



State of Wyoming Education Standards

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What Are Standards?

Standards mean high-level knowledge and skills that all children should achieve. *No Child Left Behind* requires higher education standards for all children, at all levels, in all states. Without standards, students learn different things from school to school, even from one classroom to the next at the same grade level. Setting high standards is a way to make sure that all children receive a high-quality education; however, teaching based on high standards does not mean that every classroom will be exactly the same. It means that *all* children should be in classes where teaching and learning are at a high level.

"Standards specify what students must master. They are not instructional curricula or technical documents used by teachers to guide day-to-day instruction. Teachers ensure that students achieve standards by using a range of instructional strategies that they select based on their students' needs." Source: Wyoming Department of Education

According to Wyoming law, all students will be held accountable for state standards in the Common Core of Knowledge and the Common Core of Skills. The Common Core of Knowledge includes:

1. Language Arts
2. Social Studies
3. Mathematics
4. Science
5. Fine and Performing Arts
6. Physical Education
7. Health Education
8. Career/Vocational Education;
9. Foreign Languages.

The Common Core of Skills may be integrated into the uniform student content and performance standards. The Common Core of Skills includes: problem solving; interpersonal communications; keyboarding and computer applications; critical thinking; creativity; and life skills, including personal financial management skills.

There are three kinds of standards: Content Standards, Benchmark Standards, and Performance Standards.

- ✓ Content Standards are what the local school district decides students should learn. These standards are set for the subjects in each grade in school. Content standards clarify what students are expected to know and be able to do by the time they graduate. Content standards at the local level must align with content standards at the state level.

- ✓ Benchmark Standards specify the skills and content students must master in order to reach the Content Standards by the time they graduate. , Benchmarks are set in grades kindergarten *through* 8, and 11 in all nine content areas. On the PAWS assessment, student are tested in language arts and math in grades 3 *through* 8 and 11, and in science in grades 4, 8, and 11.
- ✓ Performance Standards tell us *how well* students have learned the content standards.

Performance descriptors are statements that describe *how well* students perform on the benchmark standards. They help teachers determine how students are performing in relation to the standards. Performance descriptors are: Advanced
Proficient
Basic (partially proficient)
Below basic (novice)

The Wyoming content standards have been written in order to accommodate a broad range of efforts to teach to the standards and to demonstrate mastery of the standards. Local districts will be responsible for determining whether students are meeting the standards.

A Wyoming Supreme Court ruling which stated that education must be very similar regardless of what district a student attends is one of the reasons that uniform content and performance standards are so important. They provide an avenue to guarantee that all Wyoming students receive a

reasonably equal education, regardless of where they live and attend school.

By law, beginning with the graduating class of 2006, all students will be held accountable for all of the standards in the nine content areas:

10. Language Arts
11. Social Studies
12. Mathematics
13. Science
14. Fine and Performing Arts
15. Physical Education
16. Health Education
17. Career/Vocational Education;
18. Foreign Languages.

If students do not meet the state standards, they will not receive a high school graduation diploma. In Wyoming, under Chapter 31 of the Department of Education Rules and Regulations, there is one diploma with three levels of endorsement:

- **Advanced Endorsement:** A student must achieve an *advanced* performance level in 5 of the content areas and a *proficient* performance level in the other 4 content areas.
- **Comprehensive Endorsement:** A student must achieve a *proficient* level of performance in all 9 content areas.
- **General Endorsement:** A student must achieve a *proficient* level of performance in 5 of the 9 content areas.

The requirements for earning a high school diploma from any Wyoming high school within any district of the state shall include:

1. The successful completion of the following components in grades 9 – 12, as evidenced by passing grades or by the successful performance on competency-based equivalency exams:
 - A. Four school years of English
 - B. Three school years of mathematics
 - C. Three school years of science
 - D. Three school years of social studies (including history, American government and economic systems and institutions, providing that business instructors may instruct classes on economic systems and institutions)

Log on to the Wyoming Department of Education website at www.k12.wy.us for more information.

2. Satisfactorily passing an exam on the principles of the constitution of the United States and the state of Wyoming.
3. Evidence of proficient performance, at a minimum, on the uniform student content and performance standards for the common core of knowledge and skills.

Standards are not new. Until recently, however, most schools did not have high, reliable, consistent standards for all students. What students learned depended mainly on the teacher, on the textbooks, or on the program or class in which the student was placed. District or state tests or other methods of measuring students' knowledge or performance did not always match what students were taught. Too many variables created inconsistency and irregular educational plans for students.

Federal laws require each state to adopt higher learning standards for all students. Many states—including Wyoming—have passed new, standards-based education laws. Setting high standards is a way to make sure that ALL children get a high-quality education. High standards mean all children should get reliable and consistent instruction in the academic content areas. This also means all students should have highly qualified teachers and up-to-date books and materials.

Standards provide consistency from one district to another within a state, from one school to another within a district, and from one classroom to another within a school. These standards say what all students should know, at key grade levels, in all major subjects. With high standards, teachers, parents, and students know what is expected in every grade and in every subject.

Sources: Wyoming Department of Education
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Center for Law and Education publications

Contact your local principal for more information or call the Parent Education Network, toll-free: 1-877-900-9736 or log on to www.wpen.net.

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