

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT

**PRELIMINARY DRAFT
FRAMEWORK**

FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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FOREWORD

Some of the students in New York State schools today are winning prizes in national contests for their writing ability. In 1994, sixty-three eleventh-grade students from New York were honored by the National Council of Teachers of English for their ability to write well-developed essays, the second highest number of winners of all the states. Some of our students are competing in statewide and national debating and oratorical contests, in mock trials and moot courts requiring the presentation of sophisticated analysis and argument on topics of current interest. Some of our students are writing poetry and fiction for publication in journals for young writers, such as *Merlyn's Pen: The National Magazine of Student Writing*. Some of our students are writing research papers and reports on scientific inquiry that are gaining them college credit in academic areas like history, chemistry, or advanced biology. And some of our students are engaged in school and community service projects that require them to communicate effectively with senior citizens, people with disabilities, elementary and preschool children; that is, with people of all ages and backgrounds. In short, some of our students are developing and exhibiting outstanding language proficiency in all of the ways required for full and productive participation in our society.

Some of them are—but not all. Many of our students do not achieve proficiency as readers, writers, listeners, or speakers, not because of a lack of ability or interest on their parts, but because not all the important uses of language are included in their programs or measured by the tests they are required to pass. They go through their educational programs without having the opportunity or the requirement to use language in many of these powerful and essential ways. They are not required to write regularly to summarize or synthesize complex information, or to read and discuss their interpretations of rich literature, or to take part in formal panel presentations on significant issues and topics they are studying. Without such regular experiences and guided practice in using language for serious academic study, students cannot develop their language proficiency as fully as possible or develop an in-depth understanding of the topics and issues they are studying.

That does not mean that, given that experience, all students will achieve the same high level of excellence in all areas of language use. The prize-winning poet may not be an equally effective debater, and the writer of insightful and complex analyses of current social and political issues may be less accomplished in understanding the levels of meaning in a complex work of fiction. The important thing is for all students to have experiences that allow them to develop all of these important language abilities as fully as they can, and to develop some of them to a higher degree of excellence according to their talents and interests.

This framework for English language arts attempts to insure for all students the opportunity to develop all of the essential language proficiencies by establishing standards in each of the four major purposes of language use suggested by the examples above. The standards call for students to achieve proficiency in:

- reading, writing, listening, and speaking to acquire and transmit information. This is the language ability involved in reading textbooks and other reference material; in conducting library research, in using electronic data bases and information networks, in writing essays and feature articles, and in developing and delivering oral reports.
- reading, writing, listening, and speaking for literary response and expression. This standard requires that students read and understand rich literature from the classical authors such as Shakespeare, Austen, Hawthorne, and Keats to modern standard-setters like Robert Frost, Langston Hughes, Toni Morrison, and Cormac McCarthy; that they present oral and written interpretations of such complex literature; and that they write some fiction and poetry of their own.

- reading, writing, listening, and speaking to analyze and evaluate complex texts and issues. Critical analysis requires that students consider many divergent perspectives on significant issues and evaluate each perspective using a variety of criteria; it requires that they form and defend their own positions on significant issues and present, both orally and in writing, well-developed arguments supported with sound evidence.
- listening, speaking, writing, and reading for social interaction. Effective social communication is essential for students' success in school, in the community, and on the job. This standard requires that students learn how to talk effectively with people they need to work and study with; that they know how to adjust their language to respect the age, position, or cultural background of the person being addressed; that they understand and follow the conventions for speaking in particular social situations; and that they can write thank you notes, friendly letters, and other social correspondence.

These learning standards are the essential elements of the framework, but, as its name suggests, the framework is only the beginning. It provides the basic structure on which schools and teachers will construct appropriate curriculum and instructional programs for their students. They will choose the particular books that their students will read, design the research projects that will involve their classes in meaningful academic investigation, develop assessment tasks and criteria for performance that challenge students to reach increasingly higher levels of learning and prepare students to meet the requirements of State and national tests, college admissions offices, and competitive workplaces. The framework is intended to guide that process while allowing the flexibility needed for districts to bring all their students to ever higher standards of learning.

CONTENTS

Foreward **iii**

Acknowledgments **vi**

CHAPTER I: THE NEW YORK STATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS **1**

- The Foundation for the English Language Arts Framework **1**
- The Purpose of the Framework **3**

CHAPTER II: A RATIONALE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS **5**

- The Nature of Language **5**
- Trends and Issues in English Language Arts **6**

CHAPTER III: LEARNING STANDARDS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS **15**

- Language Standards in a Learning-Centered Curriculum **15**
- Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding **16**
- Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression **22**
- Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation **26**
- Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction **31**
- The Standards Continuum **35**

CHAPTER IV: USING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS TO PLAN CURRICULUM IN THE SCHOOLS **39**

- An Implementation Strategy **39**

CHAPTER V: USING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS TO GUIDE ASSESSMENT **45**

- Multiple Sources of Evidence **45**

REFERENCES **57**

APPENDICES **59**

- A: Regents Goals for Elementary, Middle, and Secondary School Students **59**
- B: Curriculum Planning at Three Levels **62**
 - Achieving the English Language Arts Standards in the Elementary School Years **62**
 - Achieving the English Language Arts Standards in the Middle School Years **83**
 - Achieving the English Language Arts Standards in the High School Years **96**
- C: Higher Standards for Students of New York State: Developing Curriculum Frameworks **110**
- D: Students With Disabilities **114**

A response form for readers is on page 117. The next version of this document will reflect comments from those who respond.

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CHAPTER I: THE NEW YORK STATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

The Foundation for the English Language Arts Framework

The Context for Change

The education reform efforts in New York State have their genesis in the national reform reports of the 1980's; e.g., *A Nation at Risk* (The National Commission on Excellence in Education), *High School* (Ernest Boyer), *A Place Called School* (John Goodlad), *Academic Preparation for College* (The College Board), and *America's Competitive Challenge*. Among the themes resounding in these reports is the call for:

- a better match between today's educational system and the needs of today's student body;
- curricula that are more challenging and compelling, with clearly defined goals and high academic standards;
- more flexible school structures, with more integration among the disciplines; and
- a redistribution of responsibility, with greater autonomy for schools and more participation by the community.

There should never be a child—let alone a generation of children—who passes through our schools unawakened and unprepared for what will come. Educating a new generation of Americans to their full potential is still our most compelling obligation.

-Boyer, 1984

Between the lines of these documents is the demand for greater equity in access to knowledge for all students. *A Nation At Risk*, for example, notes that, "We do not believe that a public commitment to excellence and educational reform must be made at the expense of a strong public commitment to the equitable treatment of our diverse population. The twin goals of equity and high-quality schooling have profound and practical meaning for our economy and society, and we cannot permit one to yield to the other either in principle or in practice" Taken together, the reform reports challenged many existing views of education and prompted blueprints for action in nearly every state.

New York State's Response

The Regents Goals and A New Compact for Learning

An early and important response by New York State to the needs expressed in the national reform reports was the Regents Action Plan to Improve Elementary and Secondary Education Results, adopted in 1984. Its statement of Regents Goals (Appendix A) emphasizes broad-based learning, knowledge, and skills, and high expectations for all students. The next major action of the Board of Regents in the move toward reform was the adoption in 1991 of *A New Compact for Learning*, a document that provides a *rationale* for

systemic change and a *vision* for learning-centered schools. This vision is a redefinition of the roles and responsibilities of the State and the local school districts for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Under the Compact, the State's role includes collaborating with teachers, administrators, parents, and others interested in education to stimulate and support locally developed curricula by focusing on the results of elementary, middle, and secondary education and establishing standards of student performance.

The Curriculum Frameworks

The curriculum frameworks are one result of this collaboration. The Curriculum and Assessment Council was appointed to work with seven curriculum and assessment committees to design a program of learning standards and revised forms of assessment that:

- help to achieve academic excellence
- foster advanced skills and understandings throughout and across the curriculum, and
- achieve a curriculum that offers a balance of breadth and depth.

Accordingly, the Curriculum and Assessment Committee for English Language Arts, in collaboration with other educators throughout the State and the New York State Education Department, has developed this framework for English language arts to assist schools and school districts in shaping and implementing their local philosophy and vision for curriculum, instruction, and assessment in English language arts.

Thus, the framework represents the most recent response to the challenge set forth in the reform reports: to prepare students for a rapidly changing world that is rich in information, technologically advanced, and culturally diverse. As students graduate into the 21st century, their success will depend in large measure on their ability to read and write proficiently and use language in critical and complex ways. From Theodore Sizer's reminder in *Horace's Compromise* that writing and talk are essential to engagement in learning, to the Regents Goals that call for skillful use of language in diverse contexts, to the New Compact's emphasis on communicating well, the place of the English language arts in the school curriculum and in society as a whole is confirmed.

Like the other curriculum frameworks, this one paints a coherent K-12 vision for curriculum by a) articulating desired learning standards for students, b) suggesting the key concepts and competencies related to those standards, and c) describing the criteria for success at several points on a continuum of achievement. In addition, the framework provides direction for teachers in using the standards as a basis for observing, guiding, assisting, and assessing their students' language learning. Although the framework is based on findings of research and effective practice, its usefulness, and ultimately its effect on student achievement, will depend upon the degree to which it engages educators in reflecting on teaching and learning in their own schools and communities.

The *Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Framework for English Language Arts* seeks to inform curriculum and assessment in several ways:

- The framework highlights purposeful language use as the basis for learning about language forms and conventions.
- The framework focuses on what learners should be able to do as a result of language instruction and experience.
- The framework describes skillful language use in learners at different stages of development and identifies several dimensions of growth that characterize that development.
- The framework respects the integration of the language arts, for proficient achievement in reading or listening can only be revealed through writing or talk, and proficient writing or talk is measured by the responses of the readers or listeners.
- The framework provides for meaningful uses and applications of technology.

These distinctions suggest a view of teaching and learning in English language arts in which students learn language by using it with the guidance of their teachers. Appendix B outlines some specific instances of using the framework for curriculum planning and implementation; listed below are some general ways those involved with schools can begin to use this document to guide their thinking.

Program planning and evaluation

The English language arts standards describe what it means to use language skillfully for informational, literary, critical, and social purposes. It remains for those responsible for planning school programs to ask themselves:

- how all students can have frequent opportunities to read, write, listen, and speak for these purposes;
- what opportunities, texts, technologies, and other experiences can be provided to assure that students will be able to make effective use of language for these purposes; and
- how students can be continually challenged to move from one level of achievement to the next.

Observation and Assessment of student learning

The framework defines learning standards as “the knowledge, skills, and understandings that individuals can and do habitually demonstrate over time as a consequence of instruction and experience.” This emphasis on habitual performance suggests that what learners do in varied contexts over time is more important than isolated demonstrations of learning. The English language arts standards provide a common lens for observing, assessing, and reporting authentic language use at different stages of development. Together with the criteria that characterize competent performance (performance indicators), the

Framework—A coherent K-12 vision for curriculum that a) articulates desired learning standards for students, b) suggests the key concepts and competencies related to those standards, and c) describes the criteria for success at several points on a continuum of achievement.

standards should assist teachers in noticing growth in language achievement, in using common vocabulary for describing that growth, and in developing plans for nurturing that growth.

Provision for resources

For students to be able to use language critically and creatively, they must have many opportunities to use and encounter language that is real, informative, provocative, artistic, powerful, and poignant. This requirement suggests the need for teachers to have access to library materials that are rich and diverse, classrooms arranged for maximum interaction, technological resources that are up-to-date, staff development that inspires teachers to reflect on the language learning in their classrooms, and support personnel who can assist low-achieving students in their engagements with texts and with other students. Those charged with curriculum responsibilities may find it useful to examine the nature and availability of resources in their school that would support achievement of the language standards described in this document.

CHAPTER II: A RATIONALE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

The Nature of Language

English language arts education is really about the study and use of language and literature, but language is more than a school subject, more than forms of grammar and rules of usage. Language is a means for making sense of our lives. It is a symbolic way of understanding experience, and it helps to shape experience. Because reading, writing, listening, and speaking are inextricably linked to thinking, these acts often generate possibilities and connections in our minds that otherwise might never exist.

Language is dynamic; it is constantly changing, and the meanings of words and texts are always dependent upon their purposes and contexts. A central focus of language learning is preparing for those everyday roles that require different kinds of language and different conventions for their use. The learning of language is also a social process, for the talking and writing we do as members of a community both *inform* and *are informed by* that community.

The constructive, dynamic, and social nature of language allows it to play a crucial role in helping individuals become thoughtful, informed, and responsive citizens. Through and within language and literature (the imaginative use of language), we come to understand ourselves, our world, our history, our culture. We use language to construct and shape our knowledge and to develop our imagination and sensibilities. Language allows us to share stories, traditions, and beliefs; persuade or be persuaded; explore new worlds and provide new worlds for others to explore. But while language can empower us, it also constrains us. Our perceptions of the world and of ourselves are influenced by our language and by our cultural views and perceptions. It is important, then, for schools to attend to the ways in which language and literature function; how they are shaped by social, cultural, and geographical influences; and how effective language use can give us control over our lives.

Success in school and in life is determined in large part by competence in language. As a significant means for developing students' abilities to use their minds well, language is central to learning for all students and in all disciplines. Thinking creatively, making informed and reasoned judgments, producing and inventing, critiquing and analyzing—all are facilitated through language. As a lifelong resource, skillful use of language is valued in all areas of our lives in which we participate as adults—as parents, as workers, as members of social and civic organizations. In fact, "Skillful use of language may be the single most important means of realizing the overarching goal of education to develop informed, thinking citizens" (National Council of Teachers of English, 1989).

Put at its broadest, we master language by using it to make the most of our lives.

- Britton, 1982

These assumptions about language are consistent with views in the professional literature and those currently guiding the national and international efforts to develop goals and standards. These efforts are guided by a vision of the communicative arts in which the nature of language and learning informs the teaching of reading, writing, listening, and speaking in the classroom.

The value of language is in its purposeful use. Although most knowledge about language is acquired unconsciously, it is only through engagement in real and demanding acts of communication that learners can be expected to discover how language works, the terms that can be used to describe it, and the ways it can be used to serve their own ends.

Trends and Issues in English Language Arts Education

In their synthesis of research on teaching the English language arts, Britton and Chorny (1991) note that the past three decades or so have seen a gradual movement toward views of language instruction that acknowledge the complexity of language and language learning.

This trend is evident in the recent research on language instruction. The following statements, synthesized from the *Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts* (Flood, et al., 1991), present a summary of findings from studies in English education, linguistics, and educational philosophy:

- Reading, writing, listening, and speaking are complex processes that youngsters acquire as they engage in actual acts of language use.
- Children's reading and writing abilities develop together and are mutually supportive.
- Most preschool children have a wealth of knowledge in oral language, reading, and writing before they come to school.
- Children more readily learn the conventions of language, such as spelling and punctuation, when they are encouraged to express their ideas and when the content matters to them.
- When children have daily, positive experiences with all kinds of literature in a variety of media, their understanding becomes more varied and more complex.
- Responding to literature helps students construct their own meanings, which may not be the same for all readers.
- Learning is a natural process of pursuing personally meaningful goals.
- Learning is enhanced by social interactions and communications with others in flexible, diverse, and adaptive settings.

Virtually all of the major professional gatherings, from the Dartmouth International Seminar of 1966 to the New Standards Project of 1993, have affirmed these relationships between language

and learning: that all genuine learning involves discovery and that individuals learn language by using it to explore their own experiences and to develop their own ideas within a context where effective language use is taught and encouraged.

A number of issues and tensions emerge as educators try to develop instructional programs to meet the needs of today's students. The following discussion addresses some of these issues within the context of the learning-centered philosophy that undergirds the English Language Arts Framework.

The Content of English Language Arts Instruction

The standards described in this document suggest broad but powerful guidelines for instruction. In addition, the dimensions of change that distinguish one achievement level from another suggest clear implications for instruction.

For example, helping students extend the range of their language ability (that is, both the breadth and depth of their learning) requires providing extensive experiences with classic and contemporary texts from their own and other cultures, reflecting diverse voices of the past and present, about universal and unique themes. It requires opportunities for students to respond in many forms to literature in a variety of media and to other experiences, from retelling to critiquing single texts and events to generalizing across texts and events. It means allowing students to share their learning in many formats, from posters to poetry to computer programs. It requires familiarity with all literary genres and literary forms (See "Content of a Reading and Literature Program" in *Reading and Literature in the English Language Arts Curriculum K-12*). It also requires a curriculum that is increasingly rigorous so that students' encounters with language become more and more sophisticated as they move through the grades.

Emphasizing language experiences and processes does not mean neglecting literary works and language skills. Rather, it means a careful selection by knowledgeable teachers of those works that can best:

- introduce students to powerful language and literature from different eras;
- allow students to envision the lives and times of a wide range of people and cultures; and
- inform students' thinking, writing, listening, and speaking.

An emphasis on processes is impossible without a parallel emphasis on content. As Purves (1986) reminds us, language processing requires engagement with the historical and emerging canons of literature and the "historical facts of language as it has evolved." This suggests that students need opportunity to read widely in the literature of earlier historical periods as well as their own in order to expand their language ability.

Beginning Literacy Instruction

A strong foundation for literacy begins with a program that builds on existing abilities and is rich in language, experience, and literature (See “Providing a Strong Foundation for Literacy” in *Reading and Literature in the English Language Arts Curriculum K-12*). Consistent with the research cited previously, studies in early literacy support instruction that:

- both builds on and expands upon students’ prior knowledge
- involves learners in their own learning
- fosters language use for real purposes
- provides a balance of word recognition and comprehension strategies—including making predictions from pictures and text; using graphophonic (letter-sound), semantic (context), and syntactic (structural) cues; and drawing on prior knowledge—within the context of reading and listening to connected, informative, engaging text
- includes modeling, demonstration, and direct instruction by the teacher and/or other readers and writers
- provides daily, positive experiences with stories and other literature
- provides opportunities for responding to literature and other experiences through talk, drawing, role playing, and writing.

The English Language Arts Standards provide a common lens for viewing literacy programs at every level. The standards serve as a reminder that most learners have used their oral language for informational, literary, critical, and social purposes before coming to school and that schooling should provide additional, worthwhile contexts for language to flourish. The standards also suggest that every language experience, every text, and every strategy has a purpose, and that purpose influences the choices we make as readers, writers, listeners, and speakers. In addition, the Dimensions of Growth highlight the need to provide young learners with opportunities that allow them to begin to develop their range, independence, flexibility, connections, and control of the conventions.

Language Skills

The conventions of grammar, usage, and literary discourse are important to achieving all of the language standards. In learning-centered classrooms, these skills are introduced and practiced in meaningful ways.

- Students learn skills as they are learning to read and write.
- Skills are taught when students’ work and/or performance indicate a need for them.
- Teachers know the skills are easier to learn if the context is something that matters to the learner.

- Teachers understand that skills are acquired through experience and development, as well as through direct instruction and demonstration.
- The emphasis is on learning language skills within a context of purposeful language use.
- Reading, writing, listening, and speaking complement and support each other in the process of making meaning.

In summary, in learning-centered classrooms the skills are defined as means, not ends in themselves. Control over the skills of grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation is essential to effective communication. These skills are most effectively learned in a meaningful context. Thus, rather than assigning exercises in a given skill out of context, the teacher provides many experiences with reading, writing, listening, and speaking that require effective application of that skill and that provide a context for the teacher to work with students to perfect that skill. Instead of teaching about sequencing in the abstract, the teacher helps students to retell stories, share information orally, and write narratives—all activities in which sequencing is important. Instead of teaching generic organizational patterns (cause-effect, compare-contrast, etc.), the teacher demonstrates the benefits of different organizational patterns by teaching students to consider optional forms when writing about a topic. The teacher also asks students to share the organizational patterns they are already using in their own writing and encourages them to talk about the patterns in the texts they are reading.

Teachers, therefore, support and guide their students *in the process* of reading or writing. They provide appropriate direction, modeling, or reinforcement as students plan, revise, and edit; question, investigate, and interpret; predict, monitor understanding, and reflect on their learning.

In short, with experience and instruction the skills become part of the process of using language to interpret or express meaning, much as technique becomes part of the process for the artist, photographer, or musician.

Underlying all of these practices is ongoing observation. Teachers watch their students, read their writing, observe their prereading and prewriting behaviors, know which aspects of the process give them the most and least difficulty, know which students can help others on which skills, are aware of who needs applause and who needs nudging, know their students' favorite topics, work habits, and error patterns. This allows them to adapt their teaching to the students' needs. In the learning-centered classroom, observation is at the heart of skills instruction.

The Role of Literature

The question of the role of literature in the curriculum has vexed English educators since the emergence of English as a respected subject of study in its own right. Attempts to answer the question have led to tensions within the discipline (Purves, 1993). Is literature important for its moral values (Matthew Arnold)? For its exemplars of "classical" writing in the "great tradition" (Mortimer Adler)? For its archetypal and structural themes (Northrup Frye)? For its power to

*Let the children tell us
what they know and let
them show us what they
need to know.*

-Graves, conference
address

evoke personal connections and enhance self-understanding (Louise Rosenblatt)?

The English language arts standards support a balanced curriculum in which students read literature from many literary periods and genres in order to “understand the culture represented, to speculate on the ideas and the imaginative vision, and to speculate on the nature and use of the language that is the medium of the artistic expression. Further, students should read literature in order to understand themselves as readers . . . [This] means helping them to connect the way they read to the way they write, to develop a sense of pleasure in the medium of language, and to explore the cultures of the writer and of the community of readers in the classroom” (Purves, 1993).

Just as the study of literature will take on different roles in the classroom, so, too, will the meaning of the term “literature.” A learning-centered curriculum will include opportunities to read and interpret works from the traditional canon, as well as works from many cultures, adolescent fiction, nonfiction, nontraditional genres such as diaries and journals, little-known works, students’ own writing, and electronically produced texts.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Homogeneous, monocultural classrooms are the exception in New York State, rather than the rule. The English Language Arts Framework supports a “culturally-responsive” (Au, 1993) or “additive” (Cummins, 1986) approach to instruction. That is, diversity is viewed as an advantage and a foundation to build upon, rather than as a deficit or a problem.

In the culturally responsive classroom, students are encouraged to rely on all the linguistic resources they have and to see their home language as a valuable resource. Their primary language, their talk and their stories, the experiences reflective of their native culture will all contribute to their own learning and to the learning of their classmates. For students for whom English is a second language, the expectation is that all students will gain competence in the English language even while they are encouraged to maintain and strengthen their ability in their first language. To expect otherwise would be to marginalize some students and deny them participation in mainstream society. The role of the teacher is to provide opportunities for those with less command of English to interact in meaningful ways with those whose command of English is greater while also helping competent English speakers to grow in their use of the language. The teacher’s role is also to provide a safe and comfortable environment for students to use and reflect upon the various language uses and forms that characterize language in various cultures while learning standard English uses and forms.

