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**Part III: Review of Brazilian National Learning Standards (NLS):
Portuguese Language**

By Sheila Byrd Carmichael - January 2016

Review of Brazilian National Learning Standards (NLS): Portuguese Language¹

Sheila Byrd Carmichael, January 2016

The Brazilian National Learning Standards publication, commissioned by the Lemann Center at Stanford University, is a series of policy analysis papers discussing the first draft of the Brazilian National Learning Standards released in September 2015 by the Brazilian Federal Government. It also discusses some implementation challenges the country will face once the standards are approved by the National Council of Education.

I. Documents Reviewed

The following documents were examined when conducting this analysis:

- *Brazilian National Learning Standards: Excerpts of Preliminary Version (Unofficial Translation),*

Sections One through Five, entitled:

- *Guiding Principles of the National Learning Standards*
- *Preliminary Document to the National Learning Standards*
- *Introductory texts for the Area Languages*
- *Introductory texts for the Curricular Component Portuguese*
- *Learning objectives for the Curricular Component Portuguese¹*

II. Organization of the Standards

Preceding the actual standards, called the "Learning Objectives for the Curricular Component Portuguese," are several lengthy introductory sections that 1) explain the "Guiding Principles" for the "National Learning Standards" generally (i.e., for all content areas, "Languages, Mathematics, Human Sciences, and Nature Sciences"); 2) describe the "Principles, Organization Method, and Content" for all content areas; and 3) outline an approach to the study of languages not typically observed in sets of English language arts standards in the United States:

In the Common National Curricular Base (NLS), the Languages Area encompasses four curriculum components: Portuguese Language, Modern Foreign Language, Arts, and Physical Education. These components articulate themselves in the sense that they include experiences in the creation, the production and the fruition of languages. Reading and writing a short story, watching a film or a dance performance, playing capoeira, making a sculpture or visiting an art exhibition, are all language experiences (page nine).

¹ This document was commissioned by the Lemann Center at Stanford University by language expert Sheila Byrd Carmichael in January 2016.

*Review of Brazilian National Learning Standards (Languages): Excerpts of Preliminary Version
Sheila Byrd Carmichael (February 1, 2016)*

While the focus of the actual objectives for the Portuguese language ultimately *is* on the kind of content and skills usually described in sets of English language arts standards in the United States, the introductory material makes clear that the purpose of the study of languages in this context is “its relevance to the expression of and interaction among the subjects” (page 10). Knowledge of languages, the authors remind us, is “executed not as an end, but as means to a deeper understanding of the ways to express oneself and to participate in the world” (page 10).

The standards are presented by grade level (grades one through 12) and fall into six categories, called “Fields of Activity” in the translation reviewed:

- Practices of Everyday Life (grades one through eight)
- Artistic and Literary Practices
- Political and Citizen Practice
- Investigative Practices
- Cultural Practices of Information and Communication Technologies
- Work World Practices (high school only)

These categories seem designed to reinforce the theme of integration that characterizes the approach to language study in the NLS. They reflect the authors’ assertion that language is “a means of interaction between subjects...” (page 18) and convey the importance of “contextualization of school knowledge” (page 19).

A series of “learning objectives” (hereafter simply “objectives”) describe grade-specific expectations within each category.

III. Methodology for Analysis

This analysis of the standards conveys the ways in which the standards do or do not address the “**ELA-Content-Specific Criteria**” established by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute (TBFH) for its *State of State Standards* report in 2010.² These criteria fall under the following categories:

1. Reading
2. Writing
3. Listening and Speaking
4. Oral and Written Language Conventions

5. Research

6. Media

These criteria (see Appendix A) guided the reviewer to examine the standards and objectives in the most comparable NLS language categories or, more often, in a number of the NLS language categories since the NLS categories and the Fordham categories are quite differently conceived. For example, the TBFi criteria for “Research” standards guided the reviewer to examine objectives in at least three NLS language categories, “Investigative Practices,” “Cultural Practices of Information and Communication Technologies,” or even “Work World Practices” in order to account for differences in organization.

