



HISTORY

The Texas Adult Education and Literacy Content Standards v. 4



History of the Texas Adult Education and Literacy Content Standards

The 2016 Content Standards were an ambitious step forward to increase the rigor and relevance of adult education through alignment to the following assessments and standards²:

- Texas College & Career Readiness Standards (TCCRS)
- End-of-Course Exams for the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)
- Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)
- Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency (TxCHSE)
- Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA).

Expectations for increased performance have also been set by the release of the new National Reporting System (NRS) Performance Level Descriptors (Appendix A) which are now reflected in revised tests approved for use in adult education such as the Test of Adult Basic Education 11/12 (TABE 11/12).

The trend toward higher expectations for adult learners can be broadly described:

- **In Mathematics**, increased academic rigor reflects content typically taught in both beginning and more advanced algebra and geometry courses, as well as in data analysis and statistics classes.
- **In English Language Arts (ELA)**, the standards demand robust analytic and reasoning skills and strong oral and written communication skills.
- **In English as a Second Language (ESL)**, the standards have been expanded from a focus on basic personal communication skills to one that includes the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing competencies required for participation in academic environments.

Because the standards are set at exit or mastery level, they demonstrate expectations of mastery of content, skills, and performance. Standards and the supporting benchmarks offer educators and students a transparent view, across levels, of what is expected to exit or master education and training competencies.

² More detail on the 2016 standards development process can be found in Appendix D – In-Depth Description of the Development Process for the 2016 Adult Education and Literacy Content Standards.

History of the Texas Adult Education and Literacy Content Standards (cont.)

Once standards are established, educators can then develop a curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments to build or document mastery of the skills and knowledge represented in the standards. Because standards represent the exit-level knowledge and skills, they must be in place before the field constructs what will be taught at each level (the curriculum), how the content is taught (instruction), and how mastery of the content and skills will be measured (assessment).

Standards 2.0 - Aligning to Industry Literacy Requirements

Standards 2.0 includes crosswalks that link the 2016 standards to detailed work activities and skills as they are applied in work in four industry clusters: advanced manufacturing, construction and extraction, healthcare sciences, and transportation, distribution, and logistics.

Why these industries?

Each of the four industry clusters are important to the Texas economy. They were selected for alignment to the standards based on the following factors:

- **Documented Growth:** The industry is documented to grow in the next decade.
- **Statewide Representation:** The sector is well represented across most regions of Texas.
- **Career Pathways Articulation:** The sector has well-defined pathways from entry-level jobs that are accessible to many adult education students and have clear pathways into middle- and higher-skilled occupations.

The methodology used to develop these crosswalks can be applied to other sectors.³

³ The Standards Alignment to Industry Clusters project final report provides more detail on how the methodology to crosswalk these four industries could be used for other industries.

Standards 2.0 - Aligning to Industry Literacy Requirements (cont.)

What are the limitations of this update of the standards?

While *Standards 2.0* describes the discrete skills valued by employers in four driver industries of the Texas economy, the industry-related examples that are aligned with the academic standards are not exhaustive. *Standards 2.0* does not provide an in-depth review of credentials required and valued in these sectors either.

Working with individual employers at the local or regional level, education and training staff, and workforce development specialists can use this information to elicit more specific, and local, examples of workplace applications of knowledge and skills. O*NET, the online occupational information network database sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, can also be used to research additional jobs.⁴

The Standards Alignment to Industry Clusters Project and the Development of *Standards 2.0*

The Standards Alignment to Industry Clusters (SAIC) project was created to review the 2016 Content Standards and align them to industry literacy requirements. Under the guidance of the Texas Workforce Commission, four lead organizations worked in partnership with adult educators and employers from the four target industries to develop the content for *Standards 2.0*. The forty-one subject matter experts have extensive backgrounds in training, education, and the world of work. Over a year's time (June 2017 – June 2018), the experts convened in person and virtually to align the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for in-demand jobs with career potential with the 2016 AEL Content Standards.⁵

⁴ O*NET provided the basis for much of the work-related content that is included in *Standards 2.0*. There is more information about O*NET, including how it can be used as a career navigation resource, in the *Standards 2.0* project final report.

⁵ More detail on the Standards Alignment to Industry Clusters development process can be found in Appendix E-Description of the Standards Alignment to Industry Clusters Project (2017-2018).

Standards 2.0 - Aligning to Industry Literacy Requirements (cont.)