Teachers can incorporate, appreciate, and celebrate the diversity students bring to their classrooms in the following ways:

- by providing a supportive environment for students to learn and practice the rules and ways of speaking that are associated with Standard English;

- by providing choices and multiple strategies to fulfill tasks and achieve standards;
- by incorporating in the curriculum multicultural texts that reflect the lives and experiences of the students, including, where possible, some texts students can read in their primary language;
- by encouraging students whose first language is not English to use their primary language as they work through their personal responses to literature written in English;
- by focusing on meaning without undue attention to minor errors. For instance, too much attention to pronunciation detracts from the meaning-making process, and constant correction may be interpreted as a rejection of the child's language or culture;
- by inviting students to bring their unique knowledge to the classroom;
- by reinforcing English language skills through encouraging students to make comparisons with their native language, to see the two languages as "different ways of knowing;" and
- by assuring parents that reading and talking about their reading in either or both languages is helpful to their child.

The Role of Technology

The potential of technology to transform instruction in English language arts is at once far-reaching and undefined. In less than a decade, the medium that was used in schools primarily for programmed skills instruction has emerged as an exciting vehicle for simulated problem solving. What was once an efficient method of composing at the keyboard is now the preferred means for document publication. What seemed to be an alternate way to display text now allows readers to draw on other materials and resources while interpreting that text. And what began as a vehicle for accessing separate data bases has become a way in to a worldwide web of resources.

Clearly, teachers and students with access to personal computers, communications software, and a modem have almost unlimited opportunities to collaborate with others in making use of a variety of resources for addressing real-world problems. So, too, in a world which may soon combine the personal computer with the television set, students may one day be able to interact with any visual image displayed to them. Student motivation, individualization, and increased incentive for personal inquiry must be counted among the advantages of these new technologies.

Accompanying the advantages, however, is the obvious need for equitable access for all students, for those without will surely be at a disadvantage. Other challenges are those implied by new and specialized vocabulary, the possibility of new literary forms and genres, and the ethical questions that arise when information is widely shared and easily acquired. The writers of this document have made a modest start toward acknowledging the role of technology in today's world by including suggestions for its use at appropriate points in the discussion of the standards.

Assessment Practices

The principles of assessment for English language arts rest on the belief that the ultimate purpose of assessment is to improve learning for children. Assessment is therefore curriculum inquiry, the process of examining the learning that is taking place in schools.

The assessment practices described in this framework focus on students' real performances as readers, writers, listeners, and speakers and are inherently connected to curriculum and instructional practice.

Assessment approaches that are consistent with the following principles will work to ensure equitable and appropriate instructional practices for all students and provide valuable information for parents and professionals. The Curriculum and Assessment Committee for English Language Arts believes that:

- Assessment should incorporate multiple strands of evidence.
- Assessment should be a learning experience for teachers, students, and all others who are involved in education.
- Assessment practices should be broad enough to include all the literate activity of the school (e.g., school newspapers, literary magazines, field trips, etc.).
- Assessment should be designed to encourage a full understanding of oral and written literatures and literary histories.
- Assessment should accommodate the needs of students regardless of gender, cultural or linguistic background, or assumed handicaps or talents.
- Assessment should reflect the complexity of the language arts.
- Assessment should reflect the belief that students learn language as an integrated process.
- Assessment is an integral and ongoing part of instruction.
- A primary result of assessment should be to instill in children knowledge about and confidence in their learning.
- All members of the school community who have a stake in students' learning (e.g., teachers, students, families, librarians, administrators, support staff) should be involved in the assessment process.

As New York State and its schools work to bring their assessment practices into alignment with the English language arts framework and standards, these principles will continue to guide and focus our work.

Professional Growth

Professional development is central to the improvement of teaching and learning, but such learning cannot occur without organizational support and school community learning. Students, teachers, administrators, support staff, parents, board members, the local business community, and the general public associated with a particular school

all have a vested interest in the quality of schooling. Unless a relationship of caring and trust exists among the school community, it is difficult for teachers and students to focus their attention on learning.

If *students'* language learning is fostered by meaningful activity, immersion in literate practices, effective instruction, and opportunities for reflection, then *teachers'* learning is nurtured by similar conditions. To be consistent with the principles of learning and language that undergird the English language arts framework, school community learning should have the following characteristics:

- Learning is continuous, long-term, and focused on sustained engagement. Major learning does not occur as a result of one-day workshops. It is more likely to occur when mentoring, peer coaching, and professional study groups are an integral part of the school culture.
- School community learning focuses on three important kinds of professional knowledge: knowledge of individual students and their development; knowledge of the processes of reading, writing, listening, and speaking; and knowledge gained from personal inquiry into the theory underlying teaching practice.
- The school community prizes the knowledge and expertise of its own community members. Staff members are consulted before outside experts. Parents and other community members are seen as valued resources. The facilities and conditions in which staff development occurs demonstrate that both the learners and the learning process are appreciated by the school community.
- The community learning program should grow out of the school's plan for achieving and assessing learning standards. For example, when portfolios are part of that plan, a staff's examination and presentation of portfolios provide opportunities for reflection and dialogue about the nature of the contents, the statements they make about the learner's achievements, and the criteria used for evaluation.

CHAPTER III: LEARNING STANDARDS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Language Standards in a Learning-Centered Curriculum

The concept of learning standards represents a clearer focus on what learners should learn and what that learning looks like in actual practice. Our decision to define learning standards as “the knowledge, skills, and understandings that individuals can and do *habitually demonstrate . . .*” serves as a useful reminder to “consider the journey as well as the destination” (Eisner, 1992), for it honors authentic behaviors and performances over time and in varied contexts, rather than isolated and controlled demonstrations.

That definition also gives primary status to the notion of *willingness*, which, in turn, reflects the belief that children acquire language as they need it, through practice and through numerous encounters with exemplary models. It is not enough merely to have the knowledge and ability to do something; one needs to use that knowledge and ability. Individuals develop proficiency in important skills by practicing them. Willingness to participate implies both an ability and a propensity to engage, experiment, take risks, and sustain effort.

Building on those Regents Goals that call for using language skillfully in different contexts and on New York State's English Language Arts Syllabus K-12, which identifies the general purposes of language use, the English language arts standards set forth four broad areas for curriculum and assessment.

Each learning standard contains a content standard that describes what students should know, understand, and be able to do and some statements of performance standards and performance indicators that begin to define the expected student achievement at elementary, intermediate, and commencement levels. Some of the material in the performance standards is drawn from *The Work Sampling System: Omnibus Guidelines, 3rd Edition* (Judy R. Jablon, et al. 1994) and from *English—A Curriculum profile for Australian schools* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1994).

Learning standard—A statement of the knowledge, skills, and understandings that individuals can and do habitually demonstrate over time as a consequence of instruction and experience.

STANDARD 1: LANGUAGE FOR INFORMATION AND UNDERSTANDING

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts. As speakers and writers they will use oral and written language to acquire, interpret, apply, and transmit information.

This standard refers to those public meanings an individual takes away from a language experience for later use. Language for information and understanding is important for both academic and real-world success. The fifth-grader reporting the results of her science experiment to a group of second-graders, the middle school student looking up biographical information in the library, the high school student watching a video on the Holocaust, and the executive synthesizing complex material in preparation for a speech to a community service club are all using language for this purpose.

The essential factor in using language for information and understanding is the ability to assign significance: to seek out and apply specific information and to support the decisions for doing so. When students are asked to mark with a highlighter, then share, facts about butterflies, or to chart the significant features of several survival stories, they are on their way toward meeting the standard set by adult professional writers or speakers in such disciplines as science or history.

Concepts and Competencies Related to Using Language for Information and Understanding

When students use language to acquire and transmit information and understanding, they learn many concepts related to the organization of information and the relationships among information, including cause/effect, similarity and difference, thesis and support, chronological order, evidence and assertion, fact and opinion. They develop competencies necessary for making sense of information, including gathering and selecting information, generalizing, comparing and contrasting, synthesizing, summarizing, and interpreting. They also develop competencies related to the presentation of information, including correct use of the rules of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar and usage, sentence formation, and paragraphing. These concepts and competencies, and many others, are embedded in the performance standards that follow.

Performance Standards at Three Levels:

Elementary

* Listening and Reading *

Students can listen to and read the ideas of others as a way of gaining information, and can ask specific questions to clarify or extend meaning. Examples of how they demonstrate informational listening and reading skills include:

- using a variety of strategies to construct meaning from print, such as using prior knowledge about a subject, structural and context clues, and an understanding of phonics (letter sounds) to decode difficult words.
- accurately paraphrasing what they have heard or read.
- following directions that involve a few steps.
- asking for clarification of a classmate's idea, shared in written work or group discussion.

With [language for information and understanding] what goes on is piecemeal contextualization . . . You take what you want from it and leave the rest . . . You pick here, you pick there, you make new relations between those bits, and you make your own relations between those and what you already know and think.

-Britton, 1982

Students can acquire information from appropriate children's sources for informational purposes. Examples include:

- gathering information from children's reference books, magazines, textbooks, electronic bulletin boards, audio and video presentations, oral interviews, and other informational sources.
- gathering and interpreting information independently from charts, graphs, maps, and diagrams.

Students can discover some relationships among information, perceive underlying concepts, and make some generalizations with minimal direction. Examples of these abilities include:

- applying suggested strategies for collecting, organizing, and aggregating information.
- reflecting on what is heard or read and relating other ideas and experiences that are relevant to it.

* Speaking and Writing *

Students can express themselves clearly in discussions and conversations. Examples of how they demonstrate oral communication skills include:

- relating a story in sequence.
- relaying directions for how to conduct an assignment or a task to another person.
- using language to explain how a problem was solved or a task was conducted.

- demonstrating through order of presentation and selection of language the relative importance of information presented.

Students can use writing as a way to communicate ideas and organize information. Examples of how they write for these purposes include:

- writing short essays and reports to convey a clear understanding of information on familiar topics.
- using forms such as posters or charts in presenting information visually and orally to peers and adults.
- observing basic writing conventions, such as correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, as well as sentence and paragraph structures appropriate to written forms.

Intermediate

*** Listening and Reading ***

Students can listen to and read the ideas of others as a way of gaining information and understanding, and can analyze what they hear and read. Examples of how they demonstrate these skills include:

- using structural analysis, context clues, and peer discussions to comprehend difficult text.
- listening to or reading an account of how something is done and then incorporating those techniques into their own work.
- following directions that involve a series of actions.
- synthesizing into note form the main ideas of an oral presentation (such as a peer's research report, a visiting speaker's talk, a video presentation).

Students can acquire and use information from a variety of sources for different purposes. Examples include:

- locating and using information on a wide range of topics from general reference materials, books and magazines for young adults, audio and video presentations, oral interviews, and electronic data bases.
- independently selecting and using strategies for collecting and synthesizing information, such as notecards and bibliographies.
- analyzing information presented orally; for example, listening to three different classmates describe methods of solving a math problem and then comparing and evaluating the methods.

Students can discover relationships among information from a variety of sources (such as encyclopedias, census data, historical accounts, oral texts), understand common elements in categories, and make

generalizations with minimal direction. Examples of these abilities include:

- using a variety of reference books and other data sources to seek out information and generate independent understanding about a topic.
- making selective and effective use of information to support their position or research findings.

*** Speaking and Writing ***

Students can convey information clearly in discussions, conversations, and presentations. Examples of how they demonstrate their ability to communicate orally include:

- using precise language to express ideas and opinions in group discussions and presentations.
- presenting an oral report to the class, maintaining a logical flow of ideas using language and gestures appropriately.
- using rhetorical patterns and verbal cues to indicate relationships, such as cause and effect or similarity and difference, and relative importance among the pieces of information.

Students can use writing with growing proficiency as a way to communicate ideas and organize information. Examples of how they write for these purposes include:

- taking research notes and then composing a report.
- recording data for a graph.
- writing about math problems or scientific observations in a class log in a way that accurately records what was seen or done.
- developing well-constructed essays that convey a clear understanding and interpretation of information to general audiences.
- using standard English for formal presentations of information, selecting appropriate grammatical constructions and vocabulary and using a variety of sentence structures.

Commencement

*** Listening and Reading ***

Students can listen to and read the ideas of others as a way of gaining information and understanding, and can analyze what they hear and read. Examples of how they demonstrate these skills include:

- using a combination of techniques (previewing, use of advance organizers, structural cues) to read complex informational texts (reference materials, manuals, and expository material.)

- completing a project that involves a complex set of directions.

Students can acquire and analytically use information from a wide range of sources for many purposes. Examples include:

- obtaining essential information from printed and nonprint material on academic and applied topics and drawing connections among information, making distinctions about the relative significance of specific data, facts, and ideas.
- gathering and using information presented in print and electronic sources to create research reports, data bases, and summaries for in-school and out-of-school contexts.

Students can discover significant relationships among information from a wide variety of sources, identify key concepts, and make generalizations without direction. Examples of these abilities include:

- synthesizing information from reference books, technical materials and texts, resource persons, and electronic data bases to generate independent understanding and draw conclusions about a topic.
- identifying what kinds of information will be needed to adequately understand an area they are researching.
- examining a report on a topic to evaluate whether the information it contains is adequate to support generalizations or conclusions about a topic.

*** Speaking and Writing ***

Students can convey information confidently and coherently in discussions, conversations, and presentations. Examples of how they demonstrate their ability to communicate orally include:

- clearly conveying information and points of view in public and classroom events that require planned speaking and spontaneous reactions (such as debates, interviews, and panel discussions).
- using discussion to explore complex concepts and ideas, clarifying the use of comparisons and analogies and the elaboration of ideas.
- providing information to another person about how to perform a complex task, such as to operate a computer program or to conduct a laboratory experiment.

Students can use writing proficiently as a way to communicate ideas and organize information. Examples of proficient written communication for information include:

- writing expository texts, including extended research reports, that acknowledge the complexity of issues or subject matter, that document sources of information, and that are well-organized to convey overarching ideas and supporting evidence and details.
- using a wide range of forms, including those available through word processing and desktop publishing, to present information

on a wide range of subjects clearly, coherently, and effectively, taking into account the nature of the audience and using various organizational patterns for developing the text (such as particular to universal, abstract to concrete, comparisons and contrasts).

- in writing and oral presentations, supporting decisions about interpretations and relative significance of information with explicit statement, evidence, and appropriate argument.
- using standard written English skillfully, effectively applying established rules and conventions for presenting information and making use of a wide range of grammatical constructions and vocabulary to achieve an individual style that communicates effectively.

STANDARD 2: LANGUAGE FOR LITERARY RESPONSE AND EXPRESSION

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.

Students will read and listen to oral, written, and electronically produced texts and performances, relate texts and performances to their own lives, and develop an understanding of the diverse social, historical, and cultural dimensions the texts and performances represent. As speakers and writers, students will use oral and written language for self-expression and artistic creation.

Our wish is not that students read, write, listen and speak for literary response and expression just during the twelve years they are in our schools, but that they see this as central to their lives.

- Susan Burke,
middle school teacher

This standard refers to language experiences that are often described as aesthetic and that emphasize personal connections with one's life. For reading and listening, it refers to the ability to tap personal connections in making meaning of a "text." For speaking and writing, it refers to the ability to a) convey a personal response to a text for oneself at another time or for another person, and b) create an artistic text that evokes the aesthetic response of readers or listeners.

The first-grader commenting on whether an illustration fits the text of a version of *Cinderella*, the middle school student writing a response journal while reading Esther Forbes's *Johnny Tremain*, and a high school class discussing their interpretations of Richard Wright's *Native Son*, are all reading and responding to literature and noting the ways in which the form and the content come together to shape their understanding. Their talk or writing is similar to that of the adult professional reader of literature (the reviewer, scholar, librarian, or publisher).

The kindergartner acting out a picture book while it is being read to the class, the middle school youngster reflecting on the contents of his writing portfolio, and the high school student conveying an experience in a poem of his own invention are all using language aesthetically. While the focus of attention in this standard is on personal meaning, it is possible to establish criteria for exemplary performance based on our knowledge of the adult professional standard (e.g., the exemplary essayist, poet, or novelist). Criteria for achievement at elementary and intermediate levels would, of course, reflect habitual behaviors of exemplary adult performers at earlier stages of development.

Concepts and Competencies Related to Using Language for Literary Response and Expression

In using language to respond to works of literature, students learn a wide variety of literary concepts commonly used in reporting on and discussing literature, including genre (poetry, novel, drama, biography, fable, myth, legend), plot, setting, character, point of view, theme, meter, rhyme scheme, tragedy, and comedy. They will develop competencies associated with the production of literature, including writing

poetry and stories, using poetic structures and devices such as stanzas and chapters, foreshadowing, characterization, description, direct and indirect dialogue, and first- and third-person narration, and also competencies related to the presentation of literature, including poetry recitations, dramatic readings and performances, and improvisations. These concepts and competencies are embedded in the performance standards that follow.

Performance Standards at Three Levels:

Elementary

*** Listening and Reading ***

Students read a variety of works, showing their interest in and understanding of literature by, for example,

- selecting, using previewing strategies, some books for their own reading, based on personal interests related to particular topics, authors, or genres.
- sharing, reviewing, and recommending books to others, articulating what it is they find interesting about various books.
- forming an initial understanding of different genres of literature, including picture books, poems, articles and stories from children's magazines, myths, songs, plays and media productions, and works of fiction and nonfiction intended for young readers, using their knowledge of the different genres to adjust the manner in which they read the text.
- selecting and reading children's literature set in different times and places and comparing those settings and cultures to their own lives.
- relating events and ideas from one literary work to other texts and to their own lives.

*** Speaking and Writing ***

Students respond to literature through discussions, writing, dramatization and art media, enabling them to make connections to what they read and organize their thinking. Examples of how students respond to literature include:

- describing a story event, characters, setting, and main idea during group discussion.
- creating their own stories, poems, and songs using the language and structures of the literature they have heard and read.
- incorporating into their own writing ideas and writing strategies from a story they have read.
- writing about or discussing how a story might end.

- creating and explaining an interpretive painting or sculpture based on a story.
- recognizing and explaining the effects of the writer's choice of language and story structure on their responses.

Intermediate

*** Listening and Reading ***

Students become more independent and fluent readers, showing wider interests and understanding of literature by, for example,

- selecting texts and performances from a wide range of authors, subjects, and genres, including published biographies and autobiographies, essays, documentaries, and media productions as well as poetry, short stories, drama, and novels.
- understanding and identifying the distinguishing features of the major genres and using them to aid their interpretation and discussion of literature.
- recognizing aspects of texts or productions that are related to other literary works or to their own lives.
- using the responses of other readers and listeners, ranging from formal reviews to comments made in discussion, to extend their own initial responses.
- reflecting on literary events and actions by relating them to themes in the text and in other texts, recognizing that one text may generate multiple interpretations.

*** Speaking and Writing ***

Students can synthesize, interpret, make connections, and act on what they read in written, oral, and artistic media. Examples of how students express themselves in producing and responding to literature include:

- drawing on varied strategies for planning and writing a story (e.g. talking with a friend, recalling a personal experience, considering another author's style, using knowledge of genres and types of literature).
- writing a sequel to a story that continues the logic of characters, plot, and themes.
- reading literature set in different times and places and using appropriate written forms such as essays or reviews to explore the connections between literary texts and aspects of human experience, including those that are common and those that are culturally distinct.
- recognizing and explaining stylistic, structural, and linguistic features of text or production that prompt a particular response and

making effective use of those features and devices in their own writing and speaking.

Commencement

*** Listening and Reading ***

Students read and listen independently and fluently across many genres of literature from many places and historical periods, demonstrating their understanding by, for example,

- selecting and understanding complex texts that use such structures and devices as stream of consciousness, allegory, and multiple narration.
- selecting and using appropriate strategies for making meaning of a text, such as linguistic cues for detecting irony and point of view.
- recognizing common human experiences in literature of their own and other cultures, while appreciating the uniqueness of each culture and era.

*** Speaking and Writing ***

Students can synthesize, interpret, make connections, and act on what they read in written, oral, and artistic media. Examples of how students express themselves in producing and responding to literature include:

- discussing in an interpretive essay how themes, events, characters, and setting contribute to the meaning and effect of a literary text.
- discussing reasons for particular stylistic techniques and rhetorical devices (such as analogies, imagery, repetition, and rhythm) and their effects on audience interest and engagement in spoken and oral texts.
- using in their own writing such literary structures and devices as stanzas and chapters, metaphors, foreshadowing, characterization, description, symbolism, and different forms of dialogue and narration in a purposeful way to capture feelings, attitudes, and ideas.
- explaining, orally and in writing, their responses to literature with reference to prior literary and life experiences, forming generalizations and distinctions as a result of hearing multiple viewpoints and recognizing multiple levels of meaning.
- using language, tone, gesture, and other presentational strategies effectively to evoke a range of responses from a variety of audiences.

STANDARD 3: LANGUAGE FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

Wise understanding tends to consist of the ability to see and affirm the truth of contrary points of view.

-Elbow, 1986

As listeners and readers, students will analyze experiences, ideas, information, and issues presented by others using a variety of established criteria. As speakers and writers, they will present, in oral and written language and from a variety of perspectives, their opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information and issues.

Important to both aesthetic and informational functions of language and the focus of many reform efforts, the use of language for critical analysis and evaluation refers to an individual's ability to step back from an experience, to question it, and to probe its meanings from a variety of critical perspectives.

The curriculum should include many opportunities for students to use language for critical analysis and evaluation; for example: comparing different newspaper and television treatments of an event in the news; examining how the performance has changed a play by Shakespeare or Arthur Miller; generating criteria for a good picture book, an effective speech, or this year's Academy Award winners; examining the characters and events of a novel by Mark Twain or Alice Walker from the points of view of different genders, cultures, or ideologies. Establishing criteria for the skillful use of language for this purpose is a matter of describing the behaviors of those critical thinkers, speakers, and writers whom we most admire.

Concepts and Competencies Related to Using Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

When students use language to analyze and evaluate experiences, texts, and ideas, they draw on an understanding of many important concepts related to analytical thinking, including perspective, opinion, debate, argument, rebuttal, evidence, criteria, logic, coherence, motive, propaganda. They will develop the competencies associated with producing editorials, critical reviews, advertisements, literary analyses, position papers, and scientific inquiries. These concepts and competencies are reflected in the performance standards that follow.

