



State Academic Standards

Standard-setting Processes

Education Commission of the States

www.ecs.org

700 Broadway, Suite 810 • Denver, CO 80203-3442 • 303.299.3600 • ecs@ecs.org

State standard-setting processes in brief

By Jennifer Thomsen

December 2014

Concerns about academic standards, whether created by states from scratch or adopted by states under the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) banner, have drawn widespread media attention and are at the top of many state policymakers' priority lists. Recently, a number of legislatures have required additional steps, such as waiting periods for public comment, that state education leaders must follow, and ECS anticipates that the 2015 sessions will see continued debate on this issue.

This brief describes state standard-setting 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. Don't miss [Appendix A](#). It provides historical context around standard setting and the evolution of state standards.

Key takeaways on standard-setting processes

- States use a **variety of processes to adopt standards**, including appointing standards review committees or commissions. In Indiana, the academic standards committee submits recommendations to the education roundtable, a permanent working group, which then makes recommendations to the state board.
- Many states are required by state law or education department regulation to **periodically review** the standards. The review cycle varies from state to state. In North Carolina, the Standard Course of Study is reviewed on a staggered five-year cycle. Virginia reviews its Standards of Quality every two years.
- More states are adopting procedures that allow for **broader input** into the standards review process. In Massachusetts, the state board appointed a 40-member commission that gathered input at public meetings, workplaces and in homes. In addition, they developed a video and brochure and widely distributed drafts of the standards for public comment.
- Standards are **validated by various means**, including contracted national experts, validation committees, input from K-12 and postsecondary educators and comparison to CCSS. Texas contracted with the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) to assess whether the state's college and career standards were aligned with entry-level courses at Texas postsecondary institutions.
- 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 CCSS.

Standard-setting authority

State legislatures are ultimately responsible for establishing academic standards in nearly all states. Most legislatures then task state boards of education or departments of education with adopting and implementing the standards. However, following concerns surrounding the CCSS, some legislatures are strengthening their hands by adopting legislation creating new steps in the process, such as waiting periods for public comment, and some have gone so far as to prohibit the adoption of the CCSS.

Review processes and cycles

Many states are required by state law or education department regulation to periodically review the standards. States use a variety of processes, including appointing standards review committees or commissions, gathering public input and seeking input from state education department staff, outside experts, school district leaders and teachers. Public input, in particular, has emerged as a key consideration for policymakers looking to address concerns about their state's adoption (or not) of the CCSS.

The review cycle varies from state to state. Some states review standards on a set, staggered schedule. Others review on an as-needed basis.

In response to concerns about the CCSS, a number of state legislatures have mandated out-of-cycle reviews. In addition, some have adopted procedures that allow for broader input into the review process, such as public testimony and parent and teacher input.

Validity

In response to the discussion and debate around the quality of states' standards, not to mention the CCSS, many states have adopted measures aimed at evaluating the standards' rigor and alignment with career and college readiness measures. Some states have contracted with outside consultants, while others have used panels of local or national experts or review of student performance on assessments such as NAEP, TIMSS, SAT or ACT for proof of validity. In addition, a number of states have compared their standards to the CCSS, citing alignment as validation. The CCSS were declared valid in 2010 after a review by a validation committee convened by the National Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Where we've been, and where we are going

- Nearly every state has had some level of academic standards in place since the late 1990s. (See [Appendix A](#) for more on the evolution of standards.)
- Under the No Child Left Behind Act, all states are required to have standards in the core content areas.
- The initial 2010 adoption (or not) of CCSS created a nationwide focus on more rigorous standards, standards that have been independently benchmarked and evaluated with the goal of ensuring that graduates are college- and career-ready.
- Standard-setting processes matter now because the CCSS have been top of mind. While 45 states and the District of Columbia initially adopted the standards in both English and math, a number of states have been changing course in one way or another.
- At least nine governors have recently issued executive orders pertaining to state standards; one order was an action – in Louisiana – to attempt to exit the CCSS.
- Two states – Indiana and Oklahoma – passed legislation to exit the CCSS; four states are reviewing and potentially repealing the standards – Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio and South Carolina.

Common obstacles to setting and updating standards

- Resistance to change.
- Inconsistent laws.
- Confusion over goals.
- Political shifts.
- Complexity over communication.
- Quantity of information.
- Disconnect between what parents want and what education reformers want.

Lessons Learned

- Involve the public in making standards decisions.
- Develop a comprehensive communications strategy.
- Involve teachers from the beginning.
- Insist that standards apply to all students.
- Allow adequate time to develop rigorous standards.
- Align standards to other state policies and reforms.
- Provide support for districts implementing standards.

