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Background Brief on ...

Education Standards and Assessments

History of Education Standards in Oregon

With publication of the *State Manual of the Course of Study for the Elementary Schools* (1920), Oregon began to develop standards for public education. The manual identified “responsible American citizenship” as the primary goal of public schools, along with an understanding of Oregon’s pioneer history. Subjects included reading, spelling, language, storytelling, penmanship, arithmetic, geography, health and hygiene, music, picture study/art, agriculture, and moral truths and maxims. In the 1960s, school districts participated in the development of a statewide curriculum improvement plan and Common Curriculum Goals followed in the 1980s. As part of Oregon’s Educational Act for the 21st Century (1991), content standards were first introduced at grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 and grade-level content standards were mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Development of Common Core State Standards

In 2009, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers enlisted the aid of education leaders from 48 states, two territories and the District of Columbia in an effort to develop common standards to ensure that all children graduate high school with the ability to succeed in college and workforce training programs. The work involved reviewing the best existing state standards with input from teachers, content experts, states, and the public.

Because Oregon had begun to design a core standards structure in 2006, in order to create fewer standards that

are more focused and cohesive, the state was well-positioned to participate in the development of common state standards. Oregon Department of Education staff reviewed each iteration of the standards and provided feedback based on input from teachers, parents, and administrators from across the state.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts and mathematics were adopted by the State Board of Education in October of 2010. They meet the requirement for standards leading to college and career readiness required by Oregon's No Child Left Behind waiver granted in 2012.

Core standards are learning goals for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Teachers use standards to ensure students have the skills to move on to the next level and help parents understand what is expected of their children. Common core standards ensure that students graduate high school ready for post-secondary education or to enter the workforce able to compete with their counterparts from other states and countries. While curriculum is still determined at the local level, common standards provide assurance that students from different districts and states acquire the same basic knowledge and skills.

As an example, here are the foundational skills for reading that should be acquired in kindergarten according to the CCSS:

1. Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.
 - a. Follow words from left to right, top to bottom, and page by page.
 - b. Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters.
 - c. Understand that words are separated by spaces in print.
 - d. Recognize and name all upper- and lower-case letters of the alphabet.
2. Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds.
 - a. Recognize and produce rhyming words.

- b. Count, pronounce, blend, and segment syllables in spoken words.
- c. Blend and segment onsets and rimes of single-syllable words.
- d. Isolate and pronounce the initial, medial and final sounds (phonemes) in three-phoneme words.
- e. Add or substitute individual sounds (phonemes) in simple, one-syllable words to make new words.

The methods and materials used to help students meet the standards listed above are determined by teachers and their districts. Textbooks and materials aligned to CCSS are expected to be widely available and teachers will have opportunities to collaborate online with their peers both here in Oregon and around the country to develop lesson plans.

Smarter Balanced Assessment

Since 1991, the state has relied on the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) to determine student progress toward meeting standards. For the 2014-2015 school year, Oregon will move to Smarter Balanced Assessments for English language arts and mathematics which were developed by a state-led consortium to align with the new standards. Students will have multiple options (work samples, SAT, ACT) to demonstrate their mastery of essential skills required to graduate, in addition to the Smarter Balanced Assessment. OAKS will continue to be used to assess science and social science until common standards are developed for those content areas.

Alternate Assessment

Oregon is participating in the National Center and State Collaborative Assessment Consortium to develop assessments based on alternate achievement standards aligned to the Common Core. These assessments, which are scheduled for field testing in 2015, will allow students on individualized education plans to demonstrate their achievements on individually administered tests designed specifically to provide them with appropriately challenging content.

Implementation of Common Core State Standards and Assessments

Formal preparation to implement the Common Core State Standards and align Smarter Balanced Assessments commenced in 2013 with regional meetings of Professional Learning Teams charged with training in their home districts. Funds were distributed in January of 2014 to support district implementation with grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$7,000 for small districts, \$150,000 for mid-size districts and up to \$495,000 for the largest districts. Additional grants of \$2,700 to \$10,800 were distributed to small, rural, and remote school districts. Another \$21 million in federal funds were allocated for CCSS implementation, along with state funds of \$6 million appropriated by House Bill 3233 (2013) in district grants to support educator effectiveness. Professional development programs were scheduled for the spring and summer of 2014. The Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) survey released in May of 2014 indicated that 80 percent of responding teachers reported that curriculum currently taught in their schools covered the skills identified in the Common Core State Standards.

The Oregon Department of Education is in the process of developing an online portal as part of the Teaching and Learning Network. In addition to housing 120 high-quality work samples, the site will provide a place for Oregon teachers to locate resources and to develop and share lessons aligned to the Common Core.

Additional information regarding Oregon's educational standards and assessments is available at:
<http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2860>

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