

**Review of Draft Standards in English-Language Arts  
Common Core State Standards (NGA/CCSS0)  
July 2009 – Kimberley Daly**

**Background:**

The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) are collaborating on the Common Core State Standards Project, an effort designed to create national standards in English and mathematics that will lead to American students being more prepared for higher education or workforce training programs and thus more able to compete in a global marketplace. It is the intent of those creating these standards that they are inclusive of rigorous content and internationally-benchmarked as well as research and evidence-based. Forty-six states have agreed to adopt the standards once they are completed. Texas, Alaska, Missouri, and South Carolina have not signed on to the initiative.

The standards that were released on 23 July are in draft form for the subjects of English and math and the entire process is expected to continue throughout the rest of 2009. The draft document spells out the basic ideas that students should be able to achieve by the end of high school in English and mathematics. Achieve, ACT and The College Board have done much of the writing of the draft document although there have been many international documents, career and college readiness materials, national reports, assessments and state documents consulted. The draft does include a reference list of all consulted documents.

In English, there are standards in the following areas:

- Reading informational and literary texts
- Writing
- Speaking and listening

The following pages contain a review of the English standards and an analysis of how IB English A1 might fit in with the proposed benchmarks. Standards have been taken directly from the draft document. IB English comments have been inserted in *italics* following each standard or series of standards.

## ***Standards for Reading Informational and Literary Texts – Core Standards***

To be college and career ready, students must:

1. Determine what the text says explicitly and use evidence within the text to infer what is implied by or follows logically from the text.
2. Support or question statements about the text by citing the texts explicitly and accurately.
3. Assess the contributions that significant details as well as larger portions of the text make to the whole.
4. Summarize the ideas, event, or information in the text and determine the main ideas and themes.
5. Trace how events and ideas unfold in the text and explain how they relate to one another.
6. Analyze the traits, motivations and thought of individuals in fiction and nonfiction based on how they are described, what they say and do, and how they interact.

*The above statements are addressed through both the IB English A1 curriculum and the IB English A1 assessments. In terms of curriculum, both fiction and nonfiction must be addressed by teachers as there is a requirement for both “Prose: the novel and short story” and “Prose: other than the novel and short story” categories in terms of genres of works. Also, in Part 3 of the curriculum, a teacher may select to complete an entire semester of work in the “Prose: other” category meaning that students would complete four works of nonfiction that semester.*

*In terms of assessments, areas A (Understanding of the Text), B (Interpretation of the Text), and D (Presentation) of the Paper 1 rubric address these goals. Similarly, the same areas of the paper 2 rubric also address these areas although on the Paper 2 rubric Area B deals with Response to the Question. In terms of the World Literature Assignments that students complete during IB English A1, the above statements would be addressed through areas A (Selection of the Aspect and its Treatment) and B (Knowledge and Understanding of the Works) of the rubric while for the Oral Component, students would demonstrate mastery via areas A (Knowledge and Understanding of the Extract or Works), B (Interpretation and Personal Response) and C (Presentation). Please see the Language A1 Guide for further information concerning the rubrics.*

*Further, although the above standards are addressed in IB English A1, all of the concepts should not be new to students through that course of study and the IB English A1 programme should be considered the terminal curriculum (grades 11 and 12) for the student in terms of their secondary learning. IB English A1 should develop the student’s skills in regards to the above to a sophisticated level so that a student looks at texts critically and analytically in preparation for higher education or career training.*

7. *Draw on context to determine what is meant by words and phrases, including figurative language.*

8. *Analyze how word choice shapes the meaning and tone of the text.*
9. *Analyze how the organizational structure advances the argument, explanation, or the narrative.*

*Again, noting that these skills should be learned in the lower grades and sharpened in the IB English A1 course, both the Paper 1 and Paper 2 rubrics address these skills in Area C – Appreciation of Literary Features. On the Oral Component, Area B would cover this area. In addition, these skills are a heavy part of IB English A1 instruction as a large part of classes covers text analysis and includes the idea, “How does the writer convey his ideas?” and “What tools does the writer use to convey his/her message?”*

10. *Interpret data, graphics, and words in the text, and combine these elements of information to achieve comprehension.*
11. *Follow the reasoning that support an argument or explanation and assess whether the evidence provided is relevant and sufficient.*