This review also considers the “**Clarity and Specificity**” criteria for the TBFi 2010 report, the “top” score point descriptions for which (a 3 out of a possible 3 points in that analysis) are noted here:

Standards are coherent, clear, and well organized.

1. The scope and sequence of the material is apparent and sensible. They provide solid guidance to users (students, teachers, curriculum directors, test developers, textbook writers, etc.) about the content knowledge and skills required to do well on the exam. The right level of detail is provided.
2. The document(s) are written in prose that the general public can understand and are mostly free from jargon. The standards describe things that are measurable (i.e., can lead to observable, comparable results across students and schools). The standards as a whole clearly illustrate the growth expected through the grades.

Please note that The Thomas B. Fordham Institute was not consulted in any way for this review, nor were any of its employees asked to examine Brazil’s standards for this review.

No scores have been assigned in this review; the criteria simply provided a benchmarking scheme for the reviewer, who had helped develop the criteria, and who maintains their efficacy for evaluating K-12 ELA standards. Results of the holistic analysis are summarized in the following section, Section IV.

IV. Summary of Strengths and Weaknesses

In general, the **strength** of the standards is the laudable nature of their stated goals, for example:

1. The standards acknowledge the importance of integration across content areas.
2. The standards prioritize the “real world” applicability of the grade-by-grade objectives.
3. The standards communicate the need for students to understand and use language in ways that promote good citizenship.
4. The standards encourage curiosity both within and outside of the classroom.

In addition, the standards exhibit some particularly interesting additions, not seen often enough in U.S. standards, such as requiring memorization and recitation of literary works.

Much of the discussion that follows regarding the weaknesses of the objectives, however, will concern the fact that the lofty goals above and others stated in introductory materials (such as those on page 20) do not necessarily translate well into specific, actionable, and measurable or observable expectations for students in school classrooms.

Despite the acknowledgement that these standards comprise only the “common basis of the curriculum of every Brazilian school—a basis that is not the entire school curriculum but part of it” (page six), they largely eschew the rigor, coherence, and specificity that should characterize even basic common expectations for all students. The standards do state that “a diversified curriculum” must be added to the “common core,” one that:

...must be built in consonance with the common core and with the realities of each school—in respect not only to local culture but also to the choices of each educational system regarding the experiences and knowledge to be offered to students throughout their schooling. (page six)

Such language only exacerbates, unfortunately, the potential for inconsistency in the quality of curricula across school districts, schools, and perhaps even classrooms.

In this way, the NLS language standards seem to emulate the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts in the United States, which also concede that they must be “complemented by a well-developed, content-rich curriculum” (CCSS, page six). In both cases, the assurance of a consistently rigorous curriculum for all students remains elusive because of the myriad ways in which these sets of primarily skills-based standards may be interpreted and implemented. That said, the CCSS arguably does more to ensure the quality and complexity of “inputs and outputs” through its appended discussions of “text complexity” and “close reading,” as well as its “Text Exemplars,” “Sample Performance Tasks,” and “Samples of Student Writing.”

The **weaknesses** in the current draft of the NLS for Portuguese discussed below come in the form of gaps, redundancies, idiosyncrasies, and—in the aggregate—a general lack of specificity and coherence that makes it hard to say that they exemplify language standards that will guarantee rigorous, coherent, and consistently implemented curricula in classrooms. In general, the standards could be improved remarkably by editing the heavy use of academic jargon, reorganizing the objectives into more distinct categories or strands; making the content more rigorous (especially in grades one through eight), more sequential, and more coherent both within and across grade levels; including a list of exemplar texts and/or authors; and adding sample student tasks, scoring rubrics, and student work—accompanied by scoring criteria and annotations that explain why the sample student work meets the objectives.