Related reports

[States and the \(not so\) new standards — where are they now?](#) (September 2014) captures a snapshot of where states stand in regard to the CCSS, providing a sampling of state legislative and executive branch activity on the standards.

[50 Ways to Test: A look at state summative assessments in 2014-15](#) (November 2014) provides a high-level overview of the two testing consortia and federal testing requirements, and then provides a snapshot of what assessments are planned in each of the 50 states and Washington, D.C., during the 2014-15 academic year.

State profiles

The following profiles detail the processes used by eight states in setting, reviewing and validating the rigor of their standards. The profiled states – Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas and Virginia – were chosen to illustrate the differing approaches taken. 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 CCSS.



Background and standard-setting authority

- Statutory/legislative authority: [H.B. 1427](#) (2013); [S.B. 91](#) (2014); [IND. CODE § 20-31-3-1 through 20-31-3-7](#) and [§ 20-19-4-1 through 20-19-4-13](#).
- The state board has authority to adopt “clear, concise, and jargon-free academic standards” ([IND. CODE § 20-31-3-1](#)). The academic standards committee, a temporary body, submits recommendations to the education roundtable, a permanent working group, which then submits recommendations to the state board.
- Indiana initially adopted the CCSS in 2010 and was among the first to do so. Following 2013 legislation requiring a pause in implementation and review of the CCSS (H.B. 1427, 2013), in 2014 the legislature formally exited the CCSS and directed the state to adopt new academic standards (S.B. 91). The Indiana Academic Standards were adopted in April 2014.
- By statute ([IND. CODE § 20-19-2-14.5](#)), the state’s academic standards must do the following:
 - Meet national and international benchmarks for college and career readiness standards and be aligned with postsecondary educational expectations.
 - Use the highest standards in the United States.
 - Comply with federal standards to receive a flexibility waiver.
 - Prepare Indiana students for college and career success, including the proper preparation for nationally recognized college entrance examinations such as the ACT and SAT.

Review process

Academic standards are revised and updated at least once every six years ([IND. CODE § 20-31-3-3](#)). Two bodies are involved in the process, but the state board is ultimately responsible for the state academic standards.

- The academic standards committee is convened only during the standards review process and makes recommendations to the education roundtable. The committee members are appointed by the superintendent and include subject area teachers and parents.
- The education roundtable is a permanent working group co-chaired by the governor and superintendent and includes appointed business and community leaders and representatives from elementary and secondary education. The roundtable takes recommendations from the academic standards committee and makes recommendations to the state board.

2014 Standards Review

The review process for the new standards, adopted in 2014, included four phases with various participants during each phase.

- **Phase 1:** Evaluation/technical review committee created the first draft and included English language arts and mathematics educators, curriculum review directors and higher education content experts. The process was facilitated by an education consulting group. Public comment was specifically sought on the first draft through public meetings and an online portal.

- **Phase 2:** Advisory committee included educators, higher education representatives and community members. Using the work from Phase 1, they created a new draft and sent it to national experts.
- **Phase 3:** College- and career-ready panel included higher education, career and business community representatives. Again, they created another draft using work from Phases 1 and 2.
- **Phase 4:** Final draft evaluation and submission to the education roundtable and state board for review and approval. Public comment was specifically sought during Phase 1 on the first draft of standards via an online portal and public meetings, but public comment was taken during each phase.

Validity

Validation measures specified by the 2014 standards review process:

- Facilitation and consultation by WestEd while the panel created the first standards draft during Phase 1.
- Local and national experts, including representatives from higher education institutions, asked to provide input on the first draft.
- Six contracted national experts served as evaluators and reviewed a draft.
- Public comment.

Sources

[Indiana Academic Standards Evaluation Process and Timeline](#), April 13, 2014.

[Indiana Academic Standards Evaluation Status Update](#), March 24, 2014.

[Standards Evaluation Process](#), February 2014.

[2014 Standards Evaluation Process](#), State Board of Education.

[Indiana's Academic Standards website](#), Indiana Department of Education.

[New standards Q&A](#), Indiana Department of Education.

[Summary of National Evaluator Input Into Draft #2 of the Indiana Academic Standards](#), March 14, 2014.



