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Curriculum, Academic Standards, Assessment, and Pedagogical Commitments

Definitions

The following definitions for Assessment, Competencies, Curriculum, Indicators, Instructional Practices, Learning Targets, Pedagogy, and Standards come from both Agency of Education and national resources.

- **Assessment:** An assessment is a formative or summative evaluation of student performance which is meaningful, accurate and fair and is administered with the purpose of providing feedback on learning for both the teacher and student ([Student Centered Terminology](#)).
- **Pedagogy/Instructional Models:** Theory or philosophy of teaching and learning.
- **Instructional Practices:** Instructional practices refer to the strategies, methods, and techniques that educators use to facilitate learning and help students achieve their academic, social, and developmental goals.
- **Instructional Strategies:** “series of actions with a definable outcome relative to student thinking or learning and a definable beginning and end” ([Marzano](#)).
- **Curriculum:** Curriculum is the integration of the content, concepts, skills, instructional activities, and assessments through which students achieve proficiency within a course of study ([Student Centered Terminology](#)).
- **Standards:** Standards identify the essential knowledge, skills and behaviors that should be taught and learned in school. a) Essential knowledge is what students should know. It includes the most important and enduring ideas, issues, dilemmas, principles, and concepts from the disciplines. b) Essential skills are what the students should be able to do. Skills are ways of thinking, working, communicating, and investigating. c) Essential behaviors identify the behaviors related to success in and outside of school. These include (but are not limited to) providing evidence to back up assertions and developing productive, satisfying relationships with others ([Student Centered Terminology](#)).
- **Anchor Standards/Domains/Strands/Standards:** Different sets of standards use different words to describe larger grain size outcomes that organize smaller grain size outcomes (e.g., Performance Indicators, Grade Level Outcomes, etc.). These words are not perfectly synonymous but represent bigger pieces of a whole.
- **Performance Indicators/Grade-Span Indicators/Grade Level Outcomes/Grade Level Standards/Sub-Standards/Indicators/Performance Expectations:** Different sets of standards use different words to describe smaller grain size outcomes that are often specific to grade levels or spans within a broader grouping. These words are not perfectly synonymous but represent smaller pieces that are part of a whole. These focused outcomes are often used in design of curriculum and assessment. The following is an example of Performance Indicators within the National Health Education Standards:



Example	National Health Education Standards
Standard 1	Use functional health information to support health and well-being of self and others.
Performance Indicators (K-2)	1.2.1 Identify strengths and assets that support health and well-being. 1.2.2 Identify dimensions of wellness. 1.2.3 Identify ways to prevent or reduce risks for illnesses and injuries. 1.2.4 Describe health-promoting behaviors. 1.2.5 Explain the importance of health and well-being. 1.2.6 Identify how the environment affects personal and community health. 1.2.7 Explain when it is important to seek health care.

- **Learning Targets:** These small, descriptive, task-neutral phrases are intended to show what a student should know and be able to do at particular proficiency levels. Learning targets are the basis of teacher feedback, peer feedback, and learner self-reflection, and therefore should be written in student-facing language so they may be clearly communicated to and understood by students ([Student Centered Terminology](#); see [Visual Art High School Accomplished Level Learning Targets](#)).
- **Competencies/Proficiencies:** Proficiencies include explicit, measurable, learning objectives based on standards and measure a learner’s knowledge and skill demonstrated in a consistent manner, in various settings over time (see also [Priority Performance Indicators](#)).

Relationship

The relationship that exists between curriculum, assessment, instructional practices, and learning standards is largely described in the Educational Quality Standards Rule Series 2000. The following abridged list refers to specific locations where the relationship between these elements is described within the [revised Rule Series 2000](#).

- **2111. Adoption of Performance Standards:** Pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 164(9), the State Board will implement and periodically update standards for student learning in appropriate content areas from kindergarten to grade twelve supervisory union and supervisory district boards shall use these standards as the basis for developing and selecting curriculum, methods of instruction, assessments, and the content and skills taught and learned in school.
- **2120.6. Curriculum Content Areas:** Each supervisory union or supervisory district shall develop documented curriculum that is aligned with the standards approved by the State Board.
- **2120.7. Curriculum Coordination:** Each school district shall implement a written curriculum developed pursuant to Subsection 2120.6 (Curriculum Content Areas) that is: (a) aligned with the standards approved by the State Board.
- **2120.8. Graduation Requirements:** Graduation policies must define proficiency-based graduation requirements based on standards adopted by the State Board.
- **2123.2. Development and Implementation of Local Comprehensive Assessment System:** Each supervisory union or supervisory district shall develop, and each school

shall implement, a local comprehensive assessment system that: (a) assesses student performance in meeting the standards approved by the State Board.