*In terms of curriculum, IB English A1 fulfills the standards listed above minus the references to “graphics and data” in Number 10. The curriculum, a mix of poetry, prose: fiction, drama, and prose: other, allows teachers to instruct students how to dissect an argument and to explain it using evidence that they find explicitly and implicitly in a text. Students are taught to determine whether or not the evidence provided is relevant or sufficient and the required use of the IB rubrics teach students and educators the line between the two. In terms of IB English A1 assessments, Paper 1 and 2 address the above standards through areas A, B, and D, the World Literature Assignment addresses it in Areas A and B and the Oral Component hits it in Areas A, B, and C.*

*As for “data and graphics”, this is an area sometimes called “workplace text”, “real text”, or “life text”. The IB English A1 curriculum **does not** specifically have any place in it where these things are addressed; however, many individual state standards in the United States require students to be able to read these kinds of texts. In Virginia, for instance, the English Standards of Learning (SOL) examinations that students take in grade 11 require students to answer questions that address these topics. It is possible that these skills are being developed in students prior to starting IB English A1.*

12. *Ascertain the origin and credibility of print and online sources when conducting research.*

*This is not covered specifically in the IB English A1 curriculum although may be covered through activities by IB English A1 teachers. More likely, it is IB English A1 teachers who are responding to local or state standards requirements in terms of research.*

*It is possible in a small way to address this standard through the World Literature Assignments. Students have the option during the second assignment to complete a formal paper where they might complete some research. The assignment is not a specific research paper per se and the student does complete much of the work independently but the groundwork should have been*

*previously laid by the teacher in order for that student to be proficient in completing the research, meaning that they would be able to evaluate the credibility of sources, both in print and online.*

13. Analyze how two or more texts with different styles, perspectives or arguments address similar topics or themes.

*The above standard is most likely addressed time and time again in IB English A1 classes as teachers prepare students for the assessments. Often texts are compared to one another in order to link one literary feature to another or to discuss an author's style in relation to different pieces of literature.*

*In terms of assessments, students must compare two texts for World Literature Assignment 1 and have a choice to do this again with an A1 text and a World Literature text for World Literature Assignment 2. For their Paper 2 exam, students must discuss at least two works in relation to a thematic question.*

14. Apply knowledge and concepts drawn from texts to other texts, contexts, and circumstances.

*This standard is met throughout the IB English A1 programme in both instruction and assessment in the actual classroom throughout Parts 1-4. Teachers encourage students to make connections to other texts, to other contexts, to the outside world, to other ways of knowing, in an effort to make them more knowledgeable in the IB English A1 curriculum and programme.*

### **Standards for Writing – Core Standards**

To be college and career ready, students must:

1. Select and refine a topic or thesis that addresses the specific task and audience.
2. Sustain focus on a specific topic or argument through careful presentation of essential content.
3. Create a logical presentation of ideas and use transitions effectively to convey the relationships among them.
4. Support and illustrate arguments and explanations with relevant details and examples.
5. Develop and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the purpose and audience.
6. Choose words and phrases to express ideas precisely and concisely.
7. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard written English, including grammar, usage, and mechanics.
8. Represent and cite accurately the data, conclusions and opinions of others.
9. Assess the quality of one's own writing and when necessary, strengthen it through revision.

When **writing arguments**, students must also:

10. Establish a substantive claim, distinguishing it from alternate or opposing claims.

11. Link claims and evidence and ensure that the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims.
12. Acknowledge competing argument or information, defending or qualifying the initial claim as appropriate.

When **writing to inform or explain**, student must also:

13. Synthesize information from multiple relevant sources, including graphic and quantitative information when appropriate, to provide an accurate picture of that information.
14. Convey complex information clearly and coherently to the audience through careful selection, organization, and presentation of the content.
15. Demonstrate understanding of the content by getting the key facts right, covering the essential point, and anticipating reader misconceptions.

*In terms of the above standards, IB English A1 addresses many of them in the forms of Paper 1, Paper 2, and the World Literature Assignments. In individual classrooms, as students learn how to write for these particular assessments, they also learn the skills listed above. In terms of Paper 1, a blind commentary, students must develop a thesis for a chosen piece of text, persuasively argue points, support ideas with text-based relevant evidence, maintain a style that is appropriate for the purpose and audience, choose words that express their ideas concisely and accurately, and defend claims. In addition to this, students must demonstrate that their command of grammar and mechanics is sufficient enough not to detract from the meaning of their overall argument. Instruction and assessment in IB English A1 concerning Paper 1 also satisfies the section of the draft standards which establish benchmarks for writing arguments. The areas of the Paper 1 rubric which specifically address these standards are A, B, D, and E (Formal Use of Language).*