Performance Standards at Three Levels:

Elementary

* Listening and Reading *

Students can, with assistance, analyze and interpret information from various texts. Examples include:

- listening critically during a book discussion and expressing an opinion supported by specific evidence from the text.
- using criteria suggested by the teacher to assess the content and presentation of written and oral texts.
- reading peers' writing for the purpose of suggesting revisions based on flow and meaning of text.

* Speaking and Writing *

Students can present, orally and in writing, logical analyses of issues, ideas, and literary strategies. Examples include:

- writing short essays that evaluate an idea and argue a point of view with evidence.
- developing advertisements that analyze the benefits of a product, the nature of the audience, and the kinds of persuasive techniques likely to be effective.
- evaluating the validity of particular arguments and expressing a conclusion clearly and cogently.

Students monitor and adjust their own oral presentations and revise their written presentations to meet given criteria for competent performance. Examples include:

- reading a piece of writing to a peer and talking over whether to add or remove some information or elements.
- sharing a story orally with the class, responding to comments, and deciding to change some aspects.
- evaluating whether to broaden or narrow a topic.
- rereading a piece of work and adding omitted words, correcting spelling, or improving sentence structures.

Students demonstrate control over basic writing conventions. Examples include:

- using capitalization correctly.
- reviewing text and identifying where sentences end.
- using punctuation to clarify written work.
- using spelling accurately when writing final drafts.

Intermediate

*** Listening and Reading ***

Students can, with minimal direction, analyze and interpret information, ideas, and language from academic and nonacademic texts. Examples include:

- evaluating the adequacy of evidence given to support an idea or conclusion in a text.
- assessing the content and presentation of written and oral texts using criteria drawn from textual elements specific to a genre, from knowledge of the subject matter and purpose, and from personal perspectives.
- critiquing their own and others' work, noting, for example, the sequence of main ideas in a piece of expository writing and pointing out unexplained leaps of reasoning or lack of consistency in plot.
- comparing and contrasting different literary styles.

*** Speaking and Writing ***

Students can present, orally and in writing, clear analyses of issues, ideas, and literary strategies, supporting their positions with well-developed arguments. Examples include:

- writing expository essays and literary critiques that evaluate ideas and perspectives, examine evidence, and express arguments logically and clearly.
- developing editorials that develop a point of view, support it with details, and address competing viewpoints.
- describing, orally and in writing, their evaluations of scientific and other kinds of data developed through observation and analysis.

Students monitor and adjust their own oral presentations and revise their written presentations to clarify or elaborate. Students demonstrate revision skills by, for example:

- deciding if a paragraph has a well-stated main idea and supporting details.
- reading a draft to a friend and reworking unclear sections.
- perceiving whether they are understood in oral communications and adjusting their presentation to provide more elaboration or explanation where necessary.
- rereading a story to correct and refine sentence structures, spelling and punctuation.
- rearranging and reorganizing a piece into a more cohesive form.

Students use standard English in formal presentations and demonstrate control over language conventions appropriate to a range of formal and informal situations. Examples include:

- employing correct syntax and usage in writing and speaking.
- using end marks, commas, apostrophes, and quotation marks correctly.
- self-correcting more independently.
- seeking and responding to corrective feedback.

Commencement

*** Listening and Reading ***

Students can independently analyze and interpret ideas, information, and language from a wide range of texts across subject areas, using academic and personal criteria and making appropriate connections among ideas. Examples include:

- doing research before listening so that evaluation is based on knowledge of the topic and of perspectives on the issue.
- critically examining their own reactions to ideas they hear and read, understanding how rhetorical strategies, style of presentation, and personal knowledge and experience influence responses.
- analyzing spoken and written texts in terms of the evidence, attitudes, and assumptions they convey, identifying, for example, significant inclusions and exclusions of ideas and means of emphasizing particular interpretations.
- comparing spoken and written texts on an issue to analyze them critically for similarities and differences in content, context, and point of view.
- approaching with useful linguistic and interpretive strategies the reading of texts across topic areas—including those that are densely written or visually forbidding.

*** Speaking and Writing ***

Students can present, orally and in writing, well-developed analyses of issues, ideas, and literary strategies, explaining the rationale for their judgments and analyzing their rationale from a variety of perspectives. Examples include:

- presenting conclusions orally and in writing from synthesizing material read and viewed, making generalizations based on patterns, trends, and themes.
- responding to a text imaginatively based on an analysis or perspective about the text (for example, composing a letter from Ophelia to Hamlet written just before her “mad scene”).

- explaining the impact of an author’s own views and intentions on a text.
- critiquing the completeness, clarity, and validity of technical reports by peers and others (e.g. reports of science experiments, social science research) through careful reading and knowledge of related subject matter and method.

Students monitor and adjust their own oral presentations and revise their written presentations, as well as helping others revise, to clarify and elaborate ideas according to criteria for acceptable performance. Students demonstrate revision skills by, for example:

- reading their own writing from an outsider’s perspective and identifying gaps and inadequacies, especially in logic and completeness.
- presenting work with regard for clarity for various audiences.
- reading peers’ writing for the purpose of suggesting revisions focusing on particular areas, such as content, grammar, or proof-reading.
- critically evaluating their own writing in discussion with peers, teachers, or other readers to decide what to add, discard, and rework.

Students use standard English skillfully in formal presentations and in a wide range of written communications. Examples include:

- drawing on a variety of words and grammatical and syntactical structures to convey meaning economically and precisely.
- using a variety of punctuation devices—such as end marks, commas, apostrophes, semicolons, quotation marks—to convey precise information about the meaning, rhythm, and tone of a text.
- using a range of stylistic features, such as symbolism and imagery, to illustrate ideas in both expository and imaginative writing.
- self-correcting independently.
- seeking and responding to corrective feedback.

STANDARD 4: LANGUAGE FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION

Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.

Students will use oral and written language for effective social communication with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use the social communications of others to enrich their understanding of people and their views.

This purpose calls attention to how people use language in the service of establishing, maintaining, or enhancing relationships with others. They draw on their ability to communicate successfully with a broad range of audiences; to use language appropriate to differences in age, race, gender, and ethnicity; to respond appropriately in different social situations. This function may be more important in oral language, where facility at listening and responding sympathetically is more obvious, but reading and writing are also social acts. Our interpretation of a new novel is inevitably influenced by hearing the views of other readers, and whenever we read the social communications of individuals (i.e., their notes, letters, or journals), we gain insight into those individuals and their worlds. Most writers can recall instances in which their letter or document was improved as a result of conversation with others who could see it from the reader's perspective.

Writing invitations and thank-you notes, corresponding with individuals in another classroom or another country, taking different roles in learning groups, making new students feel comfortable—these situations all provide opportunities for students to hone their social interaction skills. We can call on our observations of those individuals who have a special word for everyone, who respond with sensitivity in delicate situations, or who make artful contributions to discussion to recognize the habitual behaviors of those who use language skillfully for this purpose.

Concepts and Competencies Related to Using Language for Social Interaction

In using language for social interaction, students learn concepts such as social etiquette, cultural mores, regional dialects, and personal perspective. They also develop competencies related to understanding audience, using formal and informal language, attentive listening and observing, and communicating nonverbally.

n.b. Because the focus of language for social interaction is on direct communication between individuals (rather than communication to a more general and perhaps unknown audience), the performance indicators for this standard are arranged to reflect the immediacy of direct communication (Speaking and Listening; Writing and Reading).

Performance Standards at Three Levels:

Elementary

Communication is fundamentally social, and one of the central processes students must learn is decentering—moving beyond their egocentrism to consider the needs and responses of others.

-Andrasick, 1990

* Speaking and Listening *

Students perceive and use language appropriately in social interaction with peers and significant adults. Examples include:

- recognizing in group discussion when it is appropriate to listen and when to speak.
- listening attentively to others.
- understanding how to take turns and respond to others' ideas in conversations on familiar topics.
- perceiving the kind of interactions called for in different circumstances, such as story hour, group discussions, and one-on-one conversations.

* Writing and Reading *

Students communicate socially with peers and others through reading and writing. Examples include:

- exchanging notes and cards with friends, relatives, and pen pals to keep in touch and to commemorate special occasions.
- writing in ways that take into account the knowledge and interests of the person receiving the letter.
- reading and discussing published letters, diaries, and journals to learn the conventions of presenting ideas in these forms.

Intermediate

* Speaking and Listening *

Students use language appropriately and selectively for social interactions with a range of different people. Examples include:

- listening attentively to others and building on others' ideas in conversations of general interest to peers and adults.
- expressing their ideas and concerns clearly and respectfully in conversations and group discussions.
- learning words in another language to communicate with a peer or an adult who speaks that language.
- understanding that people respond to both nonverbal and verbal elements of spoken language and developing verbal and nonverbal skills to improve communication with others.

*** Writing and Reading ***

Students communicate socially with peers and others through reading and writing. Examples include:

- communicating their experiences and ideas by writing letters and cards to friends, relatives, and community acquaintances, sometimes with the assistance of electronic communications and editing tools (such as computer-based word processing and e-mail technologies)
- creating an exchange of correspondence with a friend, classmate, or pen pal in which responses take into account the ideas and interest expressed by the other person in his or her letters.
- reading and discussing the social communications of other young authors and using some of the techniques of these writers in their own correspondence.

Commencement

*** Speaking and Listening ***

Students use language skillfully and purposefully to interact socially with individuals and groups both in and out of school. Examples include:

- engaging in conversations and discussions on academic, technical, and community subjects, anticipating what listeners will need to know to understand an idea and structuring conversations and discussions to provide that information.
- expressing their thoughts and views clearly with attention to the perspectives and voiced concerns of the listener or audience.
- recognizing and practicing without direction the conventions of language appropriate to different situations and audiences, such as informal conversations, first meetings with other students or adults, and more formal interactions, such as job interviews.

*** Writing and Reading ***

Students communicate socially with peers and significant adults through reading and writing. Examples include:

- writing effectively in a variety of print and electronic forms on subjects related to school, work, social occasions, and community affairs, making effective connections among message, audience, and context. Forms might include letters to friends, relatives, or literary authors; group invitations to school or community events; introductions for an exchange student to the school community; and e-mail exchanges on topics of mutual interest with students in other schools.
- reading about the ideas and experiences of others as a basis for framing an interaction or response; for example, reading about

life in another culture before sending a letter or e-mail communication to a group of students in another part of the world, and taking into account what is learned in the communication.

- reading and discussing the social communications of published writers and using some of the techniques of these writers in their own correspondence.

The Dimensions of Performance

These four standards describe the kinds of knowledge that students should acquire during school and the kinds of activities they should engage in. In addition, the English Language Arts Standards set forth five dimensions or criteria that accompany these standards and mark the proficient student.

Range

The amateur photographer is able to recognize only a limited range of photo possibilities, while the skilled professional can find design and pattern in any surroundings. A similar change is evident in language performance. As individuals grow in their language achievement, the number and variety of stories, poems, plays, essays, and films that they read, enjoy, and understand will grow. They will also grow in the number and complexity of the subjects they write and talk about; the diversity of cultures and historical periods they appreciate; the varieties of language, diction, and usage they employ in different social situations; the forms, genres, and structures that help to frame and shape their thoughts; and the variety and sophistication of their strategies for interpreting and composing. This valuing of learning that is both broad and deep is reflected in the range, or extent, of the individual's capacity for performance.

The main way a learner grows verbally is toward increasing the number of options about how to compose thought into language and how to interpret language into thought.

-Moffett, 1992

Flexibility

Where the amateur photographer is insecure under poor lighting conditions, is easily confused if asked to use another's camera, or isn't sure when to use programmed or manual modes, the skilled professional, on the other hand, can adjust settings, film, filters, and lenses according to conditions and the desired effect. Skilled language users also have this flexibility. Not only do they read a lot of stories, for example; they read stories from many cultures and in many styles from the straightforward to the complex. They can take different perspectives in their writing, such as the personal and the dispassionate; adjust presentations according to different audiences; read the same story from an historical, psychological, or social stance; apply familiar material to an unfamiliar situation; and write appropriately in a range of situations from the short examination to the extended research paper. While the dimension of range describes the substance of an individual's language performance, flexibility is concerned with the manner of the performance: facility in choosing among options; adaptation to purpose, audience, and context; consistency of quality across performances. For curriculum and assessment, this dimension means that students must be presented with different sorts of books to read and films to watch, different kinds of writing from the technical to the poetic, and different kinds of technologies from the pencil to the computer. Clearly, flexibility can only be attained where students have many opportunities to make their own meanings for numerous and varied purposes and audiences.

Independence

The amateur photographer is able to hold the camera properly, load the film, and use some camera settings and features without direction

but probably relies on the manual or other resource to check such things as flash settings, the hyperfocal distance scale, the self-timer, or the need for different lenses and films. The skilled photographer needs no direction and can use any camera and its features to full effect.

As students grow in their abilities to use language, they become less reliant on models and direction, more adept at deciding their own topics and forms for writing, and better at setting their own purposes and raising their own questions in reading. Although there is an increasing recognition of the social and collaborative power of language in making meaning, most educators would agree that an important indicator of literacy achievement is the personal control and responsibility exhibited by the student. Teachers want to see, for example, evidence of students' own views and personal voice in their oral and written texts, their ability to pose problems as well as to propose solutions, their selective use of other resources to support their own thinking, their awareness of the success or failure of strategies for composing and interpreting.

Connections

The novice photographer sees photography as a set of directions to be followed. But when Ansel Adams writes about his photography, he reveals an astonishing grasp of physics, chemistry, art, and even psychology. Similarly, this ability to make connections within and across disciplines, topics, texts, and contexts is an essential skill of the effective thinker and language user. The truly competent thinker and language user makes connections with widely diverse language and life experiences and is able to see similarities and relationships that others do not recognize. In schools, teachers strive daily to help their students apply the strategies learned in one context to subsequent contexts and to use the learning and experiences from one class to facilitate learning in another.

As individuals grow in literacy, the connections they make among texts, ideas, and experiences also grow. It is this ability to make connections that allows them to see commonality in apparently disparate experiences and contexts, to recognize dissonance, to use and understand metaphor and analogy. This ability is probably at the heart of all learning, for all meaning making requires the linking of the unknown with the known. For each language standard, the connections most necessary for proficiency in that standard have been addressed. As students' range and flexibility increase, they should be able to connect the modern play they are reading to the one by Shakespeare they read the year before. They should be able to see that the way they researched a paper for English can be used in history. When reading, they should make connections with their personal life and the events of the world around them. When they write, they should see that connections with audience are crucial for social interaction.

Conventions

Every discipline has its conventions: those protocols, traditional practices, skills and rules which the novice strives to master but which the truly skilled performers know well and sometimes even dare to violate. The amateur photographer struggles to master a few basic conventions, like keeping the subject within the frame, while the professional applies a whole range of conventions regarding light, color, composition, and perspective.

Similarly, the most skillful readers, writers, listeners, and speakers know the conventions—the etiquette of the discourse—without which the meaning, structures, and rhetorical choices will lack power and elegance. The English language arts standards include a broad range of conventions: the spelling, mechanics, and usage conventions of standard written English; rules of conversation and public speaking; the principles and manners associated with listening in formal and informal situations; rhetorical features of different kinds of discourse; cultural norms and mores of groups. The conventions will differ for each of the language functions and for different modes, audiences, and purposes, but they are essential to attaining proficiency in every standard.

CHAPTER IV: USING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS TO PLAN CURRICULUM IN THE SCHOOLS

An Implementation Strategy

When the dimensions are put together with the standards, they create the ingredients for a successful curriculum in the English language arts that can meet the needs of all students and provide a framework within which curriculum and assessment can be created by districts and schools. These standards may be used along with the New York State Syllabus in English Language Arts. They may also be used to aid in local decision making.

The standards clearly indicate that the curriculum must attend to four activities using language:

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking
- Listening (Including Viewing)

The standards clearly indicate that the curriculum must attend to four functions of language:

- Informational
- Literary
- Critical
- Social

The standards and the dimensions clearly indicate that the curriculum must provide the opportunities for students to encounter and demonstrate five qualities:

- Range
- Flexibility
- Independence
- Connections
- Conventions

Taken together, the standards and the dimensions call for a curriculum that is broad, that challenges students at all levels, and that prepares them for all the roles they will take in the community.

The best way to use the standards in curriculum building and review is as a lens on specific activities, lessons, units, and programs. The structure and sequence of the curriculum can take a number of forms, depending on the situation of the school and the students. Some approaches to English language arts focus on genres or types of texts; some focus on cultures, historical periods, or nations; some focus on themes and topics. Some curricula set forth separate times for literature, language, media, and composition. Each of these

approaches is appropriate and can help students gain the necessary knowledge and skills to perform well on any assessment based on the standards.

Using the Standards to Assist Overall Planning

There are two stages to curriculum planning: the first is to set a school-level plan; the second is to specify the week-to-week activities within a grade or a class. In order to set a school-level plan, teachers and administrators in a school should reach some sort of consensus. One way to do this is to ask two questions. The first is how well students can read, write, speak, listen, and view when evaluated against the standards; the answer to this question will say something about the nature of the school's existing curriculum. The second is in what ways a student in the last year of school should be more accomplished than a student who has just entered the school; the answer to this question also helps define standards, particularly with respect to curricula and programs.

The Idea of Quality

In answering the first question, what does the school mean by "competent," the curriculum planners at a given school are beginning to elaborate the four standards in the light of their own community and its perception of what is specifically important. As they undertake this elaboration, they will undoubtedly deal with three aspects of the curriculum that are part of the standards: knowledge, good practice, and worthwhile habits.

- Knowledge—what teachers, parents, and administrators expect students to know that they might not have otherwise known had they not come to school (which is to say the content of the curriculum).

A great part of the knowledge base for English language arts comprises the books or other selections read or viewed. It seems clear that it is not simply a matter of quantity; there are a number of specific books that teachers think students should have read or should be knowledgeable about. They may range from the plays of Shakespeare to the novels of Toni Morrison to Robert's Rules of Order. The standard that refers to the ability to use language for information (Standard 1) requires a knowledge of dictionaries, encyclopedias, data bases, and other sources of information.

The second kind of knowledge that students should come to possess comprises the various terms and concepts by which people talk and write about what they read. These are often defined by the critical terms contained within handbooks and glossaries of textbooks, but the teachers see their importance in use, not simply as passive learning. Students should also be knowledgeable about the conventions of oral and written discourse, from spelling and penmanship to margins and bibliographies. They should be knowledgeable about newspapers and other media that provide information. It seems clear that having such knowledge marks the competent student, but it is less the knowledge for its own sake than the application of that knowledge in reading and writing.

- Practice—what teachers parents, and administrators want students to learn *to do* in reading and writing, speaking, and listening.

In practice, the more accomplished or more mature student is usually the one who can speak knowledgeably at some length, can use various concepts and conventions, can supply more details and features of the text to support a position, and can draw generalizations about the text that are grounded in close reading and thoughtful interpretation. Such talk or writing implies making connections between the given text and, first, the student's own experience, but later, the stockpile of other texts that have been read or studied as well as the broad set of cultural artifacts—film, television, music, art—contemporary with the text or with the readers.

- Learning habits—the ways in which teachers, parents, and administrators want students to behave as learners.

Students are expected to enjoy reading and writing as leisure activities. They are encouraged to enjoy and willingly participate in a variety of experiences, from reading both classics and comics to viewing stage plays and television dramas. They are encouraged to find analysis of art works as enjoyable as talking about their own responses. They are encouraged to choose to get to the source for information and not rely on secondhand data. Range, flexibility, connections, conventions, and independence are to become second nature.

A school's curriculum developers may readily use these three components as an aid to the school's particular working out of the standards.

The Shape and Sequence of the Curriculum.

In answering the question, "What are the differences that accompany age or experience?" planners are elaborating the proposed sequence. According to the standards, older students are expected to come to read longer works and more mature works, works written for a general adult population. Their stock of references should be broader, and they should have acquired a sense of the nature of the major genres (e.g. poetry, short stories, novels, biographies, dramas, epics, essays), the major literary themes (e.g. utopia, the individual and society), and some of the major movements such as romanticism, realism, feminism. They are expected to know about more complex sources of information and about various cultures. The knowledge is not specialized or detailed, but a broad categorical familiarity is expected through the high school years.

In terms of practice, older students are expected to read and write more "difficult" texts (in both treatment of subject matter and style and structure). They are expected to respond to more stringent demands imposed by the situation of reading and discourse in the classroom. This may mean they should refer more to the author and to historical and other cultural and social information, use more elaborate references to critical terminology, and make more connections to texts that have been read or known. According to the standards, older students should come to use more technical language, to extend their writing or speech, to consider more points, and to write or talk more consistently in terms of their theoretical approach to the issues. Older students should also be more aware that other views or interpretations of literary works can be as valid as their own and recognize the differences among interpretations and account for them. In writing, older students are expected to display more elaboration, greater length, more complex syntax, and greater use of language that exhibits tentativeness or contingency based on consideration of competing factors or explanations.

The development of more mature habits tends to follow the same pattern. Students are expected to prefer both the more “difficult” text and the more difficult approach to a text. Not that they give up their simpler taste; they are expected to become more eclectic and diverse in their reading. In addition, students are expected to make more complex judgments and more subtle distinctions between what they like and what they know is “good” by some established literary criteria. At a high level, they should appreciate the “good” whether it be determined in terms of style or substance.

In determining the curriculum and selecting the specific texts to be read and the types of writing to be done, the school should look through the complete set of standards to be sure that all the standards have been addressed and that students will have ample opportunity to practice what is contained within those standards. A curriculum that concentrates on social uses of language at the expense of the literary is narrow. So is a curriculum that concentrates on the elementary level without allowing for individual students to move on to the intermediate or commencement levels. These levels are not grade prescriptions, but serve to indicate the range of potential performance.

Sequence

At the same time as it strikes a balance among the standards, the curriculum that emerges should set a plausible sequence so that students have a chance to acquire knowledge, develop skills, and develop good learning habits. This sequence may take a distinct shape for individual schools or even programs within schools. In some instances an historical sequence for the study of language and literature may be appropriate, particularly if the planners in a school believe that historical connections are important. There are other possible links that may help students understand the variety of connections. Each of these has proved useful in the English language arts curriculum for shaping a unit or a year of study:

- Cultural or Geographic: Focuses on groups and places;
- Genre and Types: Focuses on the formal and structural elements of language;
- Skill Area: Focuses on one skill area at a time (e.g. speaking or viewing);
- Technology: Focuses on particular ways of processing language, such as the computer or the television camera;
- Local-Global: Focuses on the school and its environment and moves out into the world;
- Thematic or Topical: Focuses on a particular unifying theme such as heroes or the environment;
- Functional: Focuses on one of the uses of language, such as the social or the informational.