These refinements are achievable without sacrificing the worthy goal of establishing an integrated curriculum. It is possible to convey the content and skills unique to the various disciplines *and to do so in an integrated context*. Eminent education historian, Arthur Bestor, long ago observed that “...many offerings in the liberal arts and sciences have failed to provide the intellectual discipline which they promise.” In that spirit, he suggests, we can and must train students to think, for example, like historians, literary critics, scientists, and mathematicians. Accordingly, students can learn to use each discipline to its advantage in the service of any manner of “integrated” intellectual challenges in the future. “The answer,” Bestor confirms, “is not to banish the scholarly and scientific disciplines, but to hold them rigorously to their task.”³ Brazil would be wise to consider how to make its language standards reflect more clearly the unique and important aspects of the discipline of language study first and foremost, and then consider the most efficacious way to integrate the discipline with others as they subsequently develop integrated curricula. As is, the standards do not clearly convey the most essential content and skills unique to the study of Portuguese.

³ Arthur Bestor, *Education Wastelands*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1953), pp. 20- 21.

Following is detailed commentary (particularly about reading), organized by the TBFI criteria described on pages two and three (“ELA Content-Specific Criteria” and “Clarity and Specificity”).

ELA Content-Specific Criterion 1 (Reading)

Reading Acquisition

The objectives for reading acquisition are erratic and not described in a systematic way that would help ensure the quality of reading instruction in early childhood and elementary programs nor the careful treatment of both literary and informational text throughout the grades.

An added section for grades one through three called “Alphabetic/Orthographic Written System and Writing Technologies Acquisition” contains some objectives related to reading acquisition skills (including some expectations for learning to write), but it is disjointed and uneven in its detail. For example, one packed objective in grade one states:

Perform phonological analysis of words, segmenting them orally into smaller units (parts of words, syllables), identifying rhymes, alliterations, and observing the sound function of phonemes in words; relate the sound elements to their written representation.

This one objective addresses related but also distinct content and skills that must be taught in a particular sequences (starting sooner than grade one) and delineated in detail for teachers.

Other objectives are at once odd in their juxtaposition of content, as well as vague, such as this objective, also from grade one:

Write your own name and use it as a reference in order to write and read other words; build phoneme/grapheme connections.

How do students use their names as reference points for reading and writing other words? How do they “build [knowledge of?] phoneme/grapheme connections,” and how will teachers assess that “building” unless the sequence of phonemes and graphemes is detailed in the objectives?

Many objectives are simply too vague to be understood and their purpose gleaned, such as the grade two objective in this category:

Understand the function and importance of storage and text circulation spaces such as the school library, websites, bookstores, newsstands, etc.

A recognizable progression of rigor in reading skills acquisition is also absent. For example, a grade one objective states:

Recognize that syllables vary in their consonantal-vowel combination (i.e. learn the following syllable patterns: CV, CCV, CVV, CVC, V, VC, VCC, CCVCC) and that vowels are present in all syllables in Portuguese.

The second grade objective, presumably designed to address a new level of content and skills acquisition in this realm essentially restates the same objective:

Recognize that syllables can vary as much as the combination of consonants and vowels (CV, CCV, CVV, CVC, V, VC, VCC, CCVCC); recognize vowels are present in all syllables in Portuguese.

Mapping the objectives into more specific categories (e.g., "Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, etc.) in a side-by-side fashion, as here, might help writers and users recognize and fill gaps in content and eliminate redundancies within and across grades.

	Grade One	Grade Two	Grade Three	Grade Four...
Objective 1				
Objective 2...				

Treatment of Literary and Informational Texts

The objectives for analyzing literary and informational texts are also erratic: they sometimes address specific genres and characteristics of genres (including various literary devices); sometimes not. They sometimes detail approaches to reading various kinds of literature or informational text; sometimes not. Understanding and explaining the structures of literary and informational texts are not addressed in any systematic way; and, overall, it is difficult to tease out a coherent progression of content and skills in terms of how to analyze the many genres of literary and informational texts—including literary nonfiction—because the overlapping

expectations are spread among the vague categories of “Literary and Artistic Practices,” “Political & Social Citizenship Practices and “Investigative Practices.”

