



Immediate Release

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IRA Calls for Three-Part Initiative to Raise Literacy Achievement Through Common Core State Standards

NEWARK, DELAWARE: “The release of the Common Core State Standards in Language Arts for K–12 is the first critical step in a three-part initiative to support the development of students who are college and career ready in literacy,” according to Kathryn Au, president of the International Reading Association. “The good news is that the latest draft is a strong step toward building rigorous goals for student performance, but it is only the first step in a three-part program.”

IRA has called for a complete package in our nation’s efforts to raise students’ literacy achievement through standards. The components needed are (1) rigorous goals for students’ performance, (2) assessments to monitor students’ progress toward these goals, and (3) professional development that enables teachers to provide students with the needed instruction.

Positive features of the new standards include:

- Portrait of students who meet the college and career readiness standards
- Consistent structure of the standards across the grades from K through 12
- Recognition of technology, reading online, and multimedia presentations
- Integration of literacy in history/social studies and science
- Focus on higher level thinking with text while still attending to lower level skills

“While a good start has been made, we know from over two decades of work with standards that this first component is the easiest of the three to put in place,” Au says. “The heavy lifting comes when we address the other two components: assessment and professional development.”

IRA supports the extensive involvement of teachers in the development of both assessment and professional development and offers the following recommendations:

Assessment

- Attend to multiple formative assessments that provide feedback to students and teachers for instructional purposes, and not solely to summative assessments for purposes of accountability.
- Shift the focus to incentives for improvement.

Professional development

- Build capacity for literacy leadership at the building level to promote and sustain standards-based change.
- Frame sessions on the core standards as an opportunity for teachers to update their knowledge and collaborate on ways to improve student achievement, not as a top-down mandate.
- Build capacity of teacher education programs to support standards-based change.

“It’s the expertise of the classroom teacher that will allow standards to elevate the achievement of each and every student in the classroom,” concludes Au. “Let’s keep in mind that standards don’t teach—teachers teach.”

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The International Reading Association is a community of 70,000 reading professionals in 100 countries, dedicated to promoting higher achievement levels in literacy, reading, and communication by continually advancing the quality of instruction worldwide. A network of 1,200 councils forms the working foundation for the Association.