



Defining Postsecondary Expectations for Reading and Writing in Nevada

As recommended in the American Diploma Project (ADP) legal research, the ADP asked members of the postsecondary community in Nevada to define their expectations of high school graduates (related to admissions and placement decisions), to comment on what is now expected of high school students for graduation in the state, and to identify gaps that may exist between those different sets of expectations. The ADP's gap-analysis work consists of two parts. **Part one** focused on an analysis of the content of high school exit and college entrance/placement assessments; **part two** focused on defining postsecondary expectations and determining the degree to which current ADP state standards and assessments reflect those expectations.

In **part one**, the Education Trust assembled English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics faculty members from K-12 systems and from two- and four-year colleges in the five ADP partner states (Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Nevada and Texas). At these meetings the faculty members examined the content of partner state high school graduation assessments, national college admissions and placement tests (i.e., SAT, ACT, COMPASS, Accuplacer), a sampling of postsecondary institutional placement tests and the GED.

The results from part one comprise Education Trust's five state reports, reflecting the feedback received from faculty members to the aforementioned assessments, as well as the Education Trust's analytical "cross-state" report. These reports discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of the assessments and how well each assessment might serve postsecondary institutions in making admissions and placement decisions. By examining individual test items, the faculty members were able to examine the breadth and depth of content coverage, as well as the types and quality of test items. The first part of the gap-analysis work revealed that:

- Although Nevada's High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE) in Reading is administered in the 11th grade, the reviewers stated that it does not adequately assess high school level reading. The cognitive-demand level of the examination is at a level too low for it to be useful to postsecondary institutions.
- The HSPE in Writing is a stronger assessment of student writing than either the SAT I or the ACT, but in order to maximize the HSPE's usefulness to postsecondary institutions for admissions or placement, the writing examination needs to challenge students to produce more critical/analytical responses.

A closer look at the alignment of the HSPE assessments to the Nevada Content Standards and faculty expectations was warranted to determine how high school standards and assessments might become more closely aligned to college admissions and placement standards.¹

In **part two**, Achieve and ADP staff, using the assessment-to-standards alignment protocol developed by Achieve, conducted an alignment study of the HSPE (in Reading and in Mathematics) and the Nevada Grade 8 and Grade 12 Content Standards.² With both the assessment-content analysis and the alignment studies complete, ADP staff met with faculty members from two- and four-year colleges in Nevada, representing a range of content areas (organized into ELA and Math Teams) to:

1. define their expectations for incoming students,
2. prioritize their expectations for students, as may be contained in the Nevada Content Standards,
3. determine the degree to which the current standards and assessments together reflect those expectations, and
4. identify any gaps (missing content) in the standards and assessments.

In this round of discussion, it was particularly helpful to have had a cross-section of faculty from the humanities, sciences and social sciences, since reading, writing and mathematics skills are necessary for success in all credit-bearing courses throughout college, not just English and mathematics.

¹ The Education Trust gap-analysis reports were circulated in 2002 and are available on the ADP website <<http://www.americandiplomaproject.org/>>.

² The HSPE by design assesses some content from the grade eight standards.

*Part One Findings (Reading and Writing):
Assessment Content Analysis*

1. *The Nevada High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE) in Reading has several strengths but its level of cognitive challenge is too low to be of use in its current form to postsecondary institutions. The passages on the reading examination must be at a consistently higher level and the items must require higher level thinking skills in order to provide a reliable indicator of readiness for college.*

