

Refined High School State Standards Proposal

Overview of the High School State Standards Design

The Colorado Model Content Standards are being revised. For grades P-8, the proposal is to organize the standards within a given subject on a grade by grade basis. At the high school level, the standards within a subject would be organized into four topical bundles. There, articulation is not by grade but by essential knowledge and skills. This helps ensure that the state focuses on standards while leaving curriculum and course decision for local districts. This also helps ensure that the sequence of concepts and skills within a subject are organized in a sensible fashion. Finally, this makes it possible to assess students at the time they have studied these topics.

Current High School State Standard Situation

1. Current high school standards are general.
2. Articulation is four grades broad (somewhere between 9th and 12th grade).
3. State high school assessments cannot currently be certain which course a student has taken, and so is designed to assess a few elements from many strands or courses per subject.
4. Assessment system of these standards does not easily incentivize a student to learn, pass and continue learning.
5. Standards are not written specifically as mastery based, but, if designed, would be specialized well enough to assist a student toward multiple pathway opportunities.

New Assumptions

1. Mastery of content and skills matters (not just exposure and appreciation).
2. Student engagement and incentives are essential to competence.
3. Retains our commitment to local control.
4. Concurrent enrollment is a valuable and powerful tool for learning and opportunity based acceleration. Like Advanced Placement, its grade earned goes on a student transcript.
5. Rigor, *relevance* and coherence matter.

What Where Our Solution Options?:

These options are examples of a course of action we had before us.

- Option A: Group each of the Colorado high school subject standards into topical buckets in which a student's district selects which assessment (math, science) per grade aligns to their own course sequence. Language arts buckets, however, are seen as progressive and would be sequenced by grade in order.
- Option B: Establish state high school courses in language arts, science and math at each grade with correlated assessments by grade in state courses (end of course exam).
- Option C: Group grade by grade standards with a generalized subject test at grades 9 and 10 in language arts, math and science.

After study and discussion, Option A is the recommended approach.

Proposed Design:

High school standards would be an articulation of essential knowledge and skills organized by like-conceptual groupings. Rather than a state course at a required grade, this design allows for local choice about when the specific bundle is taught and when it is assessed.

So, for example, a district may elect to teach geometry and measurement in ninth grade and therefore would ask the state to deliver the geometry assessment. Simultaneously, another district could elect to teach Algebra at the ninth grade and would receive the state Algebra Solutions assessment. At the end of a student's four years the student has been taught and has learned all of the essential competencies but at the district's discretion. **The subject area of Reading and Writing, however, believe that their discipline is sequentially taught and would not offer topics out of order.**

This is a draft organization of State Grouping for High School Standards.
The titles of the competencies are subject to improvement.

Proposed Essential Elements by Content Area

Language Arts	Language Arts 1 (reading, writing, speaking, listening)	Language Arts 2 (reading, writing, speaking, listening)	Language Arts 3 (reading, writing, speaking, listening)	Language Arts 4 (reading, writing, speaking, listening)
Mathematics	Number Sense, Operations	Algebraic solutions	Probability /Statistics	Geometry/ Measurement
Social Studies	History	Geography	Civics	Economics
Science	Biological Science	Physical Science	Earth Science	Environmental Science
World Language	World Language 1 (communication, cultures, connections, communities)	World Language 2 (communication, cultures, connections, communities)	World Language 3 (communication, cultures, connections, communities)	World Language 4 (communication, cultures, connections, communities)
Arts	Production & Performance	Culture/Theory	Critical Judgment	Aesthetics
Physical Education	Kinesiology	Physical Activity/Skills	Responsibility to Self & Others	Personal Wellness & Challenge

What are the Benefits of Option A?:

- This gets Colorado closer to the idea of a seriously robust mastery-based standards and assessment system, where even a 7th grader in anticipation of high school might say, “I can do this,” and proceeds to take a more sophisticated subject of study
- Helps students strive forward using multiple pathways, different points in time – starting with what’s right for kids. Colorado then has a more refined system where a kid is motivated to reach *for* the test
- Promotes “fewer, clearer, higher” **conceptual** standards designs
- The state could now offer the assessment twice, once in December and once in May. Then if a student is eligible to attempt the test in December and passes, that would demonstrate mastery. If not, the student would take the assessment again in May, thinking, “I really want to make this work.” The district submits only the student’s best outcome
- Features mastery not seat time
- Does not reinforce “old” course structure
- Specifies clearer topics for standard expectations in Colorado high schools.

What are the Benefits of Option A?: (Continued)

- Still will incorporate 21st century skills and Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) skills
- Choices matter
- If this is a computer-adapted test, this lets kids reach for the ceiling
- If concurrent enrollment and higher education standards are more deeply aligned, our assessments matter more to the student and the transcript system is a “ticket” to advance as a student continues demonstrating mastery
- Longitudinal growth would be intact as long as the assessment was designed so that each competency shared a common scale and that at least 6,000-8,000 students took the assessment

What are the Possible Concerns with This Proposal:

1. In an economy that doesn't have a lot of extra resources, is it prudent to have total freedom for districts, or is it better to have courses in Colorado that articulate what a student should study, know, etc. (as in Virginia or Singapore) and a state assessment perfectly aligned to that state course?
2. Do we possibly and inadvertently lower our expectations when we don't have mixed groupings of topics?