

Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum Frequently Asked Questions

Part I – General Information

1. What is the purpose of the Comprehensive Curriculum?

The purpose of the Comprehensive Curriculum is to align content, instruction, and assessment. Research has shown that when these are aligned, students' academic achievement increases. Additionally, the use of the Comprehensive Curriculum provides uniformity in content taught across the state in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

2. What does it mean to say that the Comprehensive Curriculum aligns content, instruction, and assessment?

The Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs) identify the essential content for each grade, while the activities within the Comprehensive Curriculum indicate various instructional strategies based on best practices for teaching. The units in the curriculum have been arranged so that the content to be assessed will be taught before the state testing dates. Samples of performance-based classroom assessments are provided to assist teachers in determining if students are making progress towards mastery of the GLEs.

3. Who wrote the course documents in the Comprehensive Curriculum?

The course documents were written by Louisiana educators. The names of writers are listed in the Acknowledgements section of the Introduction for each content area. The one exception is that the Reading Essentials courses for grades PreK-4 were written by one of the state's national Reading First consultants.

4. What are the state's policies concerning implementation of the Comprehensive Curriculum?

The state has indicated that all content of the curriculum must be taught and has provided guidelines to districts for using the curriculum. Local districts are responsible for implementation and monitoring of the Comprehensive Curriculum. Districts have been delegated the responsibility of deciding if units are to be taught in the order presented and whether substitutions of equivalent activities are to be allowed. If changes in unit order and activity substitutions are allowed, the district is responsible for determining if these changes are to be made at the district, school, or teacher level.

5. My district has mandated that teachers are to teach the Comprehensive Curriculum as written with no deviations. Can they do this? What are other districts doing in this regard?

Yes. Such a decision falls within the guidelines established in FAQ 2. Some districts have teacher committees working to make changes to the curriculum before distributing it. Others have established a process for teachers to request the use of equivalent activities. Some districts have delegated these decisions to grade-level/subject area committees at the school level. The differences are a result of the flexibility that the state has given to districts in implementing the curriculum.

6. Isn't the Comprehensive Curriculum just a framework to guide instruction?

No. The Comprehensive Curriculum provides a minimum number of activities needed by students to master the GLEs. If an activity is not used, another activity that addresses the same GLEs should replace it. If students need additional activities to master concepts in which they are particularly weak, additional activities may be added. The district is responsible for determining who has the responsibility to make such changes.

7. What are the procedures for using the activities in the Comprehensive Curriculum in the classroom?

The activities are not intended to stand alone and should be used as part of a lesson plan. Depending on the time needed for an activity, some lessons may incorporate more than one activity; other activities are longer and may be used in a lesson plan that spans several days.

8. Are the timeframes in the units exact?

The timeframes are the writers' best estimates based on their experiences in the classroom and the number of activities in a unit. It was suggested to districts that a curriculum map be developed for each course. In a curriculum map, the timeframes are matched to the school year calendar and serve as a way for teachers to pace themselves as they teach the units.

9. Must all teachers be teaching the same lesson on the same day in a given course or grade?

There is no mandate from the state for this to occur. It seems reasonable to expect that teachers should be teaching the same units within a given time period. Some classes may be ahead and others might be slightly behind the established timeframe for a given unit. We have indicated to districts that they should investigate reasons for situations in which a teacher gets far behind the suggested timeline and provide ideas for improvement.

10. The units and activities of the Comprehensive Curriculum don't match the chapters and lessons of my textbook. Can I just follow my textbook and use the Comprehensive Curriculum activities that fit?

Strictly following the textbook would be contradictory to the intended use of the curriculum. Textbooks are designed for varied audiences in different states and often contain much more material than can be taught in a single year. The Comprehensive Curriculum, not the textbook, should determine the order and the content to be taught so that all GLEs are fully addressed. The textbook is to be used as a resource of information in the same way that other supplemental resources might be used. For example, the textbook may provide background information, definitions, introductory information, and practice exercises which can be used with an activity in designing a lesson plan.

