

News Release

Colorado State Board Of Education Adopts New Content Standards Unanimously; Spells Out New Expectations For Student Learning

Following a two-year statewide conversation, the Colorado State Board of Education today formally adopted new standards that detail the broad themes, ideas and concepts that the state expects students to learn, experience and demonstrate for postsecondary success. The new standards replace those adopted in 1994 when the state first shifted to a common statewide understanding of what schools are expected to teach.

"This is a substantial improvement over Colorado's 15-year-old standards," said State Board of Education Chairman Bob Schaffer. "The board applauds the efforts of the many individuals who have spent countless hours carefully crafting the language and doggedly pursuing this finished product. These are fewer, clearer and higher."

The state board adopted standards in **14 areas** including civics, **dance**, economics, geography, comprehensive health and physical education, history, math, music, reading, writing and communicating, science, drama and theatre arts, visual art and world languages and English language development.

The standards were adopted unanimously in a spirit of celebration with applause as each was forwarded and approved. Some changes were made in moments of group editing, including work on grade level expectations in the comprehensive health and physical education standards. Board member Elaine Gantz Berman pointed out that the adoption of health standards was historic, since the state previously only provided physical education standards. The decision is timely, she noted, given that far more children than adults are considered obese in Colorado. The English language development standards presented a minor wrinkle, as board members struggled with the draft language of the "proficiency standards" as opposed to all other "academic standards."

In the end, the board approved a motion by Peggy Littleton to adopt the proficiency standards "with assurance" that they would be aligned to all of the other newly-minted academic standards. "These are not content standards, these are the way English language learners can access the rest of the content," said Jo O'Brien, Assistant Commissioner for Standards and Assessment, who has led the staff work on the statewide conversation leading up to the final adoption. The upgrade of the standards began in 2007 when the state board recommended the revision and was given a further push in 2008 when the Colorado State Legislature affirmed and further articulated the nature of these changes. Senate Bill 08-212 expanded the vision of public education outcomes with the inclusion of higher education and early childhood education goals into one seamless standards policy.

The standards approval marks the end of one phase of work and overlaps with the next phase, which is choosing a new state assessment.

Full drafts of the content standards may be found online here:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/UAS/DraftStandards.html>

Up-to-date information about the assessment revision process may be found online here:

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

Resolution in Support of Educator Effectiveness

The State Board of Education approved a resolution encouraging districts to adhere to key principles when designing and implementing teacher evaluation systems. "The State Board of Education has a significant interest in ensuring that educator evaluation systems throughout the state are of high-quality and serve to improve student outcomes, and so should provide guidance to districts on the characteristics of high-quality evaluation systems and is authorized to do so under the Licensed Personnel Performance Evaluation Act," The resolution states: "To have the potential to be considered fair, transparent, rigorous, and relevant," the resolution states, "an evaluation system should have the following features:

- a. The standards for evaluating performance are clear and relevant to the individuals' roles and responsibilities and advance the system's goal of improving student outcomes.
- b. Multiple valid and reliable measures are used to assess performance against the standards, and multiple objective measures of student growth serve as the predominant factor in assessing performance for those educators with direct responsibility for students.
- c. Evaluations provide useful information about the performance of the individual to both the individual and the system through the use of multiple overall rating categories and personalized feedback on performance with respect to each standard used.
- d. Evaluators are well-trained with respect to the standards, appropriate assessment methods, and resources available for improvement.
- e. The standards used to evaluate performance are widely known, embedded in the culture, and consistently used to provide frequent feedback designed to improve student outcomes.
- f. Sufficient and meaningful resources are available to assist educators seeking to improve their performance.
- g. The evaluation system is consistently monitored for its fairness, transparency, rigor, and relevance, and its design and implementation are adapted as needed."

The resolution states that evaluation systems incorporating the criteria above should result in:

- a. Educators who are consistently high performers are recognized and rewarded, and have

multiple opportunities to develop their leadership and share their knowledge and skills for the benefit of students in the school, district, and/or state.

b. Educators who are solid performers are recognized and rewarded, provided with multiple opportunities to share their knowledge and skills in their areas of strength, and provided with on-going high quality professional development targeted to areas in need of improvement as identified by evaluations.

c. Educators who are consistently poor performers despite opportunities to improve are removed from their positions in a process that is both quick and fair.

Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones said the board is "rightfully taking its leadership role" by approving the resolution and that the support for the language "sends the right message" for Colorado's application for federal Race to the Top grant dollars. "I wholeheartedly support it and it's one more example of Colorado leading the way," said state board member Marcia Neal, who added that the resolution is another example of Colorado's strong position in the competitive federal grant process. "We're winning. We're ahead," she added. "This is a pretty remarkable day for education in Colorado and this is a big part of that," said state board member Jane Goff.