



# APPENDIX C

In-Depth Description of the Development Process for the 2016 AEL Content Standards



## Process Framework

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) contracted with Texas State University (TxState) to update the 2008 Texas Adult Education Content Standards and Benchmarks (TAECSB) and align them with the Texas College & Career Readiness Standards (TCCRS), the Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency (TxCHSE), and the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA). The contract period was from November 2015 to December 2016. The final version of the *Texas Adult Education & Literacy Content Standards* (Content Standards) was released in December 2016.

The development process mirrored the methodology used by the federal work group for the development of the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. While the methodology for standards development was the same as the federal process, the informing resources were different, prioritizing resources specific to Texas.

To support the project staff in anchoring their decisions in evidence, TWC identified specific guiding documents, including, but not limited to:

- the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards (TCCRS),
- the Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency (TxCHSE),
- the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA),
- the National Reporting Systems (NRS) guideline descriptors,
- recommendations from the content standards expert contracted by the Texas Education Agency (TEA),
- the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRS),
- the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) performance standards,
- work readiness skills or criteria recognized by the Board or private sector employers,
- Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) standards for Adult Education programs, and
- the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) standards.

A second priority was to ensure that a broad base of Adult Education practitioners reviewed the draft Content Standards. The project team identified 15 people they believed would have interest and expertise in college and career readiness in English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and English as a Second Language (ESL) to serve on the Standards Working Group (SWG). The membership of the SWG included representatives from community colleges, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, independent school districts, community-based organizations, professional development providers, and industries.

## Process Framework (cont.)

Project staff also received feedback from 13 subject matter experts (SMEs), most of whom were also active adult education classroom teachers. This team became the Informal Team of Practitioners (ITP). Similar to the composition of the SWG, the ITP included representatives from adult education, developmental education, college faculty, and career/technical training.

A third priority was to introduce a series of checks and balances by establishing an ongoing feedback process and conducting a series of online validation surveys. Project staff members facilitated the feedback and validation process, which included multiple rounds of review and revision by both the SWG and the ITP.

## Timeline of Deliberations

The first full meeting in March 2016 began with an orientation to the role and responsibilities of the SWG, as well as to understand the State's standards initiative. Discussion topics included the State's perspective on the standards, establishing a common set of definitions and a common language, establishing norms for working together, determining frequency and methods of communication, and reviewing the change process as it relates to the standards development. SWG members used a Nominal Group Technique (Delbecq & VandeVen, 1971, and Vedros, 1979) to identify areas they considered to be either relevant and important to adult education or not essential to adult education. SWG members were asked to make professional judgments regarding the knowledge and skills they believed were necessary to include in any standards for Adult Education. The SWG agreed upon three primary areas that the standards should address: English Language Arts and Literacy (thus merging reading and writing), Mathematics, and English as a Second Language. Notes from this meeting were summarized and sent to the members of the SWG who were asked to confirm their agreement with the accuracy of the identified key content and skills.

During March and April 2016, an environmental scan of existing materials and publications authored by stakeholder groups allowed project staff to gather information without requiring a commitment of time from the SWG and the ITP. Project staff and consulting SMEs reviewed research on the following: (a) standards-based education, (b) the content areas, and (c) existing federal and state-level Adult Education content standards. The review of the research on standards-based education helped to provide an understanding of the potential effect that content standards will have on other systems in adult education such as curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, and local program accountability. The review of content area standards assisted in identifying and narrowing the key components and skills for each of the content areas – English Language

## Timeline of Deliberations (cont.)

Arts, Mathematics, and English as a Second Language. The review of existing federal and state-level adult education content standards assisted in determining how best to use existing standards to inform the Texas standards. The reference section of this book includes a list of the documents used during each step of the environmental scan. Following the environmental scan, to assist SWG and ITP members, and to expedite the development process, content experts and project staff made initial judgments about the process and content that should guide the development of content standards.

