

Oklahoma  
English Language Arts  
Implementation Collaborative

# IMPLEMENTATION COLLABORATIVE REPORT

FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS  
3.3.17



OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF  
**EDUCATION**  
— CHAMPION EXCELLENCE —

# IMPLEMENTATION COLLABORATIVE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

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A special thank you to Dr. Bryan Duke (UCO), Anne Beck (OU), and Lara Searcy (NSU)!

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## Collaborators

The following was made possible through the collaborative efforts of Oklahoma teachers implementing the Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts. Participants have the option to remain anonymous during this process.

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**John** Korzelius, Northeastern State University

**Juli** Gatlin, Moore

**Kara** Sholes, Barnsdall

**Katherine** Dower, Norman

**Kelsey** Schellhorn, Northeastern State University

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**Lisa** Lamont, Muskogee

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**Melissa** McGaughy, Yarbrough

**Paige** Holden, Norman

**Patricia** Johnson, Guthrie

**Sandra** Hurst, Duncan

**Shane** Keim, Northeastern State University

**Shanna** Mellott, Cache

**Shawn** Sparks, Canadian

**Stacy** Miller, Hilldale

**Summer** Boismier, Piedmont

**Tammy** Edwards, Fort Towson

## Background

The Implementation Collaborative includes Oklahoma teachers implementing the Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts in Pre-kindergarten through grade 12. Using policy documents, such as state content standards, allow educators opportunities to interact with the public about our work and it provides a means for educators to position themselves as professionals (Fredericksen, 2011). Therefore, the purpose of the Collaborative is to provide the Oklahoma State Department of Education’s Curriculum and Instruction Literacy Team with ongoing feedback, from educators who are “on the ground,” regarding their implementation work during the Fall 2016 semester. This feedback includes strengths and troubleshooting solutions to guide professional development and policy work for 2017.

Seventy-five (75) Oklahoma teachers initially enrolled in the study. Forty-six (46) of those initially enrolled participated in the research at some point. Eighteen (18) Oklahoma Teachers fully completed all the feedback requests throughout the Fall study and are identified as “Lead Investigators.” Five (5) pre-service teachers comprised a special task force to elicit feedback from the planning perspective. Collaborative teachers were offered and earned professional development credit for their participation.

Note that standards alone do not inherently improve teaching and learning; rather, improvement happens when there is a collective responsibility to continually troubleshoot and share instructional experiences because collaboration strengthens the professional education culture (Fullan, 2016). Collaborative members approached the OAS for ELA with a

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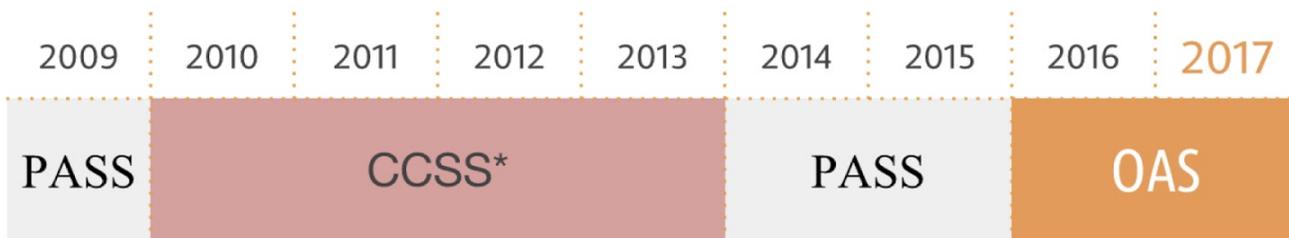
critical lens or “healthy skepticism” (Schmoker, 2011) to address the strengths, the hurdles to troubleshoot and offer solutions to develop for the second phase of implementation. The Collaborative represent various grade-levels and districts across the state. They accessed the same tools and resources available for all Oklahoma teachers to implement the Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts (see an interactive list at [bit.ly/elaoktoolkit](http://bit.ly/elaoktoolkit)).

