

Frequently Asked Questions About Standards Implementation

1. *What are the most significant changes in the revised Colorado standards?*

The most significant changes from the current standards relate to three key ideas. First, the revised standards document explicitly includes the 21st century skills of *innovation, critical thinking and reasoning, information literacy, self-direction and collaboration*. Second, the revised standards document articulates the concepts and skills students are to master at each grade level, pre-kindergarten through eighth-grade. At the high school level, these mastery expectations are articulated by standard and incorporate postsecondary and workforce readiness skills. Third, the revised standards document was designed to focus on the few essential concepts and skills, effectively defining all expectations as power standards.

2. *When should districts plan to start teaching to the revised standards document? What is the deadline to implement all of the revised standards documents?*

Districts are required by statute to adopt standards that meet or exceed the revised standards by December 2011. A new assessment system based on the revised standards is scheduled for implementation in the 2011-12 school year. Many districts are planning to use the 2010-11 school year as a transition year, attending to the current standards for assessment purposes while preparing to implement the revised standards. A transition time period allows districts to identify gaps in curriculum, instructional materials and programs, and district assessments and to attend to professional development needs.

3. *If we start teaching to the revised standards now, will it affect our CSAP test scores?*

Until the new assessment system is developed and deployed in 2012, the CSAP tests will continue. The current CSAP is based on the current standards. While many of the current assessment framework items are addressed in the revised standards document, districts that choose to align curriculum and instruction to the revised standards document in 2010-11 should be mindful of the differences between the current and revised standards document to ensure that gaps are appropriately addressed.

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4. Are districts required to adopt the state standards?

According to CRS 22-7-407, each district shall adopt standards that meet or exceed the state standards and develop a plan for revising curriculum and programs of instruction to align them the adopted standards. Further, districts are required to ensure that each student will have the educational experiences needed to achieve the adopted academic standards.

5. Will CDE be giving out an implementation timeline?

The Colorado Department of Education has been collecting input from educators and leaders across the state to inform the development of support materials and tools to assist districts in implementation of the revised standards document. While CDE will not specify an implementation timeline to districts, CDE will be producing and disseminating a timeline of anticipated supports for districts.

6. Should districts implement the currently tested content areas first?

The Colorado Department of Education is advising districts to implement all revised standards documents following the adoption schedule given in SB 08-212. This requires that districts adopt all the revised standards by December 2011.

With the anticipated five year standard revision cycle, districts that implement new standards on a staggered timeline will find the timeline for revision difficult to manage. Subject areas that are implemented later in a staggered timeline would have less time with the revised standards before the next revision cycle begins.

CDE is developing standards implementation support materials and tools to assist districts in the implementation of all content areas. For instance, to support elementary teachers in the implementation of all content area standards, the standards will be available in an online searchable format, allowing easy viewing of all expectations at any particular grade level. Also, the CDE content specialists have identified unifying ideas for each elementary grade level allowing teachers to organize instruction around interdisciplinary themes.

The new assessment system is currently being developed which may change the definition of tested content areas. Pursuant to SB 08-212, the revised Colorado standards include definitions of school readiness

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and postsecondary and workforce readiness. These definitions go beyond what has been historically assessed in Colorado.

7. Can districts adopt the revised standards document or do they need to develop their own standards?

Districts are responsible for adopting standards that meet or exceed state standards, and therefore are free to adopt the revised standards document "as is" or to develop their own.

8. Which standards are the power standards?

The revised standards document has been intentionally designed around fewer concepts and skills. In essence, the revised expectations are the power standards. This revision involved a shift of focus from broad benchmarks articulated by grade band, to fewer mastery expectations. With the learning progression and specificity of concepts and skills articulated by the revised expectations, no standard or expectation stands out as more important than another.

Questions related to assessment:

9. What will the assessment be like?

The Colorado Department of Education is currently in the process of developing a new system of state assessments that will reflect the expectations of the revised Colorado Academic Standards and the requirements of Senate Bill 08-212, which calls for both school readiness and postsecondary and workforce readiness assessments. Progress on the work related to assessment revision can be found at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/asmtrev/home.htm>.

10. When will we know what mastery of grade level content looks like?

In the revised standards, evidence outcomes define mastery of grade level expectations. Over time the CDE is planning to disseminate exemplars of student mastery to further support clarity of grade level mastery.

11. When will we know the format of the high school test?

Format decisions for the high school assessment are part of the assessment system revision process, which also includes school

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readiness and postsecondary and workforce readiness assessments. A request for proposal for the new assessment will be developed and put out for bid during the spring of 2010. Progress on the work related to assessment revision can be found at:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/asmtrev/home.htm>.

12. Can we have sample assessment tasks?

Decisions related to the release of sample assessment tasks will be made by the Office of Standards and Assessments as part of the assessment revision process. Progress on the work related to assessment revision can be found at:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/asmtrev/home.htm>.

Questions related to curriculum:

13. What is the state's role in curriculum decisions?

It is helpful to distinguish between a curriculum, which is an organized plan of instruction that engages students in learning the standards, and instructional materials, resources, and programs, which typically are commercially produced.

Colorado does not have a state curriculum. As part of CDE's ongoing commitment to service and support, CDE plans to disseminate model curricula from districts, based on the revised standards document, which other districts may use to guide their curriculum development and alignment process.

Selection of curriculum and instructional materials are district level decisions. CDE is developing tools and processes to support districts in identifying instructional materials, resources, and programs that are aligned with research and standards, proven to deliver results, and supported through vendors that are competent providers of technical support.

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Questions about district level decisions:

14. Do we have to teach the content at the grade level specified in the standards?

Grade level expectations and evidence outcomes define mastery expected at a specific grade level. Districts are responsible for meeting or exceeding grade level mastery of concepts and skills by the grade level specified in the revised standards document. Districts are encouraged to consider implications for vertical and horizontal coherence of content within their district and the state if grade level expectations are rearranged.

Grade level designation is more complex in elective content areas so consideration of points of entry is important. Understanding that many elective course structures vary from district to district, it is a district's decision on how to accommodate the mastery level needed when courses may not be offered at each grade level in a progressive structure. District partners have agreed to share options they will explore to ensure strong, mastery level instruction for all content based on course structures employed.

15. Do we only teach the content in the standards at a particular grade level?

The revised Colorado Academic Standards are high level indicators of learning progress. The purpose of the revised standards document is to define mastery for a given grade. Grade level expectations are key indicators of learning progress toward prepared graduate competencies not the scope and sequence of all content in a grade level.

Locally developed curriculum should include additional content and provide opportunities for interdisciplinary connections. Furthermore, the role of curriculum is to scaffold learning up to the grade where mastery is expected and provide opportunity for practice of previously learned concepts and skills in subsequent grades. A balanced curriculum ensures mastery of grade level expectations, develops the foundation for expectations of future grades, and reinforces previously learned concepts.

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16. *What will be the impact of the national discussion about Common Core Standards movement (currently focusing on English Language Arts and Mathematics) on Colorado's revised standards?*

In 2009, the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices initiated the Common Core State Standards Initiative to create voluntary national academic standards. The Colorado Department of Education has carefully monitored the national conversation and progress of these standards. As of December 2009, drafts of the national Common Core College and Career Ready Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics have been disseminated for national feedback. This draft of the Common Core Standards matches well with Colorado's work.

The Colorado State Board of Education is fully committed to Colorado's standards process as part of SB 08-212 and supports Colorado's voluntary participation in the consortium to shape the development of the Common Core Standards. Colorado along with each state throughout the country will make its own determination as to the voluntary adoption of the Common Core Standards.