11. All of my students perform below grade level. How can they be expected to learn the content of the GLEs for the grade in which they are enrolled?

This is a situation for which there is no easy solution. With the exception of some Reading Essentials courses, the timeframes for all courses are less than 36 weeks. Teachers of students who are working below grade level should consider using the

extra time to provide additional lessons which prepare students for the Comprehensive Curriculum activities. Other ideas include the use of a different teaching strategy for an activity to better fit student learning styles and/or the use of a different book which is equivalent in content to one recommended in an activity. This situation should correct itself over time if students who enroll in prekindergarten and Kindergarten in 2005-2006 master the GLEs as they progress through the grades.

12. The units in Prekindergarten and Kindergarten units are not time bound. How does this affect the implementation of the Comprehensive Curriculum for these grades?

The time frames for Prekindergarten and Kindergarten units in the Comprehensive Curriculum for English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies are based on recommendations from teachers who reviewed the course document as one part of the Comprehensive Curriculum development process. The intent is to allow districts flexibility in implementing the activities at these grades to meet the developmental needs of students. Teachers indicate that Prekindergarten and Kindergarten students need to revisit concepts a minimum of three times before they can internalize them. Thus, there is a need to use most of the activities multiple times.

Districts may choose to implement short time-bound units to introduce specific content and then revisit activities throughout the year to reinforce concepts/skills. Another alternative is to use the activities as parts of thematic or contextual situations as they occur in the classroom throughout the course. As with all other courses in other grades, all the activities (or equivalents) should be used to ensure that students have the opportunity to master the GLEs. The district is responsible for determining how the activities will be implemented and who may substitute equivalent activities. Please note that these guidelines do *not* apply to the Reading Essentials courses which are time-bound units. Information on use of the Reading Essentials courses is provided in the questions pertaining to Reading.

13. How should we use the Science and Social Studies curricula in grades 1, 2, and 3? We teach these as an integrated Social Sciences class? Do we have to teach these courses every day?

Science and Social Studies courses for grades 1, 2, and 3 in the Comprehensive Curriculum were developed with the understanding that they would be taught every other day for approximately 45 minutes. Those districts using the integrated Social Sciences format on a daily basis will want to determine how to use the two courses within the format established by the school ensuring that all the content is covered.

14. Are we exempt from using the Comprehensive Curriculum in gifted and honors classes?

All students should be encouraged to work to their potential. Teachers may teach more than the content of the Comprehensive Curriculum when their students are capable of doing more. However, students are required to take on-level tests, so it is important to make sure the GLEs for that grade and content area take first priority.

Gifted: Generally, gifted students take courses designed for higher grades. Therefore, the teacher must document that the student has mastery of the GLEs for the grade in which the student is enrolled and supplement the course being taken so that students have the opportunity to master all GLEs prior to the end of the year.

Honors: Teachers of honors courses should add content to the “regular” Comprehensive Curriculum course to make it more rigorous or to allow for a more in-depth study of some of the course content (e.g., Algebra I Honors should use the Comprehensive Curriculum Algebra I course as the basis since this is content that all students completing an Algebra I course must master, but the teacher might add other units or activities to make the course more rigorous).

15. Will the state pay for implementation costs for the Comprehensive Curriculum? If not, how will our teachers get the materials they need?

There are no additional funds available at the state level for implementation of curriculum. Districts were asked to develop a list of resources that would be needed by teachers in June 2004 and develop a plan for providing these. When possible, teachers may substitute materials listed in the activities with others that will perform the same function.

16. When is Comprehensive Curriculum training going to occur? How are people who don't know what KWL and Think-Pair-Share ever going to use this curriculum without training?

The state's professional development for the GLEs and Comprehensive Curriculum is called GLEEM (Grade-level Expectations Educational Model). There are two forms of training – face-to-face and online workshops. The emphasis is on development of lesson plans using Comprehensive Curriculum activities or GLEs. Beta and field testing is underway. For more information contact Kartina.Roberts@la.gov for face-to-face workshops or Nicole.Honore@la.gov for the online components.

