



NORTHEASTERN
STATE UNIVERSITY

10 February 2016

Dear Oklahoma State Board of Education:

As the English Education Specialist at Northeastern State University, I support the new Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts. During the process, my advice and expertise was sought out to ensure that the new Oklahoma Academic Standards:

- 1) express a clear progression for the level or depth at which a skill should be mastered from grade-to-grade,
- 2) have language that is clear and free of jargon,
- 3) measure student proficiency ,
- 4) provide opportunities for students to use critical thinking skills,
- 5) prepare students for active citizenship and college and career readiness,
- 6) have smooth and reasonable transitions from grade band to grade band.

In regard to implementation of the new standards, teacher planning and time must be priorities. Dr. Rachel Green, Assistant Professor of Teacher Education at Northeastern State University, works with future NSU English teacher candidates where her job is prepare them to work effectively with future students. She argues that teacher candidates need the correct tools to prepare and that the ELAOK Academic Standards strengthen the Oklahoma English curriculum with higher level critical thinking. In addition, the standards allow for some autonomy on the district level. Dr. Green believes that the ELAOK Academic Standards need to be adopted now and that this adoption will assist her in strengthening teacher preparation.

Some argue that the new Oklahoma Academic Standards are similar to Common Core, but according to Dr. Chris Goering, Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Arkansas, alignment to Common Core is irrelevant because standards and education are a representation of a culture and vice versa, so we should not expect the standards to be wholly different than others--many of the same skills that are important in Oklahoma are important elsewhere. Goering champions the present iteration of Oklahoma standards because they followed a democratic process in their creation, and it is safe to say that the Common Core State Standards did not do that.

These standards are for Oklahoma by Oklahoma. They are rigorous, clear, succinct, and measurable. They are a baseline for what our students should know and be able to do in order to be active citizens, successful college students, and career-ready contributors to society. I support the new standards and urge the Oklahoma legislature to give dedicated educators a timely response in approving them during a period of transition that has been unwieldy.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Lara Searcy, M.Ed-NBCT
English Education Specialist