

Learning Standards

Frequently Asked Questions

from the ELA, math, and science public comment period in August–September 2024

Families and Caregivers

Q: How are you planning to communicate the learning standard updates to parents?

A: There will be a public release of the updated learning standards after the formal adoption, which is currently scheduled for December 2024. We are also developing Family/Caregiver Grade Level Resource Guides for estimated release in January 2025. These guides will help support understanding of the priority learning at each grade level as well as support positive two-way communication between the school and caregivers about the updated learning standards.

Bias and Equity Screening

Q: Will OSPI conduct a bias and equity screening on all the revised learning standards?

A: An *Equity and Bias Screening Tool* was developed in partnership with state commissions and other partners as part of the requirements in [Engrossed Senate Bill 5462](#). This *Equity and Bias Screening Tool* will be used to review any future revised learning standards.

The *Equity and Bias Screening Tool* was first used by a committee of teachers on August 12–14, 2024. The educators screened all the learning standards for math, science and English language arts, as part of our partnership with the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (CSTP). OSPI content staff will review the feedback from the screening process to make potential revisions to the standards.

Supporting Documents

Q: When will the teacher implementation resources be available?

A: Initial resources are estimated to be published in February 2025. We will continue to publish resources and training materials as they become available throughout the [Professional Learning & Transition Phase](#) which lasts through July 2026.



Connections to state assessments

Q: Will OSPI be adjusting the test maps or items for the state tests?

Q: Will only the overarching priority standards be assessed or will the supporting standards also be tested?

Q: How will [insert name of specific assessment resource] align with this work?

A: Our state ELA, math, and science assessments are required by federal law to measure our state learning standards in those content areas. Starting in October 2024, OSPI will begin the process of evaluating the revised standards to determine if, or what, adjustments need to be made to our state assessments including the Smarter Balanced ELA and math assessments, the Washington Comprehensive Assessment of Science (WCAS), and the Washington Access to Instruction & Measurement (WA-AIM) alternate assessment for ELA, math, and science.

We recognize that the additions of Media Literacy, Digital Citizenship, and Data Science standards, as well as the inclusion of Climate Science and Environment and Sustainability Education standards lead to questions about whether and when those new standards might be tested in the state assessments. Those questions do not have answers yet but are part of further assessment evaluation work which will occur after the standards are officially adopted.

When more is known, we will be sure to include assessment information in the Professional Development content we provide during the 2025–26 school year. When final decisions are made, details—including a timeline—will be announced via Bulletin and other assessment communication channels.

Prioritizing standards

Q: What process/resources were used to identify priority standards?

A: OSPI used a variety of resources in the review and revision process. Current research, other states' versions of standards, national partners in the content area and field, Achieve the Core, and local districts in the state's priority standards documents. Content teams reviewed the collection of information to identify prioritized and supporting standards. Many feedback events were held with educators in partnership with Educational Service Districts and through a contract with the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession. Events focused on providing input on the standards and the identified priority standards.

Q: Many districts have prioritized the standards. Will they be directed to refine their work to follow the state suggestions?

A: OSPI is required to adopt the state standards which identify what students must know and be able to do. Districts will be supported in implementing new standards. Districts may decide to teach district-identified priorities in addition to the state-identified standards.

Q: What is the expectation for the use of prioritized standards?

A: It is the expectation that the priority standards are the universal learning for all students in the state. The prioritized standards should drive instructional decisions as well as decisions about intervention and enrichment. Educators will continue to center student needs in determining how to offer opportunities to meet and demonstrate learning and knowledge of the prioritized standards.

Instructional Material Adoptions

Q: Will the standards review process lead to statewide instructional material recommendations?

A: Instructional material adoption will continue to follow local processes. OSPI does not direct instructional material adoption decisions. Identification of aligned instructional materials and supports may be a component of future recommendations for districts after the initial standards adoption; these may serve to support district instructional material adoption decisions.

Q: Is there any sense of whether new instructional materials might be needed by a district to fully address the revisions?

A: Crosswalk documents, which compare the previous standards to the revised standards, are estimated to be released in January 2025 to help districts. The additions of Media Literacy, Digital Citizenship, and Data Science standards, as well as the elevation of Climate Science and Environment and Sustainability Education standards, will need to be evaluated by districts to see if additional materials are necessary. The expectation is that students would be learning these new standards in the 2026–27 school year, so there is time for districts to make instructional materials decisions.

Funding Support

Q: What funding support will be available for districts to supplement or update local instructional materials?

