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Contact: Richard Vespucci
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State Board of Education Receives Draft Of Core Curriculum Content Standards

The State Board of Education today received a draft of the revised Core Curriculum Content Standards. The standards are statements of expectations that describe what all students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate from high school.

Today's release of the draft revised standards launches a statewide public review process in which comments will be sought from educators, business leaders and interested citizens. This phase of the standards-setting process will continue into the spring. The state board is scheduled to consider the revised standards at first discussion level in May 2002.

"When our standards were adopted, the state board wisely built in an automatic five-year review," said Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr. "Seven months ago, we began the comprehensive process of evaluating every area of the standards. The purpose is to clarify and adjust the standards where it makes sense."

The revised standards reflect the work of more than 250 educators and representatives from business and industry who have served on standards revision committees in all seven content areas and the workplace readiness standards. Throughout the code revision process, a statewide advisory committee composed of key representatives from all of the major education organizations, colleges and universities and business and industry has provided guidance and direction. The Department of Education's Office of Standards and Professional Development has coordinated the entire effort.

Commissioner Gagliardi explained that the draft standards include more subject matter and more targeted grade level expectations.

"For some of the standards, we have added additional benchmark grades of 2 and 6 to our original benchmark grades of 4, 8 and 12," Dr. Gagliardi said. "While we are not proposing additional state tests for these new benchmark years at this time, we believe that designating them will provide local school districts with valuable opportunities to evaluate student performance and properly align their curricula."

Each standard is divided into specific categories for learning known as strands. These groupings will allow teachers and administrators to track the expectations across grade levels.

Highlights of the proposed changes in the draft standards appear below:

- In **Language Arts Literacy**, the standards were influenced by recommendations from the National Reading Panel. The standards also contain more specific direction for reading and writing in grades K-4.
- In **Mathematics**, the standards are now more closely aligned with those of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, which were recently revised.
- In **Science**, two life science areas were combined. In addition, emphasis on technology was added.
- The **Social Studies** standards propose more content, particularly in U.S. history, world history and New Jersey history.
- In the **Visual and Performing Arts**, the content for each arts discipline was defined.
- Proposed revisions to the **World Languages** standards recognize multiple entry points and the fact that many students begin the study of a new language at different times throughout their schooling. The draft standards also underscore the vision of focusing on communication and cultural awareness, rather than grammar and translation.
- **Health and Physical Education** contains a much stronger emphasis on the importance of wellness and health-related issues.

- The **Workplace Readiness** standards now include technology education. The practical arts are also included. There continues to be a focus on career awareness and exploration.

"We have tried to maintain a very careful balance between providing more specificity and content, while allowing for local development of curriculum," Gagliardi said. "I