



66th Idaho Legislature House and Senate Education Committees

Dear Governor Brad Little, State Board of Education and State Superintendent Sherri Ybarra,

We have actively reviewed the progress made to replace the Idaho Content Standards, sometimes referred to as “Common Core Standards”. The Idaho Constitution Article IX, Section 1 establishes, “The stability of a republic form of government depending mainly upon the intelligence of the people, it shall be the duty of the Legislature of Idaho, to establish and maintain a general, uniform and thorough system of public, free common schools.” Uniformity and Thoroughness are included in the Idaho Administrative Rules, as documents by reference. The Idaho Joint Education Committees are expecting that any new standards are not simply modified Common Core standards.

The purpose of this letter is to acknowledge the progress made over the past eleven months to meet the recommendations specified in a letter from the Joint Education Committees dated March 9, 2020. In the following paragraphs we will acknowledge the progress to date, make recommendations for further direction and provide suggestions that can lead to a final approval of new Administrative Rules covering Thoroughness of the Idaho English Language Arts, Math and Science Content Standards.

A. ELA Standards - Committee comments and suggestions for completing these standards

- a. We are asking that the process for completing the ELA Standards revision be significantly modified. We ask that a smaller committee of practicing or retired teachers who understand the initial directive to replace Common Core (eight to ten teachers) be assembled this summer and given the opportunity to dedicate sufficient time and energy to the process. We ask that the process not rely on volunteers, but that great teachers be sought out and invited to join the process. We suggest that four to eight weeks be dedicated to the process, and that these teachers be paid for their time so they can give their full energy to the task and feel valued for their professionalism and expertise. We would like to offer the opportunity to continue the process into another year if that is deemed necessary and wise to create the best standards possible.
- b. We would like the revision committee to ask all pertinent questions, to probe deeply, to be comfortable with a different approach, and to make major changes. We are not asking the revision committee to “start over,” but we encourage review and comparison of our revised standards with the standards from other states, with related material from major publishers, and with materials from other organizations like the Core Knowledge Sequence in order to glean the best of the best standards available.
- c. We believe that Idaho can truly create exceptional standards that are appropriate for Idaho students, parents, and teachers—standards that will endure, provide clarity and vision, provide a better way forward for student proficiency, and encourage good teaching for years to come. We encourage a focus on necessary, underlying knowledge as well as the processes of reading, writing, and “doing” language arts skills.
- d. It is extremely important that the standards can be evaluated effectively. Committee members should not assume that Idaho must continue to use our current testing models or providers.
- e. Appendix A includes other Suggestions and Thoughts.

B. Science Standards – Committee Comments and Suggestions for Completing these Standards

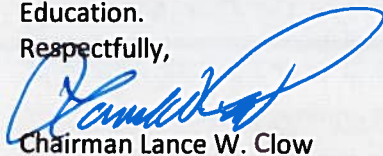
- a. In addition to the “Common-Core-Standards” it was the desire to review and rewrite the Science Standards, modeled after the Next Generation Science Standards, to make them more usable for students, parents, and educators. The journey toward this end has brought together many talented individuals that spent a great deal of time, energy, and cooperation.
- b. The resulting revision, although an improvement, still falls short of the original intent of a fresh approach to the standards. A broader vision of a system of enduring value to the teachers, parents, and the long-term needs of our students.
- c. When the standards were reviewed in detail, it became apparent that some requests of the House and Senate Education Committees were problematic, such as removing the supporting content. We recommend including the supporting content, with assurance that supporting content and standards are depoliticized.
- d. A more focused group of compensated individuals should be assembled to finish this task. When selecting the committees to rewrite the content standards we should include people who understand current issues with the Next Generation Science Standards, both current and retired teachers. Experts from across all grade levels should be brought together to evaluate sequencing of concepts and grade level appropriateness.
- e. Appendix B includes other Suggestions and Thoughts.