Background and standard-setting authority

- Statutory/legislative authority: [MASS. GEN. LAWS ANN. Title XII, Chap. 69, 1D](#).
- In 1993, the legislature charged the state board with establishing a set of statewide educational goals and directed the commissioner to institute a process to develop academic standards.
- In July 2010, the state board adopted the CCSS, referring to them as the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy and Math.
- In September 2010, education department staff, in collaboration with members of the committees that worked on the original framework revision, made state-specific additions to the CCSS.
- In December 2010, the final version, including state additions, was adopted by the state board.

Review process

Initial standards review process

- The state board appointed a 40-member commission to develop and recommend to the state board educational goals to be used as the foundation for the development of curriculum standards. The commission reviewed similar work in other states and did extensive public outreach to involve citizens in the process. The commission met with the public and gathered input at public meetings, workplaces and in their homes. In addition, they developed a video and brochure that were distributed to every school council and school committee in the state.
- The commission's first draft was distributed widely across the state. Public testimony was gathered at six public hearings, which led to major revisions. Second and third drafts were created, and the third draft was presented to and approved by the state board in the summer of 1993.

Current review process (adoption of the CCSS)

- The state board discussed the adoption of the CCSS at four meetings over the course of the 2009-10 school year. It sought public comment and engaged department staff, outside experts, district curriculum leaders and teachers in a process involving analysis and feedback. In addition, the board reviewed reports from national organizations that reviewed the standards and heard from external review teams who did their own analysis of both the CCSS and the state's academic standards. The external review teams were composed of Massachusetts educators and academics assembled by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Standards review cycle

In 2007, the state board adopted a process and five-year schedule for reviewing and updating the seven curriculum frameworks. The process calls for the commissioner to appoint a review panel to review the framework and present recommendations to the commissioner and the state board. The department then works with the review panel to draft revisions and present them to the board for approval.

Validity

Comparison to CCSS: Department of education staff and the framework review panels for math and English language arts compared the curriculum frameworks to the CCSS and determined the Common Core is consistent with, or stronger than, the state's revisions. The validation committee convened by the National Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers reviewed the CCSS and declared it valid in 2010.

College and career readiness: The state department of education and board of higher education, in collaboration with the governor's office, established a working committee to advise the department and board of education on identifying a recommend course of study for college and career readiness. The committee included representation from secondary education, higher education, workforce development, the business community and other stakeholders.

Sources

[Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education FY2010 Annual Report.](#)

[History of Content and Learning Standards in Massachusetts](#), Massachusetts Department of Education.

[Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Massachusetts Board of Education](#), Sept. 27, 2007.

[Background to the Development of Masscore](#) , Massachusetts Department of Education.

[Reaching Higher: The Common Core State Standards Validation Committee](#), June 2010.



Background and standard-setting authority

Statutory/legislative authority: [MINN. STAT. § 120B.021](#); 2014 Minnesota Session Laws, [Chapter 272, Article 3, Section 3](#).

Minnesota adopted the Common Core English language arts (ELA) standards in 2010 but not the Common Core mathematics standards. Minnesota added content to the Common Core ELA standards before adopting them as the Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in English Language Arts.

By statute ([MINN. STAT. § 120B.021, Subd. 2](#)), academic standards must:

- Be clear, concise, objective, measurable and grade-level appropriate.
- Not require a specific teaching methodology or curriculum.
- Be consistent with the constitutions of the United States and the state of Minnesota.

Academic standards are adopted through a rulemaking process. The department of education and/or commissioner of education must receive statutory authority from the legislature before starting the rulemaking process.

Review process

- Based on the statewide standard rulemaking process.
- The standards committee, convened by the department of education, must include:
 - Parents.
 - Teachers providing instruction in the subject.
 - School board members.
 - Post-secondary faculty.
 - Business community representatives.
- The process includes several opportunities for stakeholders and community members to provide feedback.

Standards review cycle

Academic standards must be reviewed periodically:

- Mathematics: 2016-17 school year and every 10 years thereafter.
- Arts: 2016-17 school year and every 10 years thereafter.
- Science: 2017-18 school year and every 10 years thereafter.
- Language Arts: 2018-19 school year and every 10 years thereafter.
- Social Studies: 2019-20 school year and every 10 years thereafter.

Validity

To check the validity of academic standards during the review process, the department of education involves the following:

- Focus groups with educators who provide detailed feedback on each draft of the standards prior to their adoption.
- Online surveys of current school district practices.
- Consultations with postsecondary faculty in Minnesota.
- Feedback from national content experts.

The validation committee convened by the National Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers reviewed the CCSS and declared it valid in 2010 (Minnesota adopted only the Common Core English language arts standards).

Sources

[English Language Arts Statement of Need and Reasonableness](#), August 2011.

