



English Language Arts

Resource Guide

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NOTE: This document is a work in progress. Parts II and III, in particular, are in need of further development, and we invite the submission of additional learning experiences and local performance tasks for these sections. Inquiries regarding submission of materials should be directed to: English Language Arts Resource Guide, Room 681 EBA, New York State Education Department, Albany, NY 12234 (tel. 518-474-5922).

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Foreword

New York State is engaged in a serious effort to raise standards for students. The strategy for raising standards, as clearly articulated by Commissioner Richard Mills, includes three elements:

1. Setting clear, high expectations/standards for *all* students and developing an effective means of assessing student progress in meeting the standards;
2. Building the local capacity of schools/districts to enable *all* students to meet standards; and
3. Making public the results of the assessment of student progress through school reports.

The learning standards approved by the Board of Regents reflect the intensive, collaborative work conducted over the past few years by the State Education Department and by national groups, such as the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools and Teaching (NCREST), the Council of Chief State School Officers, and the New Standards Project.

Learning standards have two primary dimensions. **Content standards** describe what students should know, understand and be able to do. **Performance standards** define levels of student achievement pertaining to content. However, the teaching and learning which takes place in between is the heart of the matter. This addresses **opportunity to learn standards** and is, perhaps, the most crucial element of the entire process.

Classroom teachers have a tremendous challenge. They must bring reality to the **teaching and learning** process in order to assure that *all* of their students will perform at higher levels. They also have a wonderful opportunity for both professional and personal growth. Numberless occasions are available for teachers to really examine their instructional practice, to share what it is they do each day with their students, to work in collaboration with other teachers and students and, thereby, to grow in their understanding of the craft of teaching. In his book, *Teaching: Making Sense of an Uncertain Craft* (Teacher's College Press, 1992), Joseph McDonald states that:

“Real teaching. . . happens inside a wild triangle of relations—among teachers, students, subject—and all points of the triangle shift continuously.”

This Resource Guide has been developed to get inside this triangle and provide some clarity, to demonstrate concretely how colleagues across the state are tackling the job of standards-based teaching and learning, and to offer examples of resource/research materials which can serve to inform local curriculum development. The standards define the points of the triangle; they are the starting point. Assessments are simultaneously ends and beginnings; they serve both as benchmarks to ascertain what and how well students are learning and as springboards for further teaching and learning. Real teaching shifts continuously in response to the needs of students as they strive to understand the content and to demonstrate their understanding in a variety of assessment contexts.

The Board of Regents recognizes the diversity of students in New York State, including students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, gifted students, and educationally disadvantaged students, and has made a strong commitment to integrating the education of all students into the total school program. The standards in the framework apply to all students, regardless of their experiential background, capabilities, developmental and learning

differences, interests, or ambitions. A classroom typically includes students with a wide range of abilities who may pursue multiple pathways to learn effectively, participate meaningfully, and work toward attaining the curricular standards. Students with diverse learning needs may need accommodations or adaptations of instructional strategies and materials to enhance their learning and/or adjust for their learning capabilities.

The *English Language Arts Resource Guide* has been conceptualized using these philosophical bases. The content has been selected to address important aspects of the teaching and learning process. It is our hope that all the partners in all learning communities in New York State will find the document useful, practical and informative.

Introduction

The *English Language Arts Resource Guide* is the first of a series of resource guides which are being designed to serve as companion documents to the Frameworks and the Learning Standards. Each resource guide is intended to (1) **establish connections** for administrators and teachers between these learning standards and the specifics of classroom instruction and to (2) provide further **elaboration of the standards** which will be of assistance in planning grade by grade curriculum. It is the hope of all those who worked on the development of this resource guide that teachers and students will find the support they need to give students the opportunity to learn and achieve.

The guide has been developed with significant input from local districts, schools, and teachers who are currently working to align their instructional practices with the learning standards. The document is not comprehensive or exhaustive. Yet it provides teachers with a wealth of information, strategies, learning experiences, sample assessments, research, and specific discipline materials which can be used in the curriculum development process within each school/district.

The *English Language Arts Resource Guide* is divided into three major sections:

Part I: Planning a Standards-Based Curriculum: Curriculum Essentials

The purpose of this section is to outline the elements considered essential in planning a standards-based English language arts curriculum. It contains such information as a description of key English language arts experiences, background information on such topics as literary genres, language functions, resources and literature suggestions from a variety of sources. Samples of locally developed curricula and scope and sequence materials are also included.

Part II: Planning a Standards-Based Curriculum: Learning Experiences

Standards-based learning experiences developed and reviewed by classroom teachers from across the state are presented in this section as examples of “real” activities that can be used to bring the learning standards to life in a classroom setting.

Part III: Planning a Standards-Based Curriculum: Assessment Models

Assessing student achievement of the learning standards is an on-going process. This section provides teachers with a variety of assessments which have been used in pilot situations, examples of extended tasks which can be used with secondary students, and assessment materials developed by teachers and administrators throughout the State.

This guide is not a final, complete document. Rather, the materials and learning experiences included in this edition represent a beginning. The production staff for this document believes that many other individuals in schools across the state can make contributions to this document which will make it an even richer expression of teacher and administrator commitment to teaching and learning. It is our hope that teachers, schools, and districts will send us locally developed curricular materials, assessments or other resources that they would like to share with others.

We also believe that the peer review process used to select the learning experiences included in the Guide is a valuable and insightful staff development opportunity. We hope that this process will be replicated in schools across the state for two reasons: (1) to help teachers share their work with colleagues and receive useful feedback to inform their own practice and (2) to generate additional learning experiences for inclusion in future editions of the Guide.

The final version of the *English Language Arts Resource Guide* will be available in hardcopy, as a Compact Disc for use on CDROM, and is accessible on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.nysed.gov>

The State Education Department expresses appreciation to all who have contributed to the preparation of this document. Many people have worked long and hard to bring this resource guide to our English Language Arts colleagues and to all teachers, since proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking are essential to all disciplines.