



Christie Administration's Academic Standards Review Committee Releases Recommendations Embracing Improved, New Jersey-Centric Standards and Marking Significant Departure from Common Core

For Immediate Release

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Trenton, NJ – The Christie Administration's Academic Standards Review Committee today presented its recommendations to improve New Jersey's English language arts and mathematics standards to the New Jersey State Board of Education. The recommendations are the result of a thorough review process that regularly occurs in New Jersey every couple of years, but this time, following Governor Christie's guidance, consisted of a historic amount of direct educator involvement and public input than has generally been collected in the past. The review has resulted in recommendations to make significant changes to the Common Core Standards that reflect the direct public input process and that, as a result, are particularly suited to address the needs of New Jersey in a way the prior standards do not.

Besides recommending improvements and revisions to hundreds of standards, the state Department of Education is proposing re-naming the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, and the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts, to the "New Jersey Student Learning Standards."

In May 2015, Governor Christie called on the state Department of Education to review the English language arts and mathematics standards, known as the Common Core State Standards, to ensure they reflect the needs of New Jersey students.

"New Jersey's standards should reflect New Jersey's uniqueness, needs, strengths and challenges and also be adaptable to give educators the flexibility they need to impart the basic skills and knowledge needed by all of our students in every unique classroom setting. The previous standards did not meet that high mark for our teachers, parents, or students, and we welcomed the opportunity to get it right for our children by reviewing, improving and communicating New Jersey's academic goals," said Commissioner David C. Hespe. "These recommendations forge a pathway to ensuring that New Jersey remains a national leader in student performance by providing our children with the best instruction and the highest expectations for their learning."

A Standards Review Committee and three Content Subcommittees (K-2, 3 -12 English language arts, and 3 -12 mathematics) consisting of educators and other stakeholders was established to review each set of standards in depth. Over the course of six months, the Standards Review Committee met four times and the subcommittees met six times. This is consistent with the normal course of meetings based on previous standards reviews.

The process included multiple opportunities for public input, including: three regional listening tours; three focus group meetings; a multiple-week timeframe for the public to submit written testimony; and, for the first ever in New Jersey, the availability for any member of the public to fill out an online survey expressing their support or disagreement for each English language arts and mathematics standard.

Some highlights of the recommendations include:

- The proposed revisions clarify that informational text is not valued over literature, which was a source of confusion with the current standards. With the revisions, New Jersey has provided greater balance in the English language arts (ELA) standards, emphasizing appropriate attention to literature, attention to the reader and the importance of background knowledge, while maintaining the importance of informational text and research.
- New Jersey proposes to change the ELA standards to emphasize the need for students to learn how to make connections through historical and cultural perspectives when reading. The current standards slant heavily on close reading of unfamiliar text, but the proposed revisions recognize that is not the only way – and in some cases may not be the best way – for children to comprehend passages. The proposed revisions emphasize incorporating social and historical context, such as where the author or characters lived and what was occurring at the time. Adding the phrase "and relevant connections" to the ELA standards changes that emphasis on reading unfamiliar texts.
- To provide greater context of reading materials and writing assignments, the proposed revisions emphasize reader engagement with the addition of "self reflection" to multiple ELA standards. While the current

standards emphasize "cold reads" in which a child reads a text for the first time and must decipher the author's meaning, the concept of "self reflection" recognizes that comprehension in young readers can be fostered when they apply their own life experiences, the world in which they live, and previous texts they've read.

- New Jersey would add language from the American Association of School Librarians, most notably through the addition of "inquiry-based research" across writing at all grade levels. This expectation is not explicit in the current standards.
- The New Jersey revisions would clarify the Mathematics standards with language better aligned to classroom instruction. Mathematics standards were also clarified through the use of language and examples.
- New Jersey would move a foundational skill – distinguishing between long and short vowels in one-syllable words – from the second grade to first grade. The committee believed this is developmentally appropriate, and would help young learners to move on to the next level of literacy earlier in their academic careers.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) will offer the following resources and support for implementation of the revised standards:

- A cross-walk that allows districts to align their local curriculum with the revised standards and make the changes to instruction in the classroom expeditiously.
- A curricular framework which will serve as a guide to curriculum development and alignment. The NJDOE will make recommendations as to sequencing of the standards across the school year and what students should be able to know and do in relationship to the standards as well as guidance on how districts can complete the framework with their local materials, assessments, and lesson/unit activities. The Department will provide Technical Assistance sessions on the framework, both live and via webinar, as well as work closely with the Regional Achievement Center teams, county education specialists and pilot districts.
- Blended Learning Modules that assist districts in how to use Professional Learning Communities to support ongoing conversations around the cycle of teaching and learning (standards, curriculum, assessment, data, and reflection). These modules are hosted in an online platform with in-person and online expert, facilitated support.
- Achievement Coaches, trained by the NJDOE, will develop and present professional learning within their districts and with neighboring districts to support alignment and implementation of the revised standards.
- The Department's monthly newsletter will continue to provide tips for standards implementation and support for shifting instruction to meet the needs of all New Jersey students.
- Continued work with organization and association partners to share messaging and support in a consistent and efficient manner across the state.

The State Board of Education will now begin its normal review and adoption process. Until the recommendations are officially adopted by the State Board of Education, the current standards will remain in place.

The committee report can be found [online](#).