INTRODUCTION

The South Carolina Education Accountability Act of 1998 establishes an accountability system for public education that focuses on improving teaching and learning so that students are equipped with a strong foundation in the four primary academic disciplines and a strong belief in lifelong learning. Academic standards are used to focus schools and districts toward higher performance by aligning the state assessment to those standards. The implementation of quality standards in classrooms across South Carolina is dependent upon systematic review of adopted standards, focused teacher development, strong instructional practices, and a high level of student engagement. Pursuant to Section 59-18-350(A) of the Education Accountability Act, the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) and the State Board of Education (SBE) are responsible for reviewing South Carolina's standards and assessments to ensure that high expectations for teaching and learning are being maintained.

> *The State Board of Education, in consultation with the Education Oversight Committee, shall provide for a cyclical review by academic area of the state standards and assessments to ensure that the standards and assessments are maintaining high expectations for learning and teaching. At a minimum, each academic area should be reviewed and updated every seven years. After each academic area is reviewed, a report on the recommended revisions must be presented to the Education Oversight Committee and the State Board of Education for consideration. After approval by the Education Oversight Committee and the State Board of Education, the recommendations may be implemented. However, the previous content standards shall remain in effect until approval has been given by both entities. As a part of the review, a task force of parents, business and industry persons, community leaders, and educators, to include special education teachers, shall examine the standards and assessment system to determine rigor and relevancy.*

In October 2020, the EOC completed the cyclical review of the 2015 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts (ELA), which were adopted in March 2015. This document provides recommendations for modifications to these standards from the EOC. The recommendations were compiled under the advisement of two review teams: a national review team of educators who have worked with national or other state organizations and a state committee composed of parents, business/community representatives, English language arts educators, and teachers of English Learners and exceptional education students. The state team was composed of individuals from various geographical areas in South Carolina.

It is important to note that the state adopted 2015 South Carolina College and Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts represent the work of many educators, and that this review of the standards was undertaken to identify ways in which their work could be strengthened and supported. The EOC expresses its appreciation to those educators and commends their utilization of national source documents and their belief in the achievement of all students. The EOC intends to enhance the work of school level educators and, ultimately, to ensure that all students are provided the opportunity to experience the breadth and depth of the discipline.

I. CYCLICAL REVIEW PROCESS

The review of the 2015 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts began with a focus on the accomplishment of goals articulated in the Education Accountability Act (EAA) of 1998. The law, as amended in 2008, specifies: "The standards must be reflective of the highest level of academic skills with rigor necessary to improve the curriculum and instruction in South Carolina's schools so that students are encouraged to learn at unprecedented levels and must be reflective of the highest level of academic skills at each grade level." (Article 3, 59-18-300)

The Standard Operating Procedures for the Review of Standards (SOP) agreed upon by the State Department of Education (SDE) and the EOC during the summer 2003 were followed for this review. A timeline established during the spring of 2020 outlined the timeframe in which the required review teams were to review the standards adopted in 2015 by the end of the year 2020. The SOP also outlines the steps to be taken to revise the current standards should the completion of the reviews indicate that revision is needed.

The recommendations for revisions to the 2015 South Carolina College and Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts, as approved by the EOC, will be submitted to the South Carolina Department of Education (SDE) for consideration in any proposed revisions of the standards.

A. CRITERIA DESCRIPTIONS

The standards review process emphasized the application of the criteria addressing comprehensiveness/balance, rigor, measurability, manageability, and organization/ communication. SDE representatives, district and university curriculum leaders, and EOC staff collaborated to identify the standards review criteria in 2003. Decisions on the criteria to be used were based on a comprehensive review of professional literature, and the goals for the standards review as specified in the Education Accountability Act of 1998. The identified criteria were each applied through the two review panels: (1) leaders in the discipline and/or cognitive processes drawn from across the nation and (2) English language arts educators; special education and English language learners educators from South Carolina's education community; and parents; business representatives; and community leaders.

