

Standards vs. Curriculum

What's the difference?

Standards

are the goals for instruction.

Standards are developed at the **state** level.



Created and approved by **state departments of education** and **state boards of education**. Standards are usually based on best practices and recommendations from experts.

Standards go through an extensive process of review and rewriting until the creators and other stakeholders agree on their content and format.



Adopted by **state boards of education**. The public is invited to review the standards and weigh in.



Standards are **short statements** that describe what students should know and be able to do at each grade level.

*Example of a standard:
Understand subtraction as an unknown-addend problem. For example, subtract $10 - 8$ by finding the number that makes 10 when added to 8.*



Teachers use standards to **guide instruction**. Standards provide **a goal or focus** for each lesson.

Teachers design instruction using one or more standards as the learning goal(s) for each lesson. If a student can do what a standard asks, that student has successfully met the lesson's learning goal.



States assess students' mastery of the standards starting in grade three using state-selected exams.

Curriculum

is the content of instruction.

Curricula are selected **locally**.

May be created by **teachers, publishers, states** and **other stakeholders**. Curricula provide content and instructional approaches for student learning.

Anyone can contribute to curricula. Commercial publishers may contract with educators who have experience with a given subject.

Adopted by **local boards of education**. Teachers review them and ensure alignment with standards.

A curriculum may include **activities, lesson and unit plans, textbooks, virtual tools** and other resources.

*Example of a curriculum resource:
Curricula might include practice problems such as the following: If Julie wants 10 apples but only has 8, how many more does she need?*

Teachers use curricula to help students develop the **skills and understanding** required by each standard.

Teachers might begin a lesson by having students read a passage from the textbook, then compare that passage with one from a novel. Both the textbook and novel are elements of the curriculum.

Curricula may include assessments that are only used at the **local** level.