“Literary and Artistic Practices” is perhaps the most straightforward of the categories and does address some aspects of analyzing “literary” texts, though few genres or their defining elements are delineated in systematic detail. Neither are stylistic devices discussed in much detail, except in high school, and even then rather sporadically. More often, the expectations are a strange mix of very vague or oddly specific expectations, as in the following set from grade four:

Literary & Artistic Practices

This axis deals with participation in situations involving reading/listening and oral/written production while creating or enjoying literary productions that both represent cultural and linguistic diversity and favor aesthetic experiences.

LILP4FOA120. Read, appreciate, and reflect about traditional literary texts of popular, African-Brazilian, African, and Indigenous cultures, as well as of other peoples’ cultures. Comprehend some of the characteristics of those texts.

LILP4FOA121. Recount fables using the characteristics found in the source text.

LILP4FOA122. Watch/Listen attentively and with an interest to songs, longer written stories, and theater plays of longer duration.

LILP4FOA123. Orally recount stories they read using some of the techniques employed in storytellers’ performances (intonation, voice modulation according to the character).

LILP4FOA124. Recite texts and poems by heart while planning presentation contexts in soirees and recitals.

LILP4FOA125. Recognize the resources used to mark characters’ indirect speech in narrative texts.

LILP4FOA126. Produce literary narrations adequately using direct speech markings for the lines of characters.

LILP4FOA127. Understand the sense of humor contained in strip and regular comics by relating text and image.

LILP4FOA128. Comprehend the meaning in poems by understanding words or expressions used figuratively.

LILP4FOA129. Write poems using rhymes and sonority resources.

The first standard suggests that students could read any text of any genre and merely “comprehend *some*” of their unnamed characteristics—ultimately a meaningless objective. While memorization and recitation are both worthy endeavors if the text is worthy, the texts are not named, so students might be asked to memorize texts of dubious quality and complexity. Why are comic strips deemed worthy of special attention? Fables might easily be explored at an earlier grade level, and no specific forms of poetry are called out here, as they are at some other grade levels (for students to produce, not analyze). Why is the very specific and simple (K or first grade) skill of correctly using quotation marks specified here, at grade four? Where is the discussion of literary elements and of the stylistic devices of specific genres of texts?

The categories in which we might expect to find objectives related to analyzing literary nonfiction (e.g., essays, speeches, memoirs, biographies) do not describe a coherent progression of objectives related to analyzing these or other kinds of informational texts, such as secondary sources pertaining to history or the sciences. Both the “Political & Social Citizenship Practices” category and “Investigative Practices” offer glimpses of the content and skills necessary for understanding and explaining informational texts, but neither does coherent justice to these essential skills or to the content students could be gleaning from such texts. Instead, they encourage political practices, such as formulating and argument, without having delineated what comprises a valid and true argument in the first place—or how to analyze a written or oral argument according to the laws of logic. In grade six for example, students are asked to:

Respond in writing to questions or surveys requesting a critical position; use consistent arguments and linguistic diversity that are appropriate to the communication requirements.

In grade seven, students must:

Recognize the points of view and the arguments that make the case for those views in different genres of communication, such as interviews, debates, opinion pieces, political discourse, religious preaching, charges, etc.

By high school, the expectations in this area become slightly more specific and rigorous, as in these grade ten “Investigative Practices” objectives:

LILP1MOA244. Recognize organization forms and linguistic features of genres related to knowledge production; take topical organization into consideration (i.e. from general to particular, from particular to general, etc.).

LILP1MOA245. Create summaries of didactic texts and of scientific publishing texts; recognize the typical characteristics of the summary-genre; comprehend that a summary, beyond its many social uses, is a strategy for reading and for studying.

LILP1MOA246. Create scripts for the oral presentation of study and survey results in conferences, science fairs, and other school and academic events; self-evaluate the oral presentation performance; evaluate the performance of other students in their oral presentations.

