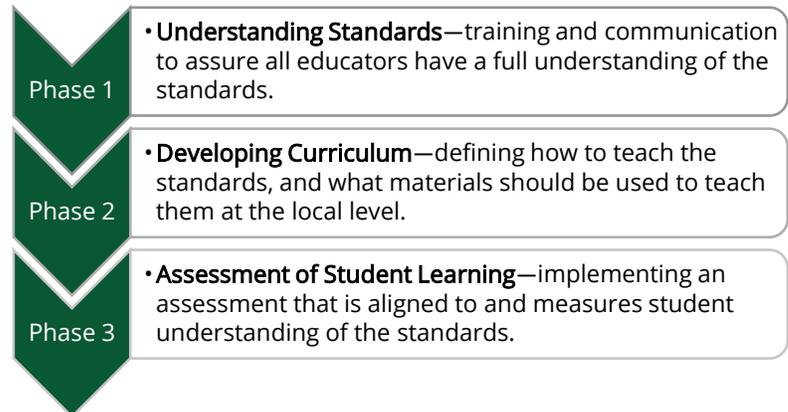


Overview: Standards and Assessment November 2015

Introduction

Over the past two decades, **the U.S. education system has slipped** from performing on par with other global leaders **to performing slightly below the average developed nation.**ⁱ Recognizing the need to ensure all students are prepared to collaborate and compete globally, **Delaware joined state-led efforts to adopt stronger standards supporting 21st century learning**, including the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in math and English, and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

Over the last five years, teachers have been gradually incorporating Common Core and NGSS into their teaching.ⁱⁱ **There are three phases leading to full implementation** of Common Core and NGSS, including:



Current Landscape

Adopting New Standards

- **Delaware is one of more than 40 states** that helped develop and adopt **Common Core.**ⁱⁱⁱ Recognizing the need for high standards that are consistent across states and aligned to the expectations of colleges, workforce training programs, and employers, a state-led effort to develop these standards was launched in 2009.^{iv}

The **development process** relied on the expertise of teachers and other standards experts (such as the National Education Association, and the National Councils of Teachers of Mathematics and English).^v In 2010, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers released the Common Core.^{vi}

Common Core hold students to the same **rigorous academic expectations** of their peers in other states, and prepare students to compete with peers in top-performing countries.^{vii} They define what skills students are expected to learn at each grade level in English language arts and mathematics. However, the decision on **how to teach the standards remains a local decision.**^{viii}

- **Delaware is one of 15 states** leading the way in adopting the **Next Generation Science Standards.**^{ix} In 2010, the National Research Council, in partnership with science education educators and experts from around the nation, developed the framework for the NGSS.^x From there, 26 states, including Delaware, collaboratively developed these higher expectations and goals, which were finalized in April 2013.^{xi}

The new K-12 science standards are **a shared set of internationally benchmarked grade-level expectations for students.** Similarly to Common Core, while NGSS set high expectations for the knowledge and skills students should know at each grade level, **the standards do not set a lesson plan or tell teachers how to teach.**^{xii}



Understanding Standards and Developing Curriculum

- **Over the last five years, teachers have gradually incorporated Common Core into their teaching**—developing new curriculum, for full classroom implementation of aligned curriculum by 2013-14.^{xiii} However, since the process is locally driven, the **level of implementation varies** across districts and schools. The Delaware Department of Education has supported local districts and schools through initiatives such as the Common Ground for the Common Core, the Delaware Dream Team, etc. (see addendum for further detail).
- **The gradual implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards has been underway for two years, with the goal of full implementation in Delaware schools by 2016-17.**^{xiv} While implementation remains a locally driven process, the state worked to engage teacher leaders earlier in the implementation process, supporting them in building a state-wide collaborative community focused on implementing NGSS and developing curriculum resources (see addendum for further detail).

