Postsecondary & Workforce Readiness Act

Statewide Transitional English Course Parameters and Competencies

April 2020
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Enacted in 2016, the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) Act includes a set of strategies to support Illinois students in their transition from high school to postsecondary education, workforce training, and careers. A major barrier to postsecondary persistence and completion is remedial education, with students enrolling in remedial courses completing approximately 13% less of their courses compared to non-remedial peers, and having substantially lower outcomes related to graduation rate, advancement rate, and credit accumulation.

While the State has established a statewide implementation system for transitional math, over 20% of Illinois high school graduates entering the State's community college system also require remedial courses in reading and communications courses.

As the foundation for a statewide system to improve these remedial outcomes, the PWR Act directs the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), and Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) to establish a statewide panel to recommend competencies for transitional instruction that avoids student placement into remedial reading and communications courses. Pursuant to this charge, the agencies convened a Transitional English Competency Development Group in Fall 2019 consisting of high school administrators, high school English teachers, community college and university administrators, community college and university English faculty, and State agency representatives (see Competency Development Group membership list attached as an Appendix). From December 13th, 2019 – April 3rd, 2020, the Competency Development Group met via five webinars and two in-person meetings to develop general parameters for Transitional English courses, competency statements reflecting broad learning goals for these courses, and a set of key performance indicators for each competency statement. The Competency Development Group was staffed and facilitated by Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University, who researched existing models, provided drafts of material, collected feedback, and incorporated identified revisions into subsequent drafts for consideration. The Group's work included extensive analysis and consideration of secondary English Language Arts standards, learning objectives and instructional approaches in pilot Transitional English courses and postsecondary remedial courses, and best practices within Illinois and across the nation.

This document includes the following drafts developed by the Transitional English Competency Development Group: (1) Transitional English Overview and Course Parameters; and (2) Transitional English Competencies and Performance Indicators. ISBE, ICCB, and IBHE invite public comment and feedback on these drafts through the online survey available at the transitional instruction website from June 1 - July 31, 2020. Thank you for your engagement in support of this important effort to prepare more Illinois students to successfully transition from high school into postsecondary education and beyond.

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Overview
Transitional English instruction builds on students’ experiential and academic knowledge to develop skills in reading, critical thinking and analysis, and writing that will enhance their success in college-level courses across majors and career pathways while aligning with the Illinois Learning Standards.

Transitional English courses are offered to students during their senior year of high school, with the goal of providing students the requisite skills for "day one" success in college-level courses. The course can be used as a 4th year Language Arts class to meet State and local high school graduation requirements, either as a new course offering or through the transformation of an existing English 4 course. While Transitional English must be submitted for state portability and recorded on transcripts as a single course, it is encouraged for Districts to integrate competencies and performance indicators across disciplines and grade levels to further support student achievement. Transitional English is structured as a year-long course, although a district utilizing competency-based approaches may accelerate individual students based on demonstrated attainment of the Transitional English competencies.

The use of Transitional English courses will reduce remediation rates to prepare and bridge the gap for high school seniors who need more instruction and practice to strengthen their reading, writing, critical thinking, metacognitive, and essential skills for college success.

Secondary-Postsecondary Collaboration
Transitional English courses are developed through a collaborative process among one or more school districts, a community college, and any partnering universities, with alignment to State competencies, performance indicators, and course parameter expectations. The secondary-postsecondary partnership will enter into a local partnership agreement addressing the curriculum documentation, assessment methods, and grading policies for the course. The collaborative secondary-postsecondary process must extend to implementation, with joint systems as defined in the local partnership agreement addressing, at minimum, professional development, review and discussion of student work, and assessment processes.

Integration of Content Competencies
Transitional English courses cover content competencies in the areas of Reading, Critical Thinking and Analysis, and Writing. The course and instructional delivery methods must fully integrate across these three competency areas, and avoid teaching the reading and writing competencies in an isolated, subskills fashion. The course pedagogy and related text selections must be organized around themes, critical issues, or concepts that direct student focus to larger ideas that foster critical thinking, reading and writing skills. State-provided resources will describe example themes that may be utilized or adapted by local partnerships.
Metacognition and Essential Skills

Transitional courses are intended to help students develop self-awareness and overall college and career readiness. To that end, in addition to the content competencies, the courses include domains of:

- Metacognition, to support students to consider how, why, and when to employ various reading and writing strategies and processes; and
- Essential skills, relating to overall college readiness, employability, and life success.

