

# Return to Learn: Launching Instruction for Secondary English Language Arts

A digital version of this document can be found at <https://sde.ok.gov/covid19-instruction-support>.

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## Introduction

This guidance is designed to support educators and school administrators as they plan for various instructional delivery models for the 2020-21 school year. It has never been so important to take time and plan to attend to the goals of supporting students’ academic growth, supporting students’ and educators’ social-emotional well-being, and creating a safe environment for all students and educators.

Teachers and schools should be responsive to their local context and student needs as they develop plans for the 2020-21 school year. Therefore, **please note that the guidance and resources provided in this document are not meant to be a directive or limitation**, but rather a tool. Additional guidance about the planning educators may undertake in preparation for this school year

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can be found beginning on page 29 of the [Return to Learn Oklahoma: A Framework for Reopening Schools](#).

To provide feedback or make suggestions or requests for future guidance, please consider [completing this survey](#).

## Questions to Consider While Planning for Instruction

Educators face unique circumstances as they plan for the 2020-21 school year. In English language arts (ELA), teachers should ensure previous grade-level work is connected to on-grade-level work throughout the school year, using a high-quality, standards-based curriculum.

This section aims to provide general guidelines while also recognizing that local schools and districts have unique needs. This document focuses on the **opportunities for learning**, rather than focusing on learning gaps, and asks educators and administrators to consider what English language arts content students know and which literacy skills they currently have.

## Standards and Pacing

### What content and disciplinary skills should instruction focus on this year?

A central goal of instruction—even in this time of disruption—is to ensure each student learns grade-level content and is ready to progress to the next grade. Given that some students may start the school year further behind than typical and that disruptions are likely, focusing students on the most important content will be essential. Achieving this goal requires each teacher to understand the essential knowledge and skills from the current and prior grades to ensure curriculum and instruction are focused and coherent.

- Use the resources provided in the Oklahoma [ELA Curriculum Framework](#) to fully understand the intent of grade-level standards and how content knowledge connects and progresses across grade levels.
- Identify the content knowledge and disciplinary skills from previous grade levels that serve as prerequisite skills and knowledge for on-grade-level learning and identify what students might struggle within their current grade that may have been abbreviated or unaddressed in the 2019-20 school year. In particular, focus on serving English learners, students with disabilities, and other special populations.

- Resource: Examine the 25 [Literacy Progressions](#) from the ELA Curriculum Framework, including literary devices, literary elements, thesis/claim, and the three modes of writing.
- Eliminate extraneous aspects of curriculum and instruction that are not closely aligned to the learning goals of the standards at grade level without eliminating grade-level standards. For ELA, this means students should spend lots of time actively reading content-rich, complex texts. Students should also increase their reading volume of texts of varying complexity levels to build their knowledge and encounter academic language from various content areas.<sup>1</sup>
  - **Example:** Instead of spending multiple class periods drawing a lifesize character from a literary text on butcher paper, students could find text evidence about the character’s personality in the literary text and analyze their characterization through writing.
- Bundle standards or learning objectives to provide students with deeper connections across standards and reinforcement of learning of standards throughout the year.
  - **Example:** During a unit on a writing mode from Standard 3 Critical Writing, include mini-lessons about the author’s craft to teach Standard 5 Language, opportunities for multiple drafts to teach Standard 2 Writing Process, and word study to teach Standard 4 Vocabulary.

## Effective Instructional Routines

### How will each student learn the content and disciplinary skills associated with this discipline, whether in-person or distance learning?

In ELA, evidence-based effective instruction focuses on students engaging in recursive reading and writing processes to deepen their knowledge of literature and composition. Ultimately, students should become independent readers and writers, and all students become proficient through deliberate practice.

- Practice means doing lots and lots of reading (on- and off-grade level), combined with well-thought-out instruction, to assist students in understanding grade-level complex texts, while learning to express their meaning through speaking and writing along the way. A text-centered approach builds to students learning a lot about a lot and becoming confident, joyful readers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Student Achievement Partners. “2020-2021 Priority Instructional Content in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics.” June 2020. PDF.