The criteria are:

CRITERION ONE: COMPREHENSIVENESS/BALANCE
The criterion category for Comprehensiveness/Balance is an evaluation of how helpful the 2015 South Carolina College and Career-Ready Standards for ELA are to educators in designing a coherent curriculum. The criterion is directed at finding evidence that the standards document clearly communicates what constitutes ELA content, that is, what all students should know and be able to do in ELA by the time they graduate. The criterion includes consideration of the following areas:

- The standards address essential content and skills of ELA;
- The standards are aligned across grades as appropriate for content and skills;
- The standards have an appropriate balance of the content and skills needed for mastery of each area in ELA; and
- The standards reflect diversity (especially for ethnicity and gender) as appropriate for the subject area.

CRITERION TWO: RIGOR

This criterion calls for standards that require students to use thinking and problem-solving skills that go beyond knowledge and comprehension. Standards meeting this criterion require students to perform at both national and international benchmark levels.

- Standards should focus on cognitive content and skills (not affect);
- Standards should be developmentally appropriate for the grade level;
- Standards should include a sufficient number of standards that require application of learning (application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation);
- Standards should be informed by the content and skills in national and international standards; and,
- Standards should be written at a level of specificity that would best inform instruction for each grade level.

CRITERION THREE: MEASURABILITY

Knowledge and skills presented in the standards are assessable for school, district and state accountability. The primary element of measurability is:

- The content and skills presented in the standards should be assessable (are observable and demonstrable).

CRITERION FOUR: MANAGEABILITY

This criterion applies to instructional feasibility, that is, whether the complete set of ELA standards at a particular grade level can reasonably be taught and learned in the class time allotted during one year. The primary element of manageability is:

- The number and scope of the standards for each grade level should be realistic for teaching, learning, and student mastery within the academic year.

CRITERION FIVE: ORGANIZATION/COMMUNICATION

The Organization/Communication criterion category stipulates that the expectations for students are to be clearly written and organized in a manner understandable to all audiences and by teachers, curriculum developers, and assessment writers. Organization includes the following components:

- The content and skills in the standards should be organized in a way that is easy for teachers to understand and follow;
- The format and wording should be consistent across grades;
- The expectations for student learning should be clearly and precisely stated for each grade; and,

- The standards should use the appropriate terminology of the field but be as jargon free as possible.

B. PANEL MEMBERSHIP

The EOC's cyclical review of the 2015 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts was conducted from May 2020 to October 2020. The national review was conducted from May to September 2020. The state review was conducted in September and October 2020.

The national review team members consisted of recognized leaders in education that have participated in the review/development/writing of national and state standards and/or development of cognitive processes. Materials shared as part of the national review included NCTE/IRA Standards for English Language Arts[1], A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives[2], Profile of the South Carolina Graduate[3], and the South Carolina Fordham Report[4] with the corresponding response from the South Carolina Department of Education[5]. Members of the team received the materials for the review in early May and continued their review process through September. After an independent review period, the members of the panel participated in a telephone conference call in August, which produced a set of findings listed later in this document. Members of the national review panel included:

- Dr. Lorin Anderson, Carolina Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of South Carolina
- Dr. Barbara Foorman, Francis Eppes Professor of Education, Florida State University
- Dr. Jaqueline Malloy, Associate Professor, Clemson University
- Dr. Timothy Shanahan, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Illinois
- Dr. Dywanna Smith, Assistant Professor Education, Claflin University

For the state panel review, the EOC contacted all school district superintendents and instructional leaders in the state as well as the members of S.C. Senate Education and House Education Committees. The EOC and SBE members were also invited to make for nominations for the state review panel. Approximately 115 names were provided to the EOC. The state review panel consisted of 24 individuals representing educators, teachers of English Language learners and exceptional education students, parents, and representatives of business/community. Also, in attendance, as observers, were representatives from the SDE Division of Standards and Learning. The state panel conducted its review virtually via Zoom.

The panel members worked over three days to compose individual responses to the standards review and then develop consensus as a group on a set of findings listed later in this document. This process was conducted by having individuals placed in one of three teams each reviewing

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[1] https://cdn.ncte.org/nctefiles/resources/books/sample/standardsdoc.pdf.

