



Oregon Department of Education
Office of Educational Improvement and Innovation



Academic Content Standards

Creating Consistency across Oregon

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Standards-based education is the process of basic teaching, learning, and assessment that focuses on national, state, and local educational standards. Academic content standards are statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do at specified grade levels. Standards serve several important functions and roles:

- **What to Teach**
Standards serve as beginning points for teachers when they make decisions about what to teach.
- **Increased Achievement**
Standards focus on essential concepts, knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary for students to succeed in the 21st century. As such, they are designed to increase achievement, a major reform goal.
- **Meeting Needs of Low Achieving Students**
Because standards clearly address what all students should learn, and each school's responsibility in that effort, they can be used as a means of preventing school failure and dropout.
- **Increased Accountability**
As standards become the basis for teaching and testing, schools are evaluated on and recognized for how well students perform on local and state tests.
- **Increased State and Federal Responsibility**
Constitutionally, education is a state responsibility. Historically and traditionally, states have delegated much of the responsibility for education to local school districts. With standards, the state now plays a much more prominent role in educational affairs.

Information from Morrison, G.S. (2004) *Teaching in America*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

REAL
**Resources for Educational
Achievement and Leadership**
www.ode.state.or.us/go/REAL

- ◆ **Oregon Standards Newspaper**
On-line version (printed version no longer available) of the newspaper including standards, assessment information and articles
- ◆ **Standards by Design**
Tool for creating a customized standards document. Download the standards for an entire grade or select several grades within a subject
- ◆ **Teaching and Learning Resources**
Lessons, content background, and assessment items to assist the state's educators in knowing, understanding, and using Oregon standards
- ◆ **Strategies for Student Success**
Strategic resources for teachers and administrators that foster system-wide improvement and innovation

Content Area	Most Recent Standards Adoption Date	Next Anticipated Adoption Date
English Language Arts	K-3 -June 2002 4-8 and High School - January 2003	2012
Mathematics	K-8 Dec 2007	2009 (High School)
Science	April 2001	2009
Social Sciences	April 2001	2010
The Arts	October 2004	2011
Second Language	June 2005	2009
Physical Education	September 2001	2013
Health Education	February 2005	2013
English Language Proficiency	June 2004	2013

Oregon's Academic Content Standards: A Legacy of Progress

Over the years, state-developed curriculum has become a priority of the Oregon educational system. In 1922, the *State Manual of the Course of Study for the Elementary Schools* was printed to assist elementary schools and teachers in their instructional efforts. In this curriculum manual, responsible American citizenship was identified as the primary goal of the public school, along with an understanding of Oregon's pioneer history. Additional subjects for the elementary grades included reading, spelling, language, storytelling, penmanship, arithmetic, geography, health and hygiene, music, picture study/art, moral truths and maxims, and agriculture. According to the *Course of Study for High Schools, 1922-24*, the high school curriculum of the 1920s included electives designed to address students' varying aptitudes and future plans.



During the mid-20th century, the state produced and distributed several publications designed to assist districts with curriculum and instruction. By the 1960s, Oregon law encouraged school districts to participate in a curriculum improvement program. Eventually, a statewide curriculum improvement plan was authorized under the direction of the Department of Education, and the scope of the agency's curriculum services increased.

Toward 21st Century Schools and Academic Content Standards

In the mid to late 1970s, student performance became a central education issue. When the state required each school district to determine its own minimum number of competencies, some established as few as 10, while others set as many as 200. With the release of the 1983 federal report, *A Nation at Risk*, however, the concept of *minimums* soon lost favor. The report warned that the skills and knowledge of the U.S. workforce must improve dramatically for the country to remain internationally competitive. In response, Oregon initiated, through its *Action Plan for Excellence*, a curriculum improvement project to define the goals of education for all public school students. In response, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) developed **Common Curriculum Goals (CCG)** which helped school districts form their curriculum.