[Social Studies Statement of Need and Reasonableness](#), Minnesota Department of Education.

[Rulemaking Process](#), Minnesota Department of Education.

[Minnesota Rulemaking Handbook](#), Minnesota Department of Health.

[Minnesota Academic Standards, English Language Arts K-12 2010, Frequently Asked Questions](#),

Minnesota Department of Education.

[Reaching Higher: The Common Core State Standards Validation Committee](#), June 2010.



Background and standard-setting authority

- Statutory/legislative authority: [H.B. 1490](#) (2014) repealed [MO. REV. STAT § 160.514](#).
- Since 2011, schools across the state have been implementing the Missouri Learning Standards (MLS) which include the CCSS for English language arts and mathematics.
- The MLS are currently under review until Oct. 15, 2015, as mandated by H.B. 1490. Meanwhile, the CCSS remain in place until 2016-17.
- The state board has authority to formulate and approve state standards but may not adopt any more than 75 academic standards ([MO. REV. STAT § 160.514](#)).
- The General Assembly, through its joint committee on administrative rules, plays a role in the final adoption of administrative rules.

Review process

According to department staff, historically, the department reviewed and adjusted standards depending on state needs. Recent legislation, however, requires significant changes to the standards review process.

Work Groups:

- H.B. 1490 mandates that whenever the state board develops, evaluates, modifies or revises learning standards, it must convene two separate work groups for each subject: one for kindergarten through 5th grade (16 members) and one for 6th through 12th grades (17 members).
- Members must be composed of education professionals and parents who are appointed by:
 - The state board.
 - Commission of higher education.
 - Lieutenant governor.
 - Governor.
 - Speaker of the house.
 - Senate president.
 - Association of Missouri school boards.
- Educators must have taught in the content area under review for at least 10 years.
- One member in each work group must be a current or retired career and technical education professional.

Process:

- The work group must hold at least three public hearings on any changes. Testimony may be solicited from but not limited to educators, school board members, parents, representatives from business and industry, labor and community leaders, members of the General Assembly and the general public. In addition to feedback from the public, the state board must also:
 - Solicit feedback from the joint committee on education and from academic researchers.

- Consider the work being done in other states by national experts, professional education discipline-based associations, the department of higher education or any other work in the public domain.

The work group must submit recommendations on changes to academic standards for the board's approval by Oct. 15, 2015, with implementation in 2016-17.

Standards review cycle

There is nothing in statute or rules and regulations that mandate a set review cycle for standards. According to department staff, historically, standards have been revised in response to state needs. Currently, the review process is being revised by the commissioner. By Dec. 31, 2014, the commission is required to revise the procedure for review and implementation of standards that allows the state board to regularly receive advice and counsel from:

- Professional educators at all levels in the state.
- District boards of education.
- Parents.
- Representatives from business and industry.
- The general assembly.
- Labor and community leaders pertaining to the implementation of standards.

Validity

H.B. 1490 does not specifically indicate a method for external third-party validation of standards.

Sources

[Missouri Learning Standards](#), Missouri Department of Education.

[Work Group Membership](#), Missouri Department of Education.

[Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: Rules and Regulations, 5 CSR 20-200.260.](#)



Background and standard-setting authority

- Statutory/legislative authority: [S.B. 812](#) (2014).
- The legislature gave the state board the authority to adopt and review academic standards, which are known as the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.
- North Carolina adopted the CCSS, but [S.B. 812](#), passed in the 2014 legislative session:
 - Prohibits the state board from entering into any agreement that would cede control of the state's standards.
 - Creates the Academic Standards Review Commission to review the state's math and language arts standards and recommend to the state board changes and modifications to the standards.
- The Academic Standards Review Commission held its first meeting on Sept. 22, 2014.

Review process

S.B. 812 specified membership criteria for the commission charged with reviewing and making recommendations on the state's math and language arts standards as follows:

- Eleven members, none of whom may be a statewide elected official or a member of the General Assembly, appointed as follows:
 - Four members appointed by the President Pro Tem of the Senate and four members appointed by the Speaker of the House who must consider, but are not limited to, appointing representatives from the following groups:
 - Parents.
 - Math and language arts teachers.
 - Math and language arts curriculum experts.
 - School leadership to include principals and superintendents.
 - Members of the business community.
 - Member of the postsecondary education community who are qualified to assure the alignment of standards to career and college readiness.
 - Two members appointed by the state board, including:
 - The chair of the state board or the chair's designee.
 - A member appointed by the chair who represents the board's Task Force on Summative Assessment.
 - One member appointed by the Governor.