[2] *Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy ofEducational Objectives. Anderson, L.W., Krathwohl, D.R., et al. (2001).*

[3] *https://ed.sc.gov/about/profile-of-sc-graduate/*

[4] https://fordhaminstitute.org/sites/default/files/0822-state-state-standards-post-common-core.pdf

[5] A. Pressley (personal communication) August 3, 2020.

standards from either elementary, middle or high school. The panel used as reference materials A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives[6], Profile of the South Carolina Graduate[7], and the South Carolina Fordham Report[8] with the corresponding response from the South Carolina Department of Education[9]. The state panel reviews were conducted September 21, 28 and October 19, 2020 and were facilitated by Rainey Knight, EOC. The task force reached consensus on insights and specific recommendations about the 2015 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts.

Members of the task force included:

Addy Aranda, teacher, Fort Mill
Melody Bradley, principal, Blacksville
Alicia Williams, teacher, Charleston
Dr. Amy Condon, teacher, Pawleys Island
Kimberly Gibbs, community, Greenville
Carley Hansman, teacher, Chesnee
Amanda Hayes, spec. education, Dillon
Tom Henz, business, Hilton Head
Alejandra Hursey, ELL, Lake View
Annia Knight, community, Columbia
Nicole Kosinski, business, Sumter
Staci Miller, spec. education, Pamplico
Lessa Owens, business, Greenville
Janie Neeley, parent, Columbia
Cassandra Poole, spec. education,Darlington
Latrece Quattleman, teacher, Graniteville
Kimberly Robson, teacher, Easley
Yamekia Robinson, parent, Lake City
Kelly Scott, parent, Rock Hill
Angela Spearman, teacher, Easley
Sarah Tew, spec. education, Hartsvile
Elizabeth Thompson, teacher, Hartsville
Kristina Turner, teacher, Anderson
Dr. Connie Williams, higher education, Folly Beach

C. THE STANDARDS DOCUMENT

The 2015 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts is organized by grade levels for grades kindergarten through twelfth grade to include standards and indicators in five strands:

- Inquiry-based Literacy
- Communication
- Reading Literary Texts
- Reading Informational Texts

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[6] Ibid., 4.
[7] Ibid., 4.
[8] Ibid., 4.
[9] Ibid., 4.

- Writing

Each strand consists of standards, which contain the same language for kindergarten through high school. The standards represent the culminating outcomes that describe what students should know and be able to do when they leave our public school system; therefore, the language included in each standard is the same for kindergarten through English 4. The grade level or course specificity is provided by the indicators, which provide specific direction and outcomes for each grade level.

An example of a third, fourth and fifth grade level Reading Literary Text standard with supporting indicators contained in the table is shown below.

Meaning and Context
Standard 5: Determine meaning and develop logical interpretations by making predictions, inferring, drawing conclusions, analyzing, synthesizing, providing evidence, and investigating multiple interpretations.

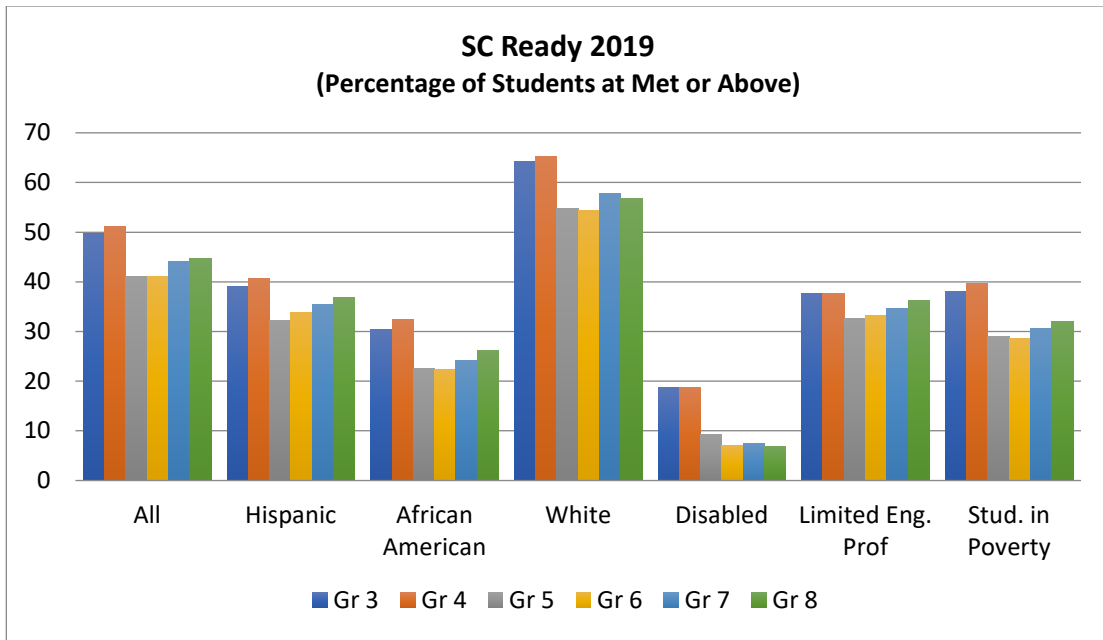| GRADE THREE	GRADE FOUR	GRADE FIVE
5.1 Ask and answer literal and inferential questions to determine meaning; refer explicitly to the text to support inferences and conclusions.	5.1 Ask and answer inferential questions to analyze meaning beyond the text; refer to details and examples within a text to support inferences and conclusions.	5.1 Quote accurately to analyze the meaning of and beyond the text to support inferences and conclusions.