Assessment of Student Learning

- **As of fall 2015, Delaware is one of 17 states that has joined the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), and adopted the Smarter Assessments** as a measure of student achievement on the Common Core State Standards.^{xv} Seven other states have joined the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), and adopted the PARCC assessments. The goal of both assessment programs is to assess higher-order thinking skills aligned to Common Core. Twenty four states are choosing to invest in independent, state-developed assessments.
- **By the end of the 2016-17 school year, a comprehensive assessment system that is fully aligned to the NGSS will be implemented in Delaware.**^{xvi}

Improving the Assessment of Student Learning

- **Strong, useful assessment** provides **timely, clear, and relevant** feedback on student learning and is a necessary aspect of the teaching and learning process.^{xvii}
- As a member of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, Delaware can **provide feedback to SBAC** on how to **improve the relevance** and quality of the assessment.
- While there tends to be a general public perception that the burden of standardized assessment is a state mandate, **national research indicates that the bulk of standardized assessments are decided upon at the local (district and school) level.** In order to better understand the problem of “over-testing,” the state of Delaware is engaging in an **assessment inventory of locally and state mandated assessments** to better understand how these assessments currently impact student learning.^{xviii}

How the Delaware System Compares

- **2011-2014 statewide assessment results show progress** as more students succeed on a challenging state assessment. Statewide, approximately seven out of 10 students scoring proficient or advanced on the DCAS in 2013-14, compared to six out of 10 students in 2010-11.^{xix}
- **2014-15 statewide assessment results provide a new baseline** for how Delaware students are performing in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The 2015 Smarter Assessment results are the first ever scores for the test, which is aligned with the Common Core. Statewide, **approximately five out of 10 students are proficient in English language arts, and roughly four out of 10 students are proficient in math.** Achievement gaps persist among low-income, minority, special education, and English learner subgroups, as many of these student populations are half as proficient as their peers.^{xx}
- **Nationally,** Delaware has improved significantly, but **remains middle of the pack** according to the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP)—considered the nation’s report card. NAEP is

administered every two years to a sampling of fourth and eighth grade students in each state. Over the past two decades (1992-2011), Delaware ranked third nationally in terms of overall NAEP gains (growth).^{xxi} Currently, **Delaware proficiency remains comparable to the national average**. Recent growth (2003-15) has been modest, and achievement gaps persist.^{xxii}

- **Internationally**, the U.S. education system **performs slightly below the average developed nation**.^{xxiii} In 2012, 65 countries participated in the Program for International Assessment (PISA), a “global report card” of student achievement.^{xxiv} Because Delaware students performed on par with students nationally on the NAEP, it is likely that the U.S. results on PISA reflect how Delaware students would perform.

Potential Action Steps

As Delaware looks to the future to ensure that students are prepared for the rapidly changing world in the information age, it is crucial that the standards and assessments are relevant and provide a valuable look at what students know and are able to do.

(Note: See addendum for additional information on Common Core and NGSS initiatives and resources listed under “Work to Build Upon”)

Category	Potential Action Steps	Progress Underway	Supporters
Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain the implementation of Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). • Adopt competencies related to 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, interpersonal skills, collaboration, persistence, and other skills students will need to be successful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Core and NGSS adopted and implemented • DelExcels Common Core and NGSS resources pages • Dream Team (LearnZillion) • Common Ground for the Common Core • Delaware Reading and Math Cadre • Delaware Science Coalition • Next Generation Teacher Leader Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) • Delaware STEM Council • State Board of Education (SBE) • Vision Coalition of Delaware
Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamline, maintain consistency, and improve the implementation of the Smarter Assessments. • Consider the adoption of performance assessments, which are assessments that require students to craft solutions to problems by constructing an answer, producing a product, or performing an activity in order to assess 21st century skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Core and NGSS adopted and implemented • DelExcels Common Core and NGSS resources pages • Dream Team (LearnZillion) • Common Ground for the Common Core • Delaware Reading and Math Cadre • Delaware Science Coalition • Next Generation Teacher Leader Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competency-Based Learning Guiding Coalition • DDOE • STEM Council • Vision Coalition of Delaware