## The Oklahoma Academic Standards

In 2010, Oklahoma adopted the *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS) for English Language Arts with the intention to fulfill implementation and alignment by the 2014-2015 school year. House Bill 3399 passed into law in June 2014 and repealed CCSS. HB3399 required teachers to re-align all curriculum and assessments to the *Priority Academic Student Skills* (PASS) standards for English Language Arts for the 2015-16 school year. During this time, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) began the process of developing new academic standards as outlined by HB3399.

Between May 2015 and January 2016, the Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts were developed following the guidelines set by HB3399 and in collaboration with OSDE staff and a diverse Standards Writing Team (consisting of Oklahoma classroom teachers, higher education leaders, and curriculum specialists). With the support of the Oklahoma State Board of Education, the Standards Writing Team developed and published multiple drafts, requested feedback from the public, responded to feedback during the standards development process. The OAS for ELA passed legislation and, due to federal regulations, were scheduled to be fully implemented for the 2016-2017 school year.

## Timeline of Standards Adoption, Repeal, Development, and Implementation



*\*CCSS was not to be fully implemented until 2014. The years leading up to 2014 were considered a transition period designated for districts to gradually implement and align the standards into curriculum and instruction.*

To support the successful implementation of the OAS for ELA, resources, and guidance tools were developed by the OSDE Office of Curriculum and Instruction during the 2016 Spring and Summer. These deliverables were co-developed with Oklahoma teachers as members of the 2016 ELA Task Force. Among the guidance tools, this task force determined the need to (1) evaluate the viability of the standards and to (2) provided explicit implementation plans for districts to adopt and adapt as necessary (Park and Takahashi, 2013).

The ELA Task Force accomplished this by developing flexible Pathways and Tasks as a guidance tool for implementation. This report includes an overview of the Pathways and Tasks in the following section. The full framework is available at [ELAOKTeachers.com/elaokcollaborative](http://ELAOKTeachers.com/elaokcollaborative).

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## Pathways

The Implementation Matrix is organized by Pathways and Tasks. **Pathways** represent a storyline with the teacher as the protagonist driving the plot. **Tasks** are reflective checkpoints occurring over the course of the storyline. Teachers participating in the Implementation Collaborative can choose the Pathway that best balances the needs of their district and the objectives outlined in the Implementation Matrix. Likewise, the reflections associated with each Task are intended to promote increased understanding of the OAS for ELA and professional growth. The Pathways and Tasks are presented in the overview below and further outlined in the [Pathways x Tasks](#) section.

### Pathways Overview

**Pathway A** is the most ambitious choice. It is designed to support professional growth by starting in familiar territory, progressing outside the comfort zone, and return to equilibrium with a new skill - designing curriculum aligned to the OAS for ELA.

**Pathway B** is the most structured. It is designed to incorporate the ELA Curriculum Frameworks as the primary tool to support successfully implementing the OAS for ELA into instruction and curriculum.

**Pathway C** adheres to a sandbox structure and is recommended for teachers with experience designing lesson plans and curriculum. It is designed to encourage applying the OAS to ELA in experimental lessons.

**Pathway D** allows for teachers to utilize vetted lessons revised to be aligned with the OAS for ELA. Vetted lessons include, but are not limited to, original work or lessons from a pre-determined curriculum.