- **Example:** After reading multiple chapters in a novel, students analyze the characterization of the protagonist, antagonist, or minor character through a paragraph or short essay.
- Practice also means doing lots and lots of writing (mostly ungraded), in which students are given choice in their genre, form, mode, topic, audience, and language, usually modeled after [mentor texts](#). When students are given choice and agency in their writing, they take greater care, write more, and develop confidence.
  - **Example:** After reading and analyzing five music reviews as mentor texts, students choose an album and write a review themselves.

A cycle of learning or routine for instruction that supports the goals mentioned above is provided below with considerations for blended or distance learning.

Turning Ten and Eleven - Lesson Outline		
ELA Cycle of Learning	Analog (No-Tech) Learning	Digital (Tech-Based) Learning
Share a <b>text</b> with students, asking them to keep track of what they notice and wonder.	Students read Sandra Cisneros' short story " <a href="#">Eleven</a> " and discuss what they notice and wonder. Teachers could display the short story on a projector or distribute paper copies.	Post a link to the story on your class Learning Management System (LMS) or email it to students. Use <a href="#">Zoom</a> or <a href="#">Flipgrid</a> , so students can discuss the story. Students could track their notices and wonders in a physical notebook or Google Doc.
Introduce a <b>second text</b> , connected to the first, encouraging students to track their thinking.	Students read Billy Collins' poem " <a href="#">On Turning Ten</a> ," annotating its important parts. Teachers could distribute paper copies of the poem and model how to annotate it.	Post a link to the poem on your class LMS or email it to students. Students could annotate digitally by highlighting and commenting if they move the article into a Google Doc. Use Zoom or Flipgrid to read the poem aloud, or record yourself and send an audio file with the poem.
Students make <b>connections</b> between the two texts.	Students use their notebooks to make a chart with two columns, listing the important information from the short story on the left	Students could take notes in a physical notebook or a chart in Google Docs. Students could discuss during a synchronous

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	and the poem on the right. They can discuss their findings and rationale with a small group.	class meeting on <a href="#">Zoom</a> or asynchronously on <a href="#">Flipgrid</a> .
Invite students to <b>write</b> about one or both texts.	Giving students a choice between prose or poetry, invite them to write about a moment in time from their current or past year. Using the two studied texts, they can make their title the age from when the experience happened (e.g., “Fifteen,” “On Turning Thirteen”).	Post a link to the assignment on your class LMS or email it to students. Students can draft their piece in a Google Doc or similar word processing document.
Allow students to <b>share</b> their writing with one another.	Students share their pieces in small groups of three or four and with a <a href="#">Gallery Walk</a> .	Use <a href="#">Zoom</a> or <a href="#">Flipgrid</a> , so students can read their pieces aloud to one another. Students could copy and paste their pieces into one big Google Doc, which everyone could then use as a virtual gallery walk.

This cycle of learning typically happens in 1-2 class periods during school-based learning. In blended or distance learning, this cycle may need to be completed over multiple asynchronous (on students’ own time)/synchronous (common class time) experiences.

**NOTE:** For specific guidance related to Special Education and English Language Learner instruction, visit the [OSDE Office of Special Education](#) and [Office of English Language Learner websites](#).

## Blended or Distance Learning

### How can I adapt my instruction for blended or distance learning approaches?

Some schools are already planning to offer students opportunities to engage in blended or distance learning for a semester or the full school year. When planning for long-term blended or distance learning models, instructional planning considerations above should be leveraged.

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For districts using the in-person model, schools and teachers should consider developing week-long distance learning units that can be easily deployed if the need arises. CommonLit has [distance learning units](#) developed for grades 6-12 that last from 1-2 and 2-3 weeks. Effective instructional routines can be used in school-based and distance learning environments. Think about these key shifts as you plan:

<b>Key Shifts from In-Person to Distance Learning</b>	
<b>In-Person Learning</b>	<b>Distance Learning</b>
Learning happens in school with consistent access to resources and materials	Learning happens in a variety of physical environments with varied access to resources and materials
Explicit instruction, independent and/or group work, and one-on-one support during daily class periods	Explicit instruction, independent and/or group work, and one-on-one support through flexible scheduling of asynchronous and synchronous learning  Synchronous learning sessions may occur with full groups 2-3 times a week for 20-30 minutes, rather than daily, or through some other version of flexible scheduling. Daily independent reading is still encouraged and may be connected to other subject-area assignments.
Evidence of ongoing student learning is readily visible or understood through discussions, student work, and other representations	Evidence of ongoing student learning is collected in intentional ways through digital tools such as email, Learning Management Systems, video recordings, etc.
Teacher and peer feedback through written feedback on student work, classroom discussions, and conferring	Teacher and peer feedback through comments in collaborative platforms, audio- or video-recorded feedback, using synchronous meeting opportunities to provide complex feedback in real-time
Daily interactions with students to understand student progress, struggles, and well-being	Intentionally designed check-ins to understand student progress, struggles and well-being

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For general guidance on distance learning, refer to the OSDE document [ELA Distance Learning 6-12](#). Additional guidance is provided in the chart below, which shows how to transform in-person lessons to distance ones for all eight overarching Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts.

Standard	In-Person	Distance
<b>1. Speaking &amp; Listening</b>	Have a Socratic seminar with a safe arrangement of desks about a required text.	Use Zoom or Google Hangouts to have a discussion, using an academic protocol, about a required text.
<b>2. Reading &amp; Writing Process</b>	After learning three methods of revision, students choose which one(s) to apply to a piece of writing.	A teacher can upload a slideshow of a revision lesson or include links to relevant YouTube videos. Students can revise digitally, using track changes to show their progress.
<b>3. Critical Reading &amp; Writing</b>	After studying various mentor texts, students write drafts in the mode of study.	Once mentor texts are in Google Classroom, students can download them for study. Teachers can use Zoom for class discussion about author's craft or use Screencastify to narrate a short lecture on a mentor text's special features.
<b>4. Vocabulary</b>	Show students how the parts of a word work together to make meaning, using the <a href="#">root word archive</a> on Membean. Then give them word part manipulatives to build their own words.	After showing students how <a href="#">Word Ladders</a> work, challenge them to make their own. You decide whether to give them the start and/or ending word. Students can digitally share their word ladders with one another.
<b>5. Language</b>	Show students various sentences about celebrities from pop culture magazines written in active and passive voice. Discuss impact and bias before writing sentences in both voices.	Upload some unlabeled active and passive voice sentences as a PDF or slide show to your online classroom space. Allow students to work in pairs or groups in Zoom to find the pattern of each voice. Then have students check one another's current writing piece for active and passive voice.
<b>6. Research</b>	Use the website <a href="#">Save the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus</a> to teach a	This lesson would easily translate to distance by sharing the octopus website

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	<p>lesson about the reliability and validity of sources. Students could investigate various pages and use the <a href="#">RAVEN</a> checklist to help them realize the tree octopus website is a hoax.</p>	<p>and RAVEN checklist electronically, but teachers would still need to give students examples and experiences—synchronously or asynchronously—to learn about reputation, ability to observe, vested interest, expertise, and neutrality. Then students could apply the checklist to the website.</p>
<p><b>7. Multimodal Literacies</b></p>	<p>Show students some of the hilarious posts from the <a href="#">SparkNotes Twitter account</a>, and ask them to find the literary allusions as well as determine what multimodal content was used to create them. Then invite students to make a literary meme about a shared or self-selected text.</p>	<p>Create a slideshow with examples of literary memes from the SparkNotes Twitter account. Using synchronous or asynchronous methods, challenge students to unpack the memes for literary allusion and multimodal content. Then have students create their memes use Padlet, Flipgrid, or Seesaw to share them.</p>
<p><b>8. Independent Reading &amp; Writing</b></p>	<p>Allow students to read books of choice.</p>	<p>Allow students to read books of choice, physical or digital, from the school or public library.</p>

Whether schools physically open or move to blended or distance-learning approaches, **teachers should consider using digital texts to minimize the use of paper.** See the Safety section on pages 17-19 for more safety considerations.

