

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are we reviewing standards? What is CDE's role?

In compliance with Senate Bill 08-212, also known as the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), the Colorado Model Content Standards will be revised and adopted by the Colorado State Board of Education by December 2009. The Colorado Model Content Standards exist for each Core Academic Discipline: Civics, Dance, Economics, Geography, History, Mathematics, Music, Physical Education, Reading & Writing, Science, Theatre, Visual Arts, and World Language. Recent legislation also calls for creating new standards in Financial Literacy to be imbedded in Math and Economics. As this process begins, the State Board and the Colorado Department of Education are:

- 1) Including a third party analysis of the current standards to inform how to refresh the standards as well as how to bridge pre-school and postsecondary expectations with the K-12th grade program.
- 2) Collaborating with the Early Childhood Education community, the Colorado Commission of Higher Education, and broad input from the community descriptions for its expectations of 21st century skills, school readiness, and postsecondary and workforce readiness.

What is the process for the standards revision?

The Colorado State Board of Education and the Colorado Department of Education are beginning a comprehensive revision of all thirteen Model Content Standards. These standards are the expectations of what students in Kindergarten through Twelfth grade must know and be able to do. The standards are the basis of school districts' curriculum, teacher lesson plans, and the statewide assessment program. The Model Content Standards (MCS) were first created and adopted beginning in 1993. Math and Science have been revised in the past five years, but the other content areas are between 7 and 13 years old. Throughout the 90s, Colorado was seen as a leader in standards-centered reform, but that standing has diminished in the last decade.

An overview of the standards review process and a detailed timeline can be found at:

http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/OSA/stand_rev.html

Who is involved in the standards review and what is their role?

Standards Review Stakeholders Committee

http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/OSA/stand_rev/20080903_Stakeholders_Info.doc

In February 2008, Commissioner of Education, Dwight D. Jones, identified a group of 25 Colorado leaders representing K-12 education, Early Childhood Education, Higher Education, Career and Technical Education, and the Business Community. These Stakeholders have committed to supporting the Standards Review process in its entirety. Through bi-monthly meetings the Stakeholders make recommendations to the State Board of Education regarding policy items, including grade-by-grade articulation of the standards versus grade span; ensuring that the 21st century skills, school readiness, and postsecondary and workforce readiness descriptions and the skills to embed in the revised standards as mandated by Senate Bill 08-212, and reviewing the work of the subcommittees to offer advice and feedback.

Content Review Subcommittee Members

http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/OSA/stand_rev.html

In August 2008, Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones, called upon Colorado citizens to apply for participation on thirteen content subcommittees to review the Colorado Model Content Standards as mandated by Senate Bill 08-212. More than 700 Coloradans responded. The Standards Review Stakeholders Committee selected 240 individuals to serve. Subcommittee members will be asked to commit to a "pledge" that serves as the basis of the work they will be doing. This pledge includes non-negotiable items mandated by Senate Bill 08-212, decisions made by the State Board of Education as related to the review, and a code of conduct that ensures that the review process is executed with integrity. Each subcommittee member is responsible for attending five day-long meetings where they will work together to revise the standards to include 21st century skills and postsecondary and workforce readiness indicators. Subcommittee members will also be responsible for out-of-meeting reading, including reviewing the existing standards and the WestEd gap analysis report.

Content Review Subcommittee Co-Chairs

The Stakeholders, as part of the selection of subcommittee members, selected co-chairs for each content area. It was the goal of the Stakeholders to appoint one co-chair that represented the K-12 education system (i.e. a teacher or school district personnel), and one co-chair from an alternate sector (i.e. higher education, business, military, parent). Co-chairs facilitate the revision process with their subcommittees by working towards consensus on revisions, ensuring the integrity of the revision process, and delivering the revisions to the CDE Office of Standards and Assessments by the phase deadline.

Colorado Department of Education -- Office of Standards and Assessments

http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/OSA/stand_rev.html

The CDE Office of Standards and Assessments is responsible for designing and implementing the revision process, communicating updates to the community, delivering subcommittee recommendations to the State Board of Education, assigning depth of knowledge indicators to benchmarks and performance objectives, and coordinating with the US Department of Education Peer Review team to ensure compliance and alignment per the No Child Left Behind legislation.