Review criteria: The commission is required to conduct a review of all language arts and math standards and propose modifications to ensure that the standards increase students' level of academic achievement, meet and reflect the state's priorities, are age-level and developmentally appropriate, are understandable to parents and teachers, and are among the highest standards in the nation.

Recommendation criteria: The commission is required to recommend changes and modifications to the standards that take into consideration the impact on educators, including the need for professional development, before its termination on Dec. 31, 2015.

Teacher, parent and public input: In addition to considering the commission's recommendations, the state board is required to involve and survey a representative sample of parents, teachers and the public to help determine whether the standards meet and reflect the state's priorities and are useful.

Standards review cycle

- State law ([N.C. GEN. STAT. § 115C-12 \(9c\)](#)) requires the state board to:
 - Develop a comprehensive plan to revise content standards and the Standard Course of Study in the core academic areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, geography and civics.
 - Involve and survey a representative sample of parents, teachers and the public to help determine academic content standard priorities and usefulness of the content standards.
- The Standard Course of Study is on a staggered five-year review and revision cycle, though the cycle has been suspended on occasion to allow for a broader review of the standards as required by the state board or the legislature.

Validity

The current review of the standards began on Sept. 22, 2014. The commission is required to assemble content experts to assist it in evaluating the rigor of academic standards. In addition, state law requires that high school course content standards be aligned with the minimum undergraduate course requirements for admission to the constituent institutions of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Sources

[K-12 Curriculum and Instruction/NC Standard Course of Study](#), North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

[About the North Carolina Standard Course of Study](#), North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.



Background and standard-setting authority

- Statutory/legislative authority: [70 OKL. ST. ANN. § 6-207](#) and [§ 11-103.6a](#).
- As of October 2014, Oklahoma is undergoing an overhaul of its standards as a result of the repeal of the CCSS. The state board must adopt new standards by January 2016.

Review process

Brief History of Standards

2003: Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) – [OAC 210:15-3](#)

- State board adopted standards for math, English language arts, science, social studies, health, physical education, technology and arts.

2010: CCSS – 2010 [S.B. 2033](#)

- State board was required to revise math and English language arts standards to align with CCSS.
- Districts required to transition from PASS to CCSS beginning in the 2010-11 school year (OAC 210:15-4-3).

2014: Repealed CCSS, immediate reversion to PASS until 2016 – 2014 [H.B. 3399](#)

- Emphasizes that standards are solely approved and controlled by the state board; prohibits board from entering into any contract that could limit state discretion and control over standards.
- All schools revert to using PASS standards until new standards are developed in 2016.
 - Regents for higher education certified that PASS standards are college and career ready.

Ongoing Process as of 2014

Timeline

- At its Sept. 25, 2014, board meeting, the State Board of Education appointed a steering committee to create a process to write new academic standards in English/language arts and mathematics. The steering committee is currently reviewing national best practices and will propose a process for writing the new academic standards in 2015.

Committees

- **Steering Committee**
 - **Members:** Three members of the state board, chancellor of the state regents of higher education, secretary of commerce, interim state director of the department of career and technology education, superintendent of an Oklahoma public school, English language arts teacher, math teacher and state department of education employee.

Standards review cycle

- Standards are reviewed and, if necessary, revised every six years. All revisions are subject to legislative review.

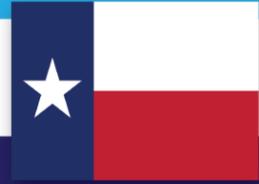
Validity

- Standards must be evaluated for career and college readiness by the department of education, the regents for higher education, the state board of career and technology education and the department of commerce.

Sources

[Oklahoma State Department of Education Academic Standards website](#), Oklahoma Department of Education.

[Standards Drafting Hub](#), Oklahoma State Department of Education.



Background and standard-setting authority

- Statutory/legislative authority: [TEX. EDUC. CODE ANN. § 28.008 \(d\)](#); [H.B. 1 \(2006\)](#) & [H.B. 462 \(2013\)](#).
- Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are the current state standards. The state board has legislative authority to adopt the standards for each subject of the required curriculum. However, the legislature can take away or limit the board's authority over standards and can adopt standards through statute.
- H.B. 462 (2013) prohibits the state board from adopting the CCSS ([TEX. EDUC. CODE ANN. § 28.002](#)) and prohibits the state education agency from adopting or developing a criterion-referenced assessment based on CCSS.
- Texas law has required college and career readiness standards since 2006 and periodic review of the standards is required.

