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Date: January 2, 2020

Source of Report: Letter received from the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs relating to LD 387

Topic: Cursive Handwriting Instruction

Context

On April 9, 2019, the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural affairs submitted a letter to Commissioner Makin regarding LD 387, *An Act to Require Cursive Handwriting Instruction in Grade 3 to Grade 5*. As part of the English Language Arts Standards Review process this letter was considered by the English Language Arts Steering Committee and included in the Steering Committee Guidance to the Standards Writing Committee.

The ELA Steering Committee, a ten-member committee comprised of public-school administrators, curriculum directors, English language learner instructors, higher education, representative school board members and a state Board of Education representative, considered the letter and the recommendation of requiring cursive writing instruction for grade 3 to grade 5. The Committee determined that to best address the intent of students' ability to communicate and read cursive writing as a 21st century skill, the clarification of types of texts should be added in a preamble to the reading and writing strands, rather than as performance indicators by grade level. The specific reference for the Reading Preamble and the Writing Preamble from the Steering committee guidance is included below.

Steering Committee Guidance to the Writing Team

Strand A – Reading:

Preamble should include:

- **Expanded definition of “text”. Definition of print: include the ability to read various texts such as print, cursive, and common digital fonts.**
- Definition of fluency.
- A balance of instructional approaches and possibilities.
- Explanation of the philosophical importance of phonics.
- Explanation of text complexity with quantitative, qualitative, and reader & task elements mentioning that these are further explained in supporting documents.
- Explanation of range of reading text types and text complexity (current standard #10)

Strand B – Writing:

Preamble should expand:

- Text types

- Composing
- **Forms of writing (print, cursive, keyboarding, font etc.)**
- Range of writing: writing standard 10 should part of the preamble introduction to the writing section.

The ELA Standards Writing Committee, comprised of 47 educators from across the state, made revisions and edits to Maine’s English Language Arts Standards based on the Steering Committee Guidance. The skills of reading and writing in all forms of print are addressed in the preamble of each section. The foundational skill of letter formation in print remains as a performance indicator in Standard #3. All other indicators are incorporated into each strand preamble.

READING PREAMBLE

The goal of all reading instruction is to help students become competent consumers of a wide variety of texts in diverse forms so that they can achieve independence, find meaning, and use literacy for lifelong learning, empowerment, and enjoyment.

A text is anything that can be read, heard or viewed. Texts may include words, images, objects, sounds, and symbols that convey messages from developers to consumers. They broadly encompass multiple purposes, audience appeal, and a wide variety of human experiences that create meaning for the reader. When choosing texts, teachers must consider the qualities of complexity and the diversity of texts each student should experience.

The reading standards are designed progressively, using specificity and scaffolding to engage all readers in pursuing skills and experiences that contribute to personal, communal, and global needs and interests. This design promotes essential reading skills, allowing students to understand and enjoy a wide range of texts from a variety of perspectives. Teachers must employ a balance of research-based instructional approaches and strategies designed to provide multiple opportunities for transfer of learning.

WRITING PREAMBLE

Writing is a lifelong, essential tool for communication. In order to prepare students for varied and evolving writing tasks, students should write routinely, in both long- and short-time frames, as a means of building writing stamina. **Moreover, students should write in a breadth of modes and forms across all disciplines. This includes the foundational instruction of legible handwriting forms and skills such as printing, cursive, typing, as well as the use of technology to compose, where the use of formatting supports the task, audience, and purpose.**

In order to manage the increasing complexity of what students read and write, educators provide guidance and support when developmentally appropriate, with the understanding that students need to develop autonomy and independence over time, particularly at the upper grade levels. To that end, the standards include a developmentally appropriate progression of performance expectations that includes

all grade levels. The K-5 performance expectations reflect a foundational level of skill acquisition, while the 6-8 and 9-Diploma grade bands expect that writing grows in sophistication and complexity.

The strand of writing includes three standards, which have been arranged to reflect a traditional learning progression in the classroom, incorporating the use of technology when authentic to the task. Students begin with an exploration of a variety of texts/ideas, then use a process to refine, plan, and craft the communication of ideas, and finally compose with a style that reflects awareness of task, audience, and purpose. The standard and performance expectations for composing are consistent regardless of mode; therefore, the performance expectations for common modes (argument/opinion, informational/expository, and narrative) have been outlined in supporting documents.

The proposed standards were in a public comment period from October 23, 2019 to November 27, 2019. A public hearing was held on November 13, 2019. Following the public hearing and public comment period, the Maine DOE will prepare and submit provisional adoption of standards revisions to the Secretary of State and Legislative Council before moving on to an LD resolve.

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STATE OF MAINE
ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

A. Pender Makin
Commissioner of Education
Maine Department of Education
23 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0023

April 9, 2019

Dear Commissioner Makin:

On behalf of the members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, we are writing to you in regards to LD 387, An Act to Require Cursive Handwriting Instruction in Grade 3 to Grade 5.

During the public hearing and work session on this bill, we learned that Maine's English language arts standards, within the Parameters for Essential Instruction, are currently under review. We are respectfully requesting that, as part of the review of the English language arts standards, the members of the English language arts standards review committee consider the option of incorporating cursive handwriting into the English language arts standards for grade 3 to grade 5.

Thank you for your time and consideration and please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Sen. Rebecca J. Millett
Senate Chair

Rep. Victoria P. Kornfield
House Chair

Cc: Members, Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Lee Ann Larsen, Early Learning Team Coordinator, Department of Education