While the metacognition and essential skill competencies are not assessed directly, they must be integrated throughout transitional instruction and embedded in course activities.

Texts and Materials

In a Transitional English course, students engage with a variety of college-level texts of different types, with a primary focus on non-fiction. The course must use a variety of modes, which may include technical texts, pictures, journal articles, songs, research briefs, videos, and other nontraditional media. Selected materials should be interesting to students, offering choice whenever possible to improve motivation and engagement and to better relate to students’ life and career goals. State-provided resources will include example open-source text and material lists that can be utilized or adapted by local partnerships.

Grading and Assessment

The district and college must agree to a grading and assessment structure such that receiving a “C” or better indicates the competencies for the course were met and the student is considered ready for college-level English courses and college-level reading expectations. Assessment of students’ work in Transitional English must be holistic and progressive, as described in the local partnership agreement. A holistic assessment approach must be used that incorporates a variety of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to measure students’ progress toward attainment of the competencies. A progressive grading approach must offer multiple opportunities for feedback and student reflection and support students to demonstrate skills and growth over the length of the course. The grading approaches in local partnership agreements must adhere to the following additional specific parameters:

- Formal, graded writing assignments must account for at least 60% of the final grade
- No single assignment may be 50% or more of the final grade
- The course must include at least three multiple-draft essays
Transitional English courses cover content competencies in the areas of Reading, Critical Thinking and Analysis, and Writing. In addition to the content competencies, the courses include competency domains of:

- **Metacognition**, to support students to consider how, why, and when to employ various reading and writing strategies and processes; and
- **Essential Skills**, relating to overall college readiness, employability, and life success.

These competencies are integrated throughout Transitional English instruction, as reflected in the graphic below:
### Content Competencies

These competencies are designed to frame the outcomes of a Transitional English course for high school seniors to prepare them for success in college level coursework.

#### READING & WRITING

**Content Competencies**

(1) Students can consider reading and writing tasks and adapt their approaches and strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IN READING</th>
<th>IN WRITING</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Students can apply and adjust active reading strategies to texts of similar rigor and structure as those they would likely encounter in a college or career setting.  
  a. Employ appropriate pre-reading and active reading strategies to aid in comprehension and interpretation.  
  b. Recognize and use text characteristics (titles, headings, subtitles, illustrations, graphs, charts, visuals, glossaries, chapter summaries, bolded and italicized text, etc.) to preview a text to make meaning.  
  c. Use a text’s structural characteristics (topic sentences and transitional words and phrases, introductions, conclusions, patterns of organization, etc.) to make meaning. | Students can identify the audience, purpose, and context of any given writing task.  
  a. Make choices about content based on audience and purpose.  
  b. Make choices about organization based on audience and purpose.  
  c. Make choices about development based on audience and purpose.  
  d. Make choices about style and tone based on audience and purpose. |
| Students can summarize a text.  
  a. Identify the topic of the text and the author’s intent.  
  b. Accurately explain the main ideas of a text in their own words. | Students can choose writing processes based on audience, purpose, and task.  
  a. Choose brainstorming and drafting strategies appropriate for the audience, purpose, and task.  
  b. Use reflection and feedback from peers and teacher to strengthen writing.  
  c. Use editing and proofreading strategies to improve writing and conventions.  
  d. Submit the final product in an appropriate format based on task, audience, and purpose. |
| Students can expand passive (recognition) and active (expressive) academic and career-related vocabularies.  
  a. Determine meaning through context clues.  
  b. Determine meaning using dictionary skills.  
  c. Determine meaning using knowledge of word parts.  
  d. Determine meaning of words and phrases, including figurative, technical, and connotative meaning.  
  e. Recognize the difference between vocabulary that is appropriate in academic settings and vocabulary that is appropriate in career-related settings.  
  f. Incorporate academic vocabulary in their writing. |
**READING & WRITING**  
*Content Competencies*

