



EDMOND MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL

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February 18, 2016

Superintendent Joy Hofmeister
State Superintendent of Education
Oklahoma State Department of Education
Oliver Hodge Building
2500 North Lincoln Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Re: Oklahoma English Language Arts Standards

Dear Superintendent Hofmeister:

We are writing this letter in support of the Oklahoma English Language Arts Standards that have recently been submitted to our State Legislature for approval. Not only were we given an opportunity to provide input on the standards as they were drafted, but our English Department has now spent multiple weeks and several meetings discussing the new standards and what their implementation means for Edmond students. Our conclusion is that they will significantly enhance our instruction to allow our students further success as they prepare as readers and writers in both the academic and non-academic phases of their lives.

Specifically, the vertically aligned standards avoid the redundancy of instruction that PASS standards often demand. The new standards ensure vertical alignment at a point in time when teacher turnover is high and time and money for professional development is often low; teachers being faithful to these new standards will immediately find vertical alignment, allowing limited resources to focus on other areas of curriculum development and instruction.

This is largely facilitated due to the student-outcome orientation of these new standards. Our PASS standards are written by what the teacher is supposed to do, which necessitates "teaching to the test" as our only model for potential assessment. This new orientation tells teachers what students should be able to do – this allows our teachers to create formative and summative assessments that illicit those outcomes, reducing our need to teach released test items. This is singularly freeing and allows for instruction that is meaningful for students while avoiding "drill and kill" exercises. This may be the one place where our new standards perhaps resemble Common Core, as some have criticized; however, basing standards on learning objectives and student outcomes makes good sense and our new standards avoid the over-prescriptive nature of Common Core (which required Shakespeare, American Literature, and British Literature taught at specific grade levels), in favor of more local control of instructional material so that teachers and communities can best decide the tools used to reach the desired standards.

In short, not only are these standards an effective tool for student instruction, but they specifically avoid many of the pitfalls that opponents to Common Core decried. With this in mind, the English Department of Edmond Memorial High School endorses these standards and looks forward to completely implementing them in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin P. McDonald".

Kevin P. McDonald
English Department Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Coffelt".

Justin Coffelt
Principal