C. Math Standards – Committee Comments and Suggestions for Completing these Standards

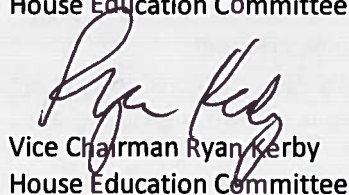
- a. Legislators on the State Math Standards Committee have a few standards they would still like to see improved. These suggestions have been taken to the State Math Standards Committee for consideration. Once the content of the standards document has been finalized, the SDE should have a small team of qualified K – 12 practicing or retired teachers who understand the initial directive to replace Common Core go through the standards to check for any mathematical errors, and then hire a professional editor to make sure formatting and verbiage is consistent.
- b. Appendix C includes other Suggestions and Thoughts.

The House and Senate Education Committees have established a goal that these content standards be available for the State Board of Education to present to the public for negotiated rulemaking to allow rule changes presented for the 2022 Legislative Session with implementation as soon as possible following approval. This letter and Appendixes A, B & C have been reviewed by the Idaho House and Senate Education Committees and approved for delivery to the Governor, State Board and Department of Education.

Respectfully,



Chairman Lance W. Clow
House Education Committee



Vice Chairman Ryan Kerby
House Education Committee



Chairman Steve Thayn
Senate Education Committee



Vice Chairman Carl Crabtree
Senate Education Committee

APPENDIX A – English Language Arts Content Standards

Structure and Organizational Issues:

1. We would like to see a complete, comprehensive review of the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards. We believe that the Anchor Standards, if used, could be listed once (not repeated at various places throughout the standards). We are also concerned that the structure imposed by the Anchor Standards results in standards that are developmentally inappropriate at the lower grades, too many standards at all grade levels, and unnecessary duplication and repetition. Said another way, there should not necessarily be ten writing standards at the kindergarten level just because there are ten anchor standards in writing.
2. We are concerned about the use of “literature” and “informational texts” as classifications of reading. Perhaps the more traditional classifications of fiction and non-fiction would be better. We also want the standards to better balance the fiction and non-fiction requirements and give better instruction in the various genres of those two major categories (e.g. historical fiction, science fiction, romance, poetry, drama, biography, historical narrative, instructional and technical texts, journalism, etc.).
3. We would ask that the categories of “Reading and Writing” and “Listening and Speaking” be reevaluated. In the current standards, there is significant duplication of skills when reading and listening are compared, and when writing and speaking are compared. There may be value in combining some standards for reading, listening, writing, and speaking.
4. We would ask that the reading and writing standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, and Science, and Technical Subjects be taken out of the ELA Standards and moved to the appropriate content standards in social studies and science, or these standards should be removed altogether.

Content Issues:

1. Please compare the State’s Comprehensive Literacy Plan (pp. 9-13) with the Reading Standards for Foundational Skills K-5 and make certain that there are no discrepancies that would make things more difficult for teachers. We believe that the foundational skills for reading should appear first in the standards to give them appropriate emphasis.
2. We feel there is still too much emphasis in the K-5 standards on literary analysis of both literature and informational texts. We feel that the consequence may be to suck the joy out of reading throughout all the grades, but especially in the early years of reading. We want students to read for the joy of entertainment and learning.
3. Please make certain that the cursive writing standards for grades 3 and 4 are adequate, clearly defined, follow a logical progression, and require continued practice in grades 5-8. We want this generation of students to be able to read the written record of our history as well as being efficient in their own writing.
4. We would like a comprehensive review of the Standards for Conventions of Standard English (grammar, punctuation, parts of speech, usage, sentence structures, clauses, phrases, tense, voice, etc.) to make certain that they are adequate. We would like the standards to emphasize the importance of continued instruction for these skills in grades 6-12.
5. We would like a full review of the suggested reading that illustrates the “Complexity, Quality, and Range of Student Reading K-5” on pages 33-35 of the original ELA standards; we feel that this list may need to be removed or significantly revised.
6. We would like all other reading lists removed from the standards and their appendices. We would encourage something like the following statement to be included in the introductory material for the standards: In article IX, section 1, the Idaho State Constitution says, “The stability of a

APPENDIX A – English Language Arts Content Standards (Continued)

republican form of government depending mainly upon the intelligence of the people, it shall be the duty of the legislature of Idaho, to establish and maintain a general, uniform and thorough system of public, free common schools.” The Idaho Legislature believes that Idaho’s public-school system should teach its citizens the background knowledge to maintain a free society and a republican form of government. The texts used in the ELA curriculum must include selections from American history and American literature that promote kindness, generosity, civility, individual responsibility, and socially acceptable behavior.

