

## English Language Arts Pilot

We are pleased so many districts have elected to join the pilot. This memo provides a broad summary of how the pilot will be managed and basic logistics information. We look forward to sharing more information at the first set of grand division meetings, taking place this June. If you have questions, please email [tncore.questions@tn.gov](mailto:tncore.questions@tn.gov).

### **Summary:**

As Tennessee moves toward full implementation of Common Core State Standards, the 2012-2013 ELA pilot gives districts an opportunity to receive support from colleagues and gain experience with the instructional shifts in the standards. The pilot will help districts become prepared and organized for fuller, state-wide implementation in 2013-2014. The ELA Pilot will also give the Tennessee Department of Education an opportunity to learn from leading districts and use promising implementation practices to inform state training efforts.

The ELA pilot consists of four key elements:

- **4 Grand Division meetings** with peers, to be attended by a 2-5 person district-level ELA pilot team, to give and receive feedback on implementation efforts. (Additional, elective meetings on specific topics may be offered throughout the year.)
- **Administration of 4 writing assessments**, beyond the official state administration, *per* grade in the 3-12 band. These assessments will increase the frequency of writing to sources and give teachers information about student readiness.
- **Teacher completion of a set of online courses** with summation activities that will require teachers to demonstrate command of the key instructional shifts and implications. These courses will be available July 2.
- **Periodic feedback to the Department** through surveys and focus groups to inform efforts toward full implementation in 2013-2014.

There are some clear shifts we will need to make to our practice to be ready for the Common Core in ELA and PARCC:

- Significantly more close-reading, including text-dependent questioning and writing to sources
- New attention to text complexity and complex academic vocabulary
- Shifts in the balance of informational and fictional texts

There are also some clear challenges that the transition to Common Core gives us the opportunity to address:

- Thoughtful interventions for students behind grade level
- Curricular alignment of assessments, instructional practices, and trainings

However, unlike the math 3-8 Common Core implementation, in which the state is advancing specific focus standards and practices, the ELA pilot will be a journey of mutual discovery. We will put forth draft focus standards and priorities as a starting point, but the pilot gives us the opportunity to step back and revisit every aspect of our instructional practice (e.g. standards, assessments, instructional practices, instructional materials). We look forward to learning from leading districts what combination of training and ongoing support will advance student progress most substantially.

**A note on participation:** Districts may choose a select number of schools or grade levels to participate in the pilot; however, we encourage pilot districts to participate at the largest scale possible.

### **Logistics and Management Information:**

**Dates for kick-off meeting:** District-level ELA pilot teams should plan on attending one of the available dates for the first grand division meeting. We will be offering two options in each grand division. Districts should choose one date to attend. Please choose *one* person in your district to email [tncore.questions@tn.gov](mailto:tncore.questions@tn.gov) with your preferred date and a list of attendees (names and email addresses).

- June 21 or 22: Knoxville (East TN)
- June 26 or 27: Jackson (West TN)
- June 28 or 29: Nashville (Middle TN)

**Location:** We are waiting to determine the final number of district participants to secure space and will have this information to you more than a week in advance of the first meeting.

**Preparation Required:** There is both individual and group preparation expected for the June meeting. Preparation is as follows:

*Individuals:* Please complete the following reading and viewing assignments, which should take a total of about six hours:

- Read the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. The full document can be found here: <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>
- Read the introductory section (p. 1-11) and scan the grade-level sections of the PARCC Model Content Frameworks (MCF) for ELA/Literacy: <http://www.parcconline.org/parcc-content-frameworks>
- Watch the following videos from Engage NY, a Common Core website established by the New York State Education Department, featuring discussions with David Coleman, a lead author of the ELA Standards (the videos below total about 1 hour, 40 minutes):

- Common Core in ELA/Literacy: An overview:  
<http://engageny.org/resource/common-core-in-ela-literacy-an-overview/>
- The key instructional shifts:
  - 1: <http://engageny.org/resource/common-core-in-ela-literacy-shift-1-pk-5-balancing-informational-text-and-literature/>
  - 2: <http://engageny.org/resource/common-core-in-ela-literacy-shift-2-6-12-building-knowledge-in-the-disciplines/>
  - 3: <http://engageny.org/resource/common-core-in-ela-literacy-shift-3-staircase-of-complexity/>
  - 4: <http://engageny.org/resource/common-core-in-ela-literacy-shift-4-text-based-answers/>
  - 5: <http://engageny.org/resource/common-core-in-ela-literacy-shift-5-writing-from-sources/>
  - 6: <http://engageny.org/resource/common-core-in-ela-literacy-shift-6-academic-vocabulary/>
- A model unit on “The Gettysburg Address”:
  - Video: <http://engageny.org/resource/the-gettysburg-address-a-curricular-exemplar-in-literacy/>
  - Unit exemplar: <http://engageny.org/resource/common-core-exemplar-for-high-school-ela-lincolns-gettysburg-address/>
- Prepare responses to the following questions:
  - Of the Common Core Standards, which are the greatest departures from current Tennessee Diploma Project standards?
  - Are the course frameworks suggested in the MCF workable in your district? If not, how might you adapt them?
  - After watching the Engage NY videos, what remaining questions do you have about the key instructional shifts (note that New York breaks down the three major shifts listed on the first page of this document into six slightly more specific shifts)?

*Districts:* As a district team, please prepare responses to the following questions:

- As you look at the instructional shifts, what do you think needs to change about the **student** experience in your district? (It may be tempting to think about educator preparation but please hold yourself in this question to examining only the changes that you believe students need to experience.)
- As you look at any available data on **student** performance, where do you think students will be best prepared and where do you think students will struggle most?
- What habits or instructional practices in **educators** need to change to support these changes in student experience?
- What do you believe **educators** will be best prepared to take on and what do you believe will be most challenging for educators?

- (optional and not expected) If you already have any district plans for Common Core implementation in ELA, please bring them with you to the meeting.

**Meeting facilitation:** The June meetings will be facilitated by LEA representatives selected through a competitive process over the next few weeks. More information will come through TNCore Update emails.

**Meeting content:** At the meeting, we will discuss the pilot in more detail, with particular focus on the following:

- The major instructional shifts
- Focus standards and priorities
- Writing assessments

**District travel stipend:** More information will be forthcoming at the June meeting.