- **2124.1. Minimum Reporting Requirements:** Each supervisory union or supervisory district shall report student and system performance results, on a school by-school basis, to the community at least annually in formats selected by the school district board. At minimum, the report shall include indicators provided by the Agency, those identified in 16 V.S.A. §165(a)(2), and other locally determined indicators, including, but not limited to, indicators that describe students': (a) academic performance using data from the most recent state and local assessments and other information related to student academic performance that describes student progress toward meeting academic standards.
- **2120.5. Tiered System of Support:** In accordance with 16 V.S.A. §2902, each school district shall ensure that a tiered system of academic and behavioral supports is in place to assist all students in working toward attainment of the performance standards. This system will result in the collaboration of all adults to meet the academic, behavioral, social, and emotional/mental health needs of each and every student. Supports are provided as layered high-quality, evidence-based instruction, intervention, and assessment practices that are matched to student strengths and needs, based on the effective and timely use of meaningful data.
- **2120.1. Instructional Strategies:** Educators shall promote personalization and high expectations so that each student may successfully engage with the curriculum delivered and meet graduation requirements. Practices employed by educators shall include examining and teaching a subject from multiple academic perspectives and encouraging students to engage with and synthesize diverse perspectives and narratives, including those from the students' lived experiences, into a coherent understanding or analysis. Classroom instruction shall include a range of evidence-based instructional strategies that most effectively improve student learning and engage all students, as identified by national and Vermont guidance, and locally collected and analyzed student data.

Models of Ethnic Studies and Social Equity

“Ethnic studies’ means the instruction of students in prekindergarten through grade 12 in the historical contributions and perspectives of ethnic groups and social groups.” ([Act 1, 2019](#))

- “Social groups” means women and girls, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, or nonbinary.” (Act 1, 2019)
- “Ethnic groups” means: (A) nondominant racial and ethnic groups in the United States, including people who are Abenaki, people from other indigenous groups, people of African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicana, Latinx, or Middle Eastern descent; and (B) groups that have been historically subject to persecution or genocide.” (Act 1, 2019)

In other states Ethnic Studies, Social Equity, and Culturally Responsive pedagogy are incorporated into K-12 teaching and learning through the application of Frameworks, interdisciplinary approaches, and or are built into Social Studies standards.

- **Teaching and Learning Frameworks** (e.g., Universal Design for Learning) outline principles, strategies, and goals, ensuring consistency and clarity in teaching. Frameworks ensure that teaching, teachers, curriculum, and the learning targets and activities built from standards reflect underlying educational philosophy and priorities. The [CASEL Framework](#), for instance, provides a foundation for communities to use evidence-based SEL strategies in ways that are most meaningful to their local context. It is a systemic approach that emphasizes the importance of establishing equitable learning environments and coordinating practices across four key settings: classrooms, schools, homes, and communities. Embedded within the implementation of the CASEL framework is both [direct instruction on SEL competencies](#) and the [integration of SEL instruction with other subject areas](#).
- An **interdisciplinary approach** to education integrates content, skills, and perspectives from multiple disciplines into a cohesive learning experience. It allows students to engage in a learning process to explore topics, think critically, and solve problems that reach beyond the scope of a single discipline. In Vermont, Financial Literacy standards were adopted to be taught through an interdisciplinary lens (see [Financial Literacy Jump\\$tart Alignment to Curriculum – High School](#)). Transferable skills, “which refers to lifelong learning and interdisciplinary skills,” are taught and assessed across different subject areas ([Education Quality Standards Rule Series 2000](#)).

State Models Related to Ethnic Studies and Social Equity

Below is a cross-section of ethnic studies, culturally responsive, social studies, and social equity models and frameworks from across the nation.

Minnesota

- [Ethnic Studies Course Guidance](#) “Starting in the 2026-2027 school year a district or charter high school must offer an ethnic studies course. This course requirement does not increase the credits required for graduation. An ethnic studies course may fulfill a social studies, language arts, arts, math or science credit if the course meets the applicable state academic standards. The course may fulfill an elective credit if the course meets applicable local academic standards or other requirements.”
- [2021 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Social Studies](#) -Includes Ethnic Studies Anchor Standards: (p. 3)
- [Culturally Responsive Practices](#)
- Multiple guides and resources, including [Culturally Responsive Teaching: A Reflection Guide](#), [School System Equity Self-Assessment](#), [Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard Toolkit](#) and a [A Culturally Responsive Inventory for Social Workers](#).

[Therapists, Counselors, and Clinicians](#) to aide educators in culturally responsive practices.

Oregon

- [Integrating Oregon’s Transformative SEL Standards into Content Area Instruction](#)
- [Draft 2024 Oregon Social Studies Standards](#) “The 2024 Oregon Social Science Standards represent a significant revision from the 2018 Standards. These new standards reflect current educational best practices and the importance of embracing a more complete approach to history, geography, economics, and civics with the inclusion of traditionally underrepresented experiences and perspectives. New requirements mandated by recent legislation, including civics, ethnic studies, the Holocaust, and other genocides.”

