

ADVOCACY UPDATE: JULY 2, 2021



CONTEXT: With our collective attention diverted by the global pandemic, the Illinois State Board of Education authorized several (relatively unpublicized) changes to English Language Arts teacher licensure. Some of these changes were made in response to the State’s teacher shortage.

This ICTA Advocacy update highlights some of those changes. **This commu-
nique is intended for informational purposes only.** It should not be miscon-
strued as an endorsement of ISBE’s licensure changes.

ISBE BRINGS BACK COMMUNICATION EDUCATION “SPEECH” SECTION ADDED TO APPROVED COURSEWORK FOR ELA (SENIOR HIGH) LICENSURE

Until recently, in order to earn a Professional Educator License (PEL) with an English Language Arts (Senior High) endorsement, ISBE required that teacher candidates acquire 24 semester hours of subject-area credit from a list of coursework focused primarily on composition and literature. However, responding to the State’s teacher shortage, ISBE has changed its ELA (Senior High) endorsement criteria. In addition to a content area test, endorsement-seekers must only take 18 semester hours of 100-level or higher content area coursework (earning a “C—” or better).

Of note, ISBE considerably expanded its list of acceptable content area coursework. ISBE added a section called “Speech.” To meet the now-required 18 semester hours and earn a PEL, teacher candidates may now take courses in interpersonal communication, oral communication, oral interpretation and group discussion, public relations, public speaking, and “speech, voice and movement techniques.” These additions to the ISBE Approved Coursework list are

*Teacher candidates may now take courses in **interpersonal communication, oral communication, oral interpretation and group discussion, public relations, public speaking, and “speech, voice and movement techniques.”** These additions to the ISBE Approved Coursework list are among the same courses stripped from the list in the early 2000s, when ISBE “folded” its **Speech endorsement into an all-encompassing ELA endorsement.***

among the same courses stripped from the list in the early 2000s, when ISBE “folded” its Speech endorsement into an all-encompassing ELA endorsement.

Additionally, ISBE has tasked in-state college and university teacher preparation programs to revise their required courses, such that colleges and universities “consider all additions to the Approved Coursework list.” So long as content area coursework is selected from ISBE’s updated list, that college or university’s ELA teacher preparation program will “officially meet Illinois standards.”

This does not mean that ELA teacher candidates are now *required* to take communication courses. It does mean, however,

that for the first time in almost two decades, ISBE will “count” communications-specific courses (from the defunct Speech endorsement) as prerequisites toward the receipt of an ELA teacher license. Moreover, in-state universities and colleges are encouraged to include communication education courses into their teacher-preparation programs.

ICTA’s position statement on teacher preparation proposes that ISBE adopt a new model for endorsing qualified oral communication teachers, including speaking and listening coursework. The ICTA Advocacy Committee is currently researching how in-state colleges and universities are modifying their teacher preparation programs to meet ISBE’s new expectations.

OLD ISBE REQUIREMENTS

- Twenty-four semester hours of subject-area credit.
- “ISBE Approved Coursework” list comprised of general, nonspecific subject-area topics: “Composition and rhetoric... grammar, language components, literary forms, American and British literature, speech, journalism, proofreading and editing, and reading.”

NEW ISBE REQUIREMENTS

- Eighteen semester hours of subject-area credit.
- Expanded “ISBE Approved Coursework” list divided into English, Journalism, Reading, Speech.
- “Speech” coursework topics include interpersonal and oral communication, oral interpretation, group discussion, public relations, public speaking, and “speech, voice, and movement techniques.”

REVISIONS TO THE ELA **CONTENT-AREA EXAM**

SPEAKING AND LISTENING SECTION REVAMPED, EXPANDED FOR RIGOR



CONTEXT: To earn a Professional Educator License with an ELA (Senior High) endorsement, ISBE still requires candidates to pass a content area exam. All Illinois Licensure Testing System (ILTS) content area exams undergo comprehensive revisions “to ensure that [they] accurately reflect the minimum content knowledge and basic skills required of the Illinois public school educator.”

The ELA content area exam recently underwent a comprehensive revision. This ICTA Advocacy update highlights some of those changes.

On the revised ELA exam, teacher candidates are expected to be familiar with several content subareas. One of them—an expanded, more rigorous Speaking, Listening, and Viewing section—requires examinees to “apply knowledge of principles and approaches” for “developing skills for speaking, presenting, and participating in academic discussions” and “developing listening and viewing skills.” Other subareas of the test now include speaking and listening questions. For example, in a Reading subsection, examinees must demonstrate understanding of “the relationships of reading to writing, listening, and speaking,” apply “knowledge of oral communication’s role in reading development,” and apply “knowledge of how to effectively use oral language activities.”

The study guide for the revised ELA content area exam contains sample questions covering 40 speaking and listening-specific topics and learning objectives. Teacher candidates are expected to answer questions regarding “oral language activities; whole- and small-group collaboration; promoting civil, democratic discussions; nonverbal and verbal communication; speech delivery; vocal qualities; audience, context, setting, and purpose; speech and presentation assessment strategies; active, critical, and selective listening; and evaluating the stated and implied meanings of spoken messages,” among others.

By law, the Illinois legislature must be kept informed on the effectiveness of each content area exam—specifically how well or poorly students from specific colleges or universities are performing on individual content area exams. Data on content area test scores is regularly sent to the Illinois Secretary of the Senate, the Clerk of the House, the Illinois Legislative Research Unit, and the Illinois State Government Report Center.

The ICTA position statement proposes a content area exam correlated with speaking and listening coursework. The ICTA Advocacy Committee is currently researching a “subarea score breakdown,” so as to provide a statewide snapshot of how well teacher candidates perform on the Speaking, Listening, and Viewing section of the revised ELA content area test.

ICTA Advocacy is also in the process of acquiring all content area test score reporting sent to ISBE by the state legislature last year.

*The **study guide** for the revised ELA content area exam contains sample questions covering 40 **speaking and listening** topics, including “**oral language activities; whole- and small-group collaboration; promoting civil, democratic discussions; nonverbal and verbal communication; speech delivery; vocal qualities; audience, context, setting, and purpose; speech and presentation assessment strategies... active, critical, and selective listening; and evaluating the stated and implied meanings of spoken messages,**” among others.*

SAMPLE QUESTION #1

A speaker is nervous about delivering a presentation to a large, formal audience. [What] is likely to be most effective in minimizing communication anxiety?

SAMPLE QUESTION #2

A teacher plans to ask each student to view and give impromptu talks in response to video recordings of informative, persuasive, and special occasion speeches. [What strategy] would most effectively differentiate the process for students who are struggling?