Category	Potential Action Steps	Progress Underway	Supporters
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As Delaware shifts to a more personalized, student-centered system, adapt assessments to support that change. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individualize assessments to reflect a student-centered approach, while maintaining comparability to ensure quality ○ Allow students to take assessments when they are ready, rather than wait for a defined testing window • Ensure assessments are rigorous and signal that students have mastered specific competencies and skills 		

Additional Resources:

- Delaware Department of Education Office of Assessment: <http://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/236>
- Next Generation Science Standards: www.nextgenscience.org
- Achieve: <http://achieve.org>
- DelExcels: <http://delexcels.org>
- Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium: www.smarterbalanced.org

Sources:

- ⁱ Harvard University Program on Education Policy and Governance & Education Next. (2013). Not Just the Problem of Other People's Children: U.S. Student Performance in Global Perspective. http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Papers/PEPG14_01_NotJust.pdf
- ⁱⁱ Academic Benchmarks. (2015). Common Core State Standards Adoption Map. <http://academicbenchmarks.com/common-core-state-adoption-map/>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2015). Standards in Your State. <http://www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/>
- ^{iv} Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2015). About the Standards: Frequently Asked Questions. <http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/frequently-asked-questions/>
- ^v Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2015). About the Standards: Development Process. <http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/development-process/>
- ^{vi} Ibid.
- ^{vii} Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2015). About the Standards: Frequently Asked Questions. <http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/frequently-asked-questions/>
- ^{viii} Ibid.
- ^{ix} Academic Benchmarks. (2015). Next Generation Science Standards Adoption Map. <http://academicbenchmarks.com/next-generation-science-standards-adoption-map/>
- ^x Next Generation Science Standards. (2015). About the Standards: Framework for K-12 Science Education. <http://www.nextgenscience.org/framework-k%E2%80%9312-science-education>

- ^{xi} Next Generation Science Standards. (2015). About the Standards: Development Process. Achieve, Inc. <http://www.nextgenscience.org/development-process>
- ^{xii} DelExcels. (2015). The Standards: Next Gen Science. <http://delexcels.org/next-gen-science/>
- ^{xiii} DelExcels. (2015). Common Core: What you need to know. <http://delexcels.org/what-you-need-to-know/>
- ^{xiv} Delaware Department of Education, and Delaware Science Coalition. (2014). Delaware's Implementation Plan. <http://delexcels.org/next-gen-science-standards-delawares-implementation-plan/>
- ^{xv} Academic Benchmarks. (2015). Common Core State Assessment Consortia Map. <http://academicbenchmarks.com/common-core-assessment-consortia/>. *Note: Two states, (Massachusetts and Missouri) will administer a combination of consortium and independent, state-developed assessments.*
- ^{xvi} See citation xii
- ^{xvii} Center for American Progress. (2015). Testing Overload in America's Schools. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2014/10/16/99073/testing-overload-in-americas-schools/>.
- ^{xviii} Newsworks. (2015). Delaware to launch 'testing inventory' for school assessments. <http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/local/delaware/79489-delaware-to-launch-qtesting-inventoryq-for-school-assessments>
- ^{xix} Delaware Department of Education. (2015). Delaware Student Assessment Reporting & Analysis for the Public (ver. 2015). https://pubapps.doe.k12.de.us/DSARA_Public/default.aspx
- ^{xx} Ibid.
- ^{xxi} Harvard University, Program on Education Policy Governance & Education Next. (2012). Achievement Growth: International and U.S. State Trends in Student Performance. http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Papers/PEPG12-03_CatchingUp.pdf
- ^{xxii} National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). NAEP Data Explorer: State Profiles. <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/>
- ^{xxiii} OECD. (2013). PISA Database. <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results.htm>
- ^{xxiv} Ibid.