

Learning Standards and Instructional Materials

Definition

Learning Standards

Learning standards are the goals for instruction identified for each content area, i.e., math, science, English language arts, etc. The goals identify what all students should know, understand, and be able to do by the end of each grade level or grade band.



How are they selected?

Learning Standards

In Washington, **learning standards** are developed at the state level with input from many partners in education.

A public feedback process occurs before being adopted by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

As required by state law, OSPI develops, adopts, and periodically revises the state's learning standards based on the four student learning goals outlined in [RCW 28A.150.210](#).



Instructional Materials

Instructional materials are all materials designed for use by students and their teachers as learning resources to help students to acquire facts, skills, and/or to develop cognitive processes. These instructional materials, used to help students meet state learning standards, may be printed or digital, and may include textbooks, technology-based materials, other educational media, and assessments.

In the model [Course Design, Selection and Adoption of Instructional Materials policy](#), the Washington State School Directors' Association defines five types of instructional materials: core, alternative core, intervention, supplemental, and temporary supplemental.

Instructional Materials

In Washington, local school boards select **core instructional materials** according to district policies. Superintendents typically delegate the selection of **supplemental instructional materials** to professional staff, ensuring they are high-quality, align with state standards, and suit students' developmental levels and interests.

State laws require districts to have policies and procedures in place that guide the selection and adoption of instructional materials for use in classrooms.



Who creates them?

Learning Standards

Learning standards go through a creation and revision process involving many partners that may include OSPI staff, teachers, industry professionals, national organizations, experts, and research.

Instructional Materials

Instructional materials can be created by teachers, commercial publishers, government organizations, non-profit groups, higher education, or individual contributors. Materials may be delivered via different methods and carry different types of licenses outlining permitted use. The criteria used to judge quality and alignment to state learning standards needs to be the same, regardless of whether the materials are print or digital, open or all rights reserved copyright.

How are they used?

Learning Standards

Teachers use **learning standards** as goals for student learning to guide the development of their units of instruction, lesson plans, individual daily lesson targets, and assessments to determine student's progress toward proficiency in the standard. Standards are also the basis for the state summative assessments.

Instructional Materials

Instructional materials should be viewed as tools to help teachers implement the district's programmatic vision. [WSSDA Model Policy 2020/2020P Course Design, Selection and Adoption of Instructional Material](#) uses the term Course Design to describe the process that includes identifying and sequencing essential content supporting students' skill development towards state learning standards. Course design involves providing appropriate instructional materials, professional development, and support systems for teachers as they implement the course.

How are standards and instructional materials related to assessment?

Learning Standards

Washington assesses students' proficiency of the **learning standards** starting in grade three using required summative state assessments for federal accountability. Educator formative assessments and additional district-based assessments also use the state **learning standards** at each grade level.

Instructional Materials

Instructional materials may come with their own optional assessments both summative and formative to be used at the school or district level.

A note about the term curriculum...

This document intentionally avoids using the term "curriculum" because it often causes confusion. Depending on the context, "curriculum" has been used to describe a district's overall educational program, specific teaching methods, state standards, grade-level learning goals, core instructional materials, or even supplemental units. This inconsistent use can make discussions and decisions about teaching and learning more complicated.

To be more specific, instead of using the term "curriculum" [WSSDA Model Policy 2020/2020P Course Design, Selection and Adoption of Instructional Material](#) uses the term course design to refer to the "the process that includes identifying and sequencing essential content supporting students' skill development towards state learning standards. Course design involves providing appropriate instructional materials, professional development, and support systems for teachers as they implement the course."

School districts are responsible for developing this dynamic framework informed by state learning standards that provides educators with a roadmap for helping students reach their learning goals.