Each of these organizations, as well as combinations of several, has proved successful in various schools; teachers and planners are urged to follow the sequence that makes the most sense for their situation.

Sharing the Process with the Community

Sharing with the community of teachers of other subjects, administrators, parents, and community members is an important step in implementing the standards, because it is a compact, a form of agreement within the communities of the State, that these objectives and standards are shared. Sharing gives teachers a chance to explain what they are doing; it also gives them a chance to validate it.

If the community of teachers shares its expectations and standards with the larger community, the result may at times be a tempering of those expectations and standards, but in most cases the process results in a clarification of the language and meaning of what the school expects. In most cases it is what the larger community wants as well. There may be some clashes of expectations, but these need to be resolved at the outset of instruction rather than at the end.

By far the most important group with whom to share standards, objectives, and criteria are the students. When teachers are open about their criteria and their goals, the students better understand what is expected of them. They don't have to ask, "But what do you want?" They can also be invited to set their own goals. It may be that a student wants to read more articles on tropical fish as well as make better journal entries. It may be that a student wants to learn to write catalog copy for sports cards as well as the other genres that will be emphasized in the class. It may be that a student wants to keep up a correspondence with friends in another country as well as to read and write in the classroom. Each of these is a legitimate extension of the standards into the students' lives. By sharing goals and making the criteria explicit, by allowing the students to formulate their own goals within the standards, the classroom becomes much clearer and more manageable.

Using the Standards to Assist Detailed Planning

Appendix B provides some examples of how the standards can be used to look at representative activities drawn from a range of elementary, middle, and high schools across New York. Each section begins with a brief description of the context of schooling and the concerns of the curriculum and then examines each of the activities in terms of its context in the curriculum, the main standard that is exemplified, and the assessment tools and evidence of learning, including criteria by which performance might be judged. An example of the format follows:

Context

A middle school combined language arts and social studies classroom in a city in New York, where students are doing a unit on Native Americans of New York State.

Activity

Students are assigned to write a research paper in which they choose a particular tribe and describe the heroes, rituals, and beliefs of that tribe in the 1700s.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

Participating in a research project fosters independence in finding material and synthesizing it. Exploring another culture provides an information base through which appreciation of cultural diversity can grow.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Students will produce reading notes, outlines, drafts, and the final report. At the elementary level, the students would be expected to show that they understood some of the conventions of research procedure, that they used multiple sources including print and interviews, that they recognized relationships and made generalizations, that they used a variety of media (text and picture) in their report, that they arranged these in an attractive format without major errors in vocabulary, spelling and usage, and that they were able to work together in producing a group report. At the middle level these attainments would be expected, as would the additional attainments of using complex sources and databases, of comparing sources and evaluating the difference between fact and opinion, of formatting a working and final bibliography, of showing an understanding of plagiarism and correct attribution, and of being able to make independent findings. At the commencement level, the research paper would also show the students' ability to make generalizations and complex arguments arising from their data, to seek out data using various electronic networks as well as interviews and other media, to evaluate the reliability of sources and their bias, to use proper citation style, to employ appropriate keyboarding and formatting techniques, and to follow the conventions of the research report in an appropriate discipline.

Once a school or district has set forth its curriculum in terms of the standards and criteria, it has already completed much of the work of defining its principles of assessment, which will be the subject of the next section.

CHAPTER V: USING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS TO GUIDE ASSESSMENT

Multiple Sources of Evidence

“A clear and vital mission is the first requirement for school improvement,” notes Ernest Boyer in summarizing his report on secondary education (1984). Learning standards help to define that mission, but to be truly useful they must also orient and guide teachers and students toward achievement of those standards. This chapter explores the implications of the standards for observing, evaluating, and reporting language achievement.

In the world outside of school, our performance is rarely assessed by means of a single measure. Whether our special interest is in swimming or playing tennis, arguing cases in court or flying airplanes, drawing or singing, quilting or throwing pots, a true picture of the quality of our work is revealed only through multiple assessments. Some information can be gleaned by watching our day-to-day engagements and observing our behaviors as we learn and practice the skill. Some can be obtained by examining our performances, those public demonstrations of learning such as the swim meet or the art show. Additional information comes from the records or reports of our learning: the number and kind of medals and ribbons and certificates of merit or the records of track or swim times. Further insight into our abilities can be obtained by asking for our personal perceptions, or self-reflections. And some kinds of information can be acquired from what have been called “convenient proxies,” those controlled samples of achievement such as the timed warmup or the monthly club competition. It is in the totality of these observations that we are able to come close to a true picture of achievement. In English language arts, that picture is made clearer when each measure is viewed through the common lens provided by the standards.

The only hope for truth through observation is to synthesize the totality of observations—from different times and vantage points—into a fuller picture.

Moffett, 1970

Learning from Student Engagements

Teachers in learning-centered classrooms are used to observing their students. They record the cue systems students use in oral reading, their emerging control over the writing conventions, their contributions to class discussion, their roles and behaviors during group work, their preferences in books and writing topics and work habits. The English language arts standards and performance indicators can help teachers to focus their observations on the desired ends of instruction. Among skilled language users, the behaviors associated with each language function are less distinctive. However, while students are developing their abilities in using language for informational, literary, critical, and social purposes, those abilities will be reflected in their day-to-day engagements with *literacy events*—instances of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Following are a few of the ways students should demonstrate their emerging appreciation for the four functions of language:

Informational

The student should:

- observe and clearly record facts and details;
- gather information for different purposes;
- share results of investigations with classmates;
- select and read books of information or interesting facts;
- choose to write and listen to informational texts;
- use and interpret graphic organizers such as charts or webs;
- use a variety of data bases; and
- make logical connections between and among ideas and information in text.

Literary

The student should:

- make connections between literacy events and his or her own life;
- read assigned and self-selected literature;
- select books of poetry, story, and drama for personal reading;
- use and understand metaphorical language;
- comment on the craft of writers;
- use literary references to understand people and events;
- choose to read, write and listen to literary texts that lead to a better understanding of human nature;
- read and interpret texts about people from other cultures; and
- recognize similarities and differences among people in literature.

Critical Analysis and Evaluation

The student should:

- develop grounded judgments and opinions about experiences;
- distinguish between subjective and objective aspects of an experience;
- see similarities and differences among texts and other experiences;
- choose to write, read, and listen to texts that present different points of view;

- support personal opinion with public criteria and evidence;
- make connections and see possibilities beyond the immediate experience; and
- question or comment upon writers' assumptions, beliefs or intentions.

Social Interaction

The student will:

- engage in conversation with adults and peers;
- be an attentive listener;
- participate in group work, taking various roles;
- write and respond to notes and letters;
- seek out opportunities for social communication (e.g., writing to a pen pal); and
- be aware of the demands of audience, purpose, and context.

Learning from Student Performances

Recommendations from the Curriculum and Assessment Council, echoing those of national experts in assessment, highlight the importance of challenging students with complex tasks requiring integrated knowledge and application of skills over time and in a variety of contexts. Measured against exacting criteria, some of these make appropriate exhibitions, or culminating experiences that demonstrate to parents and the public “what students have achieved as a result of the school’s efforts to teach them” (McDonald, 1993). Even when viewed less formally, performance tasks are an important part of the curriculum—educational tools whose function is as much to guide as to assess instruction.

Following are some of the experiences one middle school teacher arranged for her students over the course of a year to enable them to demonstrate their abilities to use language for each of the four purposes. Although each task was designed to represent a specific outcome, the completion of that task provided numerous opportunities for the teacher to observe behaviors associated with other standards. Note that each task requires completion of a product, but that numerous variations in that product as well as numerous routes toward its completion are possible. The following discussion includes the task itself; its intended purpose; the choices made by two different students in accomplishing the task; and a list of opportunities for students to integrate their reading, writing, listening, and speaking on the way toward achieving that purpose.

Authentic Performance Assessments

- *both mirror and measure performance in “real world” tasks and situations*
- *involve the creation of a product*
- *require higher-order thinking and application of knowledge*
- *measure success against rigorous and known criteria*
- *allow for a variety of routes toward completion*
- *are an integral part of instruction*

PERFORMANCE TASK A:

Standard 1
Language for Information and Understanding

In preparation for the 200th anniversary of the founding of your community, prepare an oral or written document to introduce tourists to the historical highlights of the region in which you live.

In responding to this task, students chose to demonstrate the results of their learning in a variety of formats: a tourist brochure, a videotaped walking tour, a dramatic re-enactment of a historical battle, among others. One student, working with the Chapter I reading teacher, researched newspapers of the era, interviewed local journalists, and studied the present-day summer tourist newspaper before creating his own “historical” version of a similar document. Another student, whose creative writing had won many local and regional awards, chose to create a Foxfire-like collection of stories, information, and memories gleaned from museum archives and the recollections of local townspeople. Although this task represents the use of language for information, its preparation provided many opportunities for students to use language poetically, socially, and critically. Among the contexts for observing students’ literacy behaviors were:

- interviewing parents, community leaders, and local historians;
- researching and evaluating existing promotional material for their content, language, and format;
- examining historical texts and documents to discover the significance and present-day use of area historical sites;
- preparing a summary of findings for classmates;
- sharing and responding to drafts of each others’ work;
- making decisions about content, design, and language; and
- determining with group members the criteria for an effective product.

PERFORMANCE TASK B:

Standard 2
Language for Literary Response and Expression

Prepare an anthology of family stories to be presented to a family member on a special occasion. You may include in your anthology stories by and about past and present members of your family, tall tales and true stories, poems and essays—about family names and traditions, famous or infamous relatives, joyful and sad events, admirable traits and special relationships. You may include artifacts such as photographs and recipes, but the document should be a logically organized collection of writing that says, in effect, “This is my family.”

Some students responded to this task by exploring and producing a variety of genres, while others limited their anthology to autobiographical narratives. One student who had been strongly influenced by her grandmother’s letters through the years chose to frame her

family stories as letters, directed to her grandmother and presented to her on her school's Grandparents' Day. Another student, whose recollections of his real family were painful ones, used this assignment as a way of getting to know his new foster family, sending questionnaires and interviewing them about family traditions and memorable events.

Although this activity represented the use of language for literary response and expression, its preparation provided many opportunities for the teacher to observe her students' abilities to:

- produce and reflect on a variety of texts in different genres;
- convey feelings, ideas, and experiences in language that expresses the writers' intentions;
- make decisions about content, organization, voice, and language and consider the effect of those decisions on a known audience;
- study the craft of published writers of similar genres;
- share selections with others, orally and in writing;
- choose an order and design for the anthology that celebrates the contents; and
- write and speak with clarity, conciseness and conviction for a general audience.

PERFORMANCE TASK C:

Standard 3 Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

As a group, create an annotated reading list of 10 books you believe should be read by all middle school students before entering high school. For each entry, include a critical review written by one or more members of your group. Group members must agree on the selections and assure a balance of fiction and nonfiction, a range of genres, and authorship that represents the range of cultures in your community.

This experience required students to accommodate divergent views while honing their interpersonal, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. The finding that no group created exactly the same list was an important one for these students, for it raised the same questions with which many teachers are wrestling: What is good literature? Who decides? And what does the very existence of a list say about the items that are on it and the items that are excluded?

Although designed to result in writing for critical analysis and evaluation, preparation of this annotated reading list also provided genuine reasons for:

- reading a wide variety of literature;
- sharing personal responses to literature, orally and in writing;
- investigating backgrounds and accomplishments of authors;

- reading and critiquing published reviews;
- establishing criteria for determining quality;
- responding appropriately to the ideas and opinions of classmates;
- sharing and responding to drafts of each other's writing;
- using language, organization, and format that would appeal to a middle school audience; and
- preparing a presentation to introduce the reading list to other audiences.

PERFORMANCE TASK D:

Standard 4
Language for Social Interaction

In preparation for Grandparents' Day in your school, contact an elderly friend of yours or your family, arrange to talk with that person on several occasions and exchange several letters. Then prepare a 20-minute presentation to your class in which you introduce and describe this person to your classmates.

Intended as a way of broadening the social sphere of students in the classroom, this experience allowed students to learn more about the lives of their own grandparents as well as to become friends with the elderly adults they had known casually through their parents. Probably the most important discovery of these students was that their 20-minute introduction could in no way capture the lives and contributions of these people. One student developed an interest in woodworking, another learned to crochet, and another continued to send cards and letters to her new friend on important occasions throughout the year.

Clearly, this activity has as its central purpose the initiation of an intergenerational relationship. However, preparation for the student's introduction of his or her friend also allowed for numerous other uses of language:

- using appropriate conventions for informal meetings;
- preparing questions to put interviewee at ease and assure interesting responses;
- listening attentively and responsively;
- taking notes that capture the substance and flavor of the interviews;
- writing letters, using language and tone appropriate to the audience; and
- preparing and presenting an introduction that is informative, articulate, assured, and respectful of the person being introduced.

These performance tasks suggest some reasonable contexts for observing and fostering complex language use. They demonstrate that what is valued in language is its purposeful use—in many contexts, with many audiences. They also allow students to use language to learn about language. With appropriate materials and criteria for success, these tasks could be adapted for any level. Although there is clearly no one-to-one correspondence between the task and any single performance indicator, the completion of many tasks such as these would provide numerous opportunities for teachers to observe their students' language behaviors.

Learning from Student Records and Reports

Teachers in learning-centered classrooms have always encouraged students to keep lists: “Words I can write,” books read, topics written about, skills learned, examples encountered of beautiful language. These lists can tell a lot about the range of a student's interests, as well as the scope of work in a class. When viewed in light of the English language arts standards, they can help to answer the following questions:

- Are the texts my students are reading and hearing representative of informational, literary, critical, and social uses of language?
- Are my students writing to a variety of audiences for all four purposes?
- Do the examples of language they admire suggest an appreciation of multiple forms and genres?
- Are my students acquiring the skills they need to use language effectively for all four purposes?

The activities presented in Appendix B offer a variety of opportunities for students to keep records of their own accomplishments in light of the standards.

Learning from Student Self-Assessments

For the English language arts standards to be truly useful, they must help students evaluate their own performances. Students will develop a reflective stance toward their language use only as they are given opportunities to revisit their work, use the language of the discipline, note their individual ways of working, justify favorite parts and pieces, consider their progress toward goals, and have a say in setting new goals.

One high school English teacher begins the school year by inviting his eleventh-grade students to complete a self-assessment based on the English language arts standards. At the beginning of the school year students are given these directions:

Language Arts Self-Assessment

Complete a language arts self-assessment by using the attached standards, your folder of last year's work, and your recollections of earlier activities in language arts. After reading the instructions and criteria, consider your habitual performance as a language user for each standard, and select a rating that best describes that level of

performance. Rate yourself on each standard, then explain how you decided on a 1, 2, 3, or 4 rating for that standard. Include one or more examples of your work that illustrate your typical performance.

Then, set some specific goals for yourself this year as a language user. Relate each goal to one of the standards, suggest some activities to help you to reach that goal, and propose some ways of assessing your progress toward each goal.

Following are responses to the first part of this task from four of the students:

Social Interaction

When interacting in a group, whether it be a class group project or just talking with friends, I find that I tend to take charge because of my desire for stability in situations. If I help to lead a group, I know that for myself I can keep things stable and I try to accomplish this for the group as well. . . . Although I do speak well in a group, I only use varying tones and expressions for humor or to take charge when work needs to be done.

Literary and Personal Response

During the summer I read the novel *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair. The book was read for a social studies assignment for which we had to express our meaning for the text. I had to select specific text quotes to support my feelings and my attitude toward the way the book was written. To better describe my views, I used metaphorical language to interpret the meaning of the book. This helped me bring out my feelings so my audience would better understand them.

Information and Understanding

When I have been given reports to do, I have been able to look into encyclopedias, magazines, and books and I've been able to pull out information that has been useful to me. I can read it and use the information in a wide variety [of tasks]. I can connect and interrelate the materials so that everything fits together. I can make judgments as to what is important and how my information will fit in with my strategies in my report.

Critical Analysis and Evaluation

I would rate myself a 1 because I am a very poor writer when it comes to analyzing and evaluating reading and applying it to paper. I am able, however, to write in a limited variety of forms to achieve a given purpose for a particular audience. For example, when I write for my teachers, I know their styles and therefore adjust to their techniques with my vocabulary.

These students are well on their way toward assessing their work against the same criteria as that of the standard-setting professionals. As Elbow (1986) reminds us, we haven't fully taught students to know or do something unless they can determine on their own whether they have done it or know it.

Learning from Portfolios

Details of the State's new assessment system will be determined by Regents policy in the coming months and refined over the next several years. In the meantime, recommendations of the Curriculum and

Assessment Council suggest that new State assessments in English language arts will:

- be tied to achievement of the English language arts standards;
- address a broader range of standards than is assessed by the present State tests;
- include performance components; that is, opportunities to demonstrate language proficiency in authentic situations; and
- support and inform classroom instruction that encourages meaningful language use.

Whether the new assessment system involves individual demonstrations of language proficiency, a portfolio collection, or some combination of the two, the English language arts standards can provide useful criteria for assessing and describing achievement.

Individual Literacy Events

In evaluating individual literacy events—the pieces of writing, the oral presentations, the responses to literature—that make up the collection of a student’s work, teachers and students will need criteria that are particular to each type of language experience. The “Criteria for Using Language for Specific Purposes” that follow may be used by teachers and students for evaluating individual oral and written products. When students are encouraged regularly to observe their own language growth, their work folders become a natural quarry for mining those “gems” that are later selected for final assessment.

Criteria for Using Language For Specific Purposes

Information and Understanding

The student has:

- selected a specific idea, issue, or question as a focus for the communication;
- developed the communication with specific references to other contexts as a way of explaining the significance of the idea, issue, or question to the topic and to the reader;
- made connections with previous knowledge, experience, or understanding to support conclusions and interpretations;
- grouped information and ideas to demonstrate an understanding of the relationships among them;
- selected a voice, point of view, words, and structure appropriate for conveying information and ideas to the intended audience;
- produced a well supported explanation that demonstrates an understanding of the idea, issue, or question under investigation; and
- used language that effectively interprets and communicates information and ideas to the intended audience.

Components of the New State Testing Program

- *A professional evaluation of the pupil’s accomplishments, made by his/her teachers*
- *A portfolio of the pupil’s best work, certified by his/her teachers and evaluated by qualified raters*
- *Examinations which measure problem-solving skills and the ability to analyze and synthesize as well as to recall facts.*

- A New Compact for Learning

Literary Response and Expression

The student has:

- selected a single literary text or other experience as a focus for an oral or written presentation;
- developed the presentation with specific references to related ideas, events, language, or other aspects of the experience;
- made connections with other contexts as a way of understanding and interpreting the self and/or the experience;
- selected a voice, point of view, words, and structures that allow personal exploration and refinement of thinking through writing or talk;
- produced a response that is well supported with reference to the text or experience and that demonstrates an understanding of the experience; and
- used language that effectively communicates feelings, attitudes or ideas to the audience.

Critical Analysis and Evaluation

The student has:

- selected a specific issue, idea, or experience as a focus for the communication;
- developed the communication with reference to specific aspects of the issue, idea, or experience that support the analysis or evaluation;
- used personal or objective criteria to justify opinions or judgments about the issue, idea, or experience;
- selected voice, point of view, words, and structures that allow for a reasoned analysis or evaluation for an intended audience;
- produced a substantive response that demonstrates an understanding of the issue, idea, or experience; and
- used language that presents a clear and cogent analysis or evaluation of an issue, idea, or experience.

Social Interaction

The student has:

- selected one or more subjects appropriate for personal or social communication;
- developed the communication with specific references to knowledge of the audience and the context;
- made connections with other contexts as a way of explaining or clarifying the information or ideas conveyed by the communication;

- used a form, tone, voice, structures, and words appropriate for personal or social communication;
- produced a substantive response that demonstrates an awareness of the context and the needs of the audience; and
- used language effectively to communicate in personal or social situations.

The Literacy Portfolio

As students develop in their abilities to use language for different purposes, their portfolios will reflect that development. Thus, a literacy portfolio would provide evidence of students' abilities to use all the forms of language to:

- investigate and express personal responses, attitudes, and ideas;
- interpret, apply, and transmit information;
- express opinions and make judgments about issues, ideas, and experiences; and
- communicate in everyday interpersonal situations.

A portfolio prepared by the students in consultation with the teacher may take many forms. For example, reading or writing for personal expression might be represented by a personal narrative, a list of books read, a response to a literary work, or a reflection on the portfolio itself. Writing or speaking for social interaction might be represented by notes on a group discussion or a tape of a debate. Writing or speaking for information and understanding could include a taped speech to the student body or an article about a science topic. Evidence of listening or reading for critical analysis and evaluation might be seen in a critique of a public poetry reading or an essay examining a short story from multiple critical perspectives. Asking students to assemble portfolios in order to demonstrate progress toward achievement of the language standards is a natural outgrowth of a curriculum that is rich in language activity and supportive of student self-reflection.

The literary portfolio should contain student work from across the curriculum, since effective oral and written presentation of learning is essential to success in every subject area.

The portfolio may include a variety of student performances, including the following:

- written compositions;
- conversational records;
- demonstrations;
- videotapes of dramatic performances;
- recordings of formal oral presentations;
- recordings of group oral presentations;

- group project reports;
- journals;
- multimedia presentations on CDROM;
- test results;
- reading logs;
- research papers;
- teachers' narrative reports; and
- video tapes.

The Literacy Profile

In viewing a student's portfolio or body of work as a whole, it may be useful to prepare a profile report, in which each language function is considered in light of the five dimensions of change and located on a continuum from competent to distinguished. It is important to think of these levels as broad categories rather than precise grades, and to recognize that the student is not a "level one" or a "level three" student, but that his or her ability to use language for a particular purpose is at that level. The student who may be merely competent with regard to one of the standards may be distinguished in performance of another. The literacy profile is useful for displaying a student's language achievement, either the achievement demonstrated in a portfolio assembled for that purpose or that revealed in the collective perspective that is gleaned from engagements, exhibitions, records, self-assessments, and proxies such as State or local performance tests.

Using the language standards to guide assessment has several advantages over traditional procedures. It considers language use across a broad range of contexts. It describes achievement in terms of authentic behaviors of language users. And unlike secret, secure measures, it offers known standards well in advance of any final assessment. Both teaching and learning are expected to focus on thoughtful, independent use of language in as many authentic contexts as possible. In this sense, "teaching to the test" becomes a valuable and legitimate purpose for instruction.