**Pathway E** is designed to function with the implementation plans already set by a district or school.

### Tasks Overview

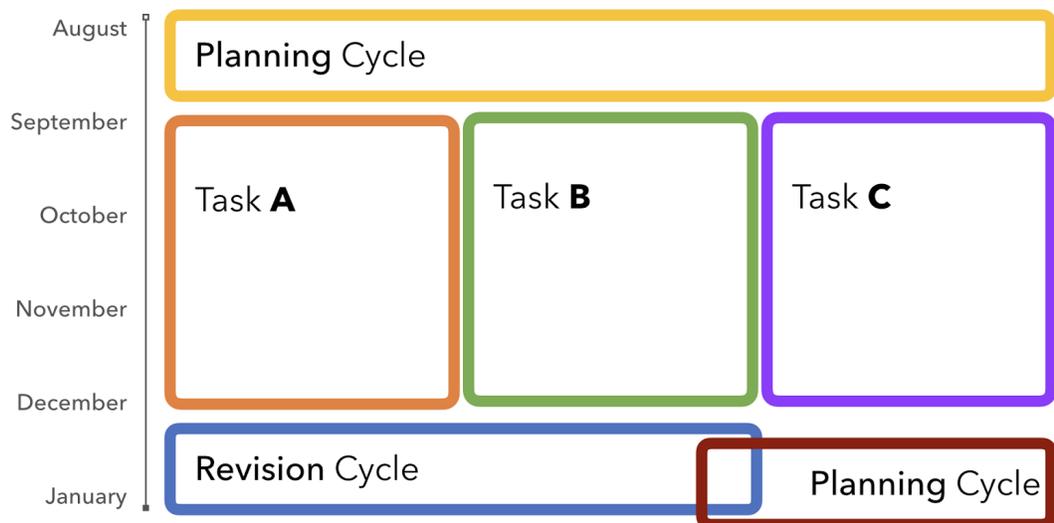
Each pathway contains a trilogy of tailored tasks. Tasks are reflection points over the course of the study to be fulfilled after teaching an OAS-aligned lesson. Tasks can be accomplished in a variety of timeframes; an ideal timeframe is represented in the right column. Details and suggested lesson types are outlined in [Pathways x Tasks](#) on the following page.

**Task A** September

**Task B** October

**Task C** November

### 2016 Fall Semester Schedule for Feedback



(Park and Takahashi, 2013)

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## Lead Collaborators

The following members of the Collaborative participated in all three tasks of the program. Tasks took place over the course of the Fall 2016 semester (September through November). Fall 2016 was the first semester for full implementation of the Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts in the state.

**C. Jennifer** Smart, Moore

**Cortney** Green, Pauls Valley

**Debby** Yarbrough, Woodward

**Debra** Thoreson, Dewey

**Jami** Huck, Elgin

**Jennifer** Seitsinger, Moore

**Juli** Gatlin, Moore

**Lara** Searcy, Northeastern State University

**Kara** Sholes, Barnsdall

**Katherine** Dower, Norman

**Mechelle** Jordan, Quinton

**Melinda** “Mindy” Foutch, Morris

**Melissa** McGaughy, Yarbrough

**Paige** Holden, Norman

**Shanna** Mellot, Cache

**Shawn** Sparks, Canadian

**Stacy** Miller, Hilldale

**Summer** Boismier, Piedmont

## Themes

Themes are the common trends found during the first cycle coding of the feedback provided. The following codes were the most reoccurring in the responses by the Implementation Collaborative participants.

#Depth

#Consistency

#Focus

#Fluidity

#Understanding

#Time

#Creativity

#Autonomy

#Frustration

#Resources

#Design

#Organization

#Confidence

#Clarity

#Excitement

#Guidance

The themes from first cycle coding were categorized into the following overarching trends addressed in the OAS implementation for phase two: **Depth, Consistency, Time, and Design.**

## Implications

The following is intended to provide a comprehensive summary of the feedback based on themes found and elaborate on the noted strengths, troubleshooting, and insights provided by the Implementation Collaborative participants over the course of the Fall 2016 semester (September, October, and November). The unedited feedback follows this section.

### Depth

Depth was a recurring comment and an unintended outcome of the feedback provided. Collaborative participants note the increased understanding of the standards resulted in excitement and frustration. The excitement stemmed from (1) exploring new possibilities in the delivery of instruction, (2) using the standards to justify decisions regarding instructional practices and time, and (3) promoted a sense of increased creativity. When teachers use policy documents, such as content standards, to inform their designing of instruction, their assessment of learning, and their conversing with others, they are finding ways to empower their practice which can indeed be exciting (Fredericksen, 2011).

