Academic standard-setting processes — Not so common

DENVER — Concerns about academic standards, whether created by states from scratch or adopted by states under the Common Core banner, have drawn widespread media attention and are at the top of many state policymakers’ priority lists.

With recent attention surrounding the Common Core State Standards, a number of legislatures have required state education leaders to follow additional steps, such as waiting periods for public comment, when adopting new standards. The 2015 legislative sessions are sure to see continued debate on standard-setting processes.

A new report from the Education Commission of the States, *State standard-setting processes in brief*, describes these processes and provides profiles of eight states’ standard-setting and review processes, as well as the measures used by those states to validate their standards.

Some points of emphasis from this report:

- States use a **variety of processes to adopt standards**, including appointing standards review committees or commissions.
- Many states are required by state law or education department regulation to **periodically review** the standards. The review cycle varies from state to state.
- More states are adopting procedures that allow for **broader input** into the standards review process.
- Standards are **validated by various means**, including contracted national experts, validation committees, input from K-12 and postsecondary educators and comparison to CCSS.
- The profiled states — **Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas** and **Virginia** — were chosen to illustrate the differing approaches taken in establishing, reviewing and validating standards. Differences in the amount of expert and public input gathered by states during the review process is of particular interest as states seek to address concerns about adoption (or not) of the Common Core.

“We are seeing many states grapple with updating their academic standards,” ECS President Jeremy Anderson said. “While state legislatures are ultimately responsible for establishing academic standards in nearly all states, the actual adoption, validation and implementation of standards vary greatly from state to state.”

*ECS was created by states, for states, in 1965. We track policy, translate research, provide unbiased advice and create opportunities for state policymakers to learn from one another.*