The complete set of 2015 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts can be found at the link below.

https://ed.sc.gov/scdoe/assets/file/programs-services/59/documents/ELA2015SCCCRStandards.pdf

II: Student Performance in ELA

The 2015 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards for ELA were adapted using national frameworks for ELA and followed a similar process to what is outlined in the SOP. Since the standards provide the foundation for the assessment of student learning which occurs following the teaching of the standards a thorough review should include an evaluation of student performance. Unfortunately, too few students in South Carolina have reached the grade level expectations in ELA. The following charts document the percentage of students scoring Met or Above on the SC Ready assessment for grades 3-8 and those scoring a "C" or better on the End of Course test in English 1 for all students and by subgroups.
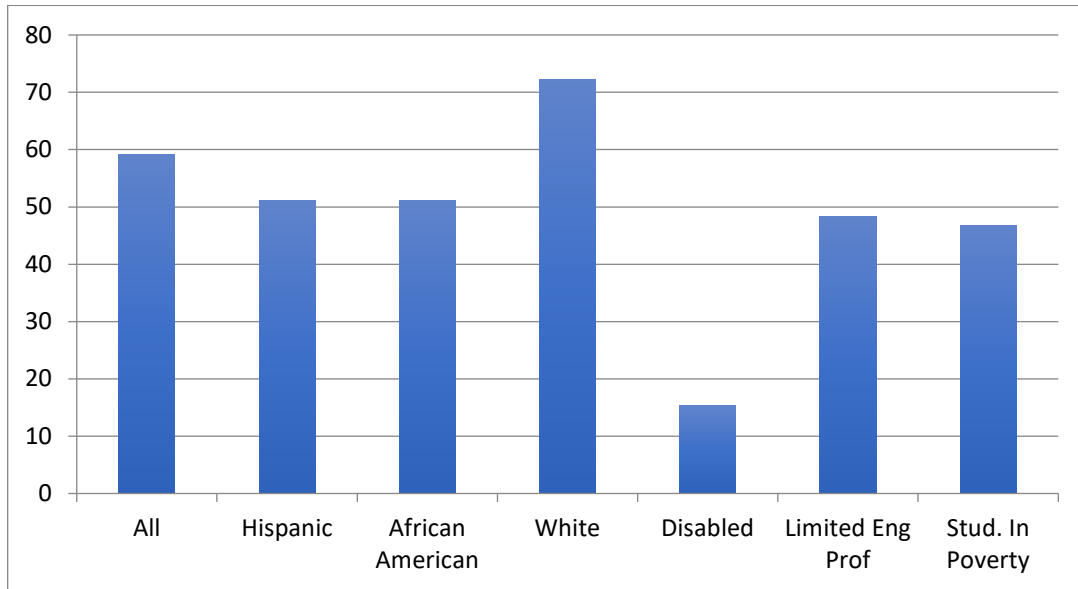
Chart 1

Source: South Carolina Department of Education, https://ed.sc.gov/data/test-scores/state-assessments/sc-ready/