Colorado Department of Education -- Content Specialists-Achievement Gap and Academic Support, Office of Teaching and Learning

CDE employs Content Specialists in the Arts, Mathematics, Physical Education, Social Studies, and Science. In addition, CDE has assigned a representative from the Language, Culture and Equity Unit and the Literacy, Grants and Initiatives Unit to provide support to the World Language and Reading & Writing reviews, respectfully. The Content Specialists serve as the primary content resource to the subcommittees, monitor their content area standards review wiki site, create drafts of the resource guide and glossary for their content area's standards document, and manage the feedback from non-subcommittee members regarding the review work. As a group, the Content Specialists work together between subcommittee meetings to assimilate information to ensure alignment across and between content areas.

The Colorado Community

All meeting notes, draft of standards revisions, and research reports are available to the public via the CDE Standards Review webpage. All subcommittee and stakeholder meetings are open to the public for attendance, though not public participation. Colorado citizens are encouraged to provide feedback for the review subcommittees to consider through in-person feedback forms at all meetings and via email to Standards_Review_Com@cde.state.co.us

Professional Planning Group (PPG)

The Professional Planning Group has been contracted to assist the Colorado Model Content Standards Review Subcommittees, Stakeholders, and other participants with the planning and implementation of all meetings related to the review process. PPG, over the course of the review, will manage more than 100 meetings, to include invitations, AV, reimbursement, catering, and all communications regarding meetings.

WestEd

<http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/pg/2>

WestEd is a nonprofit research, development, and service agency. WestEd enhances and increases education and human development within schools, families, and communities. WestEd employs more than 500 staff that are located in 16 offices throughout the country, the staff includes some of the preeminent leaders in the field of education and human development. Among their specialties are education assessment and accountability; early childhood and youth development; program evaluation; community building; and policy analysis.

WestEd is doing a gap analysis of the current Colorado Model Content Standards. This analysis has four main components:

- * Evaluation of internal quality with the purpose of determining the degree to which the standards demonstrate intended depth, coherence, rigor, and breadth.
- * Review and synthesis of key findings from prior standards evaluations
- * Review and comparison of respected external referent standards, both Nationally and Internationally.
- * Analysis of the degree to which Colorado's standards contain the skills described in the draft 21st Century Skills and Abilities and the description of the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness skills.

Their report is provided as a resource to the subcommittees to use as they deem appropriate. WestEd staff consults with the CDE Office of Standards and Assessments on the revision process and supports the subcommittees with research and background information as requested.

What WestEd is NOT doing?

WestEd is not writing the Colorado Model Content Standards. The citizens of Colorado will be writing and reviewing the standards using the best research available.

What do you mean by school readiness?

School Readiness describes both the preparedness of a child to engage in and benefit from learning experiences, and the ability of a school to meet the needs of all students enrolled in publicly funded preschool or kindergarten. School Readiness is enhanced when schools, families, and community service providers work collaboratively to ensure that every child is ready for higher levels of learning in academic content.

What are 21st Century Skills? What do you mean by Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR)?

In Colorado, we have working **drafts** of the 21st century skills and postsecondary and workforce readiness skills that will be used in the development of the Colorado Model Content Standards.

21st Century Skills and Abilities:

- Critical Thinking and Reasoning: including, but not limited to, problem solving, analysis, logic, cause and effect, synthesis, inferences.
- Information Literacy: including, but not limited to, knowledge acquisition, source discernment, systems management.
- Collaboration: including, but not limited to, team resourcing, synergy, social skills, leadership.
- Self Direction: including, but not limited to, adaptability, initiative, personal responsibility, work ethics, self-advocacy.
- Invention: including, but not limited to, creativity, innovation, integration of ideas.

Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR)

- Application of reading, writing, and computing skills
- Logical reasoning and argumentation abilities
- Identification and solving of problems
- Information management skills
- Human relation skills
- Analysis and interpretation skills

Are 21st Century Skills a new fad in education?

