

Standards vs. Curriculum

Definition

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.

Curriculum is an organized structure of content and materials that supports both the teacher and the student. Curriculum may include an order and sequencing of instruction over time that can be modified to meet the learning needs of students. Curriculum may include textbooks, equipment, resources, and other materials used to create a learning experience.

How are they selected?

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 State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In Washington, local school boards select and adopt **curriculum** for their schools based on school district policy and procedures.

Who creates them?

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.

Curriculum can be created by teachers, commercial publishers, states, and other organizations.

How are they used?

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.

Teachers use **curriculum** to support the instruction of the learning standards. Different curriculum materials format the sequence of learning in different orders. A teacher may use a standards-based curriculum to identify the details of student learning by including how the teaching and learning may take place through learning goals, instructional strategies, activities, resources, and assessments of learning. Not all curriculum is aligned to Washington state learning standards.

How are standards and curriculum related to assessment?

Washington assesses students' proficiency of the learning **standards** starting in grade 3 using required state assessments for federal accountability.

Curriculum may come with its own optional assessments to be used at the school or district level.