However, frustration was noted as a result when Collaborative members compared implementation efforts with colleagues not enrolled in the study. Collaborative members indicate how efforts to implement the standards with fidelity was a time-consuming task with positive outcomes. This effort presented an opportunity to reflect on current district curriculum and instruction choices then align to or create new classroom tasks using the integrated reading and

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writing approach promoted by OAS for ELA. Comparatively, non-participants are “making no effort to integrate the new standards” and continue to use curriculum and practices from the previous year(s) with little deviation. Those without the support of the Collaborative may be more resistant to change if they are not active participants in the changes (Evans, 2014).

For example, Collaborative teachers share concerns about genuinely addressing the depth of the OAS for ELA if department teams are not supported or have not received sufficient support to align standards and curriculum. Teachers need background on how the standards were developed to understand the shifts in their recursive nature. The standards were intentionally designed to discourage a “checklist” approach to literacy instruction. Based on the feedback, Collaborative teachers understand this design decision and adhere to the recursive approach of teaching and learning literacy skills (Gallagher, 2015). However, the “checklist” approach is still prevalent because many non-Collaborative teachers might claim a standard objective is “completed” whereas Collaborative members better understand how to use recursive teaching practices. This design is an intentional choice by the ELA Standards Writing Team to support (1) increasing time spent on the depth of instruction, (2) dissuade from misusing the standards as a checklist for teaching, instead (3) promote recursive teaching practices, and (4) recognize teachers as experts.

## Consistency

In the previous four years, teachers have been asked to implement CCSS<sup>1</sup>, revert to the previous state standards - PASS<sup>2</sup> - as a result of House Bill 3399's repeal of CCSS, and, now, fully implement the OAS for ELA without the four-year implementation period afforded to CCSS in 2010. If “change naturally provokes ambivalence and resistance,” (Evans, 2014) hesitancy to implement the standards with fidelity is expected considering a number of inconsistencies endured by teachers since 2010. The implications of this feedback address the possibility of gaps due to the inconsistent levels of standards implementation, ranging between nonexistent, to shallow, to entirely overhauling curriculum.

Promoting consistent standards implementation means it is necessary to understand the successes and struggles encountered during times of change, which is the feedback the Collaborative provided. Paying attention to teachers' perceptions can uncover practices that will lead to greater effort and persistence which is important if there is to be sustainability, effectiveness, and consistency (Endacott et al., 2016). The profound success of standards will come from teachers applying them consistently and reasonably well-- which the Collaborative ensured through its active participation (Schmoker, 2011).

In summary, we recognize two significant takeaways:

- (1) Collaborative participants understood the importance of advocating for consistency.** Standards impact assessment and accountability programs. The semi-yearly fluctuation and mystery surrounding which standards to align to disrupted consistency in assessment and accountability as well as classroom curriculum and instruction. It should be noted, however, that House Bill 3218's ([bit.ly/hb3218memo](http://bit.ly/hb3218memo)) impact on state assessment and accountability programs helped to provide educators with room to focus on standards and instruction as opposed to simplistic bottom lines of success - test scores (Evans, 2014).
- (2) All teachers had access to a community of learners and tools.** Online communities, digital professional development tools, and training was available to all Oklahoma teachers including the Implementation Collaborative. Tools were promoted and tested during the annual EngageOK tour and promoted through various newsletters published by the Oklahoma State Department of Education. A comprehensive listing of resources can be accessed online at [bit.ly/elaoktoolkit](http://bit.ly/elaoktoolkit).