The 21st century skills are not a fad but rather the clear outline of skills that students must be able to use when they leave their K-12 school experience. The 21st century skills describe what students need in order to apply the knowledge they learn in school. While the term and the emphasis are new, the skills are not. The evidence that there is a gap between what Colorado students know and what they can apply in the work place or in college settings is the level of remediation needed when they enter college or the workforce. The 21st century skills will bridge the gap by aligning classrooms learning with real world environments. For more information on 21st century skills go to <http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/>

Why are we going to grade level standards in all content areas K-8?

External groups, such as WestEd and the Stakeholders Group, have reviewed both the standards in Colorado and the curriculum formats used across the state and have come to the conclusion that the state of Colorado does not have an aligned education system either vertically as students go from grade level to grade level or horizontally as you look from subject to subject. This results in confusion on the part of practitioners, repetition of various instructional pieces, and gaps in the knowledge and skill sets of Colorado students. Defining the big ideas students need to master at each grade level in every content area will help ensure this alignment and also help clarify for curriculum developers what students are expected to master each year, so that students don't fall through the cracks that can be created by grade span.

What research shows grade articulation K-8 is successful?

WestEd provided the Colorado department of Education with an in-depth study regarding grade by grade articulation. This report is located at the following link:

http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/OSA/stand_rev/West_Ed_Articulation_Paper.pdf

What will standards look like in high school? Why?

High School standards are to be bundled topically to give students and schools maximum flexibility for when and how to teach the standards.

Are we throwing out the old standards?

The intent of the standards review is to update Colorado's state content standards. This is a standards review and committees are not charged with writing new standards. Instead the work of the committees is to review the current standard and look for gaps in what students are to know and be able to do. The goal is to have fewer standards and benchmarks that represent essential content, to make those standards and benchmarks clearer by developing a coherent focus on student outcomes, and to ensure that the standards exhibit higher student expectations through greater depth of content knowledge and the inclusion of the application of related skills. The committees are also unpacking the bundled grade span standards by grade level. Lastly the committees are embedding 21st century skills into the current standards where appropriate.

Why fewer, higher, clearer?

The Colorado Model Content Standards were exceptional for the time period in which they were written. However, external reviews of the Colorado Content standards indicated that there are too many standards and benchmarks across the curriculum than can be taught in depth in the school time frame. This creates a situation where districts or teachers have to pick and choose which standards they teach and which they leave out, leaving gaps and inequities in the education of Colorado students. Many of the benchmarks in the current state standards represent curriculum details and not big picture ideas. Also, many of the current benchmarks are ambiguous and do not help districts make curriculum decisions.

Why were the states and countries that were selected chosen for the external analysis?

In **Phase I** Massachusetts, Virginia, Singapore and Finland were selected due to their academic performance and the quality of their standards. The sets of standards used were also selected so that they would be relevant in all content areas reviewed during this phase. Additionally, it was hoped that by reviewing each set of external referent standards for multiple content areas, the comparison would benefit from any cross-content elements or guiding philosophies that might not be apparent in any one content area. CDE recognized that through their experience in standards development and revision, WestEd may have recommendations for other respected referents, especially ones whose value may be content-specific. These recommendations are included in the Findings and Recommendations section of the WestEd report for each content area.

In **Phase II** Massachusetts, Singapore, and Finland were selected due to their academic performance and the quality of their standards. However, Indiana was chosen as the second state for in depth analysis due to their knowledge in social studies content.

Phase III states for comparison have not been chosen but Singapore and Finland will be used for the international review.

Where do I keep up with the latest information about the revision process?

The CDE Office of Standards and Assessments website at:

http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/OSA/stand_rev.html

And

The Colorado Model Content Standards Review Wiki at <http://coloradostandardsreview.wetpaint.com/>

If I'm not on a Review subcommittee, how do I make my voice heard?

The public will be asked to give their comments during every stage of the standards review. While the standards committee meetings are held in public, they are not open for public comment, the same is true for the Standards Review Process wiki. If you would like to comment on a meeting or give us your thoughts about a content area set of standards, please send those comments to standards_review_com@cde.state.co.us. Your comments will be given to CDE staff and relayed to the standards committee and may even be posted on the comments page on the Standards Review Process Wiki. At the end of each phase of work, CDE will hold regional meetings throughout the State to discuss public reaction to the revisions recommended by each content subcommittee. Dates will be posted on the CDE Standards Review webpage at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/OSA/stand_rev.html