

**TESTIMONY ON SB 2311**  
**House Education Committee**  
**March 3, 2021**  
**by Ann Ellefson, Director of Academic Support**  
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**North Dakota Department of Public Instruction**

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Chairman Owens and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ann Ellefson, Director of the Office of Academic Support of the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI). I am here to provide agency testimony and information regarding SB 2311, relating to mental health awareness and suicide prevention instruction for students in North Dakota.

Currently, this bill states the superintendent of public instruction shall review the North Dakota Health Standards and curriculum for students in grades kindergarten through twelve during 2021-2022 to ensure it is current and reflects best practices. This bill calls for the review to specifically examine the standards for age-appropriate mental health awareness and suicide prevention, including the detection of warning signs, risk factors, and identification of at-risk peers. I am here to provide background information regarding the current North Dakota Health Standards, the standards review process and the scheduling of standards revisions.

The current North Dakota Health Education Content Standards were released in August of 2018. The standards provide guidance to schools as they form or select their local curriculum. Please note, local school districts determine curriculum (how the

standards are taught); the NDDPI does not oversee or select curriculum. Standards documents often contain annotations with suggested content possibilities, including mental health awareness and coping strategies for students. The North Dakota Health Education Content Standards do address risk behaviors for the student or their peers as well as how they may seek help or treatment for health concerns (including mental health concerns).

This bill suggests a complete review of the standards. When the standards are reviewed and rewritten, there is an established process that is followed which contributes to the quality and consistency between content areas. A summary of these steps can be found in Attachment A. The timeline for implementing this process averages 9-12 months from start to finish.

With each set of content standards, the NDDPI prepares and budgets funds to cover the associated costs. The anticipated cost to review and rewrite the North Dakota Health Education Content Standards is \$60,000. The North Dakota Health Education Content Standards were just reviewed and updated less than three years ago and are not currently scheduled in our existing budget cycle for review until 2024. If this bill were to proceed as drafted, the NDDPI would need to attach a fiscal note to this bill. Attachment B illustrates the current K-12 Education Content Standards and the dates adopted. On this attachment you will see the state has several standards that are older and are currently in the que for review ahead of the health standards:

- Foreign Language Content Standards (May 2001) – These standards were scheduled for review during 2019-2020; however, the process was delayed due to COVID. These standards are scheduled to start the review process in April.
- Library and Technology Content Standards (December 2012) – These standards are scheduled for review in 2022.
- Physical Education Content Standards (July 2015) – We anticipate bringing together educators in 2022-2023 to review and revise these standards.

In general, the department strives to review and revisit the standards in each content area at least every seven years. It is noted that several of the content areas are overdue. The primary cause of this deviation in schedule and timeline is due to the necessity of the department to re-examine North Dakota's English and Mathematics content standards in 2015 to address the statewide concerns of undue national influence of the Common Core English Language Arts and Mathematics standards on the state standard setting process in 2010-2011. COVID disruptions have also impacted that schedule.

Chairman Owens and Members of the Committee that concludes our agency testimony and I stand for any questions you may have.

## Attachment A

### North Dakota Content Standards Development Process

| Phase 1<br>Preparation for Development   | Phase 2<br>Development and Draft  | Phase 3<br>Approval and Dissemination  | Phase 4<br>Implementation and Evaluation Feedback  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project is proposed.</li> <li>• Ensure sufficient funds and time are budgeted. Including external facilitation fees, if required.</li> <li>• Collaborate with offices with stake in standards.</li> <li>• Select external professional consultant for external survey, facilitation, and research, if required.</li> <li>• Develop survey for stakeholders of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for change within the content area standards selected for revision or</li> <li>• Survey stakeholders and share results</li> <li>• Establish committee meeting schedule for development and review committees.</li> <li>• Identify and review prospective standard documents (national and state standards, research, documents from education related organizations).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards development committee is selected.</li> <li>• Provide standards documents, research, and survey results to the selection committee.</li> <li>• Review Committee is selected.</li> <li>• Contract, convene, and train standards development committee.</li> <li>• Standards Development Committee discusses research and survey data and identifies changes needed in content area standards.</li> <li>• Initial draft is written, reviewed, and distributed to review committee, stakeholders, and public for review and comments.</li> <li>• Revisions are made, accessibility for students with disabilities is reviewed, and vertical and horizontal alignment is examined within the draft standards.</li> <li>• Revised draft is distributed for review and comments.</li> <li>• Final draft is prepared and distributed to the State Superintendent for approval and dissemination.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Superintendent approves final standards document.</li> <li>• Standards document is posted on the website for online dissemination and public notice is given to school districts, libraries, universities, education related organizations and the public.</li> <li>• Excel document is created to upload standards to external sites (i.e., TIE Net, PowerSchool).</li> <li>• Standards are completed in CASE format and submitted.</li> <li>• Technical assistance is offered to districts regarding use of the document.</li> <li>• Local districts start to draft local standards or curriculum aligned to the document.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers and administrators may use the standards document as a basis for curriculum development, instructional design, professional development, and evaluation.</li> <li>• Teachers and administrators provide informal feedback including recommended improvements for future standards drafting.</li> <li>• The Department of Public Instruction compiles feedback and recommendations for improvement of the standards document to prepare for the next content standards development activity.</li> </ul> |

## Attachment B

<https://www.nd.gov/dpi/districtschools/k-12-education-content-standards>

[Home](#) / [Districts/Schools](#) / [K-12 Education Content Standards](#)

# K-12 Education Content Standards

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North Dakota Content Standards serve as expectations for what students should know and be able to do for each grade span. The standards serve as goals for teaching and learning. In North Dakota, the content standards serve as a model. Each school district may set more rigorous standards; however, no district shall use any state content standards less rigorous than those set forth in the North Dakota Century Code 15.1-21.

Local school districts determine the curriculum (how standards are taught) they will adopt to meet the standards.

- [Computer Science and Cybersecurity K-12 Standards - 2019](#)
- [Dance K-12 Standards - 2019](#)
- [Early Learning Standards - 2018](#)
- [English Language Arts/Literacy K-12 Standards - 2017](#)
- [Foreign Language Standards - 2001](#)
- [Health Education K-12 Standards - 2018](#)
- [Library and Technology K-12 Standards - 2012](#)
- [Mathematics K-12 Standards - 2017](#)
- [Media Arts K-12 Standards - 2019](#)
- [Music K-12 Standards - 2019](#)
- [Physical Education K-12 Standards - 2015](#)
- [Science K-12 Standards - 2019](#)
- [Social Studies K-12 Standards - 2019](#)
- [Theatre Arts K-12 Standards - 2019](#)
- [Visual Arts K-12 Standards - 2019](#)

To access a machine readable version of the official North Dakota Content Standards, please visit the [North Dakota CASE Server](#). The CASE version of the standards can be uploaded to student information systems, curriculum mapping programs, and a variety of other uses.

To access the priority standards and proficiency scales developed by the North Dakota Regional Education Association, please visit [NDREA.org](http://NDREA.org).

The North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education (NDCTE) also has content standards to assist in preparing students for entry into industry sectors for post-secondary education. The NDCTE develops these standards to ensure each program area offers courses that allow students to acquire essential knowledge and skills.

More information can be found on the [NDCTE website](#).

**ND Foreign Language Standards Development Committee**