New York

- [The Culturally Responsive-Sustaining \(CR-S\) Framework](#) “is intended to help education stakeholders create student-centered learning environments that affirm cultural identities; foster positive academic outcomes; develop students’ abilities to connect across lines of difference; elevate historically marginalized voices; empower students as agents of social change; and contribute to individual student engagement, learning, growth, and achievement through the cultivation of critical thinking.”
- [New York State Social Studies Framework](#)- Themes and content pp. 11-12.

Rhode Island

- [High-Quality Curriculum Selection & Implementation: Understanding Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Education \(CRSE\) in ELA](#)
- [High-Quality Curriculum Selection & Implementation: Understanding Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Education \(CRSE\) in Math](#)

Illinois

- [Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards](#) “The standards encourage future teachers, administrators, and school support personnel to engage in self-reflection, to get to know their students' families, to connect the curriculum to students' lives, and to support student leadership. The standards will be implemented in educator preparation programs to help aspiring educators build the skills they need to engage all students respective of cultures and identities, to create an environment most conducive to learning.”

Washington

- [Washington State Ethnic Studies Framework: Supporting the Teaching of Ethnic Studies K-12](#) “The Washington State Ethnic Studies Framework is intended to support educators and administrators implementing Ethnic Studies in a way that builds the knowledge and skills that all public-school students need to be global citizens in a global

society with an appreciation for the contributions of diverse cultures, as directed by the Legislature. Ethnic Studies requires partnerships between schools, families, and community-based organizations (CBOs), and may be applied kindergarten through 12th grade, across content areas, or to guide establishment of an Ethnic Studies course in grades 7–12.”

- [Washington SEL Implementation Brief: Focus on Culturally Responsive Practices](#) “Culturally responsive practices are approaches in which students’ cultural strengths and identities are used as assets for developing social emotional and academic skills that promote school and life success. These practices support students’ academic achievement and sense of well-being by affirming their cultural place in the world. Culturally responsive practices are intentional in critically examining power and privilege, implicit biases, and institutional racism, which serve as barriers to realizing the full potential of transformative social emotional learning (SEL) practices.”

New Jersey

- [NJ Culturally Responsive Practices](#)- A document that mirrors the AOE’s [Spotlights on Equity](#) documents as it provides links to culturally responsive resources for each content area.

Massachusetts

- [Race, Racism and Culturally Responsive Teaching in History and Social Science in Massachusetts: Frequently Asked Questions](#) “In Massachusetts, decisions about curricula and instructional materials are largely a matter of local control. The state provides guidance documents and resources to inform district planning. State Curriculum Frameworks for each content area are a central resource, which lay out the content and skills that educators should teach at each grade level as well as the guiding principles that should shape their instruction. This FAQ includes links to revised state social studies standards.”

Alaska

- [Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools](#)- “Alaska Native educators have developed standards to provide a way for schools and communities to examine the extent to which they are attending to the educational and cultural well being of the students in their care. These “cultural standards” are predicated on the belief that a firm grounding in the heritage language and culture indigenous to a particular place is a fundamental prerequisite for the development of culturally-healthy students and communities associated with that place, and thus is an essential ingredient for identifying the appropriate qualities and practices associated with culturally-responsive educators, curriculum and schools”.

Virginia

- [2023 History and Social Science Standards](#) “The standards incorporate content from earlier drafts and include new content to tell a more complete story about how the past has shaped the commonwealth, the nation and the world.”

Connecticut

- [Professional Learning: Cultural Competence](#) “Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student facilitates educators’ self-examination of their awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions that pertain to culture and how they can develop culturally-responsive strategies to enrich the educational experiences for all students.”

Nevada

- [Nevada Academic Content Standards for Social Studies](#) “Each grade level includes a set of content themes that encompass the major ideas in each of the key disciplines of social studies. The following content themes are the same throughout the document Multicultural (MC) Themes are: Social justice, consciousness, and action (MC) Identified; Respectful engagement with diverse people (MC); and, Diverse contributions made by men and women from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, including, without limitation, information relating to contributions and impact (MC)” (p. 7).

California

- [California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum](#) “This document will (1) offer support for the inclusion of ethnic studies as either a stand-alone elective or to be integrated into existing history–social science and English language arts courses; (2) be written in language that is inclusive and supportive of multiple users, including teachers (single and multiple subject), support staff, administrators, and the community, and encourage cultural understanding of how different groups have struggled and worked together, highlighting core ethnic studies concepts such as equality and equity, justice, race.”
- [California Transformative SEL Competencies](#)

Colorado

- [Colorado Equity Toolkit](#) “This toolkit is designed to provide user-friendly information and resources to support school and district leaders in centering equity in their work to support positive outcomes for the students they serve.”
- [Understanding with the Cultural Proficiency Framework](#)

National

- [Social Justice Standards- Learning for Justice](#) “has developed_a road map for anti-bias education at every stage of K-12 instruction. Comprised of anchor standards and age-appropriate learning outcomes, the standards provide a common language and organizational structure educators can use to guide curriculum development and make schools more just and equitable.”

