explicit.

**Literacy Principle #4:** The alignment of knowledge and skills must make sense vertically—from grade to grade within a strand—so that the curricular structure on which instruction is based is purposeful, coherent, and appropriately scaffolded.
The Goal

Understanding how these literary principles work in the TEKS will help you

• expand your knowledge base about what your students should know and be able to do
• consider what kind of instructional changes—or pivot—will be required to teach these content standards in a way that results in meaningful literacy gains for your students

An Evolving Definition of Text

All products of language use—including written, visual, oral, audio, sign, Braille, digital, and multimodal—can be described as texts. Multimodal texts include the combination of a variety of forms of communication such as print text, digital text, visual images, and audio (e.g., a performance or event).
Why Text Complexity Matters

• The more complex the text, the more challenging it is for students to develop a sufficient understanding to “think their way” through it in order to draw both literal and implicit meanings and build a coherent sense of the text as a whole.
• Students must have a range of skills to independently “tackle,” or negotiate, texts that represent different genres and complexity levels.

How Text Complexity Works Across Grades

In the new ELAR TEKS, text complexity is the “driver” for differentiation of standards across grade levels for the Comprehension and Response strand (major strands 2 and 3):

The student uses metacognitive skills to develop and deepen comprehension of increasingly complex texts. (KS for comprehension)

The student responds to an increasingly challenging variety of sources that are read, heard, or viewed. (KS for response)
Integrating Strands at Grade 4

• (Sub)Strands 1–5: Foundational Language Skills (Oral Language, Beginning Reading/Writing, Vocabulary, Fluency, Self-sustained Reading) [S1]
• Strand 6: Comprehension Skills [S2]
• Strand 7: Response Skills [S3]
• (Sub)Strands 8 and 9: Multiple Genres (Literary Elements and Genres) [S4]
• Strand 10: Author’s Purpose and Craft [S5]
• (Sub)Strands 11 and 12: Composition (Writing Process and Genres) [S6]
• Strand 13: Inquiry and Research [S7]

One Example: Integrating Strands

Strand 11: Composition—genres. The student uses genre characteristics and craft to compose multiple texts that are meaningful. The student is

SE B: compose informational texts, including brief compositions that convey information about a topic, using a clear central idea and genre characteristics and craft
One Example: Integrating Strands

**Genre characteristics** defined not in Strand 11…
but in **Strand 9—Multiple genres**

**Craft** defined not in Strand 11…
but in **Strand 10—Author’s purpose and craft**

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Genre characteristics: Strand 9 (sub-strand “genres”)
The student recognizes and analyzes genre-specific characteristics, structures, and purposes within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse texts.
One Example: Integrating Strands

**Genre characteristics**: Strand 9 (sub-strand “genres”)
The student is expected to

**SE (D)**: recognize characteristics and structures of informational texts such as

- the central idea with supporting evidence
- features such as pronunciation guides and diagrams to support understanding
- organizational patterns such as compare and contrast

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One Example: Integrating Strands

Strand 10: Author's purpose and craft: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student uses critical inquiry to analyze the authors’ choices and how they influence and communicate meaning within a variety of texts.* The student analyzes and applies author's craft purposefully in order to develop his or her own products and performances.**

Knowledge and Skills Statement explicitly connecting reading and writing
One Example: Integrating Strands

**Author's Purpose and Craft: Strand 10.** The student is expected to

- **SE (A)** explain the author's purpose and message within a text
- **SE (B)** explain how the use of text structure contributes to the author's purpose
- **SE (C)** analyze the author's use of print and graphic features to achieve specific purposes

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One Example: Integrating Strands

**Author's Purpose and Craft: Strand 10.** The student is expected to

- **SE (D)** describe how the author's use of imagery, literal and figurative language such as simile and metaphor, and sound devices such as alliteration and assonance achieve specific purpose
- **SE (E)** identify and understand the use of literary devices, including first- or third-person point of view
- **SE (F)** discuss how the author's use of language contributes to voice
- **SE (G)** identify and explain the use of anecdote
Thinking Further about Integration Across Strands

- Think about teaching informational writing (students composing informational texts, including brief compositions that convey information about a topic, using a clear central idea and genre characteristics and craft).
- Now consider how the strands (6 and 7) and SEs listed on page 2 of your handout could also be integrated into the teaching of informational writing.

Thinking Further about Integration Within Strands

- Again, think about teaching informational writing (or any other purpose for writing that is listed under “genres” in the Composition Strand)
- Now think about the writing process and review the highlighted portions of the SEs listed on page 3 of your handout.
- How do they support informational writing instruction and offer additional connections to the strands we’ve discussed: 9, 10, 6, and 7?
A High School Example
Connecting the Strands

- Read the excerpt from *In the Shadow of Man* by Jane Goodall.
- Review the English I TEKS for Strands 5, 6, and 8.
- Then consider this task related to the excerpt:

Think carefully about the ways in which Goodall describes her encounter with the bushbuck as opposed to her encounter with the leopard. Write an essay analyzing the difference between the two encounters.

The Bushbuck

The Leopard
Connecting Strands as a High-yield Literacy Strategy

How does Goodall “help” the reader understand the difference between these two encounters?

Identify the aspects of the text—i.e., the craft decisions Goodall has made—that reveal the difference.

Evidence of craft decisions by Goodall:
- the structure (how she organizes the piece)
- the setting of each encounter
- the language she uses to describe each animal
- the language she uses to describe her own reaction to each animal and encounter
- the perspective/lens she uses to describe each encounter (how close or far away)
Connecting Strands as a High-yield Literacy Strategy

Now think about the Response strand (Strand 5 in English I).

What SEs are relevant to this task?

A Sample Student Response

In the Shadow of Man

Goodall encounters peace with a bushbuck and fear with a leopard. The difference is revealed in her description and emotion.

When encountering the bushbuck, she describes it as “moving slowly” and it seems peaceful. Goodall uses words like “velvet” and “poised” to describe the elegance of the bushbuck. She has “unbelief” that such a gentle and beautiful thing came close and touched her. This shows Goodall desired to be close to the bushbuck and welcomed its warm presence.
As Goodall describes the encounter with the leopard, she uses a different tone. She describes the animal as “rank” with “savage ferocity.” This reveals a difference in that this animal’s presence is unwanted and unpeaceful. Goodall is “startled” and “frightened” and overwhelmed by this creature. She certainly did not have the same experience with this “savage” leopard compared to the “velvet” bushbuck. The bushbuck’s presence was welcome, but the leopard’s presence was feared.

Connecting Strands as a High-yield Literacy Strategy

What students learn from these connections:
- how the choices an author/writer makes and strategies he/she uses in constructing a piece impact the way the text is read and understood
- how the writing style, language choices, structure, and elements of the text work together to create particular meanings
- how the reader and writer (and listener and speaker) are connected
- how an understanding of author’s purpose and craft can be applied to their own writing and help them become more strategic writers
Vertical Alignment

What you need to know to implement a coherent instructional program that optimizes the time you spend on real student learning of the TEKS:

• Understand the content standards beyond the grade you teach.
• Recognize the direct threads that exist from grade to grade in the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills students are expected to learn.
• Provide meaningful support and scaffolding to students by helping them learn how the literacy competencies—and the strands—are connected/interrelated.

Author’s Purpose and Craft (F or G, depending on grade level)

• Rhetorical devices
• Logical fallacies

Literary Elements

• Characterization
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<tr>
<th>Multiple Genres, Genres, Argumentative Texts (E.ii)</th>
<th>Author’s Purpose &amp; Craft, F/G Rhetorical Devices</th>
<th>Response Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literary Elements – Characterization</td>
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