



# Michigan Council of Teachers of English

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## Statement on Benchmarks

**BACKGROUND:** The following was read into the minutes of the Michigan State Board of Education in April of 1996.

The Michigan Council of Teachers of English represents 1000 Michigan English and language arts professionals. We are teachers, administrators, teacher educators, professional development providers and parents. Our concerns run the gamut from early literacy to English education and research. We sponsor or co-sponsor four conferences each year. We publish language arts journals and newsletters, and we present workshops and special events for teachers throughout the state. Since 1924, the MCTE has provided leadership and a professional home for teachers of English language arts.

We have worked in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Education on several important projects, most notably working under contract with the MDE to design the High School Proficiency Test in Writing. More recently, MCTE members have provided leadership throughout the process established by the legislature to create the Michigan English Language Arts Frameworks. MCTE took a leadership role in creating the MELAF Standards accepted in 1995 and the Benchmarks now under consideration.

The Benchmark creation process has included several years of public review, countless meetings, and interactive discussions at conventions, professional development conferences, workshops and MELAF Demonstration Sites. Thus, the Benchmarks, as presented, reflect the professional consensus of English language arts teachers in Michigan. The MELAF Benchmarks are research based and specific enough to direct curriculum development, yet broad enough to allow local control of curriculum and instruction.

This past summer, MCTE participated in the MELAF conference which drew 50 local district teams willing to develop and revise curriculum following the new state English Language Arts Standards and proposed Benchmarks. These districts have committed resources and time to curriculum change in accordance with these Benchmarks. Our 1000 MCTE members are eager to use this model curriculum which works for today's student growing into tomorrow's world.

The Michigan Council of Teachers of English therefore urges the Michigan State Board of Education to approve the Benchmarks as presented. We urge you to support the democratic process. Michigan's children deserve, Michigan's parents want, and Michigan needs this long-awaited birth of Benchmarks clear enough to provide potent models, broad enough to support local control.