# Standards vs. Curriculum

## What’s the difference?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
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<td><strong>are the goals for instruction.</strong></td>
<td><strong>is the content of instruction.</strong></td>
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<td>Standards are developed at the state level.</td>
<td>Curricula are selected locally.</td>
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- 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.

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

- 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.*

- A curriculum may include activities, lesson plans, textbooks, and virtual tools.

  *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 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.*

- 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.*

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

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

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