## Launching Instruction with Digital Tools

For more guidance for effectively implementing virtual instruction, blended learning, or creating digital variations of instruction to enact social distancing, visit [Return to Learn: Launching Instruction with Digital Tools](#). The guidance is organized around the following principles to support all learners:

- select appropriate digital tools and implement with care,
- create clear and effective communication strategies,
- build and maintain community, and
- empower student choice.

## Classroom Assessment

### How will students be provided opportunities to showcase their learning and for teachers to provide feedback to students on their learning?

Assessment should be used to provide insights into students' learning that help teachers support every student to move to grade-level content as quickly as possible. Assessments should not be used to withhold grade-level learning from any student. ELA formative assessments (e.g., exit tickets, student work, student discussions) can be incorporated throughout a cycle of learning, so teachers can determine the levels of support their students need. Providing students multiple opportunities to showcase their thinking throughout the cycle will allow teachers to better understand what students are capable of and support equitable approaches to assessment.

Listening to students read aloud, analyzing students' writing, and engaging with students in conversations about what they have read are the most efficient ways to understand what students know and can do, and where they need extra practice or other supports to access grade-level work.<sup>1</sup>

**NOTE:** When providing feedback on student writing, consider the following questions:<sup>2</sup>

- Am I respecting the student's personhood?
- Am I listening with the intent to understand?
- Am I an ally of this student and of all my students?
- Am I able to acknowledge my own subjectivity during this conversation?
- Am I able to recognize the limits of my own perspective?
- Am I paying attention to how others interpret what I say and do?

## Connections and Integration with Other Disciplines

### How can instruction support integration and reinforcement of other content and disciplinary practices?

ELA teachers can partner with math, science, and social studies teachers who are also teaching their students to read and write within their particular subjects through [disciplinary literacy](#). **Intentional collaboration** with other teachers to plan integrated lessons or units could

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<sup>2</sup> Wilson, Maja. "Responding to Writers: From Scales to Stories." Oklahoma Virtual Summer Academy. 2020. PowerPoint.

**reduce the overall assignment load placed on students** in a given week or over the course of the year.

**Examples:**

- **Social Studies:**
  - Students can analyze works written on the same topic by two historical figures and compare methods the authors use to achieve similar or different purposes.
  - Students can evaluate an author's points of view and potential bias concerning an historical or current issue and examine how authors can reach different conclusions regarding the same issue.
  - Students can compose arguments developed around a current issue or event, including a precise claim as distinguished from opposing claims, organizing logical reasoning, and providing credible evidence to develop a balanced argument.
- **Science:**
  - Students can leverage informational text (e.g., textbooks, online resources, journal articles, case studies) to support explanations for phenomena or design solutions.
  - Students can evaluate evidence from informational text (e.g., scientific journals, case studies) to support an argument or explanation for phenomena or design solutions.

**NOTE:** All teachers can partner with their media specialists to access relevant resources for their content areas.

## Student Social-Emotional Learning and Educator Well-Being

### How can instruction in this discipline support social-emotional learning for students?

Students will return to school this fall amid two profound crises: an unprecedented global pandemic and social upheaval as the nation reckons with its legacy of systemic racial oppression. For this reason, as educators plan for a strong start to the 2020-21 school year, it will be critical to prioritize well-being and connection, which research shows are prerequisites to effective teaching and learning.

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**NOTE:** Consider incorporating [sample teaching activities](#) provided by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) to support core competencies of social-emotional learning for students this year.

Evidence-based approaches to ELA instruction and assessment also support social-emotional learning for students. Here are a few specific suggestions for supporting student well-being and social-emotional learning in ELA for both in-person and distance learning.

- Explore fiction and nonfiction about people who have dealt with unresolved conflict. Routinely ask students how these characters or figures dealt with their conflict in healthy ways.
- Have students journal or write a piece of narrative nonfiction about a time when their behavior had a positive or negative impact on someone they cared about or their community. **For more examples of subject-specific connections** to social-emotional learning, go [here](#).
- Establish collaborative norms and a [supportive learning environment](#) at the beginning of the year.
- Provide students opportunities to engage in reading and writing that reflects their interests and surroundings.
- Provide students with the opportunity to revise their thinking based on newly acquired information to help them gain confidence and feel a sense of autonomy in their learning.
- Structure opportunities for students to engage in partner, small-group, and whole-group discussions through in-person and distance learning experiences.
- Provide authentic feedback and ask open-ended questions that invite students to engage in deeper reflection about their strengths and interests as they relate to ELA tasks.
- Provide consistent check-in opportunities for students throughout the year.