Still, the expectations could be more specific and assessable: how can we assess whether or not students “take topical organization into consideration” when recognizing “organization forms and linguistic features of genres related to knowledge production”? These phrases may be murky because of translation issues, but the skills necessary for analyzing various kinds of informational texts must be described clearly, especially so that Brazil’s high school graduates will have been well prepared for the postsecondary world, where these kinds of texts are omnipresent.

Finally, where reading is concerned, NLS for Portuguese do not meet two key criteria set forth by the TBFI for reading: 1) that they “reflect the importance of reading grade-appropriate works of outstanding [Brazilian]⁴ literature that reflect a common heritage,” and, 2) that they describe the amount, quality, and complexity of both literary and non-literary texts to be studied through the use of lists (authors and/or titles), sample passages, and/or commentary.

A typical objective under “Literary and Artistic Practices” is the following grade four objective:

⁴ The TBFI criteria reference *American* literature.

Read, appreciate, and reflect about traditional literary texts of popular, African-Brazilian, African, and Indigenous cultures, as well as of other peoples' cultures. Comprehend some of the characteristics of those texts.

As noted earlier, this kind of objective essentially conveys that teachers may teach *any* texts at all and that students may "read, appreciate, and reflect" on those texts in any way at all; how will such appreciation and reflection be assessed?

The NLS could vastly improve the clarity and rigor of its reading standards by making expectations for reading much more explicit and by appending a list of authors and texts that students should read, or—at the very least—a list of exemplary authors and texts that would clarify the quality and complexity of texts to be studied at each grade level.

ELA Content-Specific Criteria 2 (Writing)

Writing, in its various necessary forms, is not addressed in a category of its own. As with reading, the writing objectives appear sporadically in most categories, but with no particularly obvious progression in rigor across the grade levels. Teachers would have to search and find the writing objectives in the various categories, and students would be writing a certain type of poem at one grade level, developing a narrative at another, or creating "argumentation-genre texts" ("using different types of arguments") at yet another level. Mostly, the objectives provide minimal direction and/or apparent purpose. At times, the objectives do get more specific and the purpose is clear.

In grade five, for example, under the category "Cultural Practices of Information and Communication Technologies," students must:

Write/produce e-mails, messages, photographic and audiovisual register for online posting in virtual spaces used for school activities such as chat rooms, Twitter, and blogs.

It's difficult to understand exactly what is expected of the student here—and why. Is writing Twitter posts the best use of students' time? In grade ten, however, under the category of "Investigative Practices," students are asked to:

Create summaries of didactic texts and of scientific publishing texts; recognize the typical characteristics of the

summary-genre; comprehend that a summary, beyond its many social uses, is a strategy for reading and for studying.

This objective is much more specific and its purpose clear (although it could be improved by naming the “characteristics” mentioned). More consistency in “grain size,” detail, and discernible purpose is recommended.

It is difficult, therefore, to track a clear and specific progression of how students are meant to employ the writing process in the service of various writing genres at each grade level. Learning the writing process itself does not appear as an expectation in the standards, nor is it anywhere clearly defined (though the introductory material does mention it).

Many genres of writing are mentioned, but the objectives would be much easier to teach and more efficacious if they were to delineate the characteristics and quality of the writing products for each the genres (e.g., narration, exposition, argument, persuasion) appropriate at each grade level. It would be ideal if the standards were to append exemplars of the kind of student writing expected and annotations that explain why the writing meets the objectives at each grade level.

ELA Content-Specific Criteria 3 (Listening and Speaking)

As with writing, no “Speaking and Listening” strand exists in the NLS standards for language, though the “Cultural Practices of Information and Communication Technologies” category description suggests that the category addresses, among other things, “listening and oral production... disseminat[ing] and preserv[ing] information, experimentation and creation of new languages and forms of social interaction.” At a number of grade levels, however, listening and speaking skills are not discussed in that category at all. In other categories, such as “Investigative Practices” and “Everyday Life Practices,” some speaking and listening skills do appear, and occasionally oral presentations and “retelling” skills are presented under “Literary and Artistic Practices, as in grade nine:

Orally recount the plot of cinematographic and theatrical productions; reconstruct the various planes and languages that constitute the narrative sequence.

