



Frequently Asked Questions:

Q. How do standards and curriculum fit together?

A. “Standards define what is to be learned by the end of a school year. Curriculum is the detailed plan for day-to-day teaching.” (Foundation for Excellence in Education, 2013).

Standards are the expectations for all Nebraska students. Standards are not an exhaustive list of what teachers are expected to teach. We know that some students will be able to do far more than what is listed and that others may take longer to achieve these goals.

Curriculum is how students will learn the standards. Curriculum decisions, including which textbook and programs to use, are made by local districts. Instructional decisions regarding student progress throughout the year are made in the classroom.

“Standards are the end. Curriculum is the means.” (Foundation for Excellence in Education, 2013)

Q. Why aren't the standards and grade-level indicators written in language that students and families can understand?

A. The standards and grade-level indicators are written in precise, academic language to be used by educators. As with the previous standards, a version of student- and family-friendly standards will be made available following final approval by the Nebraska State Board of Education. The 2009 Student- and Family-Friendly Language Arts Standards are available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1A6T7yQ>.

Q. Why not just adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?

A. The Nebraska State Board of Education has made the determination that adopting the Common Core State Standards is not an option for Nebraska. There are multiple reasons for this determination:

- Nebraska Rev. Stat. Section 79-760.01 that requires all standards to be reviewed every five years—currently there is no public plan in place to review or revise the CCSS (Nebraska Unicameral Legislature, 2008)

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- Neb. Rev. Stat. Section 79-760.03 requires the implementation of statewide assessments in reading, math, and science, based upon the Nebraska State Standards (Nebraska Unicameral Legislature, 2008)
- Nebraska has a long-standing tradition of local control and sees value in the process and resultant standards produced by committees of practicing Nebraska educators
- Both an internal review done by NDE and an external comparison done by McREL indicates that the Nebraska State Standards are equally as rigorous as the CCSS, and in some cases, more rigorous

Q. Why do the grade-level indicators sometimes state the same thing across several grade levels/spans? Why are some grade-level indicators the same in the 9/10 grade band as the 11/12 band while others are different?

A. English language arts (ELA) is different from other curricular areas in that some of the skills and concepts taught each year are similar in nature, but grow in sophistication. Students are asked to demonstrate these skills and concepts at increasingly higher levels of performance. We often refer to these skills and concepts as being recursive. Other skills and concepts, however, are not recursive and must be introduced at differing levels. This is why some grade-level indicators are the same from one grade level/band to the next while others differ.

Q. Why do some grade-level indicators not appear at every grade?

A. Some skills become a part of larger skills or strategies and no longer need to be taught separately from other concepts. For example, some of the phonics skills taught at kindergarten and first grade become a part of more complex reading behaviors at higher grades, including word analysis, fluency, and comprehension. Other skills and strategies are more complex and are not introduced until later grades. For example, beginning in grade 6, students are asked to consider and address other points of view when speaking and responding. While this skill may be introduced in elementary, students are not expected to master this skill until the middle grades where argumentation becomes a more formal mode of writing and speaking.

Q. Do students need to know if a root or affix is Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon, or do they just need to know the root or affix?

A. The goal of the grade-level indicators that mention these roots and affixes is to help students determine word meaning, know and apply spelling patterns, and use words in various forms. While students are not expected to know the origin of a root or affix, sometimes origins may be taught as a part of word study activities. It is not suggested that students memorize all roots and affixes; students should be taught these word parts during routine instruction, applying them as they determine word meaning and encounter new vocabulary across all content areas.

Q. What is the purpose of the “e.g. lists” at the end of some grade-level indicators-- for instance: LA 2.1.6.b: Identify elements of literary text (e.g., characters, setting, plot)?

A. These “e.g. lists” are meant to serve as clarifying examples. They are not an exhaustive list of every concept or skill that should be taught to meet the grade-level indicator. Some examples will change from one grade level to the next as skills or concepts grow in sophistication.