Chart 2

End of Course English I
(Percentage of Students with a grade of C or Better)

Source: South Carolina Department of Education,https://ed.sc.gov/data/test-scores/state-assessments/end-of-course-examination-program-eocep/2019/

Note: A": The student **exceeds the expectations** of the course content standards
"B" and "C": The student **meets the expectations** of the course content standards
"D": The student **minimally meets the expectations** of the course content standards
"F": The student **does not meet the expectations** of the course content standards
Performance Level Descriptors for Algebra I and English I adopted following the Revised SC Uniform Grading Scale (2016)

Of particular concern is the percentage of students in the Does Not Meet category, the lowest level on SC Ready. In all grade levels, the percentages have increased compared to the first year of administration of SC Ready in 2016 indicating more students are scoring at the lowest level of the state assessment in ELA. For example, for grade 3, the percentage of students in the Does Not Meet category was 22.2 as compared to the percentage in 2019 of 25.5. Similar increases are found in all grade levels. See the table below.

Table 1
Percentage of Students Scoring Does Not Meet on ELA SC Ready

Percentage of Students Scoring Does Not Meet, ELA SC Ready (2016-2019)				
	2016	2017	2018	2019
3rd grade	22.2	26.1	23.3	25.5
4th grade	24.2	29.5	28.2	27.8
5th grade	23.9	28.0	27.5	28.2
6th grade	20.4	23.7	25.5	26.1
7th grade	23.2	28.4	28.0	27.0
8th grade	22.4	28.0	29.1	27.2

Source: South Carolina Department of Education, https://ed.sc.gov/data/test-scores/state-assessments/sc-ready/

The lack of improvement is especially troublesome given the investment the State has made in measures to address student performance in Reading and ELA. In 2014, the General Assembly enacted Act 284 South Carolina Read to Succeed. Read to Succeed is meant to serve as support for the teaching of reading for teachers and students in all grades, but especially in kindergarten through grade 3. Read to Succeed was created to address literacy performance in South Carolina and put in place a comprehensive system of support to ensure SC students graduate on time with literacy skills they need to be successful in college, careers and citizenship. Act 284 provides for a strong assessment system and intervention system for students kindergarten through twelfth grade with a goal of all students becoming proficient readers by the end of third grade.

Many components of Read to Succeed have been implemented. An illustrative list is as follows:

- a focus on early childhood with an expansion of 4K classes for at-risk students;
- webinars for teachers to improve skill sets in the teaching of reading;
- face to face professional development to improve skill sets in the teaching of reading;
- state level literacy coaches to support and provide technical assistance to districts/schools;
- reading coaches for schools to provide support and assistance to teachers in schools;
- creation of early learning and literacy at department of education;
- summer reading camps to support students at risk for reading on grade level;
- Read to Succeed courses for pre-service teachers to develop skills sets in the teaching of reading;
- Read to Succeed teacher literacy endorsement for teachers to better prepare themselves to teach reading;
- district and school reading plans to focus on strategic plans for the teaching of reading;
- interventions for struggling readers;
- regular assessments to identify struggling readers;
- third grade retention;
- high quality reading instruction informed by data; and

- support for parents to assist their children in learning to read

III. ISSUE WITH THE STANDARDS PRIOR TO THE REVIEW

An evaluation of our current standards was detailed in a report by the Fordham Institute in August 2018, which evaluated the ELA standards of 14 states of which Fordham had determined had made the most substantive changes to the Common Core Standards. The report evaluated the South Carolina 2015 College and Career Ready Standards and gave them an overall rating of *Weak,* citing a number of specific recommendations that should be considered. The national and state panels also expressed many of the concerns expressed by the Fordham Institute. The specific recommendations by Fordham and the South Carolina Department of Education responses are listed in Table 4.