A: Currently there is no dedicated state funding provided to support districts to supplement or update locally adopted instructional materials. We are working on a plan for professional development support.

English Language Arts

Q: Why are the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core State Standards (CCSS) being revised?

A: Expectations for literacy have evolved since Washington state adopted the ELA CCSS in 2011. With the emergence of new genres, media, technologies, and platforms, students face unique challenges. Yet, they still read, write, speak, listen, and use language in some of the same ways

as previous generations.

In addition, research has continued to reveal insights about literacy development and instruction that were not incorporated into the ELA CCSS.

The Washington (WA) State K–12 Learning Standards for ELA aim to:

- integrate **media literacy** and promote responsible **digital citizenship**
- emphasize **critical thinking skills**, encouraging students to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information effectively
- reflect the **latest literacy research**, ensuring students receive relevant and evidence-based instruction
- **reduce repetition** to make the standards more user-friendly
- **focus on the process** of literacy development to scaffold students' learning experiences
- **prioritize** standards to provide context and purpose for ELA skills
- emphasize **relevance** as a pathway to academic **rigor**

By updating, amending, and revising the ELA CCSS, the WA K–12 Learning Standards for ELA equip students to navigate communication now and in the future.

Q: Will media literacy and digital citizenship standards be focused on particular age ranges?

A: Media Literacy and Digital Citizenship will be included at each grade level of the ELA standards in age-appropriate ways. The teacher implementation documents for **all** the learning standards (math, science, health, etc.) will include connections to Media Literacy and Digital Citizenship where applicable.

Q: Do media literacy standards tell students what to think about media messages and information sources?

A: Media literacy standards help students understand what's going on "behind the scenes" so they can make their own informed decisions. This includes using their own lenses to analyze:

- the effects of media messages on themselves and others
- the purposes of media messages and the techniques used to accomplish them
- the accuracy/logic of media messages
- the relevance and credibility of information sources
- the potential consequences of helping to spread media messages

Q: Digital citizenship isn't its own strand. Is it represented in the revised standards?

A: Yes. Digital citizenship skills specific to ELA are embedded throughout the strands. For example, a writing standard requires students to consider the impacts of permanence and intended and unintended audiences before deciding where to publish. Similarly, a standard in

Speaking, Listening, and Digital Forums requires students to identify pros and cons of anonymity when participating in digital forums.

Q: Are the revised ELA standards as rigorous as the ELA CCSS (2011)?

A: Yes. The revised ELA standards are simultaneously more rigorous and student-centered.

For example, the new writing standards ask students to make decisions while creating a variety of real-world texts rather than formulas or oversimplified text. Students might write news articles, literary texts, advertisements, instructions, emails, or even social media posts. These texts are complex and directly relevant to life. When students create texts which are relevant to their lives and their purposes, they are more likely to engage deeply and attend with precision. In this way, relevance increases rigor.

In addition, media literacy standards emphasize critical thinking skills. These new standards ask students to investigate the accuracy of media messages and the credibility of information sources, along with the purposes and techniques that led to their creation. This rigorous process allows students to decide how they will position themselves relative to the media messages they encounter every day, based on their personal and community values and goals.

Q: Do the revised standards support education in dual language classrooms?

A: Yes. By streamlining, avoiding duplications, and crafting the standards in a way that works across languages, the revisions reduce the workload for dual language teachers. In addition, WIDA English Language Development (ELD) standards informed the revisions. Dual language teachers often translate their own materials, including standards. By making the standards easier to translate, these revisions have the potential to reduce the workload for dual language teachers and improve grade-level instruction and thereby achievement for multilingual learners.

WIDA informed revisions to ELA standards, particularly in writing. In WIDA, Key Language Uses (narrate, inform, explain, argue, inform, explain, argue) are informed by genre families, not text types. To better align with WIDA and simultaneously reflect scholarship in composition studies, the revised writing standards shift from text types to genre.

Q: There are strong, sometimes conflicting feelings about how reading should be taught. Do the revised ELA standards take a position in this conversation?

A: The revised ELA standards take a unifying and research-based approach in the conversation about reading instruction.

Reading is a complex activity, involving multiple skills, which educators sometimes emphasize differently. Research indicates that students are served best when these skills are taught together, not sequentially.

Therefore, educators will find their concerns reflected in the revised ELA standards and will also be encouraged by the standards to attend to all the research-based components of reading. These include foundational skills, comprehension, interpretation, analysis, and evaluation and use of texts.

Q: How many priority standards have been identified, and how do they help educators focus on what’s most important?