*In Paper 2, students also have to make an argument but they need to respond to a thematic question and discuss at least two texts, arguing how their selected works fit their chosen question. Students need to link evidence and do all of the same things that they have to do with Paper 1 but be mindful that they are responding to a question instead of writing a persuasive essay about a text. In some cases, students are also writing to explain, and thus are working to convey sometimes complex information clearly and concisely to a specific audience through careful presentation and organization of content. Areas A, B, D, and E (Formal Use of Language) of the Paper 2 rubric would address the writing standards noted in the draft document. Again, in classrooms, students would receive instruction and practice in developing the skills noted in the draft document as they learn to write a successful Paper 2 essay.*

*The World Literature Assignments allow IB English A1 students to develop their writing skills further along the lines of the draft standards in that the first World Literature Assignment asks students to write a comparative essay. This essay forces students to choose an aspect and develop a paper that sufficiently balances the aspect in light of two World Literature texts. Students must employ*

*citations in their work from their texts but may not necessarily complete additional research in this task. They use their writing skills to convey complex information clearly and make connections between the texts clearly. In addition, students must demonstrate mastery of their texts by getting the key facts correct about each. The entire World Literature Assignment rubric (including areas C – Presentation and D – Language) addresses the above standards.*

*Where IB English A1 may fall short in terms of writing in light of these standards may be in Standard 13, concerning “multiple relevant sources, including graphics and quantitative information when appropriate”. This standard seems to imply the idea of research in that students should have multiple sources and the IB English A1 curriculum would only allow for this in one possible place – the second World Literature Assignment, option 2c. A student could complete some research as part of a formal essay for Option 2c but does not necessarily need to do so and there are several other options for the second World Literature Assignment. It is also possible that this standard could be addressed through IB English A1 class instruction as teachers often use different materials and media in order to develop skills in their students or in a year previous to IB English A1.*

### ***Standards for Speaking and Listening – Core Standards***

To be college and career ready, students must:

1. Present information and finding clearly and persuasively, selecting an appropriate format, organization, and register for the purpose and audience.
2. Respond constructively to clarify points and to build on or challenge ideas.
3. Listen to complex information and understand what was said, identifying main ideas and supporting details.
4. Follow the progression of the speaker’s message and evaluate the speaker’s credibility and use of evidence.

*IB English A1 meets the above draft standards through both classroom instruction and through the Oral Component Assessments. The Oral Component, which consist of an Individual Oral Presentation (IOP) and an Individual Oral Commentary (IOC) are the assessments by which a student in the IB English A1 Programme would demonstrate mastery of the above speaking skills. In terms of listening, these skills would be honed and mastered in the IB English A1 classroom as a part of the IOP is to for the student completing the presentation to have an audience of their peers. In addition, through classroom presentations on literature, author’s style, and other subjects in the English classroom, students would improve their listening skills and be able to practice responding critically to presentations, challenging points, or building on ideas presented by classmates.*

*During the Individual Oral Commentary, students are asked to respond to a piece of text independently. They have to develop an argument and select an appropriate format to present that commentary to their teacher who will be evaluating their oral discussion. In addition, students have*

*to respond to questioning from their teacher about their text and need to clearly identify main ideas and supporting details with very little preparation time. Students practice these tasks throughout IB English A1 instruction and polish their skills while in the classroom. The entire oral rubric (including Area D – Use of Language) addresses the draft standards.*

#### Summary:

In terms of the draft document created by the NGA and the CCSSO, IB English A1 should have no real issues fitting into the standards as proposed. In terms of the Reading and Informational Texts Standards, the only place where there is some concern is in the area of “data and graphics” because the IB English A1 Programme Guide does not specifically require students to work with these kinds of texts. It has been noted, however, that these skills are possibly being developed before students enter IB English A1 or as a result of state standards requirements. In addition, another requirement about credibility of sources also is not fully met as IB English A1 does not require all students to undertake research but allows it as an option with the World Literature Assignments. Again, schools may also be developing these skills in students prior to students entering IB English A1 or as a response to state standards or testing requirements. In terms of the Draft Standards for Writing, this research issue presents a similar problem but all other writing standards completely align with the activities a student would complete in IB English A1. The Standards for Speaking and Listening are also fully in line with IB English A1.

#### References:

*Language A1.* (1999). Geneva: International Baccalaureate Organization.

*Standards for reading, writing, and communication.* (n.d.). Retrieved July 29, 2009, from [http://www.edweek.org/media/draft\\_standards\\_for\\_reading\\_writing\\_communication\\_7-14-09.pdf](http://www.edweek.org/media/draft_standards_for_reading_writing_communication_7-14-09.pdf)