**NOTE:** Consider sharing these documents with families of students: [Self-Care for Parents and Caregivers](#) | [Guidance for Distance Learning Environment: Helpful Tips for Families](#) | [Family Guide to Positive Behavior in Distance Learning Environments](#)

## What are ways to ensure regular self-care as an educator?

Before teachers can be expected to provide healthy and safe environments for students, it is important that they also take time to attend to their personal care and well-being. Doing a personal check-in using the questions below can be a good place to start.

- How am I taking care of my physical needs, including getting enough sleep, exercise, and nutrition?
- Do I have a routine? If so, which parts of the routine are working well, and which could be improved on? If not, how can I use a routine to reduce stress and encourage healthy behaviors?
- Do I have a sense of balance between work and other life demands? How can I take steps to “turn off” work and spend time doing other things that bring joy?
- Am I staying connected with friends and family? How do I need to make adjustments given current limitations?

Here are a few additional resources to support teacher well-being at this time:

- [Self-Care for Teachers and Educational Professionals](#)
- Free interactive sessions from [Pure Edge](#), to support self-care
- [Social-Emotional Toolkit for Educators](#)

## How can students experiencing chronic stress be supported?

Students are going to have a variety of reactions to the realities of 2020. Here are a few examples of how to create a safe space for students who may be experiencing chronic stress due to past and recent events:

- Leverage the [SEL Hacks](#) and [read this blog](#) showing how to create a safe, nurturing, relationship-based environment for students both in-person or through distance learning.
- Provide age-appropriate and factual information to students about COVID-19, but try to focus on how [adults are trying to keep them safe](#).
- Consider reactions students may have to the pandemic and ways to support them ([English](#) | [Spanish](#)).
- Consider the effect discussions about the pandemic may have on students who may have experienced the effects of COVID-19 and other diseases in family and acquaintances. Caution should be generously applied in any case where such context may create discomfort or harm for any students.
- Encourage students to verbalize their feelings. Helping them put their emotions into words can give them a sense of control in the situation.

- Help students build connections, with you and with each other. This may be more challenging given the need for social distancing or distance learning, but caring connections with others are more important than ever. (See building classroom community resources above.)
- Routine and predictability are important. If possible, try to communicate with students about any changes before they happen. Given potentially quick changes that may happen this year, explaining the changes as or after they happen can help students adjust as well.
- Explore [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network Resource Guide for Trauma-Informed School Strategies During COVID-19](#). This document gives deeper insight into COVID-19 related chronic stress and tangible strategies for teachers and administrators.

## Equity and Inclusion

### What curriculum choices and instructional practices support equity and access to quality instruction?

While the guidance provided throughout this document promotes equitable teaching and learning practices through research-based effective English language arts instruction, educators need to spend time reflecting on planning for and implementing strategies that support more equitable and inclusive learning environments for students in the 2020-21 school year. In addition to the equitable instructional practices referenced throughout the document, the chart below lists practices to keep in mind given the current realities of returning to school:

More Equitable Practices	Less Equitable Practices
Making sure that students and families have what they need to access instruction or communication and shifting practices where necessary to ensure access for all.	Deciding on one form of instructional delivery or parent communication and sticking to only that.

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Providing all students grade-level learning, regardless of their starting points. All students are capable of progressing to the next grade level this fall and mastering that content.	Never giving students access to on grade-level content because of the perceived deficits they entered this school year with or providing “over-remediation” instead of focusing on below-grade-level work only when it is necessary for a student to complete grade-level work. <sup>3</sup>
Noticing/paying attention to students’ ELA thinking to see how students position and identify themselves and each other. Learn about the different worlds your students live in, and use texts that come from those worlds.	Using examples and other materials that are limited in their diversity and/or representation of cultures and experiences or “leave out” students’ identities.
Creating and engaging as a community by working with other educators and with your students throughout the year to work on building equity-oriented communities. <sup>3</sup>	Staying in a “silo” without consulting or working with other educators to build equity-oriented school communities.
Offering multiple opportunities and methods for students to demonstrate their proficiencies.	Using only one form of assessment to measure student progress.
Providing opportunities for self-reflection and student-reflection.	Continuing with a pacing guide or curriculum map without pausing for reflection or making adjustments based on student need and reflection.