In 1991, Oregon's Educational Act for the 21st Century made education more rigorous and relevant for students through the introduction of the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) and the Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM). These certificates were earned by students meeting outcome requirements that focused on skills and task completion. In 1995, new legislation directed the state to test content as well as skills including **academic content standards** which identify what students are expected to know and be able to do in the content areas, and **benchmarks**, which served as checkpoints at grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 for students' progress toward the CIM. In addition, the legislation identified **eligible content** that could be included on the statewide knowledge and skills assessments, and set **achievement standards** to define what students needed to do in order to meet or exceed the academic content standards.

In 2001, the U.S. Congress passed the *No Child Left Behind Act*, which focuses on every child as a learner of reading, mathematics, and science. This legislation led to the development of Oregon's **grade-level foundations** (grades K-2) and **grade-level standards** (grades 3-8 and high school) in English language arts and mathematics and full-scale testing of reading and mathematics, at grades 3-8 and high school, began in 2005. In January 2007 the State Board of Education adopted more rigorous diploma requirements for all students, merging the best components of the CIM and CAM with the Oregon Diploma. CIM and CAM were phased out July 1, 2008.

A Shift in Structure: Introducing Core Standards

For the last few years, educators in Oregon have requested content standards that would better lend themselves to standards-based education. They asked for less redundancy, a tighter scope and more coherence for each of the content areas.

In 2006 ODE contracted with WestEd for an external review of Oregon’s academic standards. WestEd evaluated and made recommendations concerning the structure, quality and scope of Oregon’s standards, as well as the alignment between standards, test specifications and assessments. These recommendations, along with national trends in standards design, informed the design of Oregon’s new **core standards structure**.

The goal of a core standards structure is to create fewer standards that are more focused and coherent. Using the discipline as the guide, core standards statements are developed around the “big ideas” of a content area. Core standards statements are supported by more specific content standards which provide the details necessary for curriculum and assessment. Core standards also articulate learning progressions within and between grade levels and allow for more effective lesson design, focused instruction and creation of formative assessments.

In accordance with the Oregon Department of Education Standards Revision and Adoption Schedule, mathematics is the first content area for which core standards have been developed. Eventually all of Oregon’s academic content standards will be organized around the core standards structure.

Table 1. Oregon Standards Based on National Standards

Oregon Academic Standards Content Area	National Academic Standards Associations
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards for English Language Arts (1996), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education, McREL and ASCD
English Language Proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Standards, revised in 2006
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), Principles and Standards for School Mathematics
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Science Education Standards (1996), National Research Council Benchmarks for Science Literacy (1993), American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)
Social Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Standards for US History, National Center for History in the Schools (NCHS) National Standards for World History, NCHS National Standards for Civics and Government, Center for Civic Education National Geography Standards, National Geographic Society Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, National Council for the Social Studies National Content Standards in Economics, National Council on Economic Education
The Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Standards for Arts Education (1994), Consortium of National Arts Education Associates
Second Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)
Physical Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Standards for the Physical Education, National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE)
Health Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Health Education Standards, The American Cancer Society



The State Board of Education's decision in January of 2007 to adopt new high school graduation requirements further strengthens Oregon's standards-based education system. These requirements are designed to better prepare each student for success in college, work, and citizenship. To earn a diploma, students will need to successfully complete more rigorous credit requirements, demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skills and meet the personalized learning requirements to help them plan for their post-high school education and career goals.

The Essential Skills

For the first time, students will be required to demonstrate proficiency in certain essential skills before they are awarded the diploma. The Essential Skills are critical 21st century skills needed for success in college, the workplace, and civic life. These process skills enable students to learn content and apply their knowledge across disciplines. Because these skills are deemed critical for future success, the State Board of Education (SBE) believes that every student must be able to demonstrate proficiency in these skills to graduate from an Oregon high school.

These are not new or additional skills; they are embedded in existing content standards, already being taught in Oregon schools. Students may demonstrate the Essential Skills in academic and CTE courses, applied and integrated courses, and community or workplace experiences.