- The HSPE in Reading features 15 reading passages ranging in length from 100 to 1200 words. Reviewers appreciated the variation in length as well as the range of topics and genres, which included poetry, fiction, nonfiction and functional reading, although the vast majority -- 10 passages -- were expository in nature. Reviewers also appreciated the fact that the passages were authentic, drawn from various decades of the twentieth century.
- Reviewers expressed concern, however, about the cognitive challenge of the passages on the HSPE in Reading. Reviewers found that over 70 percent of the passages appeared to be pitched at the “upper elementary” and “middle school” level – too low a reading level to indicate college readiness. It is important to note that the examination was designed to assess content from grades 8 -12, so including some middle school passages was therefore a deliberate decision. Having so many passages at that level, however, makes the assessment a better measure of middle school than high school competency.
- Reviewers also determined that the cognitive challenge of the selected-response items on the HSPE in Reading seem to be pitched at the lower end of the scale: 31 percent were determined to be at the level of grades 4-6, 43 percent were determined to be at the middle school level, another 22 percent were judged to be at grades 9-10, leaving only 4 percent (which amounts to about three items) to be at the exit level of high school. A majority of items (59 percent) were classified as “simple” and only 4 percent as “complex.”
- The cognitive challenge of the SAT I was judged to be much higher, although a sizeable proportion (62 percent) of the items were classified as lower high school (grades 9-10). Still, most of the SAT I items were classified as “moderately complex” to “complex,” with only a few items ranked as “simple.”
- Regarding the ACT, the primary admissions test used by Nevada state college and universities, the reviewers were especially pleased that the range of passages in terms of both content and level of difficulty. The

reviewers also found that about two thirds of the reading comprehension items on the ACT required higher critical thinking skills.

2. The Nevada HSPE in Writing could potentially become a key component for college writing placement, although its contents would need to be revised.

- Reviewers were pleased that students must respond to two different types of writing prompts: one narrative and one persuasive/ expository.
- Reviewers stated that the prompts were too generic to elicit higher levels of thinking. With added precision, the Nevada team stated that the writing exam could provide useful information to postsecondary institutions for placement purposes.
- The team recommended that the state consider combining the reading and writing examinations. In that way, students could be given two or three passages with a related prompt that could be used to measure both critical reading skills and writing ability. Reviewers suggested that such an examination would be a more valid measure of the student's ability to perform in college. Since neither the SAT nor the ACT tests writing, the Nevada HSPE could address the need that postsecondary institutions have to evaluate students' writing.

*Part Two Findings (Reading and Writing):
Definition of Postsecondary Expectations and Examination of Alignment
among Standards, Assessments and Expectations*

Part two of the postsecondary-expectations analysis began by Achieve, Inc. and ADP staff conducting an assessment-to-standards alignment study of the HSPE in Reading and the Nevada Grade 8 and Grade 12 Content Standards.³ The alignment protocol used was designed by Achieve to determine the extent to which standards-based assessments actually assess the content standards that a state has defined for students. Following is a brief description of the Achieve protocol.⁴

The protocol considers four dimensions in its analysis of the degree of alignment between an assessment and a set of standards.

- **Content centrality:** This criterion provides a deeper analysis of the match between the content of each examination question and the content of the related standard by examining the degree or quality of the match. Reviewers assign each item to one of four categories based on the degree of alignment: “2” = clearly consistent; “1a” = not specific enough; “1b” = somewhat consistent; “0” = inconsistent.
- **Performance centrality:** This criterion focuses on the degree of the match between the type of performance (cognitive demand) presented by each examination item and the type of performance described by the related standard. Each item makes a certain type of cognitive demand on a student (e.g., the item requires a certain performance such as “select,” “identify,” “compare,” or “analyze”). Reviewers assign each item to one of four categories based on the degree of alignment: “2” = clearly consistent; “1a” = not specific enough; “1b” = somewhat consistent; “0” = inconsistent.
- **Challenge:** This criterion is applied to a set of items to determine whether doing well on these items requires students to master challenging subject matter. Reviewers consider two factors in evaluating sets of examination items against the challenge criterion: *source* of challenge and *level* of challenge.
 - **Source of challenge** attempts to uncover whether the individual examination items in a set are difficult because of the knowledge and skills they target, or because of other reasons not related to the subject matter, such as relying unfairly on students’ background knowledge. Reviewers rate each item as having an appropriate (1) or inappropriate (0) source of challenge.

³ The HSPE by design assesses some content from the grade eight standards.