## What are productive structures to organize students for instruction?

Decisions about how students will be organized for instruction will vary within schools and across school districts. These decisions will reflect beliefs about how and which students can and should learn ELA. To promote equitable access to high-quality ELA education, we must have productive structures for organizing students<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> TNTP. (2020, April). *Learning Acceleration Guide*. TNTP.  
[https://tntp.org/assets/covid-19-toolkit-resources/TNTP\\_Learning\\_Acceleration\\_Guide.pdf](https://tntp.org/assets/covid-19-toolkit-resources/TNTP_Learning_Acceleration_Guide.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> NCTM/NCSM. (2020, June). *Moving Forward: Mathematics Learning in the Era of COVID-19*. NCSM.  
[https://www.mathedleadership.org/docs/resources/NCTM\\_NCSM\\_Moving\\_Forward.pdf](https://www.mathedleadership.org/docs/resources/NCTM_NCSM_Moving_Forward.pdf)

- If students receive reading and writing instruction from two different teachers, provide time for the teachers to collaborate for a recursive, integrated ELA learning experience for students.
- Assign students to teachers using structures that ensure heterogeneous ability groups, being mindful of potential inequities, such as access to technology, as schools shift between in-school and out-of-school learning.
- Create strategically mixed groups of students with a variety of strengths within classes and have them collaborate to complete rich tasks in a variety of media, including digital and print.
- Ensure that highly-qualified ELA teachers are in place for initial instruction and any intervention plans.

### Teacher Self-Reflection

Equity-based teaching requires reflection, which involves not just reflecting on your pedagogy and your classroom norms, but also considering how you identify yourself and how others identify you. Before and during the school year, reflect on your own identity, positions, and beliefs regarding how school works for all students. Consider examining your ELA curriculum and instructional practices for inherent or implicit bias by exploring the following questions:

- Do I withhold certain instructional practices or content from certain groups of students based on assumptions or beliefs about their capacity, home-life, culture or some other factor assumed to make them less ready?
- Do my instructional practices invite in multiple voices and perspectives?
- Do I find time to provide individual attention to my students during instruction or assessment feedback loops?
- Do my assignments and tasks limit the curiosity, creativity, and potential of students?
- Am I providing my ELA knowledge rather than helping students develop their own?
- How might my curriculum and instruction perpetuate an education system that marginalizes certain students?
- Do the authors of my required texts represent a diverse group of ethnicities, sexes, and genres?
- Do my students see their identities reflected in the required texts in my curriculum?
- Whose voices need removed and/or added to the curriculum?
- Do I only honor alphabetic content as writing in my classroom, or do I also allow aural, visual, spatial, and gestural content?
- Do I approach grammar as a prescriptivist with a set of rules or as a descriptivist with an open mind? ([Learn more.](#))

- Do I allow students to submit their writing anonymously (with a student ID number), so I can provide feedback with less bias?

**NOTE:** Test your own implicit bias and learn about strategies for overcoming these biases using information provided through [Harvard University's Project Implicit](#).