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<sup>1</sup> the Common Core State Standards

<sup>2</sup> the Priority Academic Student Skills standards

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## Time

The role of time is the most common reoccurring trend across all feedback. Time is relevant to teachers' and students' success on two levels:

- (1) Implementation requires dedicated planning time.** Teachers in the Collaborative noted the need for time to examine, question, research, and create when working with the OAS for ELA. Then teachers need to review current curriculum and instructional practices to ensure alignment or make adjustments to the standards. Even when completed units were provided (see [ELA Curriculum Frameworks](#)), teachers needed time to review and adjust "completed" lessons for their students' needs.
- (2) Learning and teaching literacy skills requires more class time.** Feedback from the Collaborative addresses the realization, strengths, and sometimes frustrations resulting from the intentional format of the OAS for ELA. The ELA Writing Team's design of the standards focuses on promoting integrated and authentic literacy instruction over standardized assessments results. This approach requires more time for reading, writing, and assessing at the classroom level. It would be challenging to continue maintaining separate courses for reading and writing skills.

The recursive process promoted in the OAS for ELA also requires students and teachers to learn, use, and re-use literacy skills with increasingly complex texts - this is also addressed in feedback as standards look and feel similar from grade-to-grade unless district curriculum includes various text complexities.

## Design

The number of objectives per grade-level in OAS for ELA is more condensed than previous standards with the intention to promote deeper instruction rather than creating measurements based on multiple choice assessment. This decision is encouraged throughout the work of Mike Schmoker, attesting that "[standards] documents are too large and contain far more... than can be conscientiously taught." (Schmoker, 2011) By design, the ELA Standards Writing Team wanted teachers to be able to recall all eight overarching standards without referring to a document. If teachers recall standards by memory, it helps to facilitate curriculum reviews and development, classroom observations, and, perhaps most important, the actual adoption and implementation by teachers (Evans, 1996).

Note that Collaborative members' confidence in their ability to use the standards grew as the semester progressed. The design and layout played direct a role in this success. Feedback noted the specificity and clarity contained in standards language. The purposefully "interconnected" or "closely entwined" objectives support comments regarding the "fluidity" to align or develop curriculum. The Collaborative participants also highlight autonomy and creativity that result from this strength, fluidity. The standard objectives function in tandem so multiple objectives could align to a task or lesson. This quality is a strength, overall, but we also note how it presents a learning curve and how we will troubleshoot it to increase understanding.

From a creative development standpoint, this bundling aspect of the standards provides teachers with at least two approaches to writing aligned curriculum and classroom assessments.

- (1) Teachers can focus on a set of objectives and create a common task.** It is suggested that teacher teams identify essential bundles (Schmoker, 2011) of 2-3 objectives to create tasks and classroom assessments. Instructional teams can analyze the resulting student samples and use it to inform the development of appropriate follow-up learning tasks.

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**(2) Teachers can review current curriculum and align objectives to it.** Occasional curriculum overhauls are very beneficial to foster innovation (Evans, 2014). However, our teachers have undergone multiple, drastic revisions with little time for reflection and refinement. Feedback from OSDE professional development supports this notion; teachers will express enthusiasm regarding the standards and still wonder, “will these (standards) still be around in a year?” The inconsistency with policy surrounding standards provokes ambivalence (Evans, 2014). It is no wonder why teachers are resistant to thoroughly overhauling their curriculum and practices... again.

Overwhelming a lesson plan by associating too many objectives to a single task is a critical area to troubleshoot. Although it is necessary to align curriculum to the approved state standards, over aligning too many standard objectives can result in unfocused “surface-level change” (Evan, 1996). Feedback notes teachers never feel an objective is fully “completed” as a result of over-aligning too many to a single task or lesson. This alignment approach is not the intention of the Standards Writing Team and is pivotal to troubleshoot for teachers to assess and align to the standard objectives effectively.

## #NSUENGED PRESERVICE TEACHER TASK FORCE

Initial feedback regarding OAS included concerns for preservice and new teachers who may not have experience implementing and aligning curriculum to academic standards. A special task force of preservice teachers from Northeastern State University participated in the Implementation Collaborative to determine the accessibility and troubleshoot the OAS from a new teacher's perspective.

A special thank you to **Lara Searcy**, M. Ed.- NBCT, and NSU English Education Specialist. Participants have the option to remain anonymous during this process. This Task Force reviewed and responded to the same inquiries as other Collaborative teachers. Below is the summation of their responses.