⁴ For a complete description of the protocol, see “Benchmarking and Alignment of Standards and Testing, CSE Technical Report,” available on the ADP website <<http://www.americandiplomaproject.org/>>.

- **Level of challenge** compares the emphasis of performance required by a set of items to the emphasis of performance described by the related standard. In addition to evaluating alignment, reviewers also judge whether the set of examination items has a span of difficulty appropriate for students at a given grade level based on the standards, the assessment and supporting materials. Reviewers assign each item to one of four categories indicating its type of cognitive demand: 4 = analysis; 3 = interpretation; 2 = inference; 1 = basic comprehension.
- **Balance and range:** No one assessment can measure the full range of knowledge and skills described in the state standards. Evaluating balance and range provides both qualitative and quantitative descriptive information about the choices states or test developers have made.
 - **Balance** compares the emphasis of content supplied by an item set to the emphasis of content described by the standards. In addition to evaluating alignment, reviewers also judge whether the set of items emphasizes the more important content at the grade level. Reviewers write a succinct summary of the balance of each item set.
 - **Range** is a measure of coverage or breadth (the numerical proportion of all content addressed).

With the alignment study complete (*see appendices following for summary data for each of the above categories*), Achieve and ADP staff met with faculty members from two- and four-year colleges in Nevada, representing a range of content areas, for the following discussion.

Step One: Define Expectations for Incoming Students

Thinking more about what is really needed, rather than bowing to the current state of student reading and writing expertise, what follows is a list of minimum skills and concepts articulated by postsecondary personnel in Nevada as necessary to do credit-bearing work at state colleges and universities. The team emphasized critical thinking as part of both successful reading and writing, with particular emphasis on:

1. Recognizing the difference between connotation and denotation
2. Making inferences
3. Identifying (false or emotional) assumptions
4. Substantiating opinions
5. Recognizing when others have or haven't substantiated opinions
6. Making valid arguments
7. Marshalling evidence in support of an argument
8. Recognizing and evaluating the effectiveness of oral and written arguments
9. Evaluating the validity of oral and written arguments

10. Rebutting an argument (e.g., discuss the argument, then refute claims)
11. Recognizing and using rhetorical devices
12. Recognizing and evaluating the effectiveness of rhetorical devices in arguments
13. Identifying bias
14. Using correct grammar, logic, usage, punctuation and mechanics

Step Two: Prioritize expectations for students, as reflected in the Nevada ELA Content Standards

Question One: Are the competencies required in college in a broad range of disciplines represented in the Nevada ELA Content Standards?

Answer: Yes, in general the reviewers felt that the Nevada English standards at grade 12 were strong and that students who mastered the standards would be prepared to succeed in college.

Following are some specific recommendations made by the ELA Team for improving the relevance of the reading and writing standards to postsecondary institutions:

- The ELA team suggested that the state delineate standards for grades 9, 10 and 11. The Nevada examination is administered in grade 11, and because there are no standards between grade eight and grade 11, it's difficult to determine what content students should have mastered before leaving high school.
- The ELA Team suggested that the state describe the quality, complexity and quantity of reading addressed in the standards. Rigor in English language arts standards is only partially determined by what students are asked to *do* with one text or another, but also—and in a significant way-- by the complexity and sophistication of *what* students are asked to read.
- The team emphasized the need for students to have mastered basic “critical thinking” skills in order to be successful in college. They would like to see the Nevada Content Standards delineate these skills more specifically. They suggested adding standards that address assumption, inference, connotation, synthesis, implication, and ambiguity.
- The team noted the importance of the etymology standard, since students need to understand that language has a history.
- Team members also placed great emphasis on the Evaluation of Logic section of the standards, which addresses their priority competencies listed above.

- The ELA Team had a lengthy discussion about the need to align teacher education standards for certification and Nevada’s K-12 standards for students so that teachers are better equipped to deliver the content in the standards.

Step Three: Determine the degree to which current standards and assessments reflect postsecondary expectations

Question Two: How do the prioritization of the standards and objectives on the assessments compare to the prioritization that the ELA Team placed on the knowledge and skills needed to begin college-level work?