## Process Framework (cont.)

In May 2016, the SWG members began reviewing the Content Standards draft and providing written feedback via participation in a digital validation survey. For each Standard and its supporting Benchmarks, the work group members were asked to apply four criteria in order to make a professional judgment: (a) Content Match, (b) Accuracy, (c) Equity, and (d) Relevance. The SWG members were asked to apply these criteria and to determine if each standard and benchmark was “valid as is” or “not valid.” If the reviewer felt that a given standard or benchmark was “not valid,” they were asked to suggest revisions to the statement that could be addressed in subsequent drafts of the Content Standards. The SWG member could also provide general comments and feedback not specific to any individual standard or benchmark.

Drafts of the three identified Content Areas – English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and English as a Second Language (ESL) – were produced by content experts and then submitted to the SWG and the ITP for two rounds of review and validation to develop three progressive drafts of the standards and benchmarks for each of the three Content Areas. Following Round 1 and Round 2 reviews, consulting SMEs reviewed the revisions to ensure that the draft Content Standards continued to reflect current research and practice. The third draft for each Content Area was then reviewed by a national expert on standards development who suggested editorial revisions to strengthen the language and structure of Content Standards. This expert did not make revisions that would change the intent of the SWG. The feedback provided by the SWG was essential to the development of each of the three progressive drafts of the Content Standards. The national standards expert and project staff reviewed and addressed all relevant changes in the documents after each round of SWG and IPT review.

Additional feedback was also sought from the ITP, who were asked to review the SWG’s decisions and apply the perspective of an Adult Education classroom teacher to the draft Content Standards.

## Process Framework (cont.)

June 2016 was dedicated to reviewing and responding to the feedback provided by the SWG and the ITP via the validation process. When conflicting suggestions were made by different SWG or ITP members for adding, revising, or deleting specific content, project staff solicited further review and feedback from content expert consultants whose expertise informed final decisions. Feedback from these content expert consultants was gathered using a Delphi Method (Delbecq, VandeVen, & Gustafson, 1975). The Content Standards included in this document were identified and refined into their current version over a period of three months of review and deliberations.

The draft Content Standards underwent a 52-day period of public comment from July 15, 2016 through September 5, 2016. Project staff scheduled 5 face-to-face public comment sessions over a 2-week period in early August in the following cities: San Marcos, TX, at the Literacy Texas Conference, San Antonio, TX, Midland, TX, Fort Worth, TX, and Houston, TX. Feedback received during the public comment period was used to further refine the draft Content Standards.

A final meeting of the SWG was held October 7, 2016 in San Antonio, TX. The purpose of this meeting was to provide working group members with an additional opportunity to closely examine and provide feedback on the draft content standards and benchmarks. The SWG members were directed to prepare for the meeting and were mailed bound copies of the following documents: 1) The draft of the Texas Adult Education Content Standards and Benchmarks, 2) Example Performance Indicators document, and 3) Guiding Prompts for Content Standards Review, with Tips for submitting effective feedback. SWG members were directed to utilize weeks prior to the final meeting to thoroughly review the draft contents and benchmarks for their area of expertise using the guiding prompts and to bring responses in writing to the meeting on October 7th.

### The guiding prompts were as follows:

- 1. Logical Development of ELA/Mathematics/ESL concepts:**

If necessary, note any inconsistencies in the logical development of ELA, mathematics, and ESL concepts.

- 2. Vocabulary and Terminology:**

If necessary, note any incorrect, inconsistent, or confusing vocabulary and terminology contained in the document.

- 3. Rigor:**

If the level of rigor for exit standards is inappropriate for the ELA, mathematics, or ESL standards, indicate which standard and how it might be revised to an appropriate level and include a rationale for the revision.

## Process Framework (cont.)

### 4. Clarity of Benchmarks:

If necessary, offer recommendations for making the language in the benchmarks clearer or more specific.

### 5. Reflection of Current Research:

If necessary, provide specific recommendations for what should be added or deleted, including citations for the research on which the recommendations are based.

### 6. Alignment to the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards:

Provide recommendation for revisions that will help align the standards more appropriately to the TCCRS.

SWG members were invited to add suggestions for ways in which the ELA/Mathematics/ESL Standards and Benchmarks could be improved.