**Derek Auffenorde**

**John Korzelius**

**Jamie Wood**

**Kelsey Schellhorn**

**Shane Keim**

### Themes

Themes are the common trends found when conducting a first cycle coding of the feedback provided. The following were most reoccurring in the responses by the Implementation Collaborative participants.

#Fluidity

#Practice

#Clarity

#Focus

#Understanding

#Autonomy

#Time

#Resources

### Implications

The following is intended to provide a comprehensive summary of the feedback based on themes found during first cycle coding and then elaborate on the noted Strengths, Troubleshooting, and Insights provided.

### Comprehension

The OAS's intentional transition from bullet point lists of literary terms to a focus on using literacy skills to critically read and write raised concerns among teachers with experience implementing and aligning curriculum to standards. Specifically, they were concerned preservice and new teachers would not be able to comprehend the standards without the guidance provided from explicit specificity given by the lists of literary terms available in the PASS standards.

Based on the feedback provided by NSU's Preservice Teacher Task Force, it is evident our future teachers are capable of understanding the demands of the OAS for ELA and effectively aligning curriculum and their instructional practices. However, the NSU curriculum for preservice teachers provides time, resources, background knowledge, and support to apply standards to instructional practices. We should also recognize that the preservice learning environment is different than in-service teachers' workplace. There are pros and cons to each learning atmosphere. While the preservice teachers may be able to apply understanding with assumably low-stakes, studies suggest the best learning happens at school-sites (Cole, 2004).

Regardless, the NSU preservice teachers comment that there is greater clarity in the OAS standards compared to PASS and goes on to acknowledge the increased flexibility and ease of application. They state that the clarity of the OAS impacted the time spent planning and aligning lessons. Overall, the preservice teachers share some of the learning insights of other teachers in the Collaborative. Multiple comments recognize the need for time to determine which standards would most effectively bundle together and how many should be bundled or aligned in a single lesson. Multiple self-reflective comments revolved around the need to focus on a specific number of objectives.

One preservice teacher noted it would be helpful to have "examples of assignments that meet parts or all" components of a standard. Currently, there are examples available at [ELAOKTeachers.com/frameworks](http://ELAOKTeachers.com/frameworks). More examples and resources are currently under development, and new resources will be piloted as a result of this study.

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## Next Steps

Hesitancy to implement the OAS for ELA is understandable and the OSDE C&I Literacy Team took proactive steps to (1) shape the meaning of the standards and (2) provide avenues of readiness for the standards to be embraced as a significant innovation rather than another temporary change (Evans, 2014). A catalog of standards implementation resources is accessible at the ELAOK Toolkit page - [bit.ly/elaoktoolkit](http://bit.ly/elaoktoolkit).

Teachers and administrators need time and guidance regarding the planning of instruction based on integrated and recursive literacy processes. For example, watch the suggested approach for planning 45 minutes of focused instruction at [bit.ly/literacyin45minutes](http://bit.ly/literacyin45minutes).

Guidance should be provided for administrators to understand the integrated and recursive literacy processes and how to address the time demands associated with both effectively. This guidance must also help to provide district leaders with evidence of student learning that aligns with the school's vision of shared literacy expectations and the district's academic priorities. An increased understanding will result in more effective support for the English Language Arts teachers implementing literacy programs. Additionally, this will help administrators and support staff to conduct observations and provide feedback that is authentic to the demands of literacy instruction rather than accountability practices based on standardized summative assessment results.

Instructional design guidance and training for bundling essential standards are currently under development. Recent beta tests with supporting districts (Mustang and McAlester) have provided positive feedback for fine-tuning a framework for developing inFormative Assessment Bundles. Access the latest draft and examples at [bit.ly/elaokbundles](http://bit.ly/elaokbundles). This framework addresses alignment misconceptions and guides assessing student proficiency. The resulting evidence taken from student samples can be analyzed by teacher teams to guide curriculum and instruction planning.