Answer:

Reading:

- The team was concerned about the balance of the objectives assessed. One objective has as many as 21 items on the examination linked to it; another one registered 12 items. Several other objectives have 4 or 6 items while many other objectives given high priority by the team were not assessed at all. For example, the team prioritized the ability to analyze, synthesize and interpret informational text, but the majority of items mapped to the reading standard, “Locate, interpret, organize and synthesize information from texts to answer specific questions and support ideas” only require students to locate or recall basic details in a text.

Writing:

- Team members prioritized literary analysis, the ability to summarize and evaluate information text, and demonstrate a facility for writing persuasive essays above personal, business or narrative writing, but they found that the assessment does not prioritize these genres.
- The team rated literary analysis high, even though college courses don’t often require this kind of writing, because literary analysis requires critical thinking. In their opinion, summary, information and persuasion are the most important kinds of writing. The team saw real merit in asking students to write summaries within time constraints, as the “real world” also requires. The assessment does not require students to do so.
- Reviewers strongly agreed on the need for students to use correct grammar (Standard 7), but it was difficult to be sure that correct grammar and usage is valued in the “proficient” anchor papers. Team members noted that the reality is that success in college and in the workplace depends on students’ mastery of English language conventions; these are the “tools” that will enable students to move on to more complex tasks that

postsecondary education demands. They also noted that students need a vocabulary for discussing usage errors when writing and revising, especially to explain why, for example, the use of certain words or fragments is incorrect.

Question Three: Can the Nevada HSPE in Reading and the HSPE in Writing be used in their current forms for postsecondary admissions and/or placement?

Answer: Both the HSPE in Reading and the HSPE in Writing would require some adjustments before either could be used to serve postsecondary institutions in making admissions and placement decisions. In general, the examinations do not reflect the rigor of the grade 12 standards, or in some cases even the grade eight standards.

Reading:

- The Achieve alignment study⁵ revealed that 97 percent of the examination items on the Nevada HSPE in Reading align to the content in the standards. That is, except for two items, all of the items assess the content expectations described in the state’s standards. The examination did not score as high on its performance centrality: only 49 percent of items received “2s” for performance centrality, 13 percent received “1a’s,” meaning that the standards lacked enough precision to determine whether the performance on the assessment was a match or not, and another 32 percent received “1b’s,” indicating that only the lowest level of performance described in the standards is addressed. (see *TABLE ELA 1*).

TABLE ELA1: Content & Performance Centrality of Reading

Centrality	# of Items	2 (clearly consistent)	1a (standard not specific enough)	1b (item assesses only a part of the standard)	0 (inconsistent)
Content	68 (100% of exam)	97% of all items received a 2	No items received a 1a	No items received a 1b	3% of all items received a 0
Performance	68 (100% of exam)	49% of all items received a 2	13% of all items received a 1a	32% of all items received a 1b	6% of all items received a 0

- Despite the high degree of content centrality (match between the content on the examination and the content described in the standards), the ELA Team noted that too big a gap exists between the cognitive demand on the HSPE and what is expected of students to do credit-bearing work in college. One hundred percent of examination items were rated at a level “2” or lower. (see *TABLE ELA 2*) Too many items – almost half -- were deemed simple “recall” items. Of the remaining items that scored a “2,”

⁵ See appendices for the Achieve study summary data.

the majority of these items required little more than simple inference. The ELA team suggested that Nevada raise the level of challenge of the items by raising the level of reasoning demanded in the item sets. Moreover, the vast majority of the items (more than three-quarters) align to middle school and elementary school standards rather than high school standards.