**(2) Students can analyze, evaluate, and synthesize while reading and writing.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IN READING</th>
<th>IN WRITING</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students can analyze and interpret texts.</td>
<td>Students can demonstrate how to incorporate and document relevant information from a variety of reliable print, digital, and other media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Identify explicit and implicit ideas, main ideas, and supporting details.</td>
<td>a. Choose sources based on task, audience, and purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Determine the author’s purpose, point of view and tone, and discern the mood of a given text.</td>
<td>b. Use sources to provide evidence to support a central idea or opinion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Draw logical conclusions using evidence from a given text.</td>
<td>c. Incorporate sources by using signal phrases, quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Evaluate arguments by analyzing the use of rhetorical strategies and by identifying logical structures, including fallacies and/or errors in logical reasoning.</td>
<td>d. Identify content that needs to be cited, including summarized and paraphrased ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Logically extend ideas related to a given text by employing at least one of the following connections: text-to-text, text-to-self, or text-to-world.</td>
<td>e. Develop Works Cited lists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Interpret figurative language (e.g., simile, metaphor, euphemism, hyperbole, etc.) and understand their role in the text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CRITICAL THINKING & ANALYSIS

### Content Competencies

(2) Students can analyze, evaluate, and synthesize while reading and writing. (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IN READING</th>
<th>IN WRITING</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students can understand credibility and reliability of evidence in texts while reading.</td>
<td>Students can engage with evidence while writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Evaluate the effectiveness of an author’s use of structure in exposition or argument, including the ways in which the structure may make points clear, convincing, and engaging.</td>
<td>a. Write to reflect on the stylistic decisions made by other authors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Determine (discuss) an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.</td>
<td>b. Engage with evidence to expand and support their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives to convey their messages with impact and beauty appropriate to a given audience and purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Assess the strengths and limitations of a source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience.</td>
<td>c. Write to support claims for analysis or to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information in substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Evaluate the author’s use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the source.</td>
<td>d. Demonstrate an ability to evaluate source texts for the author’s purpose, angle, and coverage including where the text leaves matters uncertain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Evaluate differences in sources across modes and media.</td>
<td>e. Apply diverse sources that present authoritative, trustworthy, credible, and reliable information to support their own analysis and claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Evaluate how claims are supported with evidence and the effectiveness of those claims.</td>
<td>f. Demonstrate an understanding of the reasons behind citation practices to avoid plagiarism and overreliance on any one source.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Develop interpersonal and intertextual connections.</td>
<td>g. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) Students can demonstrate information literacy skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IN READING</th>
<th>IN WRITING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As an engaged reader...</td>
<td>As a contributing writer...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Evaluate role as a reader in information community.</td>
<td>a. Evaluate role as a contributing writer in information community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Understand what makes sources authoritative and relevant to a given topic.</td>
<td>b. Evaluate and integrate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats, as well as in words, in order to address a question or solve a problem.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Process Competencies**

While these competencies are not assessed directly, they must be integrated throughout transitional instruction and embedded in course activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METACOGNITION</th>
<th>Planning and Monitoring</th>
<th>Self-Reflection</th>
<th>Transfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process Competencies</strong></td>
<td>Students can construct and monitor an adaptive plan of action to structure their learning process using reading, writing, or critical thinking skills.</td>
<td>Students can reflect upon collected and original thoughts in order to strengthen their reading, writing, and critical thinking processes.</td>
<td>Students can transfer reading, writing, and critical thinking processes purposefully to authentic contexts beyond the ELA classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Identify and address break-downs in reading comprehension.</td>
<td>a. Understand the impact of biases and assumptions on various groups and on themselves.</td>
<td>a. Make connections between self and world.</td>
<td>a. Make connections between self and world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Assess and address effectiveness of writing strategies to communicate a claim.</td>
<td>b. Monitor biases and assumptions while working through literacy tasks.</td>
<td>b. Make intertextual connections.</td>
<td>b. Make intertextual connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Set goals for on-going learning with appropriate revisions in response to progress.</td>
<td>c. Make connections between self and the task.</td>
<td>c. Create new meaning and original ideas from learned content.</td>
<td>c. Create new meaning and original ideas from learned content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Develop and assess learning process.</td>
<td>d. Seek help from appropriate resources.</td>
<td>d. Apply background knowledge to new learning contexts.</td>
<td>d. Apply background knowledge to new learning contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Ask questions to identify issues of comprehension and complexity.</td>
<td>e. Articulate and assess methods of self-reflection.</td>
<td>e. Recognize and apply complementary learning processes among reading, writing, critical thinking.</td>
<td>e. Recognize and apply complementary learning processes among reading, writing, critical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Persist through complex literacy tasks.</td>
<td>f. Adjust position, perspective, or plan as needed.</td>
<td>f. Identify appropriate literacy strategies for given task.</td>
<td>f. Identify appropriate literacy strategies for given task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Engage challenging ideas, methods, and texts in order to develop literacy skills.</td>
<td>g. Reflect on how understanding has changed.</td>
<td>g. Apply cross-disciplinary learning processes to new learning contexts.</td>
<td>g. Apply cross-disciplinary learning processes to new learning contexts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### ESSENTIAL SKILLS