The objectives for speaking and listening could certainly be more detailed, and organized in ways that more clearly convey expectations for both informal and formal class discussions (such as Socratic Seminars), as well as for presentations. The standards only obliquely address requirements for formal presentations and do not

address at all the expectations for informal discussions and the “rules” that should govern classroom discourse in general.

Including examples of potential informal and formal discussions (and the inclusion of evaluation rubrics, such as [this one](#) from the Brooklyn Latin School—used for evaluating individual performance in a Socratic Seminar) would also help teachers understand these difficult-to-assess expectations and how to hold students accountable for them.

ELA Content-Specific Criterion 4 (Oral and Written Language Conventions)

The NLS standards do not contain any objectives for oral and written language conventions. A search for the word “grammar” revealed only a handful of rather incomprehensible references (perhaps a translation issue?) in the introductory materials:

The language is considered as a poly-system that aggregates multiple varieties, as the social situation of oral use, reading and writing. The awareness of the variation and changes in the language, and the appreciation of all varieties as having an effective and legitimate **grammar** are therefore decisive for the way to conduct the work facing the linguistic knowledge from the teacher. The appreciation of the different varieties of language implies appreciation of different social identities.

(and)

The approach of **grammatical categories** (phonetic / phonological, morphological, syntactic, morphological and syntactic) and **writing conventions** (concordance, regency, orthography, punctuation, accentuation etc.) should come in the service of oral comprehension and written and oral and written production, and not vice versa. In this way, the linguistic aspects covered in activities of reading, writing and speaking, can broaden the knowledge of the students in relation to varieties that they still don't dominate, without disqualifying the varieties of origin. As the advance in education, it is expected a gradual increase in the level of systematization and the use of grammatical categories, always in perspective of the USE-REFLECTION-USE, and it is worth

repeating, not the accumulation of content disconnected from social-discursive practices of language.

While this reviewer is not familiar with the Portuguese language, certainly it must inhere rules for grammar and usage (in spite of “variation and changes” deemed legitimate here) that students need to internalize and articulate in order to comprehend written works well, to create coherent written work of their own, and to communicate effectively when speaking, whether formally or informally. Delineating those expectations “in the service of oral comprehension and written and oral and written production” is entirely do-able and necessary for literacy. Including a category and specific expectations for understanding Portuguese grammar should therefore become a priority when revising the standards.

On a related note, vocabulary development seems almost non-existent in these standards, as well, although it is discussed in the introductory material briefly. Vocabulary is mentioned only occasionally, as in this “Political and Social Citizenship Practices” objective in grade seven:

Comprehend texts created within the political and judicial spheres, as well as petitioning texts—examples include citizens’ petitions and the Brazilian Statute on Children and Adolescents; analyze text organization (articles, sections, chapters, etc.), morphological and syntaxes features, as well as vocabulary selection.

This objective (and other mentions of “vocabulary”) in the NLS for language seem to address vocabulary only as it relates to diction. Developing a deep understanding etymology and morphology, on the other hand (especially how morphology relates to grammar) will help students increase their vocabularies immeasurably and with confidence as they encounter new words with roots and affixes previously learned.

ELA Content-Specific Criterion 5 (Research)

In order to establish understanding and faithful execution of the research process, standards should identify research as a stand-alone strand, though it would of course remain a cross-cutting proposition, since we know that many ways exist to render research findings, whether orally, in writing, or through mixed media. As is, the Portuguese standards do assign research skills to a category called “Investigative Practices,” yet the objectives do not flow logically from early grades, where the research process should be introduced, into more sophisticated kinds of research

conducted independently and with specific outcomes explained for the delivery of research findings.

Here, for example, are the “research” standards for grade six:

LILP6FOA176. Plan and present oral expositions about various topics using study sources provided by the teacher; adjust language (lexical and structural choices) for a school environment context.