17. Is there a way to propose changes or alternatives to activities to the state?

Districts have written improvement plans to consider how they might improve the curriculum so that it better addresses the needs of students after one year's use. The state will also make revisions to the curriculum over time based on input from users. We consider the curriculum to be a work in progress. At the present time, we do not have a specific process to evaluate changes or alternatives to activities in the current version of the curriculum.

18. I have found an error in one of the activities. How can I report this?

Send an email to Carolyn.Sessions@la.gov noting the content area, grade/course, unit, activity number, and information about the error. Corrected files and the list of corrections are posted on the Department's website at <http://www.louisianaschools.net/ldc/ssa/2108.html>.

Part II – Reading Information

1. How should Reading First schools use the Comprehensive Curriculum?

Reading First schools are required to choose a Core Reading Program from an approved list. These schools are exempt from using the Reading Essentials curriculum in grades K-3 as long as the approved Core Reading Program addresses all of the components found in the Reading Essentials. Any GLE from the Reading Essentials curriculum that is not addressed in the approved Core Reading Program should be addressed using activities from the Reading Essentials curriculum. Most of

the Reading Essentials are covered in the Core Reading Program whereas *only some* of the ELA components are addressed. ELA components not addressed in the Core Reading Program must be taught at a time separate from the 90-120 minutes of protected reading time.

2. Is a non-Reading First school exempt from using the Comprehensive Curriculum if they are using a Reading First core?

A non-Reading First school using a program from the state approved list of core reading programs should use the Comprehensive Curriculum to supplement the areas not addressed in the Core Reading Program.

3. The schools in my district teach using an integrated approach and have had no training since none of them are Reading First schools. How can we receive the training that the Reading First districts received?

Training will be offered to all schools (Reading First and non-Reading First) by the end of the 2006-2007 school year. The Reading and Literacy staff can also provide technical assistance on a request basis to assist districts in implementing these new reading strategies. Please contact Nancy.Aguillard@la.gov for more information.

4. Why are there both Reading Essentials and ELA courses for grades PreK–4?

The Reading Essentials courses are based on the Five Essential Components of Reading Instruction as outlined in the Reading First Guidelines of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. To ensure that children learn to read well, explicit and systematic instruction must be provided in Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension.

The Reading Essentials courses provide the explicit and systematic methods which are to be used when teaching these components. They can be considered a subset of all the Reading and ELA content with the ELA course providing other content needed in a complete English language arts curriculum.

5. Can we change the order of the Reading Essentials units and/or change the order of the activities? The order does not match our basal reader.

If the basal is part of a Core Reading Program approved by the state for Reading First schools, then the basal may be used. Schools not using a Core Reading Program should use the Reading Essentials courses as outlined in those documents. Basals from other reading programs may be used as a resource when implementing the Reading Essentials courses.

6. Can I continue to use programs like Project Read?

Programs such as Project Read may be used to supplement the Reading program after all other reading time requirements are met. They cannot be used in lieu of a scientifically based reading research program.

7. The English language arts courses at the middle school level are written as single courses. We teach one course of English and another of Reading. Can we divide the activities in ELA and assign them to each course?

Yes. Our middle school writers will meet in June to divide the activities in middle school ELA into two lists – one for a Reading course and the other for an English

course. Districts may want to divide the activities in a different way. The use of these lists will not be mandatory, but may be used as a guide for districts.

8. What about the suggested minimum time requirements for English language arts in middle school? What are our options?

Districts who choose to designate the activities in the middle school ELA curriculum as English or Reading will need to supplement each course as there will not be enough material for two full courses. Districts who choose to teach the ELA middle school curriculum as written may use other courses (e.g., creative writing, speech) to meet the minimum suggested requirements. If students are scheduled into a double time-block for ELA instruction, the district may use the curriculum as written and add additional activities to meet specific needs of students. Any of these choices will address the GLEs and meet the suggested minimum time requirements.