- **Employers:** The twenty-eight industry representatives ranged from former oil and gas executives, construction trades entrepreneurs, and healthcare human resources directors, to manufacturing training managers and distribution center managers. They came from diverse geographic regions of the state. Many had experience partnering with educators to help prepare students for work in their sectors. Several had on-site learning programs at their companies such as English as a Second Language and classes for technical skills.
- **Adult Educators:** The fourteen subject matter experts representing adult education and literacy programs from around the state have years of experience in the development, delivery, and management of instruction. The team included bilingual instructors and program managers as well as those with expertise in the development and delivery of workplace literacy.
- **Lead Partners:** Four primary partners guided the development of *Standards 2.0*. The partners included experts with decades of experience in adult literacy and workforce research and development, national and state standards, public-private workforce education partnerships, and industry training and credentialing.
 - Literacy Texas - the project contractor and statewide literacy coalition, connecting and equipping literacy providers through resources, training, networking, and advocacy.
 - Educational Testing Service (ETS) - the world's largest educational assessment and research organization.
 - National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) - dedicated to standardized training and credentialing for the industry to develop a workforce that is safe and productive.
 - Haigler Enterprises International, Inc. - a consulting firm with extensive experience in adult literacy, workforce analysis, public-private partnerships, and academic and skills standards.

The experts reviewed each standard and subarea standard in the three content areas of the 2016 Content Standards and determined the application to entry-level and mid-level jobs in the four targeted industry clusters using O*NET elements for these jobs that were most closely related to the standards and benchmarks. They then combined this research with their own local wisdom to develop job-specific examples that demonstrate how the standards are applied at work.

How to Read the Standards

Content Area

Content Areas are the big ideas of a discipline that reverberate as themes throughout the curriculum. (Designated by Roman numerals—e.g., III)

Subarea

Within each Content Area are Subareas that further delineate the Content Area. (Designated by the Roman numeral of the Content Area with an Arabic numeral—e.g., III.3)

Content Standard/Subarea Standard

Content Standards and Subarea Standards describe what learners should know and be able to do within a specific content area. The ESL Content Area contains four overarching standards followed by several subarea standards. (Both are designated by bold capital letters—e.g., III.3.A)

Benchmark

Benchmarks describe the set of skills that learners need to develop and achieve to meet the more broadly stated standards. (Designated by Arabic numerals—e.g., III.3.A.1.6)

O*NET Element Related to Standard and Benchmark

O*NET Elements list knowledge, skills, abilities, and work styles from the O*NET database. (Designated by bulleted statements)

O*NET Detailed Work Activity and Industry Examples

Detailed Work Activities describe literacy requirements for specific jobs where relevant. Industry Examples list the industry cluster, job positions, and key jobs where given standards are applicable. (Designated by boxed text.)

How to Read the Standards (cont.)

Example:

I. English Language Arts Subarea I.2 – Reading

D. Comprehension of a Variety of Informational Texts. Describe, analyze, and evaluate diverse informational texts, and identify supporting evidence from the text to support understanding.

1. Identify and distinguish differences in structure and purpose for a range on informational texts, regardless of print or digital presentation mode (e.g., textbooks, biographical sketches, letters, diaries, directions, procedures, magazines, essays, primary source historical documents, editorials, news stories, periodicals, catalogs, manuals, procedures and other job-related materials, schedules, speeches, memoranda, public documents, and maps).

O*NET Element related to Standard and Benchmark:

- **Reading Comprehension.** Understand written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents.
- **Attention to Detail.** Be careful about detail and thorough in completing work tasks.

O*NET Detailed Work Activity	Industry Examples
Interpret blueprints, specifications, or diagrams to inform development of operation activities.	Industry: Construction and Extraction Position: First-line Supervisor Example: Reads specifications, such as blueprints, to determine construction requirements or to plan procedures.

Previous Versions

The Texas Adult Education and Literacy Content Standards v. 3 inserted two new academic standards: the *Parent/Family Content Standards* and the *Citizen/Community Member Content Standards*. The academic standards and the critical alignment to detailed work activities and specific work examples of in-demand industries in Texas remains unchanged. Please see the section titled *History of the Texas Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Content Standards* for a detailed description of the evolution and structure of the Texas AEL Content Standards.

The Equipped for the Future Content Standards Project and the Addition of the Texas Family and Civics Standards

The Texas Parent/Family Content Standards and the Citizen/Community Member Content Standards have been adapted from the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), *Equipped for the Future Content Standards Project: What Adults Need to Know and be Able to Do in the 21st Century*. The NIFL project presented the *Equipped for the Future (EFF) Content Standards* that were developed over a 6-year period by hundreds of adult education practitioners and experts nationwide to create a working consensus on what adults need to know and be able to do in the 21st century (Stein, S. 2000). Two of the original EFF role maps identified the knowledge and skills adults utilize to function as responsive parents/family members and actively participate as responsible citizens and community members. In 2020, the Texas Workforce Commission approved the addition of the family and civics standards as important additions to the current Texas AEL Content Standards.