



Texas College Readiness Standards Observations and Recommendations Prepared by E³ Alliance

General Comments on Texas College Readiness Standards

In 2006, the 79th Texas Legislature passed House Bill 1 which became “Advancement of College Readiness in Curriculum” in the Texas Education Code. Under this section, the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board were required to create Vertical Teams dedicated to aligning the state education curriculum across K-12 and Higher Education in order to ensure students graduating from Texas high schools were college ready. These Vertical Teams convened around the core subjects of English Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, Social Science and Cross Disciplinary Skills. These teams have met throughout 2007 to create the College Readiness Standards (CRS). The Draft Standards prepared by the Education Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) were made public on October 25, 2007.

The E³ Alliance commends an extraordinary effort and a resulting comprehensive and thoughtful set of college readiness standards. The effort to include both knowledge-based and cross-disciplinary skills provides a deeper understanding of what it takes to be successful in higher education today.

Further, these College Readiness Standards were developed for a specific purpose: *to identify the standards needed to succeed in college-entry coursework*. This level of specificity allows for the standards to draw parameters around criteria for higher education success from the K-12 perspective. Toward that end, the level of specificity in the identified standards makes the cross-walk with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) a simpler process.

E³ Alliance recommends some further refinement in the following Core Competencies and an additional section to Cross-Disciplinary Competencies. These are intended to be general recommendations; we leave the review of specific indicators and examples to subject matter experts.

English/Language Arts Standards

The *Writing* and *Reading* Sections do not contain reference to the ability ***to read technical manuals/material or to compose technical writing***. Both skill sets are not only necessary for many post secondary subjects, but are fundamental forms of literacy for many technical and manual forms of labor. According to Lexile measures, technical manuals for entry-level workers often require greater reading comprehension skills than literature and college-level text books.

E³ Alliance recommends that this measure be added to both the Writing and Reading components with the following language:

- A. Mastering appropriate language relevant to purpose of a given document or task. Understanding and paraphrasing technical texts.
- B. Composing a written document providing instructions and using language appropriate to the instructed task.

Under the standard of “Speaking,” E³ Alliance recommends renaming this section Effective Communication. Under Effective Communication, we recommend that a third substandard labeled “Understand the importance of non-verbal communication” be included. Components used to measure effective non-verbal communication are:

- A. Use non-verbal communication to increase effective speaking in a variety of settings.
 - a. Demonstrate how use of tone changes content of message.
 - b. Use facial and body expression to communicate importance of message.
- B. Understand the importance of nonverbal communication in developing personal relationships
 - a. Analyze examples of nonverbal communication and their effect on messaging
 - b. Analyze how nonverbal communication effects group participation and performance.

At high level review, the E³ Alliance finds the standards developed for both the **Math and Science** portions of the College Readiness Standards to be relatively comprehensive and currently has no recommended modifications to these sections. We leave specific review to subject matter experts.

Social Science Standards

E³ Alliance recommends that in addition to the close attention to comparison and contrast of various forms of government and ideologies that specific standards be developed to assess students’ knowledge in American forms of government and foundational principles of American democracy. We leave specific revisions to subject matter experts.

For the standard “Change & continuity of political ideologies, constitutions, and political behavior” there is no reference for clearly defining ideology as a concept. E³ Alliance recommends that this standard begin with a new component as follows:

- 1. Understand and apply the concept of ideology in politics and culture.
 - a. Define ideology in a political and cultural context.
 - b. Compare and contrast major ideologies across Eastern and Western societies.

For the component, “Understanding the importance of civic responsibility” there is no criterion that references actual service. E³ Alliance recommends adding a fourth criterion as follows:

- 6. Understanding the importance of civic responsibility.

- a. Participated in some form of service learning such as volunteerism, public forum participation, community service, faith-based community activities, voting or moot-voting.

E³ Alliance recommends removing Effective Communication from Social Science and incorporating into the Foundational Skill Criteria.