TABLE ELA2: Level of Cognitive Demand on the HSPE in Reading

Demand (65 items scored)	4 (analysis)	3 (interpretation)	2 (inference)	1 (basic comprehension)
	No items received a 4	No items received a 3	54% of all items received a 2	46% of all items received a 1

- The team found that the passages, taken as a set, were appropriate and of fairly good quality, but felt that they did not have a span of *reading demand* (conceptual complexity, vocabulary, topic, organization, and genre) appropriate for exiting high school students.
- Reviewers suggested that it would be helpful to them if the examination were to assess students' ability to read and interpret visual material such as graphs and charts.
- Members indicated that it would be valuable to include an article from an academic journal as one of the reading passages, i.e., a passage similar to the type of reading students would be asked to tackle in college (which they found lacking in the examination). These refinements might make the examination a better indicator of college-readiness.

Writing:

- The ELA team had several comments about how to improve the writing prompts:⁶
 - Reviewers felt that the HSPE prompts need to address audience and purpose (neither did).
 - They also felt that the prompts need to afford students the opportunity to demonstrate their intellectual abilities. The prompts reviewed seemed irrelevant to students and the team felt they would fail to evoke intelligent, analytical responses from students or ask students to build an argument of any kind.

⁶The team admitted the difficulty associated with developing good writing prompts because of copyrighting issues, accessibility issues, and the fact that test writers cannot choose passages that too many students already would already have been taught in class.

- The team recommended that the state use prompts that are text-based. Students could be asked to compare and contrast texts.
- The ideal writing prompt according to the ELA Team would include the following information:
 - Subject/Topic (fair and accessible)
 - Purpose
 - Audience
 - Grading/evaluation criteria

Question Four: What other recommendations does the ELA Team have for the state policy panel regarding issues that surround the administration of the HSPE?

- The ELA team expressed some concern that administering the HSPE first in grade 10 might exacerbate the problem of students choosing not to take their senior year studies seriously. Also, the closer an examination is administered relative to graduation, the more useful its results would be for the purposes of college admissions and placement decisions. If students take the examination and pass it as early as grade 10, could colleges reasonably expect students to retain that level of knowledge and skill? Team members felt that the lack of knowledge and skill retention that they see currently in their students is in part due to the lack of academic reinforcement in their high school senior year.
- Nevada college faculty members expressed interest in conducting a study on the predictive validity of the HSPE for college success. (This corresponds to a recommendation in the legal study to ensure the validity of using an assessment for multiple purposes.) Such a study would correlate different student scores on the state examination with how students do on other placement tests and in various college math courses. Such a study would give colleges the information they need about just how to use results from the HSPE for admissions or placement. College personnel have been using SAT I, ACT and other placement tests for years, despite their limitations. Although they may not deem the national admissions and placement tests perfect, college faculty members are in some cases more familiar with their ostensible predictive validity than they are with the HSPE.

Question Five: Are the passing cut scores on the Nevada HSPE in Reading and Writing equivalent to the competency needed for college?

Answer: The passing score on the HSPE in Reading does not reflect the level of reading necessary to be placed into credit-bearing coursework in Nevada's postsecondary institutions. From the anchor papers reviewed, a passing score on the HSPE in Writing does not reflect the level necessary for credit-bearing work in Nevada's postsecondary institutions.

Reading:

- The issue on the Reading Examination is that its overall cognitive challenge is too low, such that even a high score on that examination would not indicate college readiness.

Writing:

- Although the anchor papers scoring a “4” are supposed to represent proficient writing, the team felt that these papers reflect writing that would require remediation in college. They went on to say that the papers scoring a “5” or “6” while better, again fell short even if a student earned a “6” on both prompts. Essentially, as scored, a high score on the HSPE would not be sufficient to demonstrate a student’s readiness to place out of remedial college classes.

APPENDICES

The following tables represent the results from the Achieve alignment study for the Nevada HSPE in Reading and the Nevada Content Standards.

Assessment

Nevada High School Proficiency Examination:
Reading, Version 1, Spring 2002

Standards

Nevada English Language Arts Content Standards
Adopted March 2001

Test Design

68 Multiple-Choice Items
68 items scored

APPENDIX 1: Item Coverage

APPENDIX 2: Content Centrality

APPENDIX 3: Performance Centrality

APPENDIX 4: Source of Challenge

APPENDIX 5: Level of Cognitive Demand

APPENDIX 6: Level of Challenge and Balance

APPENDIX 7: Range

APPENDIX 1: Item Coverage

Note: Shading shows indicators eligible for state assessment.