## Creating an Anti-Bias Classroom

Current events addressing systemic racism in our nation remind us to examine our own biases as educators and any bias in our curriculum and instruction. When we focus on creating a classroom focused on anti-bias education, we provide opportunities for students to use their lived experiences and interests to deepen their understanding of ELA.<sup>5</sup> ELA curriculum and instruction can support efforts toward anti-bias education by providing:<sup>6</sup>

- texts that reflect each student's ethnic background and history as a way to address institutional and interpersonal racism.
- an environment where silence about racism isn't encouraged
- lessons that empower students and honor their multiple Englishes as well as their home and cultural spaces.
- lessons that teach mainstream power codes and discourses that lead students to become critical users of diverse language conventions.
- lessons that incorporate, examine, and critique popular culture and the evolution of language with students.
- the choice of culturally and ethnically relevant texts.
- opportunities to cite, explore, and welcome marginalized voices of color in their communities.
- time and space to investigate cultural and ethnic privileges and marginalizations as enacted in course texts.
- content texts that include children's literature and young adult books that reflect the culturally diverse lives and experiences of all students.
- course teaching stances that are anthropologically and ethnographically informed.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Berry, Robert. *Connecting Mathematics Education to Social Justice Issues*. University of Virginia. <https://curry.virginia.edu/news/connecting-mathematics-education-social-justice-issues>

<sup>6</sup> The Action Working Group of the Standing Committee Against Racism and Bias in the Teaching of English. NCTE. <http://ncte.org/app/uploads/2018/09/QualitiesAntiRacistELACurricula.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> See Belief 3 from Supporting Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Learners in English Education. NCTE. <https://ncte.org/statement/diverselearnersinee/>

Teachers can also read Vanessa Perez's [advice column on anti-bias teaching](#) from the July 2020 ELAOK newsletter for more ideas on how to work toward having an anti-bias ELA classroom.

## Safety: Physical Environment and Supplies

Educators planning for in-person, blended and distance learning instructional delivery models should **always defer to the safety guidelines provided by their school or district**. As the COVID-19 situation continuously develops, also consult the current [Oklahoma Department of Health \(OSDH\)](#) and [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) health and safety guidelines.

Reading books, writing in notebooks, and class discussions are key components of ELA learning. Teachers may need to modify many normal instructional practices to prevent the spread of viruses and other disease-causing organisms. The following ELA classroom safety considerations are not intended to replace a district's emergency or crisis safety plan and are not an exhaustive list of the health and safety needs to be considered.

### Physical Learning Environment

In the past, ELA teachers could arrange their classrooms in a variety of ways, but now there are some physical considerations:

- Desks and students should remain spaced at least 6 feet apart, to the extent possible, and face the same direction rather than students facing each other or working in physical groups. Spacing could also be encouraged through markings on tables and floor and the placement of desks. Utilize digital tools and class discussions to maintain collaborative learning opportunities.
- Keep doors open or consider holding some classes outdoors or in larger spaces such as gymnasiums, auditoriums, vacant hallways, and cafeterias, if possible.
- Frequently wipe down high-touch surfaces such as desks, tables, chairs, door handles, and light switches.
- Where students typically wait in line, place tape markings to indicate social distancing.
- Educators are strongly encouraged to use assigned seating.

### Classroom Materials

- Classrooms should reduce the use of shared items that may be difficult to clean. Items that must be shared, such as computers and tablets, should be cleaned between use. Provide methods for safe and sanitary disposal of used materials.

- Keep each student’s belongings separated from those of others and in individually labeled containers, cubbies or areas.
- Instead of turning in paper copies of assignments, consider taking a picture to view or having students submit student work digitally, allowing for closer examination and/or digital collaboration.
- Work with your administration and library media specialist(s) to determine safe protocols for students to check out physical books.
- Arrange classroom library books spine out, so students can see the titles and use their phones to look up a book’s summary.
- Place a bin for students to return their classroom library books. Allow for a 72-hour quarantine before returning the book to the shelf.
  - The Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) recommends a minimum 3-day quarantine of collection items as the most effective way to disinfect them after handling by staff and students. Because some studies have found that a 7-day period is required—and because of the small number of studies overall—some institutions may opt to continue with a 7-day quarantine, which NEDCC recommended in an earlier publication.<sup>8</sup>
  - A 7-day quarantine is appropriate for any collection item about which a curator is uncertain.<sup>9</sup>
  - If a dedicated quarantine space cannot be established for collection items, staff can place items in bags until the quarantine period is over so that staff does not accidentally handle the items. It is not advisable to tightly seal the bags because this can create potentially-damaging microclimates.<sup>9</sup>
- Partner with your county library system, so students can use library cards to check out digital books from platforms like Overdrive and Sora.

