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## **News Release**

### ***State Board of Education Reviews Drafts of 13 Model Content Standards Following Statewide Work and Discussion***

The Colorado State Board of Education devoted the majority of its day-long work session today to hear an overview and take public comment on the state's 13 proposed revised model content standards, the product of a statewide conversation held in 220 meetings over a two-year period around the state.

Jo O'Brien, Assistant Commissioner for Standards and Assessments, told the board that 19 members of the Colorado Department of Education and another 254 Coloradans travelled more than 186,000 miles to community meetings over the two-years of work, including a public feedback tour that wound through 20 cities. More than 8,000 comments were logged in meetings and via online feedback forums. Business leaders, educators, representatives from higher education and the broader community were engaged in the development process along with 15 national content and alignment reviewers.

Of the 220 meetings, more than half were at least eight hours in length. "These are Colorado-crafted," said O'Brien.

Committee members were riveted on the goal of drafting standards with the idea of producing a prepared graduate who is ready for postsecondary and workforce success, said O'Brien, while also ensuring that they are aligned with early childhood expectations. "Rigor is not a question," she added.

O'Brien emphasized that the draft standards are "fewer, higher, clearer" than the first set of statewide content standards adopted 13 years ago. The 23-member Standards Stakeholder Committee and many more subcommittee members, said O'Brien, delivered on the promised to draft standards that are based on mastery of subjects, that provide grade-level specificity beginning in preschool and that will lead to students acquiring meaningful 21st century skills.

Each of the draft standards contains "five muscles," said O'Brien, including critical thinking and reasoning; information literacy; collaboration; self-direction; and invention.

The revised standards are due to be formally considered for adoption at the state board's meeting in December—a commitment spelled out by its own initiative and under Senate Bill 08-212, also known as the "Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act" and the "Colorado Achievement Plan For Kids" (CAP4K).

Of the 13 proposed model content standards, about half of the presentations to the board drew a speaker or a few speakers in support of the proposed standards or to suggest alternate approaches.

Dr. Stanley Rabinowitz, Senior Program Director of Assessment and Standards Development Services at WestEd and consultant to CDE on the standards revision process, told the board that the limited amount of critical commentary was due to the state's inclusive approach to the statewide discussion, which he said was "the most democratic" he has seen.

"I have been to a lot of hearings in a lot of states—but you did get the most moderate range of comments I've ever seen. The fact that there was so little dissent to what was presented was a function of the process," said Rabinowitz. "I believe there will be broad support of these standards...these standards are too good to not be supported. I believe that your standards will line up side by side by the very best national work I've seen. I believe they are better than some, in fact better than most....Your standards will be a model of what fewer, clearer higher could be."

Following is a brief overview of the proposed standards.

Copies of the entire draft standards may be found online here:  
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/UAS/DraftStandards.html>

## **World Languages**

Key features of the new standards for world languages include:

- The current standards in foreign language have been renamed world languages. The subcommittee explained that world languages connotes an international focus, encouraging students to become competitive citizens of the world.
- The proposed standards provide a specific learning trajectory of concepts and skills across range levels, from early school readiness to postsecondary preparedness.
- The proposed revisions to standards define mastery of concepts and skills. Mastery means that a student has facility with a skill or concept in multiple contexts.
- The proposed revisions use appropriate technology to allow students access to concepts and skills in ways that mirror the 21st century workplace.

"All students should be proficient in a second language," said committee member Joanne Pasqua. "If they are proficient in a language, they will be postsecondary and workforce ready...they will be multilingual global citizens."

She added that "learning a language best occurs in context...it goes beyond grammar rules and vocabulary. Learning the language now in context means that students are learning real world communications."

Under the new standards, she said, students would learn the entire "language system" including gestures, non-verbal communication and communication strategies.

Holyoke High School teacher Stefan Betley, another committee member, told the board he joined the committee to ensure that the standards would be effective for rural schools. "These standards will work through distance learning," he said. "I'm very pleased with the work we've done."

## **Social Studies**

Key features of the new social studies standards include:

- The draft standards provide a specific learning trajectory of concepts and skills across grade levels, from early school readiness to postsecondary preparedness.
- High school standards are not articulated by grade level, but by standard. This is intended to support district decisions about how best to design curriculum and courses—whether through an integrated approach, a traditional course sequence, or through alternative approaches such as career and technical education.
- The subcommittee integrated the P-2 building blocks document into the P-12 standards, aligning expectations to a great degree. Important concepts and skills are defined clearly across these foundational years, detailing expectations to a much greater extent for teachers and parents.
- The subcommittees in history, geography, civics and economics worked within content area and also within multi-content area grade level groups. The social studies standards were created to intentionally encourage integration. In addition, the subcommittees were focused on the consolidation of standards.
- Personal financial literacy was integrated in the economics standards in order to ensure students are prepared for the financial expectations following school. Personal financial literacy expectations are indicated within the document and the content focuses on goal setting and financial responsibility; income and career; planning, saving, and investing; using credit; and risk management and insurance.