Based on recommendations from the Essential Skills Task Force and input from stakeholders across Oregon, the SBE adopted the following Essential Skills in June 2008:

- Read and comprehend a variety of text
- Listen actively and speak clearly and coherently
- Think critically and analytically
- Demonstrate civic and community engagement
- Demonstrate personal management and teamwork skills
- Write clearly and accurately
- Apply mathematics in a variety of settings
- Use technology to learn, live, and work
- Demonstrate global literacy

In 2002, the career-related learning standards (CRLS) were adopted as a requirement for graduation in 2007. Like the Essential Skills, the CRLS are foundational skills that prepare students for post-high school success. They are applied across the curriculum and in a variety of settings. Given the degree of overlap, and the potential record keeping burden and confusion of requiring two sets of similar and overlapping skills, the Essential Skills Task Force recommended merging the Essential Skills and CRLS into one set of skills.

Students will have multiple options and opportunities to demonstrate their proficiency in the Essential Skills by meeting state standards through Oregon Statewide Assessments, samples of student work scored by trained teachers, or additional national standards assessments (such as the SAT and ACT).

With the shift to a core standards structure and the adoption of more rigorous diploma requirements, Oregon is committed to maintaining a standards-based system with proficiencies and assessments that help students succeed and thrive in a democratic society.

For more information about the Oregon Diploma visit www.ode.state.or.us/go/diploma

Procedures for Developing Oregon’s Academic Content Standards

Since 1996, a procedural overview process has been established for the development of academic content standards (ORS 329.045). The purpose of this continuous improvement process is to institute a common practice for review and revision based on best practices from education literature and Oregon classrooms.

Reviewing and revising academic content standards begins with analysis of evidence on relevant national trends (e.g., *Education Week*, *Achieve*) best practices, comparative studies of student learning and cognition, and feedback from Oregon citizens. The resulting draft standards are then compared with national academic content standards and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Generally, a “match gap analysis” is done to identify any possible gaps between the existing Oregon standards and national academic content standards (see Table 1). Identified gaps are then closely examined by the Content and Assessment Panel (Panel) for the given content area. (The Panel includes teachers and administrators representing all of Oregon’s geographic regions, content specialties and grade levels. Its members may also include higher education professionals and others as necessary). The state’s standards are prioritized to address the content most important for students to know and be able to do. A match gap analysis is also done between the existing Oregon standards and relevant NAEP frameworks. This process is important because NAEP is the basis for making interstate comparisons of the content area programs of statewide educational systems.

NAEP frameworks have been developed for mathematics, science, reading, writing, civics, world geography, U.S. history, economics, foreign language and the arts. NAEP frameworks are also in development for world history.

The Panel’s next task is to advise the content area specialist in the review and revision process. The panel begins by reviewing Common Curriculum Goals to determine if they address the concepts necessary for a literate citizen in that discipline. Next, members review the specific academic content standards (what students should know and be able to do) and revise them as needed. In addition, the Panel ensures the content standards are coherent between the discipline’s various strands (sub-topics).

Panel members also identify “eligible content”—benchmark or grade-level standards appropriate for statewide assessment or statewide performance requirements. Finally, they make recommendations regarding assessment items included on the state’s knowledge and skills assessments and scoring guides.

Following the development of the first draft of the revised standards, the content area specialist uses surveys and public meetings to gather public comment from educators, parents, business/industry and interest groups located throughout the state. The specialist then uses this input to refine the draft, adjust it to be compatible with other system requirements (e.g., the General Education Requirements of the Oregon University System), and holds a public hearing. Lastly, the content specialist presents the academic content standards to the State Board of Education for initial reading and final adoption.