Cross-Discipline Standards

E³ Alliance strongly endorses the inclusion of these cross discipline standards that reach beyond knowledge-based skills and serve as indicators of a student's social, behavioral, financial and intellectual preparedness for the college experience. Toward this effort, E³ Alliance would like to make additional recommendations that rely heavily on the research of Dr. Clair Ellen Weinstein of the University of Texas, College of Education, Education Psychology Department. Specifically, Dr. Weinstein has developed a rubric for strategic learning that includes measures in "Skill, Will, and Self-Regulation."¹ She then places these measures in the larger context of the learning environment.

Toward this focus on a "Student as a Strategic Learner," E³ Alliance recommends the following additions to the Cross Discipline Standards.

III) Self-Awareness as Learner

A. Awareness of Learning Style

- a. Student understands what learning strategies are most effective personally. (hands-on, engaged, applied, lecture, multimedia, etc.)
- b. Student is aware of both strengths and weakness of these learning strategies and prepares to compensate for them.

b. Self-Motivation and Intellectual Curiosity

- a. Student has an understanding of why he or she is planning to attend intended form of higher education.
- b. Student has developed academic goals and has a sense of what "achievement" means personally.
- c. Student sets high expectations in accordance with academic and career interests.

c. Managing Academic Time and Work

- a. Understands and prioritizes class assignments and workloads in balance with other personal/social needs
- b. Feels comfortable communicating with professor about questions or concerns about assignments
- c. Feels comfortable communicating with teacher to clarify instructions for assignments

IV) Higher Education Planning and Awareness

A) Set Goals commensurate with personal interests and career aspirations.

- a. Understands why and how pursuit of higher education fits into personal goals and aspirations.
- b. Has some general ideas about career interests and opportunities based on personal goals, interests and aspirations.
- c. Developed academic goals that match personal goals and career aspirations.

- B) Financial planning and preparation
 - a. Student has completed FAFSA if appropriate
 - b. Student has financing plan for higher education commensurate with degree aspirations
- C) Evaluate Progress toward Goals
 - a. Monitor progress toward higher education goals.
 - b. Respond to situations that may hinder or expedite progress toward goals.

In addition, E³ Alliance recommends that “Effective Communication:” be removed from Social Sciences and be added into the Foundation Skills Criteria as component “F”. Within “Effective Communication” E³ Alliance recommends adding a component on “Technology Integration” follows:

Under the standard “Effective Communication” in Social Science, E³ Alliance recommends adding a component entitled “Technology Integration”. In this new component the criteria for success would include:

- D. Technology Integration
 - 1. Develop documents using common software applications.
 - a. Create and conduct oral presentations using multimedia strategies.
 - b. Develop and conduct team projects using common software applications.
 - 2. Discern quality of information on the Internet and research source material.
 - a. Understand difference between sponsored links and non-sponsored links
 - b. Identify on-line academic scholarship
 - c. Research source material on-line and using electronic databases.

Recommendations Represent Input from the E³ Alliance

The E³ Alliance is a regional collaborative to create a research-based “blueprint” to align our education systems to better fulfill the potential of every citizen and in turn, increase economic outcomes and build a stronger economic future for our region. The E³ Alliance is the P-16 Council for the Central Texas region, incorporating the 5-county Austin/Round Rock MSA as well as surrounding districts that are part of the Austin Community College District. The seven traditional institutions of higher education in the Central Texas region, Region XIII Education Service Center, as well as target districts Austin, Bastrop, Del Valle, Eanes, Manor, Pflugerville, Round Rock, and San Marcos Consolidated are active members of the E³ Alliance. These entities, as well as are business partners including Austin Area Research Organization (AARO), *WorkSource*, the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, and the Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, have been made aware of, and in some cases participated in, the creation and review of this document. However, this input is provided on behalf of the E³ Alliance and should not be deemed as representative of all of the desires of any individual institution.

¹ Weinstein, C.E. (2004) *The Model for Strategic Learning*. Dr. Weinstein has also created assessments at both the high school and college level called the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) that assesses a student’s strength as a strategic learner.