APPENDIX B – Science Content Standards

Summary - *The following are more specific areas that require additional scrutiny.*

Proper Assessments of Performance Based Standards

1. There is excessive emphasis in the Science Standards on the performance of tasks which thereby detracts from learning science facts and principles. This is demonstrated by the Standards almost exclusively using terms such as:
 - Gather evidence to support or refute
 - Plan and conduct an investigation
 - Use tools and materials to design and build
 - Use observations to describe
 - Construct an argument supported by evidence
 - Communicate solutions that will
 - Use materials to design a solution
 - Analyze data obtained from testing

Assessment is a fundamental shortcoming of the Performance Standards as currently written. We request that the Science Standards include clear content (knowledge-based) standards. Since the Standards are performance based, the assessment of these skills is next to impossible in an individual written or computer-based testing environment. A one-on-one evaluation from the teacher may approach this required level of evaluation, but this is neither practical, uniform, objective, or affordable.

2. Certain test questions have multiple interdependent steps where an incorrect answer on one step will necessarily result in incorrect answers on subsequent questions. This cascading effect of a single incorrect answer may give a skewed assessment of a student's aptitude.

Age Appropriateness

We believe many of these performance requirements are above grade level for the early years. Although these skills are necessary for students to learn before they complete their education, the "doing" of science vs. content knowledge in the early grades causes concern.

Use of other Science Based Skills

When reviewing the fifth-grade sample test questions, there was no usage of mathematics on any of the questions. The highest use of mathematical skill needed to answer the ninth and twelfth grade sample test questions was at a third-grade level (addition and subtraction of two-digit numbers). This is entirely inadequate.

Because mathematics is the language of science, the Standards revision should maximize the use of the level of mathematics that is appropriate to the grade level of the assessment.

Content Issues

1. One of the original intent of the Joint Education Committees was to eliminate the politicization of the material being taught. Although much progress has been made on this front, the same issue is evident in some of the testing materials. There is still a heavy emphasis on environmental and ecology related topics. The limited information given the students in the questions forces a desired outcome for the answers. (Examples of Sample Test Questions: Grade 5 Question 1: repair of coastal shoreline; G5 Question 4: breaching of a dam on a river; High

School Question 6: reforestation of South Korea; HS Question: improving blue crab harvesting yields).

2. It's not productive to remove these materials from the Performance Standards only to insert them again in the assessments where they have no visibility to legislators and the public.
3. The fundamental premise of how to understand our physical world is not addressed in the Science Performance Standards. Specifically, the four steps of the scientific method are never even mentioned in the Standards. The Joint Education Committees recommend a focus on teaching fundamental scientific principles.

APPENDIX C – Math Content Standards

We have reviewed the initial recommendation and provide the following comments:

1. The Math Committee switched from Idaho Standards to Massachusetts standards. The standards were similar, but Massachusetts had modified the language in many standards to make them more understandable, added more examples, and put the standards in a format that was easier to read. The committee also used language from Florida’s Best standards at times, as well as verbiage from Colorado, Nebraska, and a few other states when their approach to a standard was especially strong.
2. The Committee added “mastery standards” for each grade in elementary school. These standards, prominently displayed at the beginning of each grade, make it clear that Idaho expects students to be extremely proficient in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts and algorithms at the appropriate grade levels.
3. The Math Committee took great care in addressing the issue of students using multiple methods of solve problems. Teachers help students learn a variety of approaches to solving problems, but the student is then able to choose the method with which they are most comfortable. Standard algorithms, (the way previous generations solved problems), are included in the standards and students are expected to become proficient in using these approaches.
4. The Math Committee did a lot of work to make sure the standards are easily understood by teachers and other interested parties. In some cases, the Committee modified the verbiage in the standard, in other cases they included examples or clarifications. The examples are highlighted in blue, and the clarifications in light red, making the math standards clean and easy to read. In some cases, Committee members wrote the new language, and sometimes they borrowed from the aforementioned states.
5. The standards are age appropriate. They are carefully constructed so building blocks are in place for concepts learned in successive grades.
6. The Committee thoroughly eliminated all aspects of Common Core in these draft standards.

