



FAQ

Science Standards

What are standards?

Standards define what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade level in any given subject. For example: In science, a student should be able to develop a simple model that mimics the function of an animal dispersing seeds or pollinating plants by the end of 2nd grade.

What content areas are tied to state standards in Wyoming?

The nine content areas are: science, mathematics, language arts, health, fine & performing arts, physical education, social studies, career & vocational education, and foreign language. Each one has its own set of standards. Current Wyoming Content and Performance Standards can be found at: edu.wyoming.gov/educators/standards.

Who has authority over Wyoming's standards?

The State Board of Education (SBE) is charged with reviewing and approving the state standards.

How often are the content standards reviewed in Wyoming?

The state standards are reviewed every nine years at a minimum. The SBE-approved calendar for standards review can be found at: edu.wyoming.gov/educators/standards/standards-review/.

What is the process to change or adopt new standards in Wyoming?

When the standards in a content area are up for review, the SBE convenes a committee comprised of Wyoming teachers, leaders, post-secondary educators, parents, business and community members to review the standards and present proposed changes to the board. Following a 45-day public review, the SBE can ask for further review, decide to make changes based on public input, and/or vote to move the standards forward, triggering a 45-day public comment period. After considering the public comment, the SBE votes on whether to recommend the proposed standards to the governor, who then has 75 days to review and sign them.

Who has authority over implementation of state standards in Wyoming?

Implementation of the state standards, including curriculum choices and instructional methods, are determined by local school boards, district and building administrators, and teachers.

What is curriculum?

Curriculum refers to the methods and materials used to deliver instruction related to the standards. Textbooks, worksheets, lab kits, novels, software programs, and so on are used by teachers to deliver instruction related to a given content area.

Who has authority over curriculum and instruction in Wyoming?

Decisions related to curriculum and instruction are made by local school boards, district and building administrators, and teachers. Neither Wyoming nor the federal government has the authority to make these kinds of decisions for school districts.

How was the review committee formed?

Members of the 2012-13 review committee were given the option to continue the work. In addition, a call was put out for interested participants to volunteer to be on the 2015-16 committee. Members were chosen based on availability and diversity of roles and geographic location.

How were these draft standards developed?

The committee met face-to-face and through webinars from May of 2015 through February 2016. They reviewed public input, examined multiple sets of science standards, and worked through the draft set of standards line by line to reach total consensus.

How did the public give input prior to the committee meeting?

Public input was collected online and through five regional hearings around the state. Over a 65-day period, 211 comments were collected.

How will public input be collected prior to the adoption of new standards?

There will be a statewide public input period of at least 45 days where feedback will be collected. This input will be considered by the SBE as they determine whether or not to recommend the proposed standards for adoption. Once this recommendation is made by the board, a second public comment period will be opened for a minimum of 45 days. The board will again use the public feedback in their final determination before sending the standards to the Governor's Office.

Did the federal government require Wyoming to adopt science standards?

No, it has been a Wyoming-led effort. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) made it illegal for the federal government to require or incentivise a state to adopt a certain set of standards.

Do the standards require any new student-level data collections?

No.

Do the science standards require students to take more tests?

No; all federal requirements regarding state assessment remain the same. Under ESSA, states are to test students annually in grades 3 - 8 and once in high school in reading/language arts and mathematics. Science must be tested once in each grade span, elementary/middle/high school.

Why new science standards? Why now?

Science is central to the lives of all Americans. All students must have a solid K–12 science education that prepares them for life. The previous iteration of the science standards were ratified thirteen years ago. Major advances have taken place in the world of science and in our understanding of how students learn science effectively and the standards must be updated to reflect this.