Review process

[TEX. EDUC. CODE ANN. §39.053\(f\)](#) requires that the commissioner annually define the state standard for the current school year for student achievement indicators and also project the state standards for each indicator for the following two school years. A review committee is required to recommend standards to the commissioner annually. Potential committee members must apply to be on the TEKS review committee.

Review committee members may include educators, parents, business and industry leaders, and employers. Additionally, the state board may make up to seven expert reviewer appointments. The review process requires the following actions:

- Department staff posts a draft of the TEKS committee recommendations online for informal feedback. Experts provide feedback and recommendations.
- Experts and one representative from each TEKS review committee provide invited testimony regarding first draft recommendations to the state board. State board members provide feedback.
- With the feedback given, a second draft is prepared and reviewed.
- Department staff prepares draft rule text with any requested revisions/edits.
- The state board holds two public hearings.
- The department summarizes public comments and provides summaries to the state board for review.
- The state board discusses and completes second reading and adoption of the TEKS with a specified implementation date. The implementation date may not occur prior to a legislative appropriation for such instructional materials having been deemed sufficient by the commissioner.

Standards review cycle

Law requires that the commissioner is to rely extensively on the detailed review, study and advice of educators, parents and business and community leaders in setting standards. While the commissioner annually defines the state standard for the current school year for student achievement indicators, a deeper [review cycle](#) happens every five years for English language arts, social studies, math and science.

Validity

- **2008:** The Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) conducted a validation study in 2008 to assess whether the Texas College and Career Ready Standards (CCRS) were aligned with entry-level courses at Texas postsecondary institutions. Faculty were asked to submit the syllabus from the course they teach and to complete an online rating exercise in which they described the necessity of each of the relevant CCRS to their course.
- **Ongoing:** Ongoing review is conducted by vertical teams of secondary and postsecondary educators that are created by the commissioner of education and the commissioner of higher education (TEX. EDUC. CODE ANN. §39.053(f)).

Sources

[Texas Education Agency](#).

[Texas Administrative Code](#).

[Texas College and Career Readiness Standards](#), Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and Texas Education Agency.

David Conley et al. [Validation Study I: Alignment of the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards with Entry-Level General Education Courses at Texas Postsecondary Institutions](#), The Educational Policy Improvement Center, Submitted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, September 2008.



Background and standard-setting authority

- Statutory/legislative authority: [VA CODE ANN. § 22.1-253.13:1](#).
- The Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) are the current state standards for what Virginia students should know and be able to do. These standards resulted from broad education reform efforts over a period of 14 months in the mid 1990s. Virginia's SOLs include core subject areas as well as foreign languages, fine arts, health, physical education, driver education and computer technology.
- The SOLs are a subset of Virginia's Standards of Quality (SOQs), the overarching requirements that schools must meet. The state board reviews the SOLs at least every seven years, and the state legislature reviews the SOQs every two years. Virginia has not adopted the CCSS but has compared its SOLs to the Common Core to ensure comparable rigor.

Review process

Initial Standards Review Process

- Governor established Commission on Champion Schools.
 - Included state legislators and state board members.
 - Composed draft standards.
- Commission established standards revision and writing teams.
 - Representatives from four large districts selected by the department of education.
 - Solicited input from teachers, parents and community members.
- Parents and educators invited to public hearings and site visits to voice their opinions on publicized versions of the standards.
 - Seven hearings.
 - Thirty school visits to solicit opinions from parents and teachers.
- Department of education presented standards to the state board for review and approval.
- Commission recommended to the governor that the standards be introduced to the legislature for codification.

Ongoing Standards Review Process

- **State department of education**
 - Reviews SOQs once every two years.
 - Subject to revision by state legislature.
 - Maintains a website that allows teachers to submit recommendations for SOLs improvements when SOLs are under review.
- **State board of education**
 - Establishes a regular schedule of review of SOLs at least once every seven years.
 - SOLs revised in 2001-03 and 2008-10.
 - Conducts public hearings prior to establishing revised standards.

Validity

- **Ongoing:** Virginia looks to performance on NAEP, TIMSS, SAT/ACT and the state's internal accreditation process for proof of improvement and high-performance under SOLs.
- **2010-11:** Department of education compared its English and mathematics standards to the CCSS, finding that they were aligned.
- **2007:** Department of education commissioned studies from the following organizations to compare the state's SOLs in English and mathematics with that organization's standards for career and college readiness:
 - Achieve.
 - The American Diploma Project.
 - The College Board.
 - ACT.