Appendix A: Regents Goals for Elementary, Middle, and Secondary School Students

In 1984 the Board of Regents established the Regents Goals for Elementary and Secondary School Students as part of the Regents Action Plan to Improve Elementary and Secondary Education Results. Then in 1991, in connection with the implementation of *A New Compact for Learning*, the Board of Regents revised the Regents Goals for Elementary, Middle, and Secondary School Students. The goals define the broad aims for education but do not provide the basis for assessment.

The Regents Goals are the same for all students. They represent expectations for students, with the understanding that all students are not the same. Each student has different talents, developmental and learning differences, abilities, and interests. Schools must recognize and attend to these differences in order to provide an educational experience that enables all students to succeed.

Goal 1: Each student will master communication and computation skills as a foundation to:

- 1.1 Think logically and creatively
- 1.2 Apply reasoning skills to issues and problems
- 1.3 Comprehend written, spoken, and visual presentations in various media
- 1.4 Speak, listen to, read, and write clearly and effectively in English
- 1.5 Perform basic mathematical calculations
- 1.6 Speak, listen to, read, and write at least one language other than English
- 1.7 Use current and developing technologies for academic and occupational pursuits
- 1.8 Determine what information is needed for particular purposes and be able to use libraries and other resources to acquire, organize, and use that information for those purposes

Goal 2: Each student will be able to apply methods of inquiry and knowledge learned through the following disciplines and use the methods and knowledge in interdisciplinary applications:

- 2.1 English language arts
- 2.2 Science, mathematics, and technology
- 2.3 History and social science
- 2.4 Arts and humanities
- 2.5 Language and literature in at least one language other than English
- 2.6 Technical and occupational studies
- 2.7 Physical education, health, and home economics

Goal 3: Each student will acquire knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the artistic, cultural, and intellectual accomplishments of civilization, and develop the skills to express personal artistic talents. Areas include:

- 3.1 Ways to develop knowledge and appreciation of the arts
- 3.2 Aesthetic judgments and the ability to apply them to works of art
- 3.3 Ability to use cultural resources of museums, libraries, theaters, historic sites, and performing arts groups
- 3.4 Ability to produce or perform works in at least one major art form
- 3.5 Materials, media, and history of major art forms
- 3.6 Understanding of the diversity of cultural heritages

Goal 4: Each student will acquire and be able to apply knowledge about political, economic, and social institutions and procedures in this country and other countries. Included are:

- 4.1 Political, economic, and social processes and policies in the United States at national, State, and local levels
- 4.2 Political, economic, and social institutions and procedures in various nations; ability to compare the operation of such institutions; and understanding of the international interdependence of political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental systems
- 4.3 Roles and responsibilities the student will assume as an adult, including those of parent, home manager, family member, worker, learner, consumer, and citizen
- 4.4 Understanding of the institution of the “family,” respect for its function, diversity, and variety of form, and the need to balance work and family in a bias-free democratic society

Goal 5: Each student will respect and practice basic civic values and acquire and use the skills, knowledge, understanding, and attitudes necessary to participate in democratic self-government. Included are:

- 5.1 Understanding and acceptance of the values of justice, honesty, self-discipline, due process, equality, and majority rule with respect for minority rights
- 5.2 Respect for self, others, and property as integral to a self-governing, democratic society
- 5.3 Ability to apply reasoning skills and the process of democratic government to resolve societal problems and disputes

Goal 6: Each student will develop the ability to understand, appreciate, and cooperate with people of different race, sex, ability, cultural heritage, national origin, religion, and political, economic, and social background, and to understand and appreciate their values, beliefs, and attitudes.

Goal 7: Each student will acquire the knowledge of the ecological consequences of choices in the use of the environment and natural resources.

Goal 8: Each student will be prepared to enter upon post-secondary education and/or career-level employment at graduation from high school. Included are:

- 8.1 The interpersonal, organizational, and personal skills needed to work as a group member
- 8.2 The ability to use the skills of decision making, problem solving, and resource management

- 8.3 An understanding of ethical behavior and the importance of values
- 8.4 The ability to acquire and use the knowledge and skills to manage and lead satisfying personal lives and contribute to the common good

Goal 9: Each student will develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes which will enhance personal life management, promote positive parenting skills, and will enable functioning effectively in a democratic society. Included are:

- 9.1 Self-esteem
- 9.2 Ability to maintain physical, mental, and emotional health
- 9.3 Understanding of the ill effects of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs and of other practices dangerous to health
- 9.4 Basic skills for living, decision making, problem solving, and managing personal resources to attain goals
- 9.5 Understanding of the multiple roles adults assume, and the rights and responsibilities of those roles
- 9.6 Basic skills for parenting and child development

Goal 10: Each student will develop a commitment to lifetime learning and constructive use of such learning, with the capacity for undertaking new studies, synthesizing new knowledge and experience with the known, refining the ability to judge, and applying skills needed to take ethical advantage of technological advances.

Appendix B: Curriculum Planning at Three Levels

Achieving the English Language Arts Standards in the Elementary School Years

During the elementary school years, most children learn to read and write in the sense of mastering the skills of deciphering written or printed language and of forming letters, words, sentences, and longer units on paper or on the screen. The English language arts standards do not only address the ways by which children are to become literate in this sense; they address the functional uses of literacy even at an early age. The elementary years are also the years in which children learn to read, write, speak, and listen or view the media in a disciplined way, where they begin to acquire knowledge of language and literature, and where they begin to develop critical and social skills in the uses of oral, written, and electronically transmitted language.

Learning through Listening and Viewing

Young children learn about the structure of language in many forms by being read to. Just as they come to know that folk tales will begin with wording such as “Once upon a time,” they also learn the language styles and structures of factual texts if such material is read to them. Internalizing the language in this way helps them to make predictions when reading informational texts and to use this same type of language when writing informational texts.

The range of texts and performances children encounter and the kinds of engagement they have with these texts and performances will influence the kinds of language users they become. There is significant variation among children in their experience of oral, written, and electronically produced language before and during their years at school. A part of this variation may be connected to the children’s culture. Some parents will have read extensively to their children and encouraged interaction, with the children asking questions and making comments throughout the reading; other parents will have read to the children and not expected any discussion; in other families oral traditions are stronger and reading may not have occurred. The viewing of films and television programs is likely to have happened in most homes, but discussion or other forms of response are likely to be minimal.

All of these experiences, and whether they are read or viewed in active or passive ways, provide the basis of the linguistic resources children have at their disposal as developing readers, writers, and viewers. It is the teachers’ responsibility to know about and understand the nature of each child’s language experiences, to see them all as strengths to build on, and to widen the repertoire of linguistic resources they can read, respond to, and use as a model for their own speaking, writing, and performance.

The Nature of Elementary School Language Arts Programs

The principle of learning by being immersed in models of language applies to children throughout the elementary school, as they learn to use materials of all kinds. They realize that information may be interpreted from diagrams, maps, and tables as much as from text and that information can be presented in texts that vary from historical narrative or persuasive poetry about social issues, to instruction manuals or encyclopedia entries that may be in print or on a computer program.

Curriculum areas such as social studies, science, and mathematics provide many opportunities for learning how to acquire and present information, make literary judgments, sharpen critical skills and consider social situations. With younger children this may begin with class topics of study and investigation where they work together to gather and share ideas and knowledge, categorize and organize findings, or make a class book with appropriate features for nonfiction.

When children begin elementary school, teachers may ask them to select their favorite book and tell why or to make a choice about which activity they would prefer to do. By the time they leave elementary school, they will have been involved in many situations that require analysis and judgment, such as “Where should we go for our class trip and why?” or “Persuade others in a debate about whether we should recycle the cans from the school cafeteria.” Teachers cannot presume that students have either the confidence or the skills to do this, and yet teachers know that this is important for the enhancement of students’ thinking and learning.

While teachers place students in situations where such problem solving and decision making are required, teachers, at the same time, assure them that their opinion is worthwhile and valued. Teachers provide models of the ways that students can critically analyze resources that we use for information and for pleasure in our daily lives. Children also learn how to express their opinion to persuade others in situations that affect their lives, such as why they would like their classroom to be cared for by others who use it for after-school programs or why the local industries should not pollute nearby streams.

Teachers arrange the classroom in ways that will promote interaction, with a comfortable meeting area large enough for the children to come together to share ideas and information. Small groups or pairs can use this same area at many times during the day when they need to work together. When large groups meet, sometimes the children face one direction, attending to the person who is sharing or reading aloud. With older elementary children, teachers use these group situations to explore the use of various kinds of nonverbal communication that speakers use for emphasis and other effects and that listeners use as response. These include such things as a pause, a nod, facial expression, and tone of voice. Teachers also explore the ways that some children keep others out of an activity or conversation, such as by turning the body to keep someone out of a group. Teachers ask the children to self-evaluate their group work skills, perhaps by audiotaping their session and listening to it or videotaping their session and viewing it. They can analyze such evidence to find out if some children were too dominant, how they encouraged all to participate, and which aspects of social language they will work at next time they

meet. With all age groups teachers use role-play to explore and demonstrate the appropriate social conventions.

The elementary school, then, is the place where the four standards often come together in a single activity or set of activities and where children are introduced to the various facets and functions of language and literature. The following sampler of activities suggests some of the variety of ways by which the English language arts standards may inform the curriculum.

A Standards Approach to Various Elementary School Language Arts Activities

Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding

A Unit on Animals

Context

In preparation for a first-grade unit of study on penguins, a teacher has gathered many sources of information, including nonfiction big books on penguins, informational books, magazines (such as *Zoobook*), and videotapes. These sources are used in a variety of learning activities such as shared readings, read-aloud, independent reading, and writing. The teacher has several goals for this unit of study, including developing knowledge about penguins, recognizing characteristics of informational text, and recording and sharing information with others.

Student Activity

In reading activities, students initially respond to the illustrations. Their comments begin to shift from purely aesthetic reactions to realizations that the illustrations are teaching them about penguins and that the books have a distinctive format. With teacher guidance, the class begins to record its learning on charts with headings such as “Enemies,” “Food,” and “Babies.” As learning continues throughout the unit, students suggest new information to be added to the existing categories along with ideas for new categories. Each student composes his/her own penguin book. The books reflect the developmental levels of their authors. Students share their books with the class, other classes in the school, and parents.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Exposing students to information from oral, written and electronic sources develops the understanding that knowledge can be acquired and transmitted in a variety of ways.
- By guiding students through processes for recording and organizing information, such as categorizing, students develop strategies for collecting data. These same procedures for organizing information can help students to make connections between and among the information collected.
- Opportunities to present information orally and in written forms require the use of different conventions. Conventions are also influenced by the audience. Experience in presenting to a variety of audiences, in a variety of forms, helps students to learn the conventions needed to communicate their ideas and information best.

Assessment Tool and Evidence

Tools:

- inventory/list of information sources
- anecdotes based on group discussions
- student informational books
- anecdotes of student presentations

Evidence:

Inventories provide evidence of breadth of genres and formats; student books can be examined for strategies used to organize information and sophistication of composing. Anecdotes of discussions and presentations note use of language in various social situations. Student informational books can indicate independence in choice of format for writing; inventories provide information on amount and kinds of books students choose for independent reading. Anecdotes from group discussions and student informational books can indicate connections students made across texts; organization and format of students' books can also be examined for indicators of connections from texts they read to their own writing. Anecdotes from class discussions and student presentations can include statements about conventions of conversation; student books can be examined for progress in written conventions.

A Class Research Project

Context

For a fourth-grade class project on animals of the Adirondacks, the teacher has collected nonfiction books about animals (some of which contain information on animals found in the Adirondacks), children's reference materials, science magazines, newspaper articles, legends, and songs featuring animals of the Adirondacks. The librarian has shown students how to use various data bases. In addition, he has scheduled an expert on animals of the Adirondacks to do a class lecture/slide presentation. A field trip to a museum which has a collection of stuffed Adirondack animals has also been scheduled.

Student Activity

The students each choose the animal they are most interested in researching. Students who select the same animal are encouraged to work together as a group. Students begin by listing what they already know about their animal. Next, they generate several questions they'd like to investigate. Students locate needed information on their animal from the sources the teacher has gathered, from school and area libraries, and from their own personal "libraries" at home. Students read and take notes related to their research questions. During the lecture/slide presentation students ask questions and take notes from both the discussion and slides. The field trip is seen as another opportunity for information gathering, and students go to the museum with notebooks and pencils in hand.

When students are satisfied with the knowledge they have developed on their animal, they schedule a conference with the teacher to discuss how they would like to present their information. Writing is to be a component of the presentation, but many options are available for presenting their findings.

Following the formal oral presentation of their findings, the class discusses general conclusions about animals of the Adirondacks. Commonalities are noted and unanswered questions are raised as points for future investigation.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Having students examine their prior knowledge of a topic and then generate their own research questions encourages them to be actively involved in their learning. They approach their search for new information with an awareness of what they know and a framework for new learning.
- Students need opportunities to pose their own questions and to gather information on their own in order to gain independence in their learning.
- Information can be recorded in a variety of forms, depending on purpose and audience. Providing students with opportunities to use a range of written forms (from writing notes to writing research reports) helps them to become aware of the variety of forms available and which works best for their purpose.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- lists/inventories/bibliographies of sources used for research
- lists of what students know about research topic, questions for research and any other organizers used (charts, webs, etc)
- anecdotal records of discussions
- notes, drafts and written component of presentation (could be a report, script to documentary or whatever written form was selected)
- anecdotes on formal oral presentation

Evidence:

Inventories provide evidence of breadth of sources of information and tools consulted for research; formal presentation can be examined for form and language used to communicate findings. Anecdotes of discussions and presentation might note use of language in various social situations; choice of form for recording and organizing information can be indicator of flexibility; choice of form for presentation can indicate independence and the control and responsibility associated with independence. Anecdotes from group discussions and formal presentation (including the written component) can demonstrate connections made between information across number of texts; notes, charts, webs, etc., used to organize information can also be examined for indicators of connections across texts and from reading texts to writing and speaking. Anecdotes from class discussions and student presentations can include statements about student development of conventions of conversation and formal oral reporting; written component of presentation can be examined for progress in written conventions.

A Class Community Investigation

Context

A sixth-grade class is studying urban environmental issues. They read a variety of materials together and carefully work through a unit on waste disposal with a laserdisc and interactive software. They also correspond with other students around the country via KidsNet and learn of environmental issues of concern across various regions of the United States. After many class discussions about national/international environmental issues, the class selects a local environmental concern to explore further: the closing of the local landfill.

Student Activity

The students decide to make their investigation of the issues surrounding the closing of the landfill a whole class project. They generate a list of questions to be investigated about garbage removal and disposal and then form small groups to research each of the questions. Each group locates, reads, discusses, and takes notes on the information they gathered on their question. There are frequent opportunities to share findings, discuss difficulties, and suggest ideas for locating needed information. New questions arise as the research progresses, while other questions are left unanswered due to insufficient information.

When the students are satisfied with the extent and depth of information they have located, they discuss ways of sharing this information beyond the classroom. Since this is an issue which affected the local community and they have become “experts” on it, they want to help others become better informed. They decide to make a documentary video which they agree will be called “A Landfill Speaks Out.”

The script for the video is written collaboratively, with each group contributing their findings. The students make the props, sets, and the actual videotape. The tape is viewed by many classes in area schools as well as by the Board of Education and the City Council.

In their written self-assessments of the project, many students reflect on how they used their knowledge about environmental issues learned earlier in class to help them pose questions for further research. They comment on how they approached their research, the frustrations of not being able to find some information, and the difficulty of deciding what to include and what to leave out. They feel well qualified to enter the debate about whether or not the landfill should be closed.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Students learn that information can be acquired from a variety of sources, including reference materials, books, magazines, textbooks, and electronic media, through experiences using these sources.
- A variety of strategies can be used to collect, record and organize information. Through instruction and opportunities to use these strategies, students learn which work best for them, given a particular context and purpose.

- By considering information from a variety of sources, students learn to look for and make connections and generalizations from the data.
- Since all of the language forms (reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing) can be used to acquire and transmit information, students need to learn which forms are more effective for different situations and purposes.
- Students learn that the relative importance of information can be demonstrated through its selection for inclusion and the order in which it is presented.
- Learning is enhanced through self-assessment activities which provide the opportunity for students to reflect on the content learned and the process by which that learning occurred.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- inventories of resources used for research
- notes (graphs, charts, webs, etc.) recording information collected and organized from research
- statements of findings written in notes, included in script for video, or made in discussions
- anecdotes from class discussions and group sharing
- drafts and final written script of documentary
- student self-assessments

Evidence:

Inventories list variety of resources used which can be examined for breadth of genres and forms, sources, and tools consulted.

Ways in which information was recorded (notes, chart, graph, web) and use of conventions (written and oral) for self (as in notes) and wider [unknown] audience (as in script for documentary) show flexibility.

Notes of questions formed for research, statements of findings based on research, comments about learning related to content and process made in self-assessments can show independence.

Notes (graphs, charts, webs, etc.) indicate connections and organization of information, statements (written and oral) of findings, and connections made across various groups' findings as evidenced in script for documentary; statements (written and oral) of the relevance of findings to local situations.

Anecdotes from class discussions and group sharing can include statements about conventions of conversation; scripts can demonstrate attention to conventions of public speaking; drafts and final written script can be examined for written conventions; learning about conventions may be described in student self-assessments.

Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression

Records of a Read-Aloud

Context

The teacher has scheduled several times for reading aloud to her class across the school day. She has selected a variety of genres of literature to read to her class for a variety of purposes. These books might be read by the student who brought in the book, a visiting parent, or an older sibling or student in the school. There is also time each day to continue the ongoing reading of a longer piece of literature which is being read for enjoyment. (e.g., a chapter each day of *The Secret Garden*).

Student Activity

Since read-aloud time is a regularly scheduled classroom activity, the students are familiar with how this activity will be conducted. They know the teacher will read the title and author of the book and invite them to share information about other books they know by the same author. They might predict what this book will be like based on the reading of other books by the same author or from the title. They also know that the teacher might stop periodically in her reading to ask questions or to call their attention to some aspect of the reading. The students are encouraged to pose questions themselves and to share comments, although the bulk of the discussion will occur after the book has been completed. Occasionally a follow-up activity might be planned, depending on the purpose of the read-aloud.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Reading aloud to children contributes to their growth as language users. Not only does it provide an opportunity to model reading, but it immerses children in the language of literary texts and structures.
- Through read-aloud experiences, students will be exposed to a variety of genres of literature read for a variety of purposes, including personal enjoyment.
- Developing an awareness of authors and their literature encourages students to consider different texts by the same author and to develop an understanding of their style of writing. Students begin to make connections between texts of the same author as well as across other texts. They also begin to develop a sense of authors they “prefer” because their writing satisfies a personal need, in much the same manner as adults seek works by their favorite authors for the same reason.
- Aesthetic response to literature may be expressed through talk, writing, and art, to name a few. Students learn that a variety of ways are available for expressing their personal responses to literature.
- Posing questions and sharing interpretations help students to understand that many meanings are possible for a single text. By participating in discussions which challenge student’s own thinking as well as that of others, students develop their abilities in critical analysis and evaluation.

- When students read aloud to each other and discuss their reading in small groups, they are learning about the social function of language.
- As students read aloud to different social groups, they adjust the conventions of their behavior so that they are appropriate for the group.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- A reading inventory could be kept by the student, teacher, or both that included the title, author, genre, reading activity, and student and teacher comments. This inventory could be part of the student's language arts portfolio.
- Anecdotal comments and observations based on student discussions could be written by the teacher.
- Student journals, other pieces of writing and artwork might be included in a student's portfolio.

Evidence:

Reading inventories can indicate breadth of student experiences with literature. Information about the range of genres, number of authors, and purposes of student reading can be noted on the inventory to help assess the range of student reading experiences.

Comments by students might reveal the development of personal preferences in their reading and reactions to particular pieces of literature. The selections they make for personal reading will provide insight into their growing independence as readers. Teacher comments might include observations about student reading behaviors and anecdotes about "benchmark" comments made by students during discussions.

Response journals, writing and artwork may provide demonstrations of personal connections students are making with texts and between texts.

The manner in which the student chooses to express his/her response will be an indicator of his/her developing flexibility.

Students may begin to incorporate in their writing some of the language and text structures they've become knowledgeable about through their listening, reading, and viewing experiences. Their responses can serve as demonstrations of development in written conventions.

A Character Representative

Context

In a literature unit, one of the primary learning goals is for students to develop an understanding of a wide variety of diverse people. The teacher gathers a large pool of literature from which students choose their own titles for independent reading. In order to encourage better understanding of the lives of different peoples, the teacher asks each student to keep a response journal. She has focused the response such that students are to select one character from the book they are reading on their own and "become" that character. In

essence, they are to express personal responses as the character in their book. Their journal entries are to reflect life as lived through the character.

Student Activity

As students read, they comment on how they plan to become one of the characters in their book. Journal entries are shared as students progress in their reading. In their written responses, students express (through the voice of their character) any instances where the people around them do not understand them. They describe what they perceive as sources of their difficulties and express how they feel about the way they are treated and judged by others. At the completion of the reading and journals, students identify some common themes and issues that seem to cross all groups of people depicted in the literature. They conclude that a lack of understanding about the commonalities and differences of peoples can lead to suspicion, fear, and discrimination. They extend these findings to events currently taking place in the world. Newspaper clippings are brought in by some students. One student writes a personal account of how he has suffered some of the same treatment as the character he became, and he explores his feelings about the situation. Another student does further reading about the Holocaust and locates a collection of poems and drawings by children who were prisoners at Terezin. He reads some of the poems to the class. The students continue to read, write, and discuss issues raised in the literature and unit of study long after the unit is over.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Students learn about themselves and others through experiences with literature and writing. They make connections to their own lives and to the lives of people of other cultures.
- Writing from experience, both focused and free responses, encourages students to think about their reading in terms of themselves and others.
- Providing opportunities for students to make choices about their reading and writing encourages independence.
- Students develop different strategies for approaching their reading and writing and use these strategies to plan and “adjust” to varying reading and writing demands.
- Students’ knowledge of genres helps them to determine which types of literature might best fit their need(s).

Assessments Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- Reading inventories which include such information as title, author, genre, reading activity, and student and teacher comments;
- Notes on individual student comments made in class discussions;
- Focused response journal

Evidence:

Reading inventories can indicate breadth of student experiences with literature. Taken as a whole, a reading inventory provides information about the range of literature experiences a student has had.