Q. There are many references to digital resources and use of technology in the revised standards. Our school does not have the funding to provide a digital device to every student. How will we meet the increasing technological demands in the revised standards?

A. Although students need to have access to digital devices and resources, meeting the standards does not require an individual digital device for each student. Most standards have multiple options for instruction and products which include high- and low-tech options. The standards were revised with the idea that technology will continue to evolve and become an even greater part of Nebraska students’ lives. It is important that all students have the opportunity to learn 21st Century Skills, including the appropriate, responsible, and productive use of technology. Technology is an instructional tool that allows a student to move beyond the four walls of their classroom and should be used to enhance and facilitate learning.

Two of the very best resources are your school’s librarian and technology coordinator. Additional resources addressing the integration of technology into the curriculum are available through the Nebraska Department of Education’s Network Education and Technology (NEaT) Team at <http://www.education.ne.gov/Neat/index.html>. Your local Educational Service Unit also can provide resources and support for technology integration.

Q. It seems like students are taking more tests than ever. What are all of these tests and how will the revised standards impact these tests?

A. Progress toward all standards should be measured at the classroom level as part of a balanced system of both formative and summative assessments. Formative assessments are ongoing formal and informal classroom assessments for the purpose of gauging students’ progress and informing instructional decisions. Summative assessments are assessments of learning given at the completion of a unit, semester, year, or another terminal point where overall learning is measured. Many decisions regarding this system of assessments are determined at the local level.

The table below shows the summative assessments required of Nebraska’s public school students according to either Federal or State legislation.

Grade	State			
	NeSA-R	NeSA-W	NeSA-M	NeSA-S
3	X		X	
4	X	X	X	
5	X		X	X
6	X		X	
7	X		X	
8	X	X	X	X
11	X	X	X	X

Adoption of revised State Standards will result in revised Nebraska State Accountability assessments (NeSA). Nebraska educators will help create revised table of specifications (TOS) that will detail which standards and indicators will be tested at each grade level. A timeline for revised NeSA assessments is currently being determined.

As in the past, not all grade-level indicators will be assessed on the Nebraska State Accountability assessments (NeSA). A table of specifications, which lists the standards and grade-level indicators currently assessed at each grade level, can be found on the Office of Statewide Assessment's website at http://www.education.ne.gov/assessment/NeSA_Reading.htm

Q. What resources will NDE provide to support the implementation of the standards once they are approved by the Nebraska State Board of Education?

A. NDE will provide:

- a glossary of terms including concepts found in the ELA Standards as well as related terms and concepts
- a sample framework
- information on language registers
- information on copyright and fair use
- student/family-friendly version of the Nebraska ELA Standards in English and Spanish
- a crosswalk between the 2009 and 2014 Nebraska ELA Standards
- a crosswalk between the 2014 Nebraska ELA Standards and the Common Core State Standards
- an interactive version of the 2014 Nebraska ELA Standards which will include pop-up definitions, links, and annotated resources

Q. What are the major differences between the 2009 and 2014 versions?

A. The greatest differences can be summed up in two words: challenge and innovation. The 2014 standards foster deeper thinking, encourage innovation, and require students to support their thinking with evidence from the text or other sources. They also reflect the growing role of digital technology in student's lives by requiring schools to give students the opportunity to use technology effectively as a part of their learning.

When it comes to the numbers, 75% of the standards are the same or very similar to the 2009 standards. The revised and new standards serve to better flesh-out expectations that will promote readiness for college and career based upon conversations with Nebraska systems of higher education.

Works Cited

Foundation for Excellence in Education. (2013, June 3). Common Core Fact of the Day: Standards V. Curriculum. *The Edfly Blog*.

Nebraska Unicameral Legislature. (2008, July). *Nebraska Revised Statute 79-760.01*. Retrieved from Nebraska Legislature: <http://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/statutes.php?statute=79-760.01>

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