Sources

[Virginia Department of Education.](#)

[Virginia Board of Education.](#)

[Interim Report of the Governor's Commission on Champion Schools.](#)

Educational Leadership in an Age of Accountability: The Virginia Experience, Daniel L. Duke, Margaret Grogan, Pamela D. Tucker, Walter F. Heinecke.

Measuring History: Cases of State-level Testing Across the United States, S. G. Grant.

Appendix A

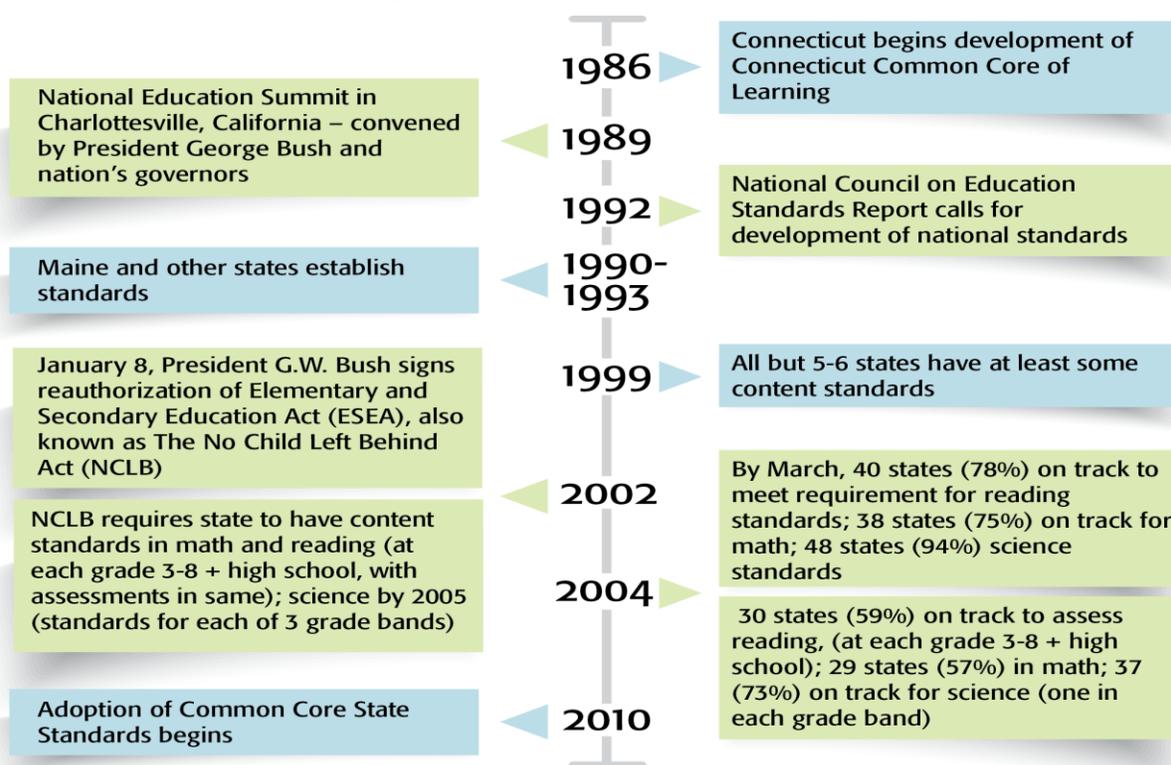
State Standards: An Evolutionary Perspective

State legislatures ultimately are responsible for establishing educational content standards in almost all states. However, nearly every legislature tasks its state board of education or department of education with adopting and implementing the standards. A number of legislatures recently have required additional steps, such as waiting periods for public comment, that state education leaders must follow. ECS anticipates that the 2015 sessions will see continued debate on this issue.

This brief summary provides historical context around standard setting and the evolution of state standards and puts the CCSS in perspective.

Historical context

Timeline: Standard setting and the evolution of state standards



In response to a series of reports focused on American students' mediocre performance on national and international tests, former President George H. W. Bush and the nation's governors jointly convened the first National Education Summit in 1989 in Charlottesville, Va. The summit led to the establishment of six long-term goals for public education and spawned a host of national commissions, task forces and study groups.

In 1992, one of these groups, the National Council on Education Standards and Testing, issued a report calling for the development of national standards in each of the major subject areas, embodying "demanding but attainable learning goals" for the widest possible range of students. The nation's goal, it said, should be to "raise the ceiling for students who are currently above average, and to lift the floor for

those who now experience the least success in school,” thus equipping an increasingly diverse and mobile population “with shared values and knowledge and the ability to compete in a fast-changing global economy.”