Live and virtual training will be available and published via the PD On Your Plan program. It is also a recommendation that the 2017 ELA Task Force focus efforts to develop completed models of inFormative Assessment Bundles for each grade level. Teacher teams can use completed models or serve as exemplars for districts to develop new inFormative Assessment Bundles.

Once completed, this presents an opportunity for the OSDE to lead a statewide study, similar to the efforts of the Implementation Collaborative, consisting of teachers adopting and implementing common inFormative Assessment Bundles during the Fall 2017 semester. We should not assume aligned lessons are valid until evidence has been gathered to reflect students' understandings. The intent of this study would focus on collecting and sharing students' sample work. Guidance will also be available on using student sample work to promote learning. Utilizing student samples as an instructional tool increases students understanding of the expectations set by the standards. We all gain increased, authentic understanding by exploring a range of student sample work (Berger, 2013). A similar resource was available in the previously repealed standards, but we have not had the time to develop a robust database of student sample work for the OAS. It will also provide more evidence of the viability of our standards and how to best align instruction and classroom assessments.

The success of the NSU Preservice Teacher Task Force (#NSUEngEd) merits further exploration. Specifically, the preservice curriculum and support provided during the coursework. We have yet to formally explore and understand the role of standards in education preparation programs in Oklahoma universities, but according to Pasternak et al. (2014), there is always the impetus to prepare preservice teachers for the realities of teaching-- how to approach standards, tests, and constrained curriculum. Standards-based reform impacts teacher education because there needs to be more research on how English teacher educators are adapting to the demands of educating future English teachers for the current context. Currently, how standards and high-stakes testing impact teacher education is not a focus in scholarship (Pasternak et al., 2014). Therefore, we should consider exploring how other programs are preparing our teachers to be active developers

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of curriculum and learning experiences as opposed to transmitters of information (Fredricksen, 2011). A possible next step would be to co-teach some of the standards and assessment structures to partnering universities with preservice teacher programs. We have not gathered feedback from this perspective yet.

## Conclusion

Based on the feedback, the obstacles to troubleshoot are feasible and will be addressed by the OSDE Office of Curriculum and Instruction Literacy Team. Surface-level alignment raises concerns of depth and, thus, precise alignment across departments and grade levels. The OSDE Curriculum and Instruction Literacy Team provided extensive professional development focused on implementation with fidelity during the 2016 Summer and Fall. However, the current model of our professional development assumes learning and action will take place after the training is over. We fail to make a lasting impact unless professional learning is managed at the school site (Cole, 2004). Participating in a program like this Implementation Collaborative allowed for teachers to reflect and inquire with each other through virtual tools. Similar protocols need to happen at the school site level to ensure depth occurs. Of course, this assumes standards are the priority.

The implementation process is not complete. Professional development must be continuous, personal, and coherent to accompany manageable change that is truly innovative and substantive (Evans, 2014). In order for there to be more effective implementation of the standards, as stated by the Collaborative, teachers need purposeful time to explore and develop a shared understanding of the depth of the standards and opportunities to practice instruction with integrated reading and writing, as intended by the standard's design. In addition, teachers need collaboration opportunities, to be included in instructional decisions, to receive support, and to be recognized for their professionalism (Endacott et al., 2015).

Future training needs to focus on the development of classroom assessments that do not overwhelm the teacher and promote a shared depth of understanding about the standards and expectations for student learning. Our team has started beta testing a framework derived from Formative Assessment training provided by the *South Central Comprehensive Center* and *The Center On Standards and Assessment Implementation* (Herman and Heritage, 2014). This model, *inFormative Assessment Bundles*, can be accessed at [bit.ly/elaokbundles](http://bit.ly/elaokbundles). Completing *inFormative Assessment Bundle* exemplars are our Summer focus and will be used for a statewide study in the Fall of 2017. Exemplars are intended to help support teacher teams develop original standards-based classroom assessments and promote genuine professional learning within teacher teams.

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