Standard	# of items	% of exam
1.0 Vocabulary	14	21%
1.8.3 & 1.12.3: Greek, Latin roots/affixes	4	6%
1.8.4: Origins, roots, structures, context	6	9%
1.12.4: Connotation/Denotation	0	0
1.8.5: Idioms, metaphors, etc.	4	6%
1.12.5: Syntax & allusions	0	0
2.0 Strategies	0	0
3.0 Literature	12	18%
3.8.1: Evaluate story elements	0	0
3.12.1: Analyze literary elements	0	0
3.8.2: Inferences & predictions re: characters	1	1%
3.12.2: Inferences story elements	0	0
3.8.3: Author's viewpoint re: context	0	0
3.8.4: Theme	3	5%
3.12.4: Analyze theme w/ evidence	0	0
3.8.5 & 3.12.5: Analyze imagery, etc.	5	7%
3.8.6: Compare stylistic elements	0	0
3.12.6: Analyze irony, etc.	3	5%
3.8.7: Compare literary forms	0	0
3.12.7: Analyze effects of form choice	0	0
4.0 Information	40	58%
4.8.1 and 4.8.2: Text features	3	5%
4.12.1 & 4.12.2: Analyze text features/rhetorical devices and how used	0	0
4.8.3: Locate, interpret, organize, synthesize information	21	31%
4.12.3: Locate, interpret, organize, synthesize information in multiple sources	0	0
4.5.4: Draw conclusions, make inferences	12	18%
4.8.4: Identify & assess evidence	0	0
4.12.4: Critique arguments	0	0
4.8.5: Summarize	4	6%
4.12.5: Analyze contexts' effect	0	0
4.8.6: Read & follow directions .	0	0
4.12.6: Directions for complex procedures	0	0
Not Mapped	2	3%
Totals	68	100%

APPENDIX 2: Content Centrality⁷

Note: Ratings for Content Centrality are “2” = clearly consistent; “1a” = not specific enough; “1b” = somewhat consistent; “0” = inconsistent.

Standard	# of items	2	1a	1b	0
1.8.3 & 1.12.3: Greek, Latin roots/affixes	4	4			
1.8.4: Origins, roots, structures, context	6	6			
1.12.4: Connotation/Denotation	0				
1.8.5: Idioms, metaphors, etc.	4	4			
1.0 Vocabulary Totals	14	14	0	0	0
3.8.1: Evaluate story elements	0				
3.8.2: Inferences & predictions re: characters	1	1			
3.8.4: Theme*	3	3			
3.8.5 & 3.12.5: Analyze imagery, etc.	5	5			
3.12.6: Analyze irony, etc.*	3	3			
3.0 Literature Totals	12	12	0	0	0
4.8.1 and 4.8.2: Text features	3	3			
4.8.3: Locate, interpret, organize, synthesize information	21	21			
4.12.3: Locate, interpret, organize, synthesize information in multiple sources	0				
4.5.4: Draw conclusions, make inferences	12	12			
4.8.5: Summarize	4	4			
4.8.6: Read & follow directions.	0				
4.12.6: Directions for complex procedures	0				
4.0 Information Totals	40	40	0	0	0
Not Mapped	2				2
Totals for Entire Exam	68	66 97%	0	0	2 3%

A content centrality score of 97% indicates that the examination is well aligned to the standards in terms of content. That is, except for two items, all the items on the examination relate strongly to the content/topic expectations described in the state’s standards.

⁷ Chart includes standards eligible for assessment at the state level. Asterisked (*) standards have items mapped, although not designated for assessment.

APPENDIX 3: Performance Centrality

Note: Ratings for Performance Centrality are “2” = clearly consistent; “1a” = not specific enough; “1b” = somewhat consistent; “0” = inconsistent.