National surveys and polls showed the public strongly supported the idea of standards. Business and industry leaders rallied behind standards-based reform, likening it to the strategies used during the late 1970s to restructure American businesses and improve productivity. At the same time, a growing number of education researchers and reformers were finding that successful schools tended to be those that focused on clear goals and had redesigned the teaching and learning process around those goals.

Under the No Child Left Behind Act, all states are required to have standards in the core content areas.

The evolution of state standards

The nature of state standards has evolved. For instance, in March 1986, the Connecticut commissioner of education appointed a committee to develop the state’s Common Core of Learning, to establish a vision of what Connecticut’s high school graduates should know and be able to do. The Common Core of Learning represented a broad array of outcomes that should result from the entire K-12 school experience, including academic skills and knowledge, personal and social skills, attitudes and attributes.

It also very clearly stated that “[t]he Common Core is not a curriculum.” By the early 1990s, Maine and several other states had established similar standards. By 1999, only five or six states had yet to establish content standards – either in statute, through regulations or by executive order. Some states eased the transition toward standards-based assessments by maintaining standardized tests while developing newer measures.

As states later adopted or revised content standards in the 1990s, a number of organizations, including the American Federation of Teachers and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, began to issue annual evaluations of the quality of states’ standards and assessments.

In a March 1996 report, ECS noted that “for states engaged in the standards-led reform, school districts are where the rubber hits the road.”

A number of critical (and related) considerations about standards remain pertinent. For example:

- How effective are content standards without being backed up with performance standards or proficiency levels?
- Are student failure rates decreasing over time? What are the effects of different approaches to standards (for example, more prescriptive as opposed to less prescriptive) on student failure rates? What supports are needed to reduce student failure rates?
- What are the consequences of setting high standards all at once as opposed to raising the bar incrementally?
- What are the consequences of mismatches in standards, assessment and accountability systems – for example, when states erect high-stakes accountability systems atop weak standards or establish good standards but no real accountability for attaining them?

Standards, by themselves, will not yield gains in student achievement or any of the other improvements states are relying on them to produce. Standards are only one piece in a puzzle that also encompasses

assessment, curriculum, accountability, teacher education and professional development, and intervention and support for struggling students and schools.

CCSS in perspective

The initial 2010 adoption (or not) of CCSS created a nationwide focus on more rigorous standards, standards that had been independently benchmarked and evaluated with the goal of ensuring graduates are college and career ready. The push for common assessments began as cost-saving measures that would not only save states money but ensure high-quality tests that measured critical thinking skills and application of knowledge and provide comparability among states. However, assessing whether students are proficient has added to the dialogue around the standards themselves.

As Michael Kirst, the highly regarded professor emeritus of education and business administration at Stanford University (and president of the California State Board of Education), has pointed out in [The Common Core Meets State Policy: This Changes Almost Everything](#), these standards require changes in assessment, to curriculum to support the more rigorous standards, to professional development and evaluation of teaching, to alignment to teacher preparation programs and admissions or college readiness expectations, and so on.

Concerns about the Common Core – whether arising from worries about data privacy or anxiety over control of classroom content – have drawn widespread media attention. Certainly the growing number of parent-cited instances of confusing implementation in classrooms has triggered significant debate – debate unfortunately aimed more often at the standards themselves rather than at gaps in support systems that were intended to help teachers and schools adapt to changes to “almost everything.” It should be noted that the vast majority of states adopting the CCSS continue to support the effort.

Listening to – and taking seriously – those parent-cited instances of confusing or poor implementation, however, can help to identify where more work is needed. Parent voices are informed by the real-time frustrations their children too often bring home with them from school. Developing vehicles to gather ongoing parent input is a crucial step in informing change and improving implementation.

Author

Jennifer Thomsen is the knowledge and research manager for the Education Commission of the States. Contact her at jthomsen@ecs.org or (303) 299.3633. Kathy Christie, Maria Millard, Julie Rowland and Micah Ann Wixom also contributed to this report.

© 2014 by the Education Commission of the States (ECS). All rights reserved.

ECS is the only nationwide, nonpartisan interstate compact devoted to education.

ECS encourages its readers to share our information with others. To request permission to reprint or excerpt some of our material, please contact the ECS Information Clearinghouse at 303.299.3675 or e-mail ecs@ecs.org.

Equipping Education Leaders, Advancing Ideas