

Concerns about Commissioner Yecke’s Reading Standards; Important Other Documents--the 2001-02 Standards Developed by Teachers (called the Revised Standards) and the accompanying Benchmarks document; and “Definitions of What Standards Should Be

Part 1: The Commissioner’s Standards

The commissioner has invited teachers and the public to provide input/feedback on the recently developed standards. WE NEED TO ATTEND THE HEARINGS AND PROVIDE WRITTEN FEEDBACK—PLEASE!

FYI: A brief, cursory review of the Commissioner’s Standards:

- Are they developmentally appropriate? No. There are skills that students are asked to accomplish that are inappropriate for children at particular grade levels (e.g., too difficult in some lower grade levels and too easy in higher grade level—a good example is “main idea” requirements)
- Is there clear articulation across levels? No. Careful articulation means that careful placement of knowledge to be learned at a lower grade level that is then built upon in a spiraling fashion at higher-grade levels—there should be links and deeper levels of sophistication in learning across the grades.
- Research base—is current research reflected in the content? No. These standards do not reflect the current research or theories of reading development; resources used do not indicate any current research literature or major reports such as the new RAND Report on comprehension. (e.g., the comprehension standards reflect a knowledge base of 20 years ago).
- Do they promote a balanced approach? No. These standards are a hodge-podge of various points of view, various philosophies, and have no guiding principles about learning or how children learn to read. A balanced approach to reading development is clearly articulated in the research literature but it is NOT evident in the Commissioner’s standards. Instead we see a little bit of this and a little bit of that (which is not what a balanced approach means).
- Are both narrative and expository text adequately addressed? No. There are problems with the kinds of texts used, when they are introduced, and some labeling of texts is inappropriate.
- Is the level of specificity appropriate (too prescriptive; too vague)? These standards are not standards statements (see definitions later in this document). They are too prescriptive and would dictate particular curriculum and even particular methods. This is inappropriate given the diversity of children in MN—both developmentally and culturally. We need sound standards that allow a balanced approach to teaching and allow teachers to teach individual children the skills and strategies they need to be independent and motivated readers.

Part 2: The Revised Standards (Draft) and Reading Benchmarks (Draft) created in 2001-02 by Teachers and Reviewed by Experts at McREL

**Senator Kelley (chair of the Senate Education Committee) wants to replace the Profile standards with the 2001-02 Revised Standards and Reading Benchmarks Drafts created by teachers.** (In other words, prevent the Commissioner’s standards from moving forward.) These

documents are attached as many educators have requested seeing them. Please know they are drafts—they will require some updating and revisions but they are superior to the Commissioner’s proposed Standards.

## THE DOCUMENTS

1. Commissioner’s Standards available at <http://cfl.state.mn.us>

*Timeline:* These are the standards recently developed over a two-week period that just ended.

*Committee:* A list of the committee members who worked on this document is available on the CFL website.

*Purpose:* To completely replace the Profile of Learning standards.

Please note: Review the information from Commissioner Yecke about the committee process and the resources they used (see the CFL website). The resources used reflect little to no research and range from curriculum scope and sequences to the opinions of people committee members knew/talked to.

2. Revised Standards Draft Created by Teachers in 2001-02—“Read, View and Listen” (attached to email)

*Timeline:* September 2001-January 2002

*Committee:* Small committee of Best Practices teachers from across the state.

*Purpose:* The charge to the group was to revise the standards from the Profile of Learning for clarity and comprehensiveness, and to express the standard in terms of declarative and procedural knowledge.

*Process:* The committee determined that a major revision was needed, and this is reflected in the document. The committee received feedback from McREL as part of the process. In addition, the standards were made available for public comment at meetings around the state.

Please note: The attached document includes both the standard from the Profile of Learning (called Current Standard) and the revision (called Revised Standard) merely to show the move beyond the Profile to something very new. PLEASE DO NOT CALL THESE 2001-02 STANDARDS A REVISION OF THE PROFILE; THEY ARE NOT. They reflect work that attempted to move beyond the Profile but provide a needed bridge for teachers to something new. THE 2001-02 DOCUMENT IS GROUNDED IN SOLID RESEARCH IN READING AND DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE BEST PRACTICES—the document IS NOT A “TWEAKING OF THE PROFILE.” (YECKE AND LEGISLATORS MUST NOT BE GIVEN THIS AS AN ARGUMENT TO DISCOUNT THESE 2001-02 STANDARDS.)

3. Reading Benchmarks Draft Created by Teachers—January 2003 (attached)

*Timeline:* November 2002-January 2003

*Committee:* Very small group of teachers and CFL staff

*Purpose:* For the state to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind, which calls for grade level benchmarks at grades 3-8 plus one benchmark for high school

*Process:* This committee made the decision to work from the Revised Standards (#2 above). However, they reorganized the standards to better align with the federal categories use in the

NRP report (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension). In the current format, it is difficult to match the benchmarks to specific parts of the standard but this is an easy step to accomplish in the future.

### **Definitions of What Standards Should Be**

from *A Technical Guide for Revising or Development Standards and Benchmarks* (McREL)

#### Content Standard

- “A content standard is a summary description regarding what it is that students should know and/or be able to do within a particular discipline.”
- “Content standards primarily serve to organize an academic subject domain through a manageable number of generally stated goal for students learning. These statements help to clarify the broad goals within the discipline and provide a means for readers to navigate the standards document when searching for specific content.”
- According to McREL research, the number of statements used to organize a discipline may vary from 6 to 18.
- “...these standards serve the function of organizing a discipline under the central categories, or organizing ideas, of the discipline.”

#### Benchmark

- “A benchmark is a clear, specific description of knowledge or skill that students should acquire by a particular point in their schooling.”
- “A benchmark is organized beneath the standard whose content it addresses more specifically.”
- “A benchmark is assigned to a particular grade level or range of grades. Ideally, a benchmark is placed at the grade at which a student is not only developmentally ready to acquire the understanding or skill it describes, but also at the point in time at which the student has received all prior instruction necessary to learn the new material.”

#### Strand/Topic

- “A strand (or topic) is a level of content organization that mediates between a standard and a benchmark.”

#### Performance Standards

- “Performance standards must specify ‘how good is good enough.’
- Performance standards gauge the degree to which content standards have been attained.
- “A performance standard describes levels of student performance in respect to the knowledge or skill described in a single benchmark or a set of closely related benchmarks. A performance standard might be described by means of a rubric or a cut-score, or could even be expressed as a percentage correct of the test items designed to assess students on a particular benchmark.”