Examination of literature selected for independent reading can provide insight into developing interests and independence.

Students' comments can provide examples of their interpretation and response to the literature as well as to the comments of others. Students may describe the strategies they employ for reading and writing and for completing a task in general. They may listen to the comments of others and build on them to make connections to their own reading and writing.

Anecdotes and observations from student discussions can document flexibility and connections in use of the language. Students' entries in a focused response journal can provide demonstrations of connections they make in their reading: connections within the text, across texts, to their lives, and to the lives of others.

The entries can be used as a window into the student's developing writing conventions (just as discussions can be windows into the student's use of spoken conventions.)

A Book Discussion Group

Context

The class has been divided into a number of literature study groups. Each group selects a piece of literature to read from a pool collected by the teacher. The titles represent the work of a variety of authors, a number of different genres, and settings from different cultures. The focus of the literature study group is the construction of meaning and personal response.

Student Activity

The teacher meets with each group and they decide on a "plan of action" for when the book will be completed and how the book is to be divided for reading. The group reads the book independently until completed, in much the same manner as they would read any book for enjoyment. When the book has been completed, the teacher meets with the group to discuss more formally the meanings they have constructed from the text. Students offer interpretations and responses to the reading. Comments and responses from all members of the group form the basis of the discussion. However, the teacher may pose specific questions to probe or extend understanding. From there, the literature study might involve rereading with attention to questions students want to discuss or for purposes the teacher feels would deepen student understanding of the book. The literature study should continue as long as students want to continue the discussion of the book and the teacher feels new or more complex meaning will be reached by the students.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Providing opportunities for students to make choices about their reading encourages independence.

- Through a group sharing of interpretations and personal responses to a text, students develop the understanding that many meanings are possible for a single text. They come to recognize how the experiences of the reader influence the meaning they construct and the connections that are made to texts.
- By participating in discussions which challenge their own thinking as well as that of others, students develop in the area of critical analysis and evaluation.
- When students discuss their reading for social purposes, they are learning about the social function of language.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- Reading inventories
- Teacher’s anecdotal comments from discussions with individuals
- Teacher’s anecdotal comments from group discussions

Evidence:

Reading inventories can indicate breadth of student experiences with literature. Taken as a whole, a reading inventory provides information about the range of literature experiences a student has had.

Examination of a reading inventory can provide insight into developing interests and independence.

Noting student comments from individual discussions can provide insight into the personal connections they are making to their reading.

Students might also discuss strategies they use when reading which indicate flexibility and independence as readers.

Students’ discussion of their own reading process may serve as an indicator of growth in understanding and use of conventions. Noting student comments during group discussions can provide examples of their interpretation and response to the literature as well as to the comments of others. They may listen to the comments of others and build on them to make connections to their own reading. Anecdotes and observations recorded by the teacher from student discussions can document evidence of flexibility and connections in students’ use of the language.

Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

Reviewing a Writing Portfolio

Context

Near the end of the school year, a sixth-grade teacher provides time for students to examine their writing portfolios. Specifically, he asks them to reflect on the kinds of writing they have done over their elementary years, how they’ve grown as writers, and what they would like to learn next year to continue to develop as writers. The students are encouraged to make any additional comments on their writing experiences and development they’d like.

Student Activity

As students examine their writing, initial comments focus on mechanical aspects. They can easily consider their growth in spelling and handwriting over the elementary years. Students informally share their “old” writing with each other, discuss pieces in common on assigned topics, and listen carefully to pieces students want to share on self-selected topics. As students begin to write their reflections, many discoveries are made about topics, styles, and genres. Students declare certain pieces the “best piece of writing they’ve ever done” or their favorite piece of writing. Although these reflections are personal in nature, many of the students share their thoughts with each other and the teacher. They incorporate the comments of others when writing their reflections. The reflections are placed in their portfolios where they will be revisited next September when students set writing goals for the coming year.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Encouraging self-assessment and providing time to reflect on one’s writing allows students to see their growth as writers. They develop the ability to take a critical stance toward their own work, making judgments about their progress and needs. Through opportunities to examine their writing experiences and performances, students develop the ability to think critically about their own writing and to internalize the standards for good writing.
- If students and teachers are to evaluate writing development, then examples of student writing, collected over time, need to be compiled.
- Students learn to consider their own writing from different perspectives when they receive comments from other readers, such as classmates and teachers.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- Yearly writing inventories
- Written reflections
- Student portfolios

Evidence:

Yearly writing inventories provide records of the topics and genres students have written on, and the purposes and audiences that students have written for. These records can serve as indicators of range, flexibility, and independence.

Students’ reflections demonstrate the ability to take a critical stance when examining their own writing. They may make connections between the various pieces of writing they’ve done over the years, their growth as writers, and their needs for further development.

They may note their growing proficiency in the conventions of writing, and aspects of the conventions where they need further instruction and practice.

Student goal statements for future writing instruction demonstrate independence. Student portfolios containing pieces of student writing across a school year and across a number of years provide written records for examining student growth.

Evidence of all five assessment criteria (range, flexibility, independence, connections, and conventions) can be found through careful examination of student writing collected over time.

The Book Conference

Context

The teacher has gathered a pool of literature related to the language arts unit the class is currently studying. Students are to select a book for independent reading from this pool of literature. Time is provided in class each day for independent reading. While many times there are no post-reading activities following the completion of an independent book, the teacher has decided to have students respond to their reading. Students can select the activity they prefer from a number of options.

Student Activity

Some students select a book conference with the teacher as a post-reading activity. During the conference each discusses the plot and characters of the book. The teacher tries to extend the student's understanding of the book by asking him to think about the connections of the book to the language arts unit. The teacher presents her interpretation of the book and discusses why she feels it is an appropriate title for the unit. They discuss how many interpretations are possible for the same piece of literature. The teacher asks the student to put his recommendations and supporting arguments in writing in order that future readers of the book may respond with their opinions.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Students need opportunities to respond aesthetically to their reading. With this as the basis for their understanding, students can learn to extend meaning by reading critically. Posing questions and presenting differing interpretations can help students to analyze their perspective in more depth.
- Through writing, a student may more closely examine his/her opinion and position about a text. This provides the student with an opportunity to probe further and elaborate his/her critical analysis. While oral language can be used to communicate a critical analysis, students learn that questions raised and positions posited can be presented for future examination through writing.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- Teacher records of book conferences (anecdotal comments)
- Written recommendations/review of books

Evidence

Teacher notes about the book conference can provide evidence of all five criteria. Student purposes for reading, such as aesthetic and critical reading, can be recorded with comments about whether students read for these purposes independently or with guidance (e.g., whether questions or probes were needed to encourage students to read critically).

The extent to which the student could probe interpretations and meanings and consider different perspectives may be noted as indicators of range.

Students' comments may indicate connections of the text to other readings as well as control of the conventions with which they orally present and discuss their reading of a text.

Written recommendations or book reviews provide evidence of a student's ability to read critically. Opinions and judgments about a piece of literature can be expressed through writing as well as orally. The content of the book review can be examined for the criteria and supporting evidence the student used to form his/her opinion. The range of ideas the student considered in forming an interpretation can be examined. The written recommendation can also be examined for demonstrations of the use of conventions appropriate for presenting an analysis and evaluation to a larger audience.

Analyzing and Imitating Book Openings

Context

In preparation for a mini-lesson on writing good beginnings for stories, the teacher has gathered a number of picture books in which the authors used a variety of techniques to write compelling beginnings to their stories. The teacher reads the books aloud so the students are familiar with the stories. After discussing why the beginnings of these books "grab the reader," she has the students generate a list of criteria for what makes a good beginning. Students will then be encouraged to apply this criteria to evaluate their writing and to consider trying some of the same techniques.

Student Activity

During read-aloud time students discuss how the author involved them as listeners and readers in the beginning of their books. After reviewing the beginnings of a number of books, students individually brainstorm a list of criteria for what they consider to be good beginnings. As students share their criteria and why these characteristics draw them into a book, the teacher records the criteria on a chart. Students then examine the beginnings of the pieces they are currently drafting. Through peer conferences and conferences with the teacher, they analyze their story beginnings in terms of the criteria they identified. The teacher suggests they might think about these criteria as they continue to work on their writing.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- By developing the ability to read critically, students can apply the same skills of critical analysis to their own reading and writing.
- Lessons and instructional activities which focus students' attention on taking a critical stance toward reading and writing will help them to generate their own criteria for assessing and analyzing texts.
- In generating individual lists of criteria, students reflect on and develop ways in which they might analyze and evaluate texts.
- Through discussion with others, students can explore further ideas for evaluating.

- Examining models of high-quality writing by criteria of “good” writing can help students consider how their own writing might be improved.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- Teacher records of discussion
- Individual student lists of criteria
- Teacher records from writing conferences
- Drafts of student writing

Evidence:

Teacher records of discussion can include student comments which indicate criteria by which they make judgments about texts. These comments may reflect range through the breadth of genres read, as well as knowledge of techniques used in writing effectively.

Students’ comments may indicate connections between different texts as they consider them in light of a particular literary device.

Whereas their initial readings of these texts may have been for personal response, students demonstrate flexibility in now considering these texts for critical purposes. This flexibility may also be reflected in their comments.

Individual student lists of criteria may be examined for number and complexity of criteria students have considered.

Independence may be reflected in the views students express through their criteria and the resources they draw upon to support their analysis.

Students may refer to particular texts and the personal response they created as part of the criteria. Such statements provide evidence of connections.

Teacher records from writing conferences may note flexibility in the techniques students attempt to use when writing.

The application of criteria for high-quality writing in student pieces may indicate connections between the criteria and texts used for instruction to the student’s own writing.

The amount of support and guidance students request for their attempts may be noted as indicators of independence and control over conventions.

Analysis of student writing may reveal the degree of flexibility and independence students have developed in applying particular criteria to their own writing.

Connections between the texts of published authors and student attempts may be evident.

The drafts may be examined in terms of student control over conventions of a particular writing technique and writing conventions in general.

A Class Letter to the Newspaper

Context

Upon completion of a unit of study on local issues, a sixth-grade class decides to enter the debate about crime. Their interest is sparked by a number of news articles and letters to the editor in the local paper. Their teacher decides the articles and letters provide a genuine opportunity for students to apply their knowledge of the subject and skills of critical analysis and evaluation. The project also encourages students to extend what they learn in class to the larger community.

Student Activity

Students bring in newspaper clippings of articles and letters to the editor related to local crime. The class forms groups to respond to each of the news items. Their primary focus is to evaluate the validity of the information contained in the news articles or letters. They describe the criteria they are using to determine validity. Each group composes a response to the article or letter they have analyzed. Their response is in a publishable form should they decide to actually send it to a newspaper.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Providing students with opportunities to question and probe information (oral and written) helps them to develop abilities to critically analyze and evaluate what they hear and read. These opportunities become particularly meaningful when they directly relate student learning to the world outside the classroom.
- In describing criteria for analyzing and evaluating, students learn to distinguish between subjective and objective criteria, how to support personal opinions with objective criteria, and which type of criteria is more effective for particular situations.
- Since many written forms can be used to present judgments and opinions, students need experiences in order to learn which is the most effective in communicating their analyses. They also need to learn the conventions which make this communication effective.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- Lists of criteria
- Teacher records of individual student and group discussions
- Notes, drafts and final copy of written response (e.g., letter to the editor, news article, article for “viewpoint” column, etc.)

Evidence:

Lists of criteria can be examined for range of sources considered when establishing them. Connections of these sources to criteria and the text under consideration may be revealed.

Student development of criteria is an indicator of independence.

Teacher records of individual student and group discussions can be used to document student comments indicating range of sources consulted when generating criteria.

When applying information from the sources to the criteria and the texts under consideration, flexibility and connections may be demonstrated.

Student writing (notes, drafts, final copy) reveal control of conventions through the form selected as most effective for communicating response.

Evidence of connections (e.g., between the text being analyzed, personal knowledge of the subject, other sources consulted, the opinions of others, and the criteria generated for considering the text) may be found in student writing.

Inclusion of student views in written responses is an indicator of independence.

Choosing among the options for responding to the article or letter and sensitivity to the audience are indicators of flexibility.

Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction

Practicing Listening Skills

Context

There are numerous times throughout the school day for students to talk with one another. Sometimes the talk is focused by the teacher and directed towards topics related to school. There are also opportunities for students to tell each other about experiences and to share stories about their lives. The teacher participates in this talk as well, modeling the behaviors of an active listener and sharing stories and experiences from her life.

Student Activity

Students pose questions and share their thinking and understanding in group learning activities. During free time, they seek out classmates to tell about experiences and events in their lives. They listen as their classmates respond and share their stories. They also engage in conversations with adults who come to the class, and the students modify their talk to reflect the different social situations.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Through experiences in different social situations, students learn to adjust their talk according to the context and the listeners.
- Through discussions with friends and adults, students learn when it is appropriate to speak and when to listen. They also develop their vocabulary, diction, and other linguistic structures and conventions by engaging in discussions with more experienced language users.
- Students learn through talking. There must be time and opportunity for talk to occur in the classroom.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- Teacher records

Evidence:

Written records of student social interactions can document evidence of using language to establish or maintain relationships with a broad range of different people (e.g., classmates, teachers and other adults in school, members of the community outside the school who may come to visit).

Teacher notes may record how students adjust their talk, making it appropriate for the social situation and person(s) to whom they are speaking.

Independence may be demonstrated by students' initiating conversation with new friends or guests.

Students may make connections between and across social situations, recognizing how the rules of conversation change and which conventions are appropriate in a given situation.

Writing Thank-You Notes

Context

Upon returning to school from a field trip, the teacher and students identify a number of people who helped with the trip and should receive thank-you notes. The names of these people are listed on the board. The teacher demonstrates some of the conventions of writing thank-you notes and writes her own as the class writes theirs.

Student Activity

Some students orally rehearse what they are going to say in their thank-you notes with the teacher or a classmate. Other students begin drafting their notes. Final copies of the thank-you notes are made.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Students need opportunities to write for genuine social interaction. As these opportunities arise, students learn to communicate through a variety of written forms, such as thank-you notes. These forms have meaning and use in their personal lives.
- Some forms of writing for social interaction have particular structures and conventions which can be learned through writing them for genuine reasons. Students will attend more closely to these forms and conventions when they know that the communication will actually be sent to someone.
- By modeling writing, the teacher supports student learning while demonstrating the importance of writing for social interaction.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- Drafts and final copies of thank-you notes

Evidence:

Drafts and final copies may be examined for demonstrations of all five assessment criteria. Indicators of range and flexibility may be identified in the use of language (e.g., whether it reflects awareness of the audience and the purpose of the social interaction).

Whether or not a student needs to consult with the teacher or other students about “what to say” can indicate the level of independence.

Students’ willingness to revise, edit and check writing as they move from draft to final copy also indicates independence.

The content of student writing may reveal connections made with the audience.

An examination of the mechanics of writing will indicate attention to, and control of, conventions.

Conducting an Oral History

Context

Students have been gathering information about local history from a variety of sources. As part of the project, area senior citizens are to be interviewed. In preparation, the teacher has been guiding students in aspects of interviewing. The teacher has several goals for this activity, including developing relationships between the students and older members of the community as well as learning about local history.

Student Activity

Students compose interview questions individually and as a group. They generate questions to learn about the history of the area, but they are also interested in learning about the individual lives of the people they are interviewing. Some discussion occurs as to what is and isn’t appropriate to ask people they don’t know very well and who are older than they are. Students role-play their interviews to practice asking questions in a manner that will make the person being interviewed feel comfortable.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Students learn to communicate with people of different ages, races, genders, and ethnicity through experiences where they actually engage in conversation with a variety of people.
- By engaging in social interactions with new people, students learn to use talk as a way to form new relationships.
- As students learn to consider the impact of their talk on others, they will become more sensitive to what they say and how they express themselves.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- Teacher records of discussions, interview role-playing, and actual interviews
- Student lists of interview questions

Evidence:

Teacher records of discussions and interview role-playing may note a student’s ability to participate in social interactions with peers. Social interactions with adults involved in the interviews may also be noted. Taken together they can provide information about the range and flexibility of a student’s social interactions.

Comments might include the extent to which a student engages freely in conversation and how the student adjusts his/her talk depending on the audience, purpose and context of the conversation. These too are indicators of range and flexibility along with indicating control of conventions.

The degree to which a student initiates conversation and converses beyond the script (i.e., the written interview questions) may be indicators of independence.

Student lists of interview questions may reveal connections to the purposes of the interviews.

They may reflect sensitivity to the audience and attention to conventions of language.

Using KidsNet

Context

Throughout the school year, the teacher has scheduled time for students to communicate with other students around the United States via KidsNet, a computer communications network for children. These communications have focused on topics of study such as the weather and environmental issues in the different regions of the country.

Student Activity

While initially transmissions are academic in nature, as students learn more about each other, new friendships develop. Many students begin to write to other KidsNet students as penpals. They regularly bring in letters from their penpals and read them to the class.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Using technology helps students learn to communicate through electronic media. It provides them with another means for having social interactions with many different people and cultures.
- Students learn the different forms and conventions of using language for social interaction by employing them for a variety of purposes with a range of different people.
- By reading KidsNet transmissions and penpal letters, students learn that written communications can be shared with others when appropriate.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The main tool would be teacher observation and student report.

Evidence:

The teacher would note participation and the rate at which the students master the conventions of the technology and actually communicate. Since the messages themselves are private, it is participation with the medium that is important to the broadening social development of students in electronic networking.

It is important to note the degree to which all students continue to participate and to find out reasons for dropping out as well as to seek anecdotes of successful participation.

The activities in this section were contributed by New York State teachers. We invite the submission of additional activities.

Achieving the English Language Arts Standards in the Middle School Years

During the middle years of schooling, students are at the stage of early adolescence with all that entails physically, emotionally, psychologically, and intellectually. The school is often a place where they develop new senses of themselves and of their world.

The Nature of Middle School English Language Arts Programs

The English language arts program in the middle grades is where students begin to develop and extend their conceptual knowledge about the language and about literature as they become increasingly able to work at a level of generalization. The students are both learning to do and learning about doing. They are learning the concepts associated with language for information as they use and create articles and speeches, memos and manuals, posters and pamphlets, videodisks and documentaries. They learn to use such sources as interviews, records, and personal observations in their investigations. They acquire a surer sense of the conventions of grammar, spelling, and text organization. In literature study, students become familiar with the conventions of poetry, drama, and fiction and become versed in using the language of literary response and criticism when they talk and write about what they have read.

Middle school teachers who value language for critical analysis and evaluation provide frequent opportunities for their students to read and study exemplary essayists and critics whose work is appropriate for middle school learners; to explore critical issues in their content area subjects; to express their opinions, anticipating the attitudes and arguments of others; to interpret oral and written texts from different perspectives (e.g., boy/girl, urban/rural, novice/expert) and recognize the assumptions underlying those perspectives; to generate criteria for evaluating their own texts and texts created by others.

Information retrieval in the 1990s might involve electronic or multi-media sources. Schools with E-mail capabilities or data retrieval operations open new challenges to information-seekers. In one science class, students were to design a solar house. They learned to retrieve data from sources gleaned from electronic bulletin boards and to fax data to other schools involved in similar projects. Tapping into Internet opens new sources of information and demands technological knowledge and expertise. Independence and flexibility are fostered as students become responsible users of this technology and begin to choose among such options as desktop publishing, electronic conferencing, and multimedia productions.

In the middle grades, students learn to use language for critical analysis and evaluation by creating texts that require them to take a stand: posters, advertisements, letters to the editor, essays, editorials, and critical reviews. In addition, they have many opportunities to express their opinions, examine their experiences from all sides, anticipate the attitudes and arguments of others, resolve opposing viewpoints, and generate criteria for evaluating their own language use.

Helping middle school youngsters experience literature as readers or listeners awakens their sensibilities and feelings. It teaches them

about themselves and their relationships with others and introduces them to other people and other cultures. It alerts them to the power of language and makes them aware of strategies for interpreting a text. Telling and writing their own stories, in whatever form, helps them to observe and make sense of their worlds. Although all uses of language emerge from and rely on social contexts, the purposeful use of language for social interaction is beneficial in its own right. Success in middle school depends in large part on the ability of children from varying backgrounds to work together. As adults, we know how important it is for our students to know how to initiate a conversation with strangers, ask and respond to questions in ways that make others feel comfortable, participate productively in group activity, negotiate a dispute, listen respectfully, and appreciate the opinions of another even while disagreeing with those opinions.

For many middle school students, the social skill of letter writing is a dying art, especially since the telephone is such a convenience. However, since adolescents are social creatures, this age is a good time to make them aware of the value of letter writing and conversation in initiating and sustaining relationships.

Creating community service projects where students interact inter-generationally is another idea for promoting effective communication. Visiting retirement homes and interviewing persons for a local history project use these communication skills. Promoting daily conversation as class begins and constantly modeling patient listening behavior can demonstrate for students the role of conversation in clarifying our own thinking. Learning-centered classrooms both nurture and depend upon social interaction skills. Language for social interaction is a key to breaking down linguistic, cultural, and academic barriers that may exist in the middle school classroom.

A Standards Approach to Various Middle School English Language Arts Activities

Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding

Studying a Political Campaign

Context

In preparation for local elections, the teacher arranges for a variety of activities designed to help students become informed about local issues, discover the positions of the candidates on those issues, articulate the candidates' positions to different audiences, and develop an informed position of their own.

Student Activity

Students begin by gathering campaign materials from all political parties. They survey some adults to determine what grownups see as the most important issues in their community, and they interview students in other classes to determine what young people see as key issues. They work out a way to represent visually the information they have collected and begin to examine campaign brochures to see how candidates view the issues. Students write questions to be posed to candidates at a "Meet the Candidates" assembly. Afterward they compare and evaluate candidates' responses to their questions. They follow the campaign through local newspaper and television coverage. Prior to the election, students write editorials and campaign speeches that accurately reflect the candidates' positions. The class holds a

mock election and analyzes the results. It compares its results and analysis with those of the actual election.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Effective instruction involves students in their own learning, with opportunities for teacher and peer interactions that engage students' natural curiosity and opportunities for personal reflection and self-study.
- Effective instruction encourages students to link prior knowledge with new information by providing multiple ways of gathering and presenting information.
- Gathering information from a variety of sources and presenting it to an audience require students to make a number of decisions concerning focus, organization, point of view, language, and conventions. In presenting information to an audience, students discover that an informed opinion includes a knowledge of what is being rejected as well as a clear understanding of what is being embraced.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- Students create a chart, graph, poster, or other organizer for sharing results of the survey on key issues.
- Students pose questions for presentation to candidates at assembly.
- Students write an editorial in support of a particular candidate.
- Students write a campaign speech for a candidate of choice.
- Students prepare presentation of results of mock election.
- Students compare and analyze results of mock election and actual election.