ODE Checklist for the Review and Revision of Standards

- ❑ Complete initial draft based on evidence of student learning, cognition and national best practices
- ❑ Conduct Content and Assessment Panel review
- ❑ Benchmark draft standards to Oregon University System (OUS) and Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) General Education Requirements, National Standards and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)
- ❑ Conduct public review for clarity and priority of content
 - Educators
 - Business and industry
 - Parents and other stakeholders
- ❑ Benchmark final draft with Oregon University System’s General Education Requirements and with NAEP
- ❑ Conduct public hearing to solicit additional input
- ❑ Recommend final version to State Board of Education for approval/adoption



Academic Content Standards—statements of what students are expected to know in particular subjects and be able to do at specified grade levels. Academic content standards are developed through the standards-setting processes established in ORS 329.045. The State Board of Education has adopted the content standards for science, social sciences, the arts, second languages, physical education, health education, and grade-level standards in English language arts and mathematics.

Achievement Standards—an objective definition of a certain level of performance. The State Board of Education adopts achievement standards which reflect the number and kinds of work samples and the scores on statewide assessments, considered sufficient to meet or exceed standards.

Alignment—the process of linking assessment, instruction and instructional materials to content and achievement standards.

Benchmark Standards—a specific statement of knowledge and skills to be demonstrated at the end of a specified grade or range of grades. In science, social sciences, the arts, physical education and health education, a student’s progress can be checked at or about grades 3, 5, 8, and 10.

Common Curriculum Goals—broad goal statements that describe the knowledge and skills expected of all students as a result of their educational experience in Oregon schools from kindergarten through grade 12. The Common Curriculum Goals include the academic content standards. This term is currently used in the content areas that have not been revised in the core standards structure.

Content and Assessment Panels—statewide advisory groups convened by the Department of Education to review, revise, and promote the academic content standards and subject-specific aspects of the assessment system. Panels consist of Oregon teachers and administrators who usually serve three-year terms.

Core Standards Structure—a small, focused, coherent set of core standards and supporting content standards at each grade level. Core standards provide the major concepts that will be the primary focus of teaching and learning at each grade. Underneath each of these core standards are content standards, which provide the details necessary for curriculum and assessment.

Education Plan—a formalized plan and process in which students identify their academic, personal and career interests which helps them connect school activities with their post-high school goals.

Eligible Content—statements related to the content standards that are eligible for inclusion in the statewide knowledge and skills assessment. The eligible content in science and social sciences is *italicized*. Note: Eligible content is only indicated in the content standards that have not been revised in the core standards structure.

English Language Proficiency Standards—statements designed to supplement the English language arts standards to ensure that Limited English Proficient (LEP) students develop proficiency in both the English language and the concepts and skills contained in the English language arts standards.

Formative Assessment—a type of classroom assessment used by teachers to help guide instruction by highlighting a student’s academic strengths and weaknesses. Formative assessment is often referred to as “assessment **for** learning” rather than “assessment **of** learning.”

Grade-level Foundations—specific statements that describe what students should know and be able to do at grades K-2 in English language arts that will prepare them to meet the grade 3 standards.

Grade-level Standards—specific statements, adopted by the State Board of Education, that describe what students should know and be able to do at grades 3 through 8 and grade 10 in English language arts and mathematics. The new Core Standards Structure provides standards at each grade level.

Performance Requirement—defined levels of achievement or performance through description of the quality of work and quantity of standards students need to meet.

Proficiency—demonstrated knowledge and skills which meet or exceed defined levels of performance.

Scoring Guide—an evaluation tool designed for scoring student work that includes specific, consistent assessment criteria for student performance and a scale to help rate student work.

Summative Assessment—a type of assessment, such as the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), that generally occurs after a period of instruction as a measure of learning; often referred to as “assessment **of** learning” rather than “assessment **for** learning.”

Work Samples—representative samples of individual student work, research papers, statistical experiments, or speaking presentations that are scored using official state scoring guides in those subjects for which one has been adopted (i.e., writing, speaking, mathematical problem solving, scientific inquiry, and social science analysis). Sample scoring guides are available in the arts, physical education, second language, and health.