Table 2

Fordham Report Recommendations[10] August, 2018	SC Department of Education Responses[11] August, 2019
1.Identify and revise standards that remain unchanged for 2 or more years to more clearly articulate how learning progresses from one grade level to the next	1. K-Eng 4 standards have been identified to inform upcoming revisions for ELA standards
2. Establish text complexity requirements that specify particular text complexity levels that students should be able to read at the various grade levels	2. A text complexity process is developed with feedback from the field. The process was used to create text sets found in upcoming new K-Eng 4 units. The process will be posted with the units.
3. Revise inquiry-based literacy standards into requirements that can be taught and measured. Eliminate standards that are only process-oriented.	3. An inquiry framework is posted under ELA resources
4. Develop discipline-specific literacy standards for grades 6-12 to communicate expectations for use outside of the English classroom	4. A Literacy in Content Area resource created and posted under ELA resources
5. Designate specific literary and informational texts at all grade levels with which students should be familiar (or at minimum, provide exemplar texts for teacher consideration).	5. Text sets are created and embedded in the upcoming K-English 2 units
6. Complete the supporting documents that were promised in 2015. DOK, disciplinary literacy, foundational skills, as well as a glossary.	6. A DOK, foundational skills, and glossary documents created and posted on web under ELA resources

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[10] Ibid., 4.
[11] Ibild.4

IV: FINDINGS

The discussion below summarizes reviews of national and state panels.

A: COMMENDATIONS

1. Overall, the reviewers noted standards address essential content and skills of English language arts.

2. There is an attempt to focus on diversity using terms such as multiple perspectives and alternative views.

3. The majority of standards require students to demonstrate learning at higher levels of Revised Bloom's taxonomy.

4. The standards appear to be of consistent style and formatting.

B: FINDINGS OF THE NATIONAL REVIEW TEAM

1. The Principles of Reading standards and indicators are weak. The standards are too general and do not provide enough specificity for teachers. The K-2 reading standards are not rigorous enough to meet national and international standards. In addition, the K-2 reading standards are not precise enough to provide expectations for student learning. An appendix should be provided with specific expectations for student learning to include outlining expectations for phonics and word analysis skills that need to be mastered at each grade level.

2. The standards and indicators, by grade level, do not define the expectations for text complexity and thus, many of the standards are difficult to measure without specification for text demands. Include grade specific benchmarks for determining text complexity, such as Lexile range, as well as exemplar texts in an appendix that are consistent with the demand and expectations for a particular grade level.

3. There is a great deal of repetition among standards and indicators with meaningless distinctions from grade level to grade level. What should students learn? Are there no changes in learning expectations? Learning progressions would be helpful to teachers and a vertical alignment is needed to provide teachers a clear understanding of their role in building on prior student learning and preparing students for future learning.

4. Many standards and indicators include terms that are difficult to measure such as "explore topics of interest" and "broaden thinking".

5. Many of the standards are activities for students and process or curricular directives for teachers such as daily explorations of texts, engage in opportunities to play, and engage in whole or small group instruction. These standards are not written as to describe the outcomes of students learning.

6. The number of standards is too many for teachers to teach in a school year. Consider a reorganization of the standards such as:
   - change the name of one strand: Inquiry to Research.
   - add another strand called Fundamentals of Reading to be comprised of first five standards of Reading for Information and Reading Literary Texts, combine standard 10 in Reading Literary with standard 11 in Reading Information, and combine standard 13 in Reading Information with standard 12 in Reading Literary Texts. The Fundamentals of Reading strand would be made up of seven (7) standards. This will minimize the repetition that currently exists.
   - then combine remaining standards from Reading Information and Reading Literary into new strand Reading Applications into six (6) standards. For these remaining standards, reduce the overlap and combine.

   This reorganization would leave five (5) standards strands: Research, Communication, Writing, Fundamentals of Readings, and Reading Applications with a reduction in the number of standards from 41 to 29.

7. Many standards and indicators are written with multiple verbs. It is difficult to separate the activities from the objectives for student learning. Standards and indicators become lengthy and should be evaluated for clarity and readability. Often it is difficult to tell what the objective is. For example, "Retell the central idea and identify key details to summarize a text heard, read or viewed." Objective is to "summarize a text, heard, read or viewed, by retelling the central idea and identifying key details." Often it is difficult to determine what the objective is. For example, "Ask and answer questions about known and unknown words." or "Reading independently for a sustained period of time."

8. The element of diversity attempts to be part of the standards, however, there needs to be more specific references to diversity of perspectives around gender, race and ethnicity.