A: Students need to be engaged in the big picture and purposes of communication even when they are practicing a subskill of literacy. To accomplish this, the revised ELA standards include six “big picture” priority standards for each grade: one for each strand, with two for Research and Media Literacy.

In K–8 ELA classrooms, teachers assess students’ literacy skills individually. These six priority standards don’t get in the way of these personalized interventions. Teachers can still address specific needs while keeping the overall context of literacy in mind.

In 9–12 classrooms, approximately ten additional priority standards supplement these six “big picture” priority standards. These ten additional priority standards are crucial for college, career, and civic readiness. They are based on ELA CCSS standards used by the Bridge to College program and the ELA performance-based graduation pathway established by [House Bill 1308](#).

Mathematics

Q: Why are the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics (CCSSM) being revised?

A: Research indicates that multiple approaches to teaching math are crucial for student success, and the subject has historically been a barrier for many. Revising state learning standards presents an opportunity to address equity issues, to improve students’ connections with ways of thinking mathematically for success, and to add data science standards which will better prepare students for data-driven careers and daily life.

Q: Why are Data Science standards being added?

A: In a world increasingly connected to data-driven decision making, students need opportunities to engage with data to be critical consumers of data and understand how data is used around them. Due to growing industries that include data science and data reasoning as employee skills, and growing careers in data architecture, data management, and the like, students increasingly need access to data science learning to be equipped for postsecondary opportunities. There is an ever-growing need for data reasoning and skills for decision making in a wide variety of careers and in daily life.

Q: Will the instructional materials currently in use still align with the revised standards?

A: Many high quality research-based resources can be accessed based on the structure of the CCSS. Use of these resources supports teachers' focus on instructional rather than materials development. Materials that currently align with CCSS will continue to align with the Washington State Learning Standards for Mathematics. Crosswalk documents, which compare the previous standards to the revised standards, will be released in January 2025 to help districts see if there are any gaps in their materials. The revised math standards are equally rigorous to the previous math standards adopted in 2011.

Q: Why were “the standard algorithm” and “from memory” taken out of the standards?

A: Encouraging multiple ways of thinking about and doing mathematics centers the Standards for Mathematical Practice, emphasizing that mathematicians do not rely solely on "standard" algorithms but instead apply flexible mathematical thinking to a variety of contexts and problems. Standard algorithms often serve as shortcuts that fail to foster deeper understanding, which is crucial as students progress through K–12 math. By focusing on the Standards for Mathematical Practice, students develop a stronger grasp of concepts introduced in the early grades, setting a foundation for greater success in later grades. Moving away from rote memorization of one-digit facts, students are equipped with strategies that evolve and grow across their academic journey. The original intent of “from memory” in the Common Core was not speed-based repetition but rather to support a shift towards meaningful understanding, a shift that is now more clearly reflected in the updated language.

Q: Why do the standards replace “fluently” with “flexibly, efficiently, and accurately”?

A: The shift in wording clarifies what it means to be fluent in mathematics by supporting multiple ways of thinking and doing math while also encouraging efficiency. This approach not only aids in obtaining accurate answers but also promotes student choice in the problem-solving process, fostering the development of transferable skills as students face new problems and situations. By equipping students with strategies that evolve across grades, this method mirrors the flexible mathematical thinking applied by mathematicians to a diverse range of contexts and problems.

Q: With "flexibly, efficiently, and accurately", will a student HAVE to show multiple modes of thought? Or will one strategy do if it's efficient and accurate?

A: Standards that include the wording “flexibly, efficiently, and accurately” are not asking students to show multiple strategies for any one problem. These standards do require students to be taught and have multiple strategies to draw upon, and to use the strategy that is the most

efficient for a particular problem. If students are only taught and use one strategy for all problems, they will not be meeting the revised standards. Implementation documents with examples that support the revised standards will be released starting in February 2025.

Q: How are the high school standards different?

A: The content standards in mathematics have been revised to more clearly show the math learning all students should participate in during the first two credits of high school. In alignment with legislation [RCW 28A.230.090](#), (and [WAC 180-51-068](#)) the high school standards have been broken out to reflect locally determined high school math sequences (Algebra 1 and Geometry, or Integrated Math 1 and 2). The standards have been revised to clarify that the first two years of high school math should include linear, exponential, and quadratic families of functions, while additional functions can be approached in a student’s third credit of high school math aligned with their High School and Beyond Plan.

Q: I believe Achieve the Core does not prioritize HS Math standards, so what was considered when prioritizing HS Math standards?