Standard	# of items	2	1a	1b	0
1.8.3 & 1.12.3: Greek, Latin roots/affixes	4	4			
1.8.4: Origins, roots, structures, context	6	6			
1.12.4: Connotation/Denotation	0				
1.8.5: Idioms, metaphors, etc.	4	4			
1.0 Vocabulary Totals	14	14 100%	0	0	0
3.8.1: Evaluate story elements	0				
3.8.2: Inferences & predictions re: characters	1	1			
3.8.4: Theme*	3	2	1		
3.8.5 & 3.12.5: Analyze imagery, etc.	5		4		1
3.12.6: Analyze irony, etc.*	3				3
3.0 Literature Totals	12	3 25%	5 42%	0	4 33%
4.8.1 and 4.8.2: Text features	3	3			
4.8.3: Locate, interpret, organize, synthesize information	21			21	
4.12.3: Locate, interpret, organize, synthesize information in multiple sources	0				
4.5.4: Draw conclusions, make inferences	12	12			
4.8.5: Summarize	4		4		
4.8.6: Read & follow directions.	0				
4.12.6: Directions for complex procedures	0				
4.0 Information Totals	40	15 38%	4 10%	21 52%	0
Not Mapped	2				
Totals for Entire Exam	66	32 49%	9 13%	21 32%	4 6%

A percentage of only 49% of the items scored as strongly aligned is an indication that the examination items do not adequately address the performances described in the state’s standards. The high percentage of 1b scores, 32%, indicates that the lowest level of performance described in the standards is addressed.

APPENDIX 4: Source of Challenge

Note: Ratings for Source of Challenge are "1" = appropriate, "0" = inappropriate.

Standard	# of items	1	0
1.8.3 & 1.12.3: Greek, Latin roots/affixes	4	4	
1.8.4: Origins, roots, structures, context	6	6	
1.12.4: Connotation/Denotation	0		
1.8.5: Idioms, metaphors, etc.	4	4	
1.0 Vocabulary Totals	14	14	0
3.8.1: Evaluate story elements	0	1	
3.8.2: Inferences & predictions re: characters	1	3	
3.8.4: Theme*	3		
3.8.5 & 3.12.5: Analyze imagery, etc.	5	4	1
3.12.6: Analyze irony, etc.*	3	3	
3.0 Literature Totals	12	11	1
4.8.1 and 4.8.2: Text features	3	3	
4.8.3: Locate, interpret, organize, synthesize information	21	21	
4.12.3: Locate, interpret, organize, synthesize information in multiple sources	0		
4.5.4: Draw conclusions, make inferences	12	12	
4.8.5: Summarize	4	4	
4.8.6: Read & follow directions.	0		
4.12.6: Directions for complex procedures	0		
4.0 Information Totals	40	40	0
Not Mapped	2		
Totals for Entire Exam	66	65 99%	1 1%

Only one item on this examination appeared to present an inappropriate source of challenge. The examination presents fair challenges to the student by not presenting them with “tricks” or possible confusion due to format issues.

APPENDIX 5: Level of Cognitive Demand

Note: Ratings for Level of Cognitive Demand are “4” = analysis; “3” = interpretation; “2” = inference; “1” = basic comprehension.

Standard	# of items	4	3	2	1
1.8.3 & 1.12.3: Greek, Latin roots/affixes	4				4
1.8.4: Origins, roots, structures, context	6			6	
1.12.4: Connotation/Denotation	0				
1.8.5: Idioms, metaphors, etc.	4			4	
1.0 Vocabulary Totals	14	0	0	10	4
3.8.1: Evaluate story elements	0				
3.8.2: Inferences & predictions re: characters	1			1	
3.8.4 & 3.12.4: Theme*	3			1	2
3.8.5 & 3.12.5: Analyze imagery, etc.	4*			3	1
3.12.6: Analyze irony, etc.*	3			2	1
3.0 Literature Totals	11*	0	0	7	4
4.8.1 and 4.8.2: Text features	3			2	1
4.8.3: Locate, interpret, organize, synthesize information	21				21
4.12.3: Locate, interpret, organize, synthesize information in multiple sources	0				
4.5.4: Draw conclusions, make inferences	12			12	
4.8.5: Summarize	4			4	
4.8.6: Read & follow directions.	0				
4.12.6: Directions for complex procedures	0				
4.0 Information Totals	40	0	0	18	22
Totals for Entire Test	65*	0	0	35 54%	30 46%

*Item scored as 0 for source of challenge is not evaluated for level of demand.