**Process Competencies**

The Essential Skills are critical not only for success with reading and writing in postsecondary environments but with all postsecondary coursework as well as in the workplace and in society more broadly. For student success, transitional courses include an emphasis on the non-cognitive skills outlined in the Illinois Essential Employability Skills Framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Ethic</th>
<th>Cultural Competence</th>
<th>a. Know others as individual people and build relationships regardless of personal similarities or differences.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>a. Overcome obstacles to achieve their goals/accomplish their tasks.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. Take responsibility for their own success by seeking assistance and guidance.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technology Use</td>
<td>a. Stay on-task and use appropriate technological tools for appropriate purposes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work Ethic</td>
<td>Time Management</td>
<td>a. Prioritize tasks and establish realistic deadlines that allow time for the work to be completed with feedback and revision.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. Respect others’ time by being on-time and having work completed when due.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>a. Be present and engaged when expected or promised.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. Complete one’s “fair share” of work based on the team’s expectations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>a. Be open-minded to others’ ideas and feedback as well as different processes and products.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding Perspectives</td>
<td>a. Understand that others will have different experiences and ideas.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. Identify others’ perspectives through written text and in face-to-face work.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Conflict Resolution</td>
<td>a. Engage with others in ways that focus on the content and are respectful in tone.</td>
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<td>b. Seek to achieve compromise that is acceptable to everyone involved.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c. Ask for support in mediating conflict when necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Technology Use</td>
<td>a. Use correct technology (i.e., email and face-to-face) to share a particular message for a specific audience and purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking and Listening</td>
<td>a. Eliminate distractions to focus on the speaker.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. Provide appropriate non-verbal feedback cues and body language to acknowledge what the speaker is saying.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c. Convey ideas and express information in a manner appropriate for the audience, purpose, and task.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX: Competency Development Group Membership List

SECONDARY REPRESENTATIVES

Lisa Balata
Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Ridgewood High School

Pam Barris
English Teacher, Glenview High School

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English Teacher, Township High School District 211

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Felice Hybert
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Megan Knight
Director of Academic Programs and Pathways, Township High School District 214

Eric Lasky
STEM Division Head, Ridgewood High School

Renee Mack
Career Readiness Coordinator, Bremen High School District #228

Lauren May
Assistant Principal, Oak Lawn Community High School

Carrie Mueller
Curriculum Dean for Secondary ELA and World Languages, Rockford Public Schools

Tom O'Shea
Language Arts Department Supervisor, Bremen High School District #228

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English Teacher, Waukegan High School

Andrea Woldman
English Teacher, Belvidere Community Unity School District #100

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Odile Blazquez
Associate Professor English Language Arts, Sauk Valley Community College

Linsey Cuti
Professor of English, Kankakee Community College

Alison Douglas
Professor of English & Director of Alliance for College Readiness, Elgin Community College

Michael Dufresne
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Jason Evans
Professor of Developmental Writing and English, Prairie State College

Matt Felumlee
Professor of English, Heartland Community College

Aja Gorham
College Readiness Writing, Triton College

Magdelyn Helwig
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Jason Klein
Director of P-20 Initiatives, Northern Illinois University

Kathy Kusiak
Associate Professor of English & English Liaison, Lake County High Schools, College of Lake County

Kathy Martensen
Assistant Provost for Education Programs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Kristi McDuffie
Associate Director of Rhetoric, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Judi Nitsch
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Mary Ruettgers
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Robyn Schiffman
Dean of the Division of Humanities, Fine Arts, and Social Sciences, Illinois Valley Central College

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Laurenn York
English Faculty, Lincoln Land Community College
STATE AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

Brandi Burley  
Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Illinois State Board of Education

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Project Administrator, Curriculum and Instruction, Illinois State Board of Education

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ELA Principal Consultant, Illinois State Board of Education

Samantha Leav  
Mathematics Principal Consultant, Illinois State Board of Education

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Senior Associate Director, Illinois Board of Higher Education

Amy Spies  
Assistant Director, Academic Affairs, Illinois Board of Higher Education