A series of conference calls were held the week prior to the October 2016 meeting with the SWG content area sub groups (ELA, Math, and ESL) to provide an advance opportunity for the members to discuss their reviews of the draft Content Standards. The calls were facilitated by staff from the Texas Workforce Commission and participants were directed to bring specific comments and recommendations in writing to the October 7th meeting.

## Content Validation Process

Each Content Area was put through a structured content validation process in which two rounds of review were conducted with the SWG and the ITP. The content validation review provided a structured methodology by which the SWG and ITP members provided feedback on the content standards and benchmarks. The information included below provides a summary overview of the directions provided to the group members and an example of a validation form. A final review of the Content Standards was conducted by consulting subject matter experts from which the version was constructed. The validation surveys were conducted using the online tool, Survey Monkey.

Content validation methods focus on content relevance and representation (Stelly & Goldstein, 2007, p. 256). Content relevance is the extent to which the knowledge and skills are relevant to the target domain. Representativeness refers to the extent to which the knowledge and skills are proportional to the facets of the domain. Content relevance and representativeness are commonly assessed using subject matter expert ratings.

## Summary Overview of Draft Standards Review, Feedback and Validation Criteria

The following criteria were considered while reviewing the Draft Standards.

### 1. Content Match

- Is the content addressed by the Standards and the supporting Benchmarks appropriate for inclusion in the Content Standards?
- Is the content within each Standard and the supporting Benchmarks appropriate for adult students to work toward as an exit level performance level?
- Do the Standards and the supporting Benchmarks reflect appropriate exit level expectations for adult learners?
- Are the Benchmarks appropriate to show an adult students' ability to meet the Standard?
- Is the content, knowledge, or skill addressed by the Standard and the supporting Benchmarks relevant to adult learners?

### 2. Accuracy

The content contained in the Standards must be accurate. This applies also to terminology and grammar. Each Standard must present clearly defined content, knowledge, or skill expectations. Benchmarks should be concise and a true representation of the types of things that students should be able to do when they have reached the exit level standard. The physical representation of the Standards and any additional graphics should be accurate and easy to understand.

- Does the Standard clearly state the required content knowledge or skill/task?
- Are clear expectations stated within the Standard and the supporting Benchmarks?
- Is the terminology used accurate and appropriate?
- Are the Standards and supporting Benchmarks grammatically correct?
- Are the Standards and supporting Benchmarks clear in meaning?
- Is the physical presentation clear, accurate, and easy to understand?

## Summary Overview of Draft Standards Review, Feedback and Validation Criteria (cont.)

### 3. Equity

The language and content included in the Standards and the supporting Benchmarks must be free of potential stereotypes and should not disadvantage, offend, or be advantageous to any individual based upon race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, nationality, or disability. The Standards and the supporting Benchmarks should be fair and equitable to all learners.

- **Content** – Are the Standards and the supporting Benchmarks free of content that could disadvantage or be advantageous to an individual based upon race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, nationality, or disability? Economic, cultural, or geographic background?
- **Language** – Are the Standards and the supporting Benchmarks free of language that disadvantages or is advantageous to an individual based upon race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, nationality, or disability? Economic, cultural, or geographic background?
- **Offense** – Are the Standards and the supporting Benchmarks presented in such a way as to not offend an individual based upon race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, nationality, or disability? Economic, cultural, or geographic background?
- **Stereotypes** – Are the Standards and the supporting Benchmarks void of language or content that may represent a stereotypical view of an individual or group based upon race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, nationality, or disability? Economic, cultural, or geographic background?
- **Fairness** – Are the Standards and supporting Benchmarks fair to all individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, nationality, or disability? Economic, cultural, or geographic background?

### 4. Relevance

- Do the Standards and the supporting Benchmarks require tasks and state expectations that are appropriate exit level expectations for adult learners?
- Do the Standards and the supporting Benchmarks measure content, knowledge, and skills that an adult learner who is exiting adult education services should know or be able to do?
- Is the content, knowledge, and skills contained in the Standards and the supporting Benchmarks relevant to adult learners?