LILP6FOA177. Select information from various texts used in research activity identifying the main ideas and presenting them in the form of notes.

LILP6FOA178. Analyze and create lists and tables in order to understand and organized the information contained in explanatory texts used in study and research tasks.

LILP6FOA179. Create surveys about topics relating to various knowledge areas and report the outcomes using lists and charts.

None of these standards relates obviously to those in the previous or subsequent grade, nor do they detail any required components for proficient “oral expositions,” “notes,” “lists and tables,” or “lists and charts.” Without further guidance, any manner or conveying findings might suffice here.

While students *are* asked to consider various types of sources, as in this grade 12 objective, specific protocols for adjudicating the credibility of sources, so critical to responsible research, are not included:

Analyze in oral and written texts of an argumentative nature the strategic use of persuasion features such as title creation, the disclosure or concealment of information sources, and the use of resources that ascertain or attenuate the stances taken by the author.

The standards could be improved by charting a course in the research process from grade one through grade twelve that is initially more teacher-directed and that gradually releases students to conduct independent research, establishing and refining research questions, locating and evaluating the credibility of sources, and requiring students to render finding orally, in writing, or in mixed media that employ consistent and responsible citation protocols.

ELA Content-Specific Criterion 6 (Media)

As is the case with other strands many “media” expectations referenced in the criteria must be hunted down in the NLS standards, in the “Investigative Practices” category or the “Cultural Practices of Information and Communication Technologies.”

In almost all cases, the objectives for analyzing, evaluating, creating, and presenting multimedia works are as vague as in other categories. Following is an example from grade six:

Use multimodal resources for the reception and production of texts in different media (spoken newscasts, radio programming, blogs, etc.).

In today’s world, it is essential that students be asked to recognize and evaluate the credibility of sources, identify potential biases and specific propaganda techniques in print and non-print media, *and* learn how to present information through multimedia in responsible and effective ways.

Instead, the objectives are vague and often not necessarily relevant for academic purposes, as in this grade 11 objective:

Analyze practices that propel the reader into virtual browsing based on searching engines and the selection of visited links in face of the various information services (artistic and literary archives, libraries, and virtual museums), as well as the performance of various daily social actions (purchasing, dating); consider the multimodal nature prevalence of the digital language.

It is hard to imagine exactly how or why students need to perform these vaguely described activities in an academic context.

The standards do not discuss some of the specifically mentioned techniques used in some multimedia formats, such as the *effect* of various visual and aural techniques or how and why information in print differs from that presented in other media.

V. Conclusion

To summarize, the NLS standards for Portuguese language contain many of the basic elements for strong standards; they simply need to be re-organized so that the essential characteristics of the various sub-disciplines of language are clearly addressed. Those characteristics must also be specifically explained in ways that demonstrate a logical progression in rigor for each sub-discipline across the grades. The ostensible goals of the integrated (though awkwardly artificial) categories, such as “Political and Social Citizenship Practices” may still be attained if replaced with simple sub-disciplines of language study: in this case, for example, a strand related to the analysis and production of informational text would suffice, along with the treatment of some material in an oral language strand (or “Speaking and Listening” strand).

Among the most urgent recommendations, as discussed herein, are:

1. Streamline and delete repetitions from reading and other strands.
2. Ensure that essential content is not glossed over (e.g., the sequencing of early reading acquisition skills) is included in all content areas.
3. Refine the verbs that introduce the objectives so that they are measurable or observable.
4. Append a reading list or other reading samples (preferably with commentary) to illustrate the quality and complexity of expected reading at all levels.
5. Specifically enumerate the Brazilian or other literature in translation that students should read and understand at all levels.
6. Append samples of the quality and complexity of writing at all levels, addressing especially the differences among arguments, informative/explanatory writing, and the rendering of research findings in various media.
7. Include objectives for grammar and vocabulary development reading and vocabulary development.

Finally, above all, use language that is as straightforward and jargon-free as possible so that teachers and students understand what is expected of them and why.