Although 35 of the 65 items evaluated for level of demand were scored at level 2, the majority of these items required little more than simple inference. A percentage of 46% of the items at level 1, requiring only simple recall or identification, may be an indication that this examination presents a lower demand than may be expected in an examination at this grade level.

APPENDIX 6: Level of Challenge and Balance

Note: Ratings for Level of Challenge are either Appropriate or Low.

Standard	# of items	Comments
1.8.3 & 1.12.3: Greek, Latin roots/affixes	4	All level 1; no real challenge but sufficient for the objective. All prefixes.
1.8.4: Origins, roots, structures, context	6	Level 2, but low level 2; 1 challenging word queried.
1.12.4: Connotation/ Denotation	0	Not assessed and could be.
1.8.5: Idioms, metaphors, etc.	4	
1.12.5: Syntax & allusions	0	<i>Not specified for state assessment.</i>
1.0 VocabularyTotals	14	Vocabulary skills are perhaps <u>over-sampled</u> at this grade level.
2.0 Reading Strategies	0	<i>Not specified for state assessment.</i>
3.8.1: Evaluate story elements	0	Not assessed and could be.
3.12.1: Analyze literary elements	0	<i>Not specified for state assessment.</i>
3.8.2: Inferences & predictions re: characters	1	
3.12.2: Inferences story elements	0	<i>Not specified for state assessment.</i>
3.8.3: Author's viewpoint re: context	0	<i>Not specified for state assessment.</i>
3.8.4: Theme	3	No citation of evidence required; identification only.
3.12.4: Analyze theme w/ evidence	0	Not assessed and could be.
3.8.5 & 3.12.5: Analyze imagery, etc.	5	No analysis or evaluation called for.
3.8.6: Compare stylistic elements	0	<i>Not specified for state assessment.</i>
3.12.6: Analyze irony, etc.	3	No analysis required.
3.8.7: Compare literary forms	0	<i>Not specified for state assessment.</i>
3.12.7: Analyze effects of form choice	0	<i>Not specified for state assessment.</i>
3.0 LiteratureTotals	12	Performances demanded not aligned in demand to those described in the standards.
4.8.1 and 4.8.2: Text features	3	Items addressed small grain features, not "common expository structures."
4.8.3: Locate, interpret, organize, synthesize information	21	Only locating information; no interpretation or synthesis required by items.
4.12.3: Locate, interpret, organize, synthesize information in multiple sources	0	No items addressed multiple sources.
4.5.4: Draw conclusions, make inferences	12	No requirement to support inference or conclusions by textual evidence or experience.
4.8.5: Summarize	4	Items required identification of main ideas only.
4.8.6: Read & follow directions.	0	Difficult to assess in large-scale, but identified as target by state, and, thus, should be assessed.
4.12.6: Directions for complex procedures	0	Difficult to assess in large-scale, but identified as target by state and, thus, should be assessed.
4.0 InformationTotals	40	More than adequate coverage of informational texts, but items required low-level applications.

Shaded areas indicate those standards targeted for assessment by the state on the high school reading examination.

APPENDIX 7: Range

Note: All grade 8 and grade 12 indicators are included in these tallies.

Standard	Portion of Standards Assessed
1.0 Reading: Vocabulary	3/6 or 0.50
3.0 Reading: Literature	4/13 or 0.30
4.0 Reading: Information	4/11 or 0.36
TEST AS A WHOLE	11/30 or 0.37