### Additional Considerations

ELA learning relies on the interaction between students and teachers and among students to construct ELA knowledge and skills. Teachers may need to modify the normal practices of having students work in pairs and small groups during literature circles, writing groups, etc. Here are some considerations for maintaining those interactions and yet avoid the spreading of disease.

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<sup>8</sup> Northeast Document Conservation Center. “3.5 Disinfecting Books and Other Collections.” 26 June 2020. Webpage.

- Limit guests and visitors to the classroom while remaining mindful that parents and families play a vital role in their child’s education; involve guest speakers through virtual means.
- Evaluate planned student activities for safety and student interactions, but also their value for engaging students in meaningful ELA thinking and learning. Consider alternatives that teach the same concepts and skills. Build in extra time for sanitizing activities.
- Include instruction that teaches the routines and procedures that students should use in the class and out-of-school. Consider the traffic flow when distributing materials and other movements. Minimize the number of students that need to move. Establish personal student practices such as wearing masks, washing hands, and sharing materials. Use signage that encourages the practices.
- Modify grouping practices. For literature circles and writing groups, arrange desks so students can remain at a proper six-foot distance. For group documents, use an electronic form instead of a shared physical paper.
- Consider alternative methods for writing groups. Students could share their writing pieces with one another electronically and then provide feedback orally or by leaving electronic comments on one another’s documents.

## Ongoing Support for Instruction

OSDE will continue to provide ongoing support for instruction during the 2020-2021 academic year. Continue to check the OSDE ELA [website](#) and [sign up for the ELAOK Newsletter](#) to see upcoming professional learning opportunities, office hours, and additional instructional resources.

### Professional Learning Opportunities

- [ELAOK Toolkit](#): Use this toolkit to guide ongoing discussions and planning for the successful implementation of the Oklahoma Academic Standards for ELA.
- [Tech Tuesday Recordings](#): Learn about different education technology tools for instruction.
- Old slideshows of past Engage OK & fall regionals workshops are available on the [OSDE ELA Resources page](#) in the Professional Development Slideshows section.
- More opportunities coming this fall.

### OSDE Hosted Virtual Meetings

Join OSDE staff and ELA teachers around the state for monthly professional learning opportunities during the 2020-21 school year.

#### Secondary ELA Virtual Meetings

- Every 2nd Wednesday of each month, 3:30-4:30 p.m.
  - August 12, 2020 ([Zoom link](#))
  - September 9, 2020
  - October 7, 2020
  - November 11, 2020
  - December 9, 2020
  - January 13, 2021
  - February 10, 2021
  - March 10, 2021
  - April 14, 2021
  - May 12, 2021

Zoom information for other meetings will be communicated through the ELAOK Newsletter. [Subscribe to the newsletter here!](#)

## Social Media Connections

### Facebook Community

- All Grade Levels: [#ELAOK](#)

### Twitter

- Use and search [#elaok](#) to highlight and find ELA resources for Oklahoma educators.
- OSDE Twitter Account: [@oksde](#)

### Flipgrid

- Share a brief video on the ELAOK [Flipgrid board](#).

## State-Level ELA Organizations

- [Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English](#)
- [Oklahoma Literacy Association](#)

## Contact Information for OSDE ELA Staff

We are here to help in any way we can. Feel free to email any of the following people at OSDE if you have questions or need support.

- **Jason Stephenson**
  - Director of Secondary English Language Arts
  - Office of Curriculum & Instruction
  - [Jason.Stephenson@sde.ok.gov](mailto:Jason.Stephenson@sde.ok.gov)
  - Twitter: [@teacherman82](#)
- **Deb Wade**
  - Director of Elementary English Language Arts
  - Office of Curriculum & Instruction
  - [Deb.Wade@sde.ok.gov](mailto:Deb.Wade@sde.ok.gov)
  - Twitter: [@a\\_wadewithwords](#)
- **Andrea Chrisman**
  - ELA Specialist
  - Project Excel
  - [Andrea.Chrisman@sde.ok.gov](mailto:Andrea.Chrisman@sde.ok.gov)