The draft standards, said committee chair Fritz Fischer, should generate “renewed emphasis on the importance of social studies in the state of Colorado...We created a clear capacity for integrated history, civics, economics and geography from P (preschool) through eighth grade and through high school...We were rigorous and clear.”

## **Science**

Key features of the draft science standards include:

- The major change to the science standards is acknowledging that scientific inquiry, science process skills and science content cannot be taught separately. These important aspects of science were integrated into the three science content standards.

- Another change is the realization that there are other important aspects, such as the general nature of science and application of science concepts, which cannot be separated easily from the content. These are represented as cross cutting themes. They differ significantly in their nature from evidence outcomes and their ability to be assessed. They are essential elements of the new Colorado Academic Standards and are addressed directly.
- The original Colorado Model Content Standards for science provided learning benchmarks at grades three, five, eight and 12. The science standards revision subcommittee was charged with defining at what grade students should master various concepts and skills in science. The committee members articulated expectations at each grade level through eighth grade based on national works such as “Benchmarks for Science Literacy” and the “Atlas for Science Literacy” so that students would build their knowledge of various topics.
- High school standards are articulated by standard, not grade level. This is intended to allow districts flexibility in designing high school curriculum and courses.
- The science subcommittee integrated the skills from the “Building Blocks to the Colorado K-12 Standards” into P-12 science standards, with the inclusion of six preschool science standards.

“We are confident we have made a huge step in raising up scientific minds in the state of Colorado,” said subcommittee co-chair Aaron Sams.

### **Reading, Writing and Communicating**

Key features of the new standards for reading, writing and communicating include:

- The subcommittee made a significant decision to rename the reading and writing standards to the reading, writing, and communicating standards. They made this change due to overwhelming belief that communication is a very important aspect of reading and writing. The subcommittee wants Colorado's students to encompass effective communication skills in their everyday lives. These skills are essential to Colorado's 21st century learners whether they go into college, the workforce, or technical training.

- The major change to the reading and writing standards was the move from six broad standards to four solid, unique standards. Each of the four proposed standards represents vital aspects to acquiring reading and writing skills in the 21st century.
- The content necessary to read, write and communicate is inseparable from the skill-sets and embedded discipline knowledge. The decision was made to more accurately reflect the complex nature of communication by integrating skills and readiness competencies in the same document.
- The reading, writing, and communicating subcommittee has integrated the “Building Blocks to the Colorado K-12 Content Standards” document into the P-12 reading, writing, and communicating standards, aligning expectations to a great degree. Important reading, writing, and communicating concepts and skills are clearly defined across these foundational years, detailing expectations to a much greater extent for teachers and parents.

“This has been a truly exciting and thought-provoking process,” said subcommittee co-chair Angela Powell.

## **Mathematics**

Key features of the proposed mathematics standards include:

- The mathematics subcommittee integrated the “Building Blocks to the Colorado K-12 Content Standards” document into the P-12 mathematics standards, aligning expectations to a great degree. Important mathematics concepts and skills are defined clearly across these foundational years, detailing expectations to a much greater extent for teachers and parents.
- More specificity about algebraic procedures is apparent in the Patterns, Functions and Algebraic Structures expectations. For instance, two high school expectations read:
  - Expressions, equations, and inequalities can be expressed in multiple, equivalent forms.
  - Solutions to equations, inequalities and systems of equations are found using a variety of tools.
- An eighth-grade expectation reads:

- Properties of algebra, equality, and inequality are used to solve linear equations and inequalities.
- The proposed revisions include a more explicit delineation of algebra concepts across grade levels. Understanding of algebra concepts develops from elementary through middle school with a rigorous study of algebra content in grade eight and high school.
- The subcommittee deliberately designed the standards to emphasize specific concepts and skills at different grade levels. This allows teachers to focus on fewer concepts at greater depth than in the past.
- Information literacy in mathematics involves the ability to manage and make sense of data in more sophisticated ways than in the past. This involves emphasizing data analysis, statistics, and probability to a greater degree than in the original mathematics standards.
- Personal financial literacy was integrated preschool through grade twelve in the math standards in order to assure high school graduates are fiscally responsible. House Bill 08-1168 requires standards which includes these skills: goal setting, financial responsibility, income and career; planning, saving and investing, using credit; risk management and insurance.