Q: Will Achieve the Core be prioritizing HS math standards like they have K–8?

A: While Achieve the Core did not take the same approach to HS math as they did in K–8 through identifying the major focus of each grade, Achieve the Core did identify the Widely Applicable Prerequisites for College and Careers. In this document, Achieve the Core calls out standards and groups of standards across HS conceptual categories that students should engage with to be college and career ready. These standards are those that are prioritized in Credits 1 and 2 of the Washington HS math standards.

Q: Will you be updating the Bridge to College Math course and/or the Modeling Our World with Math course to reflect the updated standards?

A: Our revision team includes our staff leads for Bridge to College (BtC) and Modeling Our World with Mathematics (MOWWM). The BtC Advisory Committee and staff supporting MOWWM are on the front line of revision and following adoption will evaluate whether any changes need to be made to those courses.

Science

Q: What changes are being made to the Washington State Science Standards?

A: The revised Washington State Science Standards will maintain all existing K–12 science standards (NGSS), add overarching priority standards, and embed the Environmental and Sustainability Education (ESE) Standards. The only exception is the change in terminology for

MS-ESS3-5 from “the rise of global temperatures” to “climate change” to reflect a broader set of impacts due to the changing climate.

Q: What are Overarching Priority Standards and Essential Questions in the revised science standards?

Q: What are Supporting Standards, and how do they relate to Priority Standards?

A: Overarching priority standards are new additions that provide a cohesive K–12 progression and describe the core ideas for each grade level or grade band. Essential questions are added to anchor and guide student learning towards the priority standard, showing how the supporting standards, which are the Performance Expectations from the NGSS, work together to support student proficiency. To say it another way, the supporting standards unpack the priority standards and serve as three-dimensional milestones for each grade level or band.

The priority standards each describe the overall goal of one of the core ideas in science. Each one serves as a unifying statement that supports educators in integrating its supporting standards for more coherent and efficient student learning. The priority standards do not replace the supporting standards, they bring them together and support more applied, connected student learning. This change signifies a shift away from the supporting standards being taught separately as a list of disconnected science content towards standards functioning as key building blocks working together to achieve proficiency in the knowledge, skills, and practices of a core idea.

Place-based education provides local, real-world context for learning that improves student outcomes. Students demonstrate improved academic, social, and emotional achievement through learning about topics that connect to their identity and interest through the community in which they live.

Q: How have the Environmental and Sustainability Education (ESE) Standards changed?

A: The ESE Standards are updated and differentiated by grade level or grade band. They are now added within the science standards, rather than standing alone. The ESE Standards integrate science and social studies with place-based and locally relevant learning. They engage students in communication, mathematics, and real-world problem-solving related to environmental issues in their communities and beyond. The [ESE] tag indicates standards that partner well with one or more of the ESE standards for the grade or band.

Q: Is Engineering Design included in the revised standards?

A: Yes, Engineering Design is included as a priority standard for each grade level or band and is associated with the ETS1 NGSS standard (Engineering, Technology, and Applications of Science). The ETS standards define critical skills and knowledge for students to demonstrate proficiency in

engineering design. They are meant to be partnered with science core idea learning and not stand alone when designing lessons and units. The [Engineering] tag in the revised standards indicates standards that integrate disciplinary core ideas with the ETS standards. These tagged standards are present in all grades except for grade 5.

Q: Is Climate Science included in the revised standards?

A: Yes, Climate science continues to be included in the revised standards. The revised standards maintain opportunities for students to understand Earth Systems and Earth and Human Activity across grade levels. This includes a direct understanding of climate, human impact on climate, and climate impacts on humans, as well as foundational knowledge that students will need in later grades to understand these concepts. The [Climate] tag indicates standards that offer opportunities for students to understand Earth Systems and Earth and Human Activity, including climate, human impact on climate, and climate impacts on humans.

Q: Will you be incorporating the updated [Climate Literacy document](#) due out September 24, 2024?

A: The science team is aware of the upcoming publication of the 2024 Climate Literacy Guide and has worked with the federal agencies that are publishing the document to provide feedback on the draft versions. They do not expect the information published in the new Guide to cause a need to change any of the standards released for public comment. The 2024 Climate Literacy Guide will be used to incorporate instructional guidance for climate change learning in the teacher resources for the standards, mostly in the unpacking documents.

Q: What resources are being developed to support the implementation of the revised Science standards?

A: Implementation resources include unpacking documents with improved clarification statements, assessment boundaries, and learning progressions.