C. FINDINGS FORM THE STATE LEVEL REVIEW TEAM

1. Revisions to the ELA standards should include a review of the repetitiveness of the standards.

2. The standards and indicators should be clear as to the action word being targeted. Teachers should have no doubt as to what should be taught or what students should be able to do as a result.

3. The standards and indicators need to be refined so that they are manageable and measurable in a year long course.

4. Revisions to the ELA standards should include combining or clearly linking the standards and support documents so that teachers have one document for planning and assessments.

5. Any revision process should include a focus on creating robust support documents to include the following recommendations:
   a) Provide examples or guidance in regard to how a particular standard or indicator might be assessed at grade level.
   b) Provide guidance on text complexity and text selection to ensure rigor at each grade level such as selected readings (i.e., suggested readings, not a mandated list). Include grade specific benchmarks for determining text complexity, such as Lexile range, as well as exemplary texts.
   c) Explicitly define terms used in the standards. Many of the terms are vague or used interchangeably or imprecisely in the field. Creating a set of shared South Carolina definitions would ensure that educators are talking about the same concept such as disciplinary tool and concepts, use of compare vs. contrast, and use of analyze and evaluate.
   d) Outline expectations for phonics and word analysis skills that need to be mastered at each grade level.
   e) Create units and examples of how to teach the standards for middle and high school teachers, similar to those that have been created for earlier grades.
   f) Consider providing guidance for differentiation to English language learners, honors and special education students.
   g) Provide professional development for teachers to include the use of videos explaining how to navigate the standards and support documents.

V. EOC RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations that are listed below are based on the detailed review of the 2015 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts and are supported by the evidence and detailed comments that appear in the national and state panel findings included in this report.

1. The standards and indicators, by grade level, do not define the expectations for text complexity and thus, many of the standards are difficult to measure without specification for text demands. Include grade specific benchmarks for determining text complexity, such as Lexile range, as well as exemplar texts in an appendix that are consistent with the demand and expectations for a particular grade level.

2. The number of standards is too many for teachers to teach in a school year. Consider a reorganization of the standards such as:
   - change the name of one strand: Inquiry to Research.
   - add another strand called Fundamentals of Reading to be comprised of first five standards of Reading for Information and Reading Literary Texts, combine standard 10 in Reading Literary with standard 11 in Reading Information, and combine standard 13 in Reading Information with standard 12 in Reading Literary Texts. The Fundamentals of Reading strand would be made up of 7 standards. This will minimize the repetition that currently exists.
   - then combine remaining standards from Reading Information and Reading Literary into new strand Reading Applications into six (6) standards. For these remaining standards, reduce the overlap and combine.

   This reorganization would leave five (5) standards strands: Research, Communication, Writing, Fundamentals of Readings, and Reading Applications with a reduction in the number of standards from 41 to 29.

3. The Principles of Reading standards are weak. The standards are too general and do not provide enough specificity for teachers. The K-2 reading standards are not rigorous enough to meet national and international standards. In addition, the K-2 reading standards are not precise enough to provide expectations for student learning. An appendix should be provided with specific expectations for student learning to include outlining expectations for phonics and word analysis skills that need to be mastered at each grade level.

4. There is a great deal of repetition among standards with meaningless distinctions from grade level to grade level. What should students learn? Are there no changes in learning expectations? Learning progressions would be helpful to teachers and a vertical alignment is needed to provide teachers a clear understanding of their role in building on prior student learning and preparing students for future learning.

5. Revisions should consider providing guidance for differentiation to English language learners, honors and special education students.

6. Units and examples of how to teach the standards should be created for middle and high school teachers, similar to those that have been created for earlier grade levels.

7. Ensure the standards and support documents reflect and provide multiple resources   from varied perspectives, as well as instructional strategies to address the learning needs of diverse students.

8. Many standards and indicators are written with multiple verbs. It is difficult to separate the activities from the objectives for student learning. Standards and indicators become lengthy and should be more consider for clarity and readability. Often it is difficult to tell what the objective is. For example, "Retell the central idea and identify key details to summarize a text heard, read or viewed." Objective is to "summarize a text, heard, read or viewed, by retelling the central idea and identifying key details."

9. A copyeditor should be used to ensure the standards document is clear, concise and consistent for teacher-readability as well for the expectations for student learning.