"The subcommittee is confident," said co-chair Catherine Martin, that the proposed standards "will clearly guide classroom teachers in preparing students at each grade level." She also lauded the "foundational mathematical ideals" embedded in the standards because they are "actionable within and beyond the classroom."

### **English Language Development**

The English Language Development Subcommittee voted unanimously to recommend that the state board of education adopt the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium's English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards.

The committee said the WIDA standards should be adopted as written and the ongoing revision process can address the need for cultural and technology components.

The committee reported that the WIDA Standards can be aligned and linked with the revised core content standards and that they facilitate

the process of helping English Language Learners prepare for their futures as 21st century learners.

The WIDA standards for preschool through grade 12 include that ELLs (English Language Learners) communicate for Social and Instructional purposes within the school setting and that ELLs communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content areas of language arts, mathematics, science and social studies.

### **Comprehensive Health and Physical Education**

The most evident changes to the Colorado standards are an expansion of the content area to include health education with the new name of “comprehensive health and physical education.”

Key features of the proposed new standards include:

- Expansion of the physical education standards to include health education. Prior to the revision process, physical education had only three standards, and health education had none. The draft of the new standards contains three shared standards, plus one specific to health education and one specific to physical education.
- Intentional opportunities for integration of health and physical education concepts and skills.
- Intentional differentiation of health and physical education specific concepts and skills.

### **Visual Arts**

Key features of the Colorado visual arts model content standards include:

- Reference to expressive features and characteristics of art include elements and principles of design.
- Intentional opportunities for multiple ways to combine visual literacy skills with the making of art. The subcommittees for visual arts worked within grade levels. The purpose was to create a viable document for P-12 with a special emphasis on all aspects of visual arts instruction. Intentional opportunities for integration of all four visual arts standards for each grade level were crafted.



## **Music**

Key features to the proposed music standards include:

- Two explicit standards for the expression of music and the theory of music have been identified. These important aspects of music were identified as separate standards to emphasize that theory is not always a prerequisite for expression. Levels of difficulty have been identified. Once all students attend general music in grades preschool through fifth grade, it becomes important for students to synthesize several skills at a time when performing more complicated compositions. It is necessary to delineate difficulty levels for instruction of middle school and high school compositions for greater clarity regarding the expectation of mastery in instrumental (band, orchestra) and vocal instruction.
- Western notation skills are found throughout the theory of music and creation of music standards. The proposed revisions include a more embedded approach of notational concepts across grade levels. Notation skills are found under theory (reading and identification) and creating (writing). Notational concepts develop from elementary through middle school with a rigorous treatment of notational skill in the high school performance pathway.
- Connection of music has been expanded. The proposed revisions include more explicit connection concepts across grade levels found in the "21st Century Skills and Readiness Competencies: Relevance and Application" component of each grade level expectation.
- Improvisation is more prominent in all levels. Improvisation was introduced and applied in grades preschool through 12th grade, differing from the current standards' introduction in grade seven.

## **Drama and Theatre Arts**

Key features of the proposed drama and theatre arts standards are:

- Originally the Colorado theatre model content standards presented a one-dimensional, performance-based focus that the subcommittee wished to change. Drama skills emphasized the importance of the creative process by which students learned critical thinking skills, and theatre emphasizes the performance

or “product” aspect. Much as Singapore emphasizes this approach, 21st century learning requires a balanced focus that emphasized process and product, prompting the subcommittee’s recommendation to change the standards to “drama and theatre arts.”

- The basic format for grouping standards has changed. The new threefold structure reduces the number of standards while preserving the attention to detail for a skills and competency-based approach to the education of the theatre student in public schools.
- The applications of theatre education are articulated from the points of view of theatre as it relates to society, culture and lifestyle. Theatre relates to other disciplines as a study or a career, and as a tool for understanding and using current developments in technology. The interdisciplinary nature of theatre study is emphasized within the standards.

## **Dance**

Key features of the proposed standards for dance include:

- Beginning in high school, the expectations are divided into two pathways—fundamental and extended—so that the student is allowed either to receive dance instruction for his or her general enrichment or to specialize in the art in its more advanced, performance or choreography-oriented form as preparation for college or a career.

**For more information, contact** Mark Stevens, 303-866-3898, or Megan McDermott, 303-866-2334, in the CDE Office of Communications. To sign up for the CDE e-mail news service, please visit

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/index.html>.