

Introduction

Background

Within the last two decades, English language arts educators have redefined the instruction of English language arts. At all grades, the focus has shifted from reading, writing, and the study of literature to an emphasis on acquiring language and literacy skills through listening, speaking, viewing, and representing, as well as reading and writing. In keeping with the literacy demands placed on them, students now learn to read and produce a wide range of texts.

This transformation of English language arts was prompted by social and technological change and by new research in learning. It parallels a general shift in education to learner-centred classrooms, with instruction built around student learning outcomes rather than goals and objectives. Across Canada and in much of the Western world, similar changes have resulted in initiatives to create new curricula in many subject areas.

Collaboration in Education

The Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education (WCP) was established in 1993 with the aim of developing curricula and resources with a western Canadian perspective. Under the WCP, educators from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon Territory, and the Northwest Territories collaborate to identify student learning outcomes for Kindergarten to Senior 4 (Grade 12) in mathematics, social studies, and language arts.* The student learning outcomes developed through the WCP process are released simultaneously to all participating jurisdictions in a Common Curriculum Framework. The learning outcomes are used in schools throughout western Canada, ensuring consistency for students who move from one province or territory to another.

* Student learning outcomes for science are identified in *Common Framework of Science Learning Outcomes, K to 12, Pan-Canadian Protocol for Collaboration on School Curriculum*. Toronto, ON: Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 1997.

Curriculum Development in Manitoba

The Common Curriculum Framework documents developed in collaboration with western Canadian provinces and territories form the basis of further curriculum development in Manitoba. The following chart describes the curriculum documents that result from the curriculum development process outlined in *A Foundation for Excellence* (1995).

Types of Curriculum Documents

Common Curriculum Framework

The Common Curriculum Framework documents state student learning outcomes for Kindergarten to Senior 4 (Grade 12) in specific subject areas. They form the basis of other types of documents:

- **Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes and Standards**

These documents incorporate the student learning outcomes identified in the Common Curriculum Framework documents for specific subject areas. These learning outcomes are mandated for all Manitoba schools (*The Action Plan*, 1995). Standards of student performance for Grade 3, Grade 6, Senior 1, and Senior 4 are included where applicable.

- **Foundation for Implementation**

These documents state the prescribed student learning outcomes and assist teachers in implementing them by providing suggestions for instruction, assessment, and learning resources.

- **Teacher Support**

These documents provide specific support in various areas.

- **Annotated Bibliographies of Learning Resources**

These documents assist teachers in selecting curriculum-congruent learning resources that support classroom instruction.

English Language Arts Curriculum Framework

The Common Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (Grades 10–12 Draft), developed in collaboration with the western Canadian provinces and territories, was released in 1996. It is the foundation for Manitoba’s English language arts curriculum framework of outcomes and standards documents for Kindergarten to Senior 1 (1996). The Senior 2 Senior 3, and Senior 4 curriculum framework of outcomes documents extend this development and are based on *The Common Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts, Kindergarten to Grade 12* (1998).

Senior 4 English Language Arts: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes and Senior 4 Standards (hereafter referred to as the Senior 4 ELA Framework) identifies student learning outcomes for three curricula. Senior 4 English language arts courses offered in schools must be based on these curricula. The course titles and course designations to be used by schools are as follows:

- Senior 4 English Language Arts: Comprehensive Focus (40S)
- Senior 4 English Language Arts: Literary Focus (40S)
- Senior 4 English Language Arts: Transactional Focus (40S)

Schools are not required to offer all three courses based on these curricula. To meet the compulsory core Senior 4 English language arts graduation requirements, each student must complete one of these three courses. As well, students may complete one or two additional Senior 4 English language arts courses as compulsory complementary or optional supplementary credits. None of the Senior 4 English language arts courses is a prerequisite for any other Senior 4 course. Any one of the three Senior 3 courses fulfills the prerequisite for a student’s selection of a Senior 4 compulsory core English language arts course.

Purposes of the ELA Framework

The ELA Framework documents identify general and specific English language arts learning outcomes for students in Manitoba:

- *General student learning outcomes* describe the knowledge, skills and strategies, and attitudes that students are expected to demonstrate from Kindergarten to Senior 4.
- *Specific student learning outcomes* identify the component knowledge, skills and strategies, and attitudes that contribute to the general student learning outcomes and that students are expected to demonstrate by the end of a grade.

The Senior 4 ELA Framework identifies a separate set of specific student learning outcomes for each of three Senior 4 English language arts curricula: Comprehensive Focus, Literary Focus, and Transactional Focus.

The general and specific student learning outcomes assist educators as they

- set goals for learning
- plan learning experiences that support the achievement of student learning outcomes
- monitor the progress of individual students
- communicate with parents and guardians about student progress
- develop a literacy plan for the school
- select learning resources
- establish assessment practices
- establish staff development plans

Contents of the Senior 4 ELA Framework

This document contains the following sections:

- *Introduction*: The introduction discusses the purpose of the Senior 4 ELA Framework and the process by which it was developed.
- *Language and Language Learning*: This section discusses the aims and principles of English language arts instruction and the theory and research on which language instruction of various language uses is based.
- *Student Learning Outcomes and Standards of Student Performance*: A profile of the knowledge, skills and strategies, and attitudes that students are expected to demonstrate by the end of Senior 4 is organized by curriculum: Comprehensive Focus, Literary Focus, and Transactional Focus. To provide context, the student learning outcomes for Grade 8 and Senior 1, 2, and 3 are also provided for each Focus. A section describing standards of student performance follows the student learning outcomes for each Focus.
- *References*: Print resources used in developing the Senior 4 ELA Framework are cited as references.