Evidence:

The criteria in judging performance might include, for example, the degree to which the student has: selected a specific idea or issue as the focus of the speech; developed the speech with specific references to other contexts in explaining the significance of the idea or issue to the election and to the listeners; used examples from surveys, interviews, and other research to support conclusions and interpretations; grouped information and ideas to demonstrate an understanding of the relationships among them; selected a voice, point of view, words, and structures appropriate for the intended audience; demonstrated a thorough understanding of the idea, issue, or question that is the focus of the speech; used language skillfully and effectively to interpret and communicate information and ideas to the intended audience.

Examining Advertising

Context

In the course of investigating campaign issues and political advertising, students raise questions about apparently deliberate uses of language to mislead or to present an incomplete or slanted view. The teacher capitalizes on this opportunity to encourage students to explore uses of language in the media.

Student Activity

Students create a “truth in advertising” campaign for a food product with which they are familiar. They research the ingredients, the print and media sales programs, the target audience for the product, and the ways the product is displayed in supermarkets. Then they develop their own advertising campaign for the product and present it to the class.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Learning is a natural process of pursuing personally meaningful goals; it is a process of discovering and constructing meaning from information and experience, filtered through the learner’s unique perceptions, thoughts, and feelings.
- Learners increase their range of competence by using language in many settings for many purposes and by observing the effects of that language on others.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The major tools are the process drafts and notes and the final campaign.

Evidence:

The success of the campaign can be assessed by the reaction of the audience. In addition, the campaign can be assessed for the breadth of understanding of marketing, connections to other advertising, and originality.

Comparing History and Historical Fiction

Context

The teacher provides opportunities for students to discuss the connections between the information presented in the social studies curriculum and the information they find when reading historical fiction in literature class.

Student Activity

Students write in reading logs about these connections and raise new questions based on their growing understanding. They write short historical fiction pieces of their own and share them with others who provide feedback about the accuracy and relevance of the historical information as well about the writing itself. They use the same information to write nonfiction articles for a young audience and discuss the decisions required by each genre regarding voice, organization, language, and selection of information.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Good writing in every genre depends upon a certain amount of truth. In historical fiction, that truth must be based on accurate information and understanding of the time period.

- Success in the content areas depends on learners' abilities to recognize and use the discourse patterns that are characteristic of the discipline.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The major tools for assessment are the pieces of fiction and non-fiction.

Evidence:

The pieces should be compared and contrasted to determine the extent of understanding of the differences between fictional re-creation and historical documentation, the understanding of the conventions of each genre, and the connections made between the pieces and their sources.

Sharing One's Expertise

Context

Teachers on a middle school team feel it is important for each student to work at becoming an expert on a topic of the student's choice. They plan a sequence of activities designed to help students choose their topic, design a plan for learning, become an expert among their peers, and subsequently demonstrate their knowledge to interested classmates, teachers, and parents.

Student Activity

Students spend several days reviewing entries in their literature response journals and science learning logs for clues to topics of interest. They list several of these topics and prepare a chart of things they already know about each topic and things they would like to find out. They share these charts with their peers in small groups and respond to questions raised in the group. They seek out additional information on each topic, looking especially for significant questions within the topic to provide a focus for the study. Having done this preliminary exploration, students select their topics and prepare a topic web for the conference with their teacher, who guides them in thinking about the procedures for their investigation and the focus, audience, and form of their presentation. Students continue their investigations, consulting texts, media, and individuals as appropriate. The teacher assists students, individually or through whole-class lessons, in finding, selecting, recording, and organizing information. Students choose from among appropriate forms for conveying information. In groups, they study the significant characteristics of each of these, noting the purpose, audience, design, voice, and language of each. Individually, students draft their pieces and confer with peers and their teacher using established procedures. They then revise based on feedback received during conferences and arrange for suitable "publication" of their text.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Students have a natural inclination to learn and pursue personally relevant learning goals. They are capable of assuming personal responsibility for learning—monitoring, checking for understanding, and becoming active, self-directed learners—in an environment that takes past learning into account, ties new learning to personal goals, and actively engages students in their own learning process.

- Learning and self-esteem are mutually reinforcing.
- Skills are easier to learn when the content matters to the learner.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- Students complete chart of possible topics, including what the student knows and wants to know.
- Students create a topic web, including focus questions, with spaces for plan of investigation and possible form and audience for publication, to be filled in after consultation with teacher.
- Students keep note cards, outlines, or other forms for recording information.
- Students develop and complete questionnaires for interviewing individuals.
- Students prepare results of study in a form appropriate for sharing information with an audience: an oral or written report, brochure, poster, feature article, documentary, or slide show, for example.

Evidence:

The student has selected a specific idea, issue, or question as a focus for the article; the student has developed the article with specific references to the student's research, interviews, or other contexts as a way of explaining the significance of the idea, issue, or question to the topic and to the reader; the student has made connections with previous knowledge, experience, or understandings to support conclusions and interpretations; the student has grouped information and ideas to demonstrate an understanding of the relationships among them; the student has selected a point of view, voice, and structures appropriate for an article for the intended audience; the student has produced a substantive article that demonstrates a clear understanding of the idea, issue, or question under investigation; the student has made an assured and selective use of vocabulary, grammatical constructions and the conventions of standard English.

Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression

Exploring an Historical Period

Context

To add life and immediacy to a unit on ancient Rome and its influence on American life and culture, the teacher plans activities designed to evoke personal connections with the topic and people under study, to expand students' knowledge about life in ancient Rome, to put students in the situations and culture of another, and to foster student's sense of self.

Student Activity

Students read and write myths and other literature, keep a journal in which they speculate about the daily life of a young person in ancient Rome, prepare to dramatize a scene from "Julius Caesar," write and deliver eulogies, keep a chart illustrating similarities and differences in life then and now, and intersperse these activities with

frequent reading and discussion about Roman influences on our language and culture.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Literary response and expression depend upon the personal connections a learner makes. Personal engagement is key in every discipline if students are to develop the knowledge and confidence that will make them powerful thinkers and risk-takers.
- When reading and writing are taught together, the benefits to each are greater than when they are taught separately. Since thinking is a critical part of constructing meaning, students will become better thinkers if they are taught in classrooms where meaning is actively constructed through reading and writing.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

The activities produce a number of assessment tools:

- the student myths
- response journals
- oral performances
- charts and other illustrations

Evidence:

From these tools, evidence of learning can be found concerning the range and breadth of references; the quality of the oral presentations and the evidence of understanding of the characters and their motivation; the number and quality of connections made between the two cultures; the clarity and accuracy of presentation; and the independence of the students' own analyses.

Reflecting on Literature from Other Cultures

Context

Instead of creating a separate unit on multicultural literature, the teacher finds opportunities within the curriculum for students to read short stories, poems, novels, essays, and articles reflective of their own and other cultures, and to negotiate meanings of those texts within the community of learners. When the teacher introduces new works or new authors or when she models journal responses to the readings, she thinks aloud about the connections she is making and the questions the text is raising for her. She gives students an opportunity to make their thinking visible, too, in writing and in conversation with one another.

Student Activity

Students reflect in writing on what the text means to them, what experiences or memories the text evokes, and the questions that need answering for a clear understanding.

Students share their interpretations and questions in small groups. The teacher guides the class in clustering questions into appropriate areas for investigation, such as those relating to recurring themes or symbols, historical or cultural setting, or human behavior. They talk about where and how to find answers to their questions, and they are given time and resources to pursue them. Later, when students have

shared and discussed their findings with the class, they are invited again to write an informal paper in which they reflect on their interpretations of the text, defending their interpretations with evidence from the text and the results of their investigations.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- In a community of learners each member is enriched by the thinking of others—both those present in the room and those present through their work. By sharing their thinking about text and the processes through which they construct meaning from text, teachers and students learn to accommodate new perspectives and increase their pool of effective meaning-making strategies.
- Students develop interpretive skills by being encouraged continuously to think about and respond to what they read and write.
- Responding to literature helps students construct their own meanings, which may not always be the same for all readers.
- Learning is facilitated by social interactions and communication with others in flexible, diverse, and adaptive instructional settings.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- Students explore their preliminary interpretations of a text in writing and talk.
- Students share results of their investigations in a poster or other appropriate form with members of their group.
- Students prepare informal reflection papers in response to their reading and thinking about the text under study.

Evidence:

Criteria for an Exemplary Reflection Paper might include the degree to which; the student has interpreted the text in a way that is justified by the text and the results of the students' research; the student has demonstrated an understanding of the literal meanings in the text; the student has made connections with other texts and contexts as a way of understanding and interpreting the text and himself or herself; the student has shown how the author's point of view, language, and structures have influenced the student's interpretation; the student has used language effectively to communicate the interpretation.

Exploring the Creative Process

Context

Because learner-centered classrooms encourage students to do what real readers and writers do, the teacher and students confer often about the reading and writing students are engaged in—the choices they are making, the aspects they are struggling with, the connections they are making, the goals that are guiding them, what they are planning to do next. In responding to these conversations, the teacher urges students forward, providing the instruction that adds increasingly sophisticated options to the students' bank of reading and writing strategies.

Student Activity

Students frequently have this kind of conversation with one another. They read what authors say about their processes and set writing challenges for themselves that connect to the reading they are doing. Students respond to finished work of their classmates in much the same way as they respond to the work of the authors they read. The language students use in their discussions of reading is the same as that used in discussion of their writing. As they think, talk, and write about their work, they are doing so in much the same way professional writers might. Their struggles, too, are similar, as are their efforts to articulate them.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Reading and writing are mutually reinforcing language processes that support and inform each other.
- As children develop in their literacy, they need careful guidance and support within their reading, writing, and listening experiences in the form of “telling, revealing, and showing” (Smith, 1972).

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The major tool for assessment will be learning logs and response journals. These may be developed into an individual or collaborative report on the creative process.

Evidence:

The reports and journals would be assessed for variety of examples from authors and experiences, connections made between the two worlds, and clarity of presentation.

Studying the Grammar of Poetry

Context

In a poetry unit, the teacher has a chance to introduce the ways poets arrange sentences and use grammar to make their point.

Student Activity

Working in groups, students select a poem by poets such as Shakespeare, Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Gary Soto, and e.e. cummings. The poem is one that manipulates grammar, word order, or syntax. The student teams find instances of such manipulation, discuss the effect on meaning and tone, and then write a poem of their own using the same device.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

- Grammatical knowledge is best gained and made conscious when it is related to reading and writing.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The major tools will be the student reports and poems.

Evidence:

The evidence from assessment will point to students’ understanding of the manipulation of grammatical connection, and its effect. It will include the range of examples, the connections to meaning, and the independence and originality of the imitations.

Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

Moving from the Response Journal to the Critical Paper

Context

Reasoning that response journals allow students to return to their thinking over and over again, the teacher asks his students to keep dialectical journals (Berthoff, 1978), a two-column response form in which students record their thinking about the text in one column and their thinking about their learning in the other. In this way, students are encouraged to consider not only what they are learning but how they are learning.

Student Activity

Students reading different books on the same theme keep response journals in which they record their thinking about their reading. They reflect on the information, the author's choice of genre, the connections to their prior knowledge, their personal responses to the text, and the questions the reading raises for them. After a class discussion about the theme, they write about how the conversation has influenced their thinking.

Knowledge Underlying Practice

- Learning is most effective when it involves both immersion and distancing. That is, we learn best when our mind is engaged in the activity, as it is when we are writing or talking, and when we have an opportunity to stand back from the experience and reflect upon it. When learners are able to look back, trace their thinking, and reflect on the forces that may have revised that thinking, they gain insight into their learning processes.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The major tools for assessment are the journals and the self-reports.

Evidence:

The reports will be assessed for evidence of reflection, for the number and type of connections, and for the clarity of self-reports.

Imitating an Author

Context

To help students move from personal response to critical stance, the teacher encourages her students to borrow the language, forms, and styles of literary texts as the starting point for their own writing.

Student Activity

Whenever students are taken with the language of an author under study—the imagery of poet William Carlos Williams or the metaphorical language of Natalie Babbitt, for example—they try their own hand at imitating or parodying that language.

Knowledge Underlying Practice

- Imitation either directly or through parody is well known as a way to gain understanding of the author imitated and features of the writing style, including word choice and rhythm.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The major assessment tool will consist of the student imitations together with their models.

Evidence:

The imitations can be assessed for their understanding of the author's connections by matching them with the model and for the number and types of connections made (sentence length and rhythm, word choice, metaphors and figures) between imitation and model.

Exploring the Literary Culture of Another Country

Context

Students engaged in an interdisciplinary research project on different countries of the world present their findings from the perspective of natives of different economic classes or different regions.

Student Activity

As students select a country and do research on the customs and beliefs of that country, they examine official tourist brochures and articles containing interviews with different classes of residents. They then produce a report in which they juxtapose, compare, and contrast the different views.

Knowledge Underlying Practice

Students will benefit from opportunities to challenge assumptions—even those based on information.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The reports will be both oral and written; visuals may be used, including videotape.

Evidence:

The reports may be assessed for the number and types of sources found and used, the connections and differences presented, and the balance and independence of the judgment from the perspective of any one group.

Standard 4: Language for social interaction

Exploring Diaries and Journals

Context

The class is engaged in a unit on diaries from many cultures.

Student Activity

Students read books like *Letters from Rifka*, *Letters from Carrie*, and *The Gathering of Days*. They discuss how their understanding of the central character and her situation in each is influenced by the letter/diary form. They consider the importance of diaries and letters as historical documents (that is, how they help us know a time period or a culture by focusing our attention on an individual) and compare them to historical texts.

Knowledge Underlying Practice

We cannot know enough people personally to come to an understanding of other cultures or times through our experience alone. The kinds of writing assumed to be personal—like letters or diaries—can help us think about other lives and the times they represent.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The students will produce learning logs and report on their group discussion.

Evidence:

The logs and reports will be judged on the number and types of connections between diary and background information, the ways in which the two are similar and different, and the generalizations about the “lived through” perspective and its contrast to the “objective” historian.

Corresponding with New Students

Context

A school decides to provide some form of orientation for new students and enlists student participation.

Student Activity

Students correspond with elementary school students who will be coming to their middle/junior high school the following September. In a series of exchanges they tell the younger students what they can expect, answer their questions, respond to their fears, and recount their own experiences.

Knowledge Underlying Practice

If students are to care about letter writing, they must have the opportunity to write for a real audience and know there is at least the possibility of a response. Two teachers working together on such a project between schools can assure that these two conditions will be met.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The students will decide on the kinds of information and will draft letters. These will be assessed by the younger students. The letters will be private.

Evidence:

The major evidence of learning will be participation, both initially and on an ongoing basis. The letters will not be assessed.

Videotaping Conflict Resolution

Context

In a unit on conflicts in literature, students will explore conflicts that they are seeing in the school and community and discuss ways of resolving these conflicts.

Student Activity

Students script and videotape a series of short scenes showing students in conflict situations using talk to come to understanding and resolution of their problems.

Knowledge Underlying Practice

Language can be a powerful tool to further understanding. If students are able to articulate their thinking in a clear and precise way, the options for problem solving increase.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The scripts and videotapes will provide the major assessment tools. A self report from each participant may be added.

Evidence:

These products may be viewed by the teachers and a broader audience who will judge them on the clarity of the analysis and presentation, the effectiveness of the presentation, and the quality of each person's contribution to the whole.

Informal Letters

Context

The teacher keeps a list of "Things We Can Write to Somebody About When We Have the Time" on a bulletin board in the classroom. Students and teacher add to the list at any time.

Student Activity

Periodically, the teacher schedules a class in which students write letters in response to a suggestion on the bulletin board.

Knowledge Underlying Practice

The kinds of writing that engage us in social interaction take time. If we want students to make time for these activities in their lives, we must demonstrate their importance and help students to establish the habit.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The letters will be read and responded to by the addressee(s).

Evidence:

The letters will be considered for appropriateness of tone, mastery of conventions of informal writing, and clarity of presentation.

The activities in this section were contributed by New York State teachers. We invite the submission of additional activities.

Achieving the English Language Arts Standards in the High School Years

The high schools of New York are diverse in a number of ways: for example, in the locality and population that they serve; in size; in the number and kinds of programs that they offer. At the high school level, students begin to prepare for future occupations as well as for higher education, so the curriculum is appropriately diverse.

This section, therefore, will touch upon common concerns among academic, vocational, and other special programs, but will not specify a distinct approach for each of those programs.

The Nature of High School English Language Arts Programs

In high schools, English programs may consist of separate courses with electives or integrated programs. In either format, the attention is usually on literature and writing, with some attention to speaking and various media. Reading as a separate skill is not usually emphasized, since reading is seen as a part of instruction in various content areas.

Compared to that of the elementary and middle school curricula, the focus of the high school curriculum is on the acquisition of the more theoretical aspects of the subject, including:

- history of language and literature (including media);
- rhetorical strategies and approaches in speech, writing, and the media;
- critical approaches and their rationales; and
- cultural and national characteristics and styles.

The four standards, therefore, change somewhat in their focus, building upon what has been achieved and moving out into the broader world of mature thought and action.

The English program in some high schools may be integrated with vocational programs; in others it may remain distinct. In either case, the English language arts standards clearly suggest the importance of the workplace. According to the highly publicized report of The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), today's workers must "listen and speak well enough to explain schedules and procedures, communicate with customers, work in teams, understand customer concerns, describe complex systems and procedures, probe for hidden meanings, teach others and solve problems." Central to these workplace skills is the ability to use language for social interaction, a skill that is also crucial for success both in the classroom and in the world at large.

College or job interviews require students to balance confidence with humility in describing their accomplishments to an objective audience. Scholarship applications call for the ability to describe personal and academic skills that are not reflected in the school

transcript. Membership in school or community organizations and in various out-of-school jobs involves the use of language as well as the organizational, leadership, public speaking, and group process skills that are called for by the standards.

Language for social interaction serves as an important source of ideas and a stimulus to thought. In *Detecting Growth in Language*, James Moffett notes that as learners grow in literacy, they become more aware “that meaning resides in minds, not in words, and that different people may see the same things differently, verbalize the same ideas differently, and interpret the same words differently.” As we encounter the perspectives of others, we extend and elaborate, clarify and refine our current beliefs about what we are reading, writing, or hearing. As students experience multiple viewpoints as readers and listeners, they will learn to anticipate and accommodate multiple perspectives in their writing and speaking.

In all of their dealings with reading, writing, speaking, and listening, students are gaining a knowledge of language and how it is used. As Paolo Freire reminds us, “It is through their own language that they will be able to reconstruct their history and their culture, hence their position in the world.”

A part of their position comes from a deepening knowledge of the history and culture of others, and the high school English curriculum serves to foster that knowledge through exposure to good literature and to the development of a critical awareness of that literature. The curriculum generally involves reading from the world’s major poems, plays, novels, and essays and learning ways of talking and writing about them critically.

Appreciation and enjoyment are important aspects of response to literature—aspects teachers model in a powerful way for students. Whether teachers are reading aloud, writing with their students, or listening as they tell their stories, opportunities abound for teachers to show their students how much they value language that is precise, fresh, and elegant.

The concepts and competencies that characterize readers, writers, speakers, and listeners who critically analyze and evaluate texts are also those of insightful, reflective thinkers. Such individuals are active meaning-makers who sense, feel, and imagine a text; interpret it; make connections with other texts, with background information, with other subjects, and with the world around them; and evaluate the formal and thematic qualities of the text.

The development of these critical skills applies to informational texts as well as literary ones. In the high school classroom it is appropriate to use a wide variety of documents, literary and nonliterary, taken from students’ own cultures or from other cultures. The focus may turn from a play by Shakespeare to a current film, a political speech, or an article in the latest news magazine. What has been gained in discussion will feed into a writing assignment or a research project. In these kinds of experiences—where informational and literary texts or programs are connected to what is being studied in other courses, on the athletic field, in the community, or on the job—the criteria of range, conventions, flexibility, connections, and independence can be made most clear. From such experience and having met these high standards, students are prepared to go on to higher education or to productive employment.

A Standards Approach to Various High-School English Activities

Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding.

Collecting and Producing a Family History

Context

In an eleventh-grade English and social studies unit on American populations, students are engaged in studying immigration and migration patterns as they are described in histories, autobiographies, fiction, poetry, and drama. The class itself is culturally diverse and decides to look at its own roots.

Student Activity

After reading and discussing various examples of memoir, students collect their own family stories on tape or in writing. They do the research necessary to create a context for a family history and experiment with form to find the best form (or combination of forms) to convey to the world what their families are about. They share completed projects with a variety of audiences—senior citizens, eighth-graders studying immigration, etc.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

The stories within families provide rich opportunities for study. Students need opportunities to bring to bear what they have learned about the possibilities of language and literacy to enhance these stories. They assure that the voice of each person whose story they are recounting is clear and present. They attend to the narrative thread that ties the pieces together. They develop narrative writing skills by working within a familiar context, and they gain an understanding of cultural roots and change.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- Student productions, narratives with pictures and other memorabilia, presented to an external audience.

Evidence:

The criteria will be found in the understandings elicited from the various audiences outside of the class, and the comments on the various student presentations. The reports will be judged for clarity, breadth of knowledge about the past, the ability to connect the lives of their family with the lives of others, and the degree to which the presentations are adapted to the various audiences.

A Formal Debate

Context

A senior class project combining several subject areas in which students select a debatable topic, form teams for the positive and negative sides of the debate, and prepare and conduct a formal debate.

Student Activity

Students debate major issues before a variety of audiences. The students choose teams of four (two on each side), select the topic, do the research on the topic using available in-school and local resources, conduct interviews, and prepare the formal presentations and rebuttals. After rehearsal and the deposit of written briefs, the students present their debate before an audience of students, teachers, parents, and citizens.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

After gathering information from a variety of sources and anticipating the arguments from the opposition, student teams must determine what information and how much information will be necessary to convince a particular audience. In speaking, as in writing, the student's purpose, together with the needs of the audience, determine what information is necessary and most effective.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The students will produce artifacts of the various stages of the debate: notecards and interview records, drafts, bibliographies, formal briefs, and the actual debate, which may be taped.

Evidence:

The debate can be scored as in a formal debate, assigning winners in oral and written argument. In addition, the debate can be scored by the participants for the degree to which they have worked together and supported each other. The materials can also be scored for use of a variety of sources, accuracy in presenting information, support, originality in presentation, and effectiveness in argumentation.

Media Study

Context

In a tenth-grade class looking at the media, students are introduced to an examination of the relationship among oral, print, and electronic media; they examine some of the material on gathering and reporting the news, as well as on the effect and influence of advertising.

Student Activity

Teachers introduce students to a wide range of magazines, newspapers, televised commentaries, and the like. Students identify several issues of interest to them, watch and read widely about these issues, chart the various viewpoints on each issue, and discuss the information supporting each. The students prepare a "media guide" to one of the issues.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

Truth may be difficult to determine, but there must be information supporting any point of view. Sometimes the information not considered by those who hold a position is also very telling.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The students will produce a guide concerning the ways in which the media have treated an issue of concern to them.

Evidence:

The guide may be rated for the number and variety of media covered, the range of examples and instances chosen, the degree to which comparisons and contrasts among the media treatments have been made, and the clarity and effectiveness of the presentation.

Desktop Publishing

Context

In an English class connected to a technology preparation program, students work on applying the knowledge of writing and the writing process to the preparation of finished documents.

Student Activity

The students take a number of their own writing assignments and see them through the complete process of publication. They may also undertake a class or school magazine and other publications. Working in teams, the students undertake editing, keyboarding, formatting, proof preparation, printing and binding.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

The writing process pedagogy has been extended through the advent of desktop publishing into a larger process, ending in a marketable or consumable publication, rather than an academic exercise. By participating in all phases of book or magazine production and publishing, students gain an understanding of the whole process and become aware of the availability and use of a variety of electronic tools including formatting programs, print and graphics programs, and paper supply and binding.

Assessment Tools and Evidence**Tools:**

- The major tools can be the various stages of the production of a complete booklet. These may be supplemented by student learning logs and group progress reports.

Evidence:

The major evidence would be the products themselves, which can be judged in terms of design, correctness of copy, accuracy, and attractiveness. The process reports may also be scored for understanding of the various elements of design and production.

Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression

Reading and Viewing a Play

Context

A drama unit at the sophomore level which includes a trip to a local or regional performance of a Shakespeare play

Student Activity

After viewing the dramatic performance, reading the play, and reading or viewing several critiques of both the play and the performance, students construct a collection of their views of how the play applies to the contemporary world. They support these views by writing about the thinking that produced them.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

Although every work exists in a cultural and historic context, and even though the thinking of others about the work may be available to students, it is the students' own ability to make connections that tints the lens through which each of them sees it. When students articulate in their own language the processes which produced their interpretation, they are asked to consider the various forces that contributed to their view. The activity involves reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- Working in groups or alone, the students will produce a report on the impact of the play and their views.

Evidence:

The reports will be judged for the degree to which the students take into account both the text and the performance, the degree to which they explore their understandings of the play in its various forms, and the connections they make between the play and their lives. This activity will be judged in terms of the number and types of connection that each student has made and the use to which he or she puts the various kinds of evidence. The students' reports will also be judged on their use of conventions of writing and knowledge of stage and dramaturgical conventions.

Studying a Writer from Another Culture

Context

In a world literature course, students are asked to select an author from a particular country and historical period.

Student Activity

Students engage in the study of a writer outside their own culture. They consider pieces written by that writer, autobiographical and/or biographical work, and reviews. They prepare and present a reading from the writer's work. They keep a journal in which they reflect on the reading they are doing, explore their thinking about the cultural influence, speculate on the relationship of individual pieces to the writer's whole body of work. When they have completed the reading, they return to the journal to determine what aspect seems most compelling for consideration in a more formal piece of writing. Their finished pieces are shared in class and shelved in the school library.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

Students who explore the many ways of knowing a writer and her work can speak with authority. Part of knowing the work is speaking and hearing the rhythm and intonation of the language. Understandings of both the sound and meaning of any work are tentative. Students involved in this kind of activity have an opportunity to hold opinions, explore meaning, think and revise their thinking before the publication of their work.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The students will have kept journals and produced final reports.

Evidence:

The journals may be rated for the degree to which the students seek a variety of sources and show independence in working out the nature of their report. The reports themselves may be scored for the range and variety of sources and selections discussed and presented, the accuracy and clarity of the presentation.

A Unit on American Fiction

Context

In an eleventh-grade American Literature class, the teacher will be asking his students to read Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*. He believes the book will have more meaning for the students if they are able to make connections to the piece through ideas that are more familiar to them. To this end, he asks the students to read a short excerpt from the Ron Kovic book, *Born on the 4th of July*, a contemporary, autobiographical piece centered around the Vietnam War. The excerpt he has chosen for them to read describes some of the understandings that Kovic has about what war will be like. Kovic had been brought up on John Wayne war movies; men in uniform were heroes; and feelings of patriotism were running high. The teacher then shows his class film clips from an old John Wayne movie and a portion of the more current movie, *Platoon*.

Student Activity

A class discussion with a group summary concerning attitudes toward war as expressed in various media.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

The teacher directs the class to look for evidence of what war was like as depicted in these two film clips, making clear the purpose for showing the two pieces. In the discussion, question leads to speculation about the validity of the information in these two movies and why they would depict war in such different ways. The students begin to touch on some of the social and political forces at work during these different time periods. The students are able to go beyond the contexts provided by the teacher and to apply some questions about validity to new contexts.

Assessment Tools and Evidence**Tools:**

- Observation and recording of the discussions either by the teacher or by student "reporters."

Evidence:

As thoughtful consumers of information from many sources, including movies and television, it is just these kinds of questions that students should raise. They should be able to sort out the information relevant to the questions that have been raised and to question the validity of that information. Conversations and discussions can provide the opportunities for information to be examined and for questions to be raised. Through the exploration of their own questions students begin to take a more critical look at their world and begin to try to make sense of it.

A Comparative Mythology Unit

Context

A twelfth-grade mythology class had finished reading, discussing, and writing about several Greek and Celtic myths. Now the class is to read and report on a Celtic story, “The Fate of the Children of Lir,” which has many elements from Greek and Celtic mythology, but also new elements introduced by Christian monks who were the transcribers of the myth.

Student Activity

Students hear the story and write their first impressions of it. After two days of class discussion about the piece and a chance to visit the library, students write a second paper on the context of the myth and its impact.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

At first glance it would be easy to suppose that a myth would be the sort of piece where the focus would be on the aesthetic and personal response, where multiple perspectives might be explored, and where students would come to a deeper and richer understanding of the piece through their discussions. All of the above occur, but the evidence for reading and writing for information, as well as the evidence for critical thought, is there also.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The students’ first-impression papers and the longer researched reports are the tools.

Evidence:

The reports can best be examined for the degree to which further exploration has produced either a change of opinion or a more solid grounding for the opinion that has been expressed at the beginning. The reports can be examined for the variety of sources consulted, the degree to which the students can balance a set of different perspectives, the number of connections among mythological sources and features, and the accuracy and structure of the presentation.

Developing Response Journals

Context

Students in a ninth-grade class are encouraged to develop a response journal format in which they record what they understand of the reading they are undertaking and look at the thematic and formal elements of the text.

Student Activity

Students use their response journals, the text under study, and the thinking generated in class discussion to work toward an interpretation of the text.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

Although response is a connection with text, it is not enough. Students need to return to the text itself to test the validity of their thinking.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The journals themselves can become the primary tool, together with students’ self-reports on their progress in using the journals.

Evidence:

The reports will be examined primarily to see whether the students are in fact using them. The final portfolio can include a selection from the journal which the students see as particularly cogent and indicative of their skills as readers.

A Unit on Cultural Stereotypes

Context

Multicultural perspectives are an integral part of high school instruction, rather than being added to the curriculum as a “multicultural unit.” American literature includes the writing of Asian Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans, among others. Genre units include nontraditional genres from other cultures. Portrayals of minorities in literature are examined for bias and stereotyping.

Student Activity

In a unit on poetry with an emphasis on the lyric, students are asked to read a number of contemporary lyrics from the Americas. As a part of their study, the students are asked to find examples of lyrics in which the writer questions the use of cultural stereotypes, a common theme in contemporary poetry. Each student is asked to select a culture, find examples of the stereotypes to which the poets object, and present these to the class.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

Stepping into another’s culture helps us to see our own through another lens. “We are all citizens of the world,” says Socrates. Only by knowing each other and understanding the forces that make us the way we are can learners be prepared for citizenship and social responsibility in a multicultural society.

Assessment Tools and Evidence**Tools:**

- The presentations will include copies of the poems and listings of the stereotypes. The presentations may be oral or in print.

Evidence:

The presentations will be judged on the breadth and extent of the poets and stereotypes selected, the degree to which the students understand the nature of stereotype and the reason for the protest, and the clarity of the presentation.

Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

Listening to and Analyzing a Political Speech

Context

In a unit on metaphor in literature and life, students will be asked to define and exemplify metaphors in various genres of literature and other texts. They will examine metaphors in sports, science, show business, slang, and politics.

Student Activity

As a culminating activity some students might read or listen to Jesse Jackson’s speech to the Democratic National Convention in 1987 and respond to his use of metaphor to help his audience see clearly but in a fresh, new way what his mission was. Students would look for other powerful uses of metaphor in their reading and bring these to

the group for discussion. Such rhetorical analysis will lead to new possibilities for their own writing.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

By analyzing rhetorical devices in a variety of literary and nonliterary contexts, students will gather an understanding of how language can be used to affect an audience and of the ways in which they too can use these devices.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The students will present analytic and evaluative reports of the Jackson speech. Their subsequent writing can also be a source for examining the effective use of metaphor.

Evidence:

The reports may be evaluated for the number and range of the metaphors and devices selected, the degree to which connections between purpose and style are effectively made, and the understanding of audience and rhetorical strategy.

Audience analysis

Context

Students analyze various recent public documents, including editorials, advertisements, and political speeches, and evaluate them from the points of view of different groups representative of our society.

Student Activity

Students select a particular topic and find examples of presentations in different media concerning that topic. The topic may be a controversial one; it should be one in which there are examples of particular messages being targeted to specific groups.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

Language is loaded with assumptions and interpretations, and analysis of language and its effects on an audience allows students to examine the meanings, attitudes, and beliefs that underlie the language of different speakers and writers.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

The students will prepare presentations concerning their topic.

Evidence:

The presentations will be assessed for evidence that students understand the ways in which the medium, language, organization, and tone are selected for or adapted to a given audience, for the variety of audiences and media selected as examples, and for the persuasiveness of their own presentation.

Developing Cultural Portraits

Context

In reading literature from other cultures, students begin to build up cultural definitions as well as an understanding of how such features as ritual, heroes, customs, beliefs, and other practices can define a culture. They are able to use these features as a way of approaching a new culture. In a senior-level course, they are then able to look at a literary work and discuss whether the culture is portrayed from the “inside” or the “outside.”

Student Activity

Students read literature from a variety of cultures and engage in conversation about the representation of characters in those cultures. They reflect on the accuracy of the portrayals and test their thinking against parallel current events.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

The ability to put oneself in the position of another requires an ability to move from a comfortable stance to one that may be very uncomfortable. If students are going to initiate and maintain positive relationships with people who appear different from them, they will need to acknowledge the forces responsible for those differences. Testing their assumptions and honing their language through literary discussions will provide valuable practice.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The reflections will be observable in response journals, discussions, and papers.

Evidence:

These forms of presentation will be assessed for the degree to which an understanding of the nature of cultures is used in discussing the particular text, as well as the ability to use the tools of cultural analysis to determine the perspective and biases of the author. The presentations can also be assessed for the variety of other sources and information used to connect to this particular instance, and for the degree to which the students take a stand independent of the author’s persuasive abilities.

A Study of the Dialects and Languages of the School

Context

In most classes and schools the students and staff will come from a variety of backgrounds. A unit on social dialects and language difference will involve the students in linguistic analysis.

Student Activity

The students will create a linguistic atlas of the school in which they record the major languages and dialects spoken by students and staff. Based on interviews and library research, this will include the numbers of speakers of a particular language/dialect, the geographical origins of those speakers, and the distinctive features of the dialects or languages.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

Learning about language and usage is an increasingly important feature of the English language arts program and one in which

students can gain a critical understanding of the nature of linguistic diversity and language change.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The atlas will be a class product in which each student will record his/her contribution.

Evidence:

The atlas will be assessed for the degree to which each student understands the nature of dialect and is able to use the tools of linguistic analysis to distinguish regional from social dialect, for the accuracy of the recording, and for the clarity and completeness of the evidence.

Standard 4: Language for social interaction

Letters to the Editor

Context

In a tenth-grade unit on persuasive writing, students will examine editorials and positions taken in a local paper. The students are encouraged to take an active role in the issues that concern them and about which they have knowledge.

Student Activity

Students write letters to the editor and editorials on issues of current interest for publication in the local or regional newspaper. They respond to letters written by other readers. Their writing reflects clear understanding of issues, new information which moves the discussion forward, and refutation of misinformation when appropriate.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

The most effective writing and speaking in the public arena is based on information rather than emotion. Students who can gather, assimilate, and articulate new information can make powerful contributions to their communities.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The letters will be the major tool.

Evidence:

The major evidence of accomplishment will be the actual publication of the letters, or the response of the editorial page editor to the student letters if not all can be published. In this instance, a “real-world” judge is the most effective.

Informal Group Discussion

Context

During the course of a ninth-grade quarter, students begin to learn how to take part in leaderless groups.

Student Activity

Students engaged in group work take turns in the roles of facilitator, recorder, and reporter. At the completion of each collaborative project, students reflect on the group process and on their individual contributions.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

The communication skills necessary for effective participation in a group need to be taught and practiced if students are to be comfortable and confident members of the group.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The major tools will be the teacher's observation and the students' self-reflection.

Evidence:

The reports and observations will be the source for ongoing determination of the success of the groups and the abilities of each individual to take appropriate roles. Participation without friction and smooth progress towards the goal are the main criteria.

Collaborative Writing Using the Computer

Context

In a locally networked classroom, students begin work on their writing using a collaborative approach in which drafts are shared and commented upon, revisions are made, and all help in the final editing of each other's work.

Student Activity

In reading/writing groups, students raise questions and respond to each other's work in order to help make clearer the meaning of each speaker and writer.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

Powerful speakers and writers learn to negotiate meaning in terms of their purpose, intended audience, and desired effect. Research has shown that this negotiation is most effective in networked writing workshops,

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- The participation logs of the students and the real-time records of the computer may be used in addition to the written products.

Evidence:

Student participation will be one assessment device, as will the degree to which the students report that they gain understanding from working together on the computer. In addition, the actual written products can be examined for the degree to which the quality of the writing has been enhanced by the use of on-line collaboration.

Planning a School Event

Context

For students to withstand peer pressure demands facility at taking a stand without provoking hostility. To make a major purchase, such as a car or CD player, students need the self-assurance to make a decision without feeling intimidated or exploited. Occasions such as the athletic banquet, the junior prom, or graduation call for young people to respond appropriately in different social situations as well as to present themselves in a positive light to their peers, parents, and other adults.

Student Activity

Students in the English class are asked to take on the management of a school event. They must plan it, secure necessary cooperation, publicize it, and evaluate its success both financially and socially.

Knowledge Guiding Practice

In addition to serving as a catalyst to thought, social interaction skills are essential to a wide variety of situations in which high school students find themselves. Adolescent concerns are frequently related to complex social issues that are difficult to articulate and entail hearing all sides.

Assessment Tools and Evidence

Tools:

- There will be various products along the way as the event takes shape and is completed.

Evidence:

The event's success can be determined by the students themselves or by others involved or participating in it. In addition, the organizational and social skills of the students may be rated by various outside agencies with which they dealt.

The activities in this section were contributed by New York State teachers. We invite the submission of additional activities.

Appendix C: Higher Standards for Students of New York State: Developing Curriculum Frameworks

The Curriculum and Assessment Council which advises the Commissioner of Education and the Board of Regents defines a curriculum framework as “a broad description of the principles, topics, and modes of inquiry or performance in a discipline which provides the basic structure of ideas upon which a curriculum is based.” Learning standards are at the heart of the curriculum frameworks, and each learning standard has two major components: the content standard and the performance standard. The **content standard** describes what students should know, understand, and be able to do; the **performance standard** defines the levels of student achievement and answers the question, “How good is good enough?” The content standards are rather fully developed (although still tentative, pending public and expert review) in the preliminary drafts of the frameworks that the Regents approve for further development in consultation with the field. The performance standards, on the other hand, are only suggested in the early draft and depend on input from the field for fuller definition.

Content Standards

Each of the seven Curriculum and Assessment Committees established by the Board of Regents has identified content standards for its disciplines. Those content standards, in the Committee’s view, reflect the best scholarship and practice within the discipline. The standards also adhere to the recommendations of the Technical Planning Group of the National Education Goals Panel, which call for content standards that “indicate the knowledge and skills—the ways of thinking, working, communicating, reasoning, and investigating, and the most important ideas, concepts, issues, dilemmas, and knowledge essential to the discipline—that should be taught and learned in school” (*Promises to Keep: Creating High Standards for American Students*, 1993, p. ii.).

In reviewing the work of the Curriculum and Assessment Committees, the Curriculum and Assessment Council has suggested some criteria for judging the suitability of content standards. Those criteria are similar to those in *Promises to Keep*. Both the National Panel and the Council recommend that content standards should be:

practical (feasible)—“sufficiently delimited and focused so they could be implemented” (*Promises to Keep*, p. iv.).

intellectually sound—demanding the kind of intellectual reasoning and analysis and the application of broad-based knowledge that is required of our best students and that the National Panel refers to as “world-class” and “reflecting the best scholarship within the discipline” (*Promises to Keep*, p. iv.).

politically viable—“resulting from an iterative process of comment, feedback, and revision among educators and the public within the state” (*Promises to Keep*, p. iv.).

assessable—“sufficiently specific so their attainment can be measured in terms meaningful to teachers, students, parents, test makers and users, the public, and others” (*Promises to Keep*, p. iv.).

Performance Standards

The preliminary draft of a curriculum framework should clearly describe the proposed content standards, discuss what kinds of evidence would show that they had been attained, and give some examples of possible assessment tasks. However, the development of performance standards really relies on teachers’ involvement once the content standards are available. The National Council for Education Standards and Testing calls for performance standards that “should establish the degree or quality of student performance in the challenging subject matter set out in the content standards” (*Promises to Keep*, p. 22). Performance standards thus follow the content standards and are based on them.

According to the National Panel, the performance standards should indicate the nature of evidence and the quality of student performance that is expected. The panel recommends an iterative process wherein “assessments could be developed by standards developers, a state. . . test developers, or others. Those assessments would be informed by the original standards development process, and in turn would be used to produce samples of real student work. Those samples of student work would ultimately be part of the empirical basis for setting performance standards. . . . Performance levels specifying acceptable and outstanding levels of quality of student work need to be examined against actual samples of student work” (*Promises to Keep*, p. 23).

In New York State we expect that as a result of such a collaborative process, the revised frameworks will contain examples of assessment tasks related to the standards, with rubrics for evaluating student performance on the tasks and samples of student work that meet and exceed the standards. That framework will also contain the content standards, revised according to the recommendations of reviewers.

Framework Development Process

New York State has instituted a process for framework development that provides for significant involvement of educators and the public. The main stages in the development of a framework are:

development of the content standards and a preliminary draft of the framework by a Curriculum and Assessment Committee and some consultant writers under the guidance of the Curriculum and Assessment Council and the Commissioner;

review of the preliminary draft framework by the Commissioner and the Curriculum and Assessment Council, and subsequent revision by the writers as indicated;

approval of the preliminary draft by the Board of Regents for distribution to the field and continued development in consultation with teachers and other informed advisors;

dissemination to the field through mailing to schools, reviewers, and professional organizations and distribution at public meetings;

solicitation of input through public meetings, requests for expert review, and involvement of teachers in developing assessment models related to the content standards and providing samples of student work. These samples will ultimately be part of the empirical basis for setting performance standards;

revision of the framework based on public input, with examples of performance tasks, rubrics for evaluating student performance, and samples of student work that reflect acceptable and outstanding levels of performance;

presentation of the revised framework to the Board of Regents for approval;

production of an Assessment Bank and a teacher resource manual.

Supporting Materials

As the description of the framework process indicates, the curriculum framework by itself is not sufficient to provide the support that many teachers will need in helping their students to attain the higher learning standards. When the revised frameworks are approved by the Board of Regents, the Department will produce additional materials working with teacher consultants.

One support document will be the Assessment Bank, available both in book form and on computer disk, containing assessment tasks (developed by New York State teachers) that provide appropriate evidence of students' attainment of the standards. Like the sample tasks in the revised framework, these tasks will be accompanied by rubrics for evaluating student performance and samples of student work at acceptable and outstanding levels. The Assessment Bank will contain tasks for a wide variety of classroom situations and for three levels of student development (elementary, intermediate, and commencement).

A teacher resource manual will be developed that includes suggested teaching activities and other instructional supports to guide local development of curriculum and instruction. This manual also will be developed in collaboration with New York State teachers, who will contribute examples of successful practices from their classrooms.

In addition to these new materials related to the frameworks, the State will continue to produce curriculum guides and syllabi for specific courses and school subjects. When the learning standards for all students are identified and approved by the Board of Regents, many existing syllabi will be revised to correspond to the expectations put forth in the frameworks.

Future Concerns

As the separate frameworks from the seven Curriculum and Assessment Committees are being developed through a public process, it is essential that the Curriculum and Assessment Council and the State Education Department begin to review the emerging set of learning standards as a whole. The entire set should fit together: cross-references should show where standards for one subject are related to those for another; performance standards should make explicit the ways in which evidence can speak for attainment of more than one content standard. Thus, teachers can more readily connect

learning across subject areas, and the entire set of standards will be challenging, yet manageable, for teaching and learning.

Criteria proposed by the Technical Planning Group of the National Education Goals Panel are useful for this review. They recommend that a state's standards be:

1. at least as rigorous as National Subject Standards.
2. cumulatively feasible—"Any student who works hard in a good program should be able to meet the standards, and any school working to implement the standards should be able to do so."
3. cumulatively adequate—The standards taken together should make sense as a whole. They should define an adequate "core."
4. encouraging of students' ability to integrate and apply knowledge and skills.
5. reflective of broad state consensus-building.

New York's complete set of curriculum frameworks, then, will set high standards, show their interrelations, and describe how their attainment may be measured. The accompanying supportive materials will provide and explain a variety of examples:

- of assessment tasks as examples of measuring the attainment of the standards;
- of learning activities designed to lead students to attain the standards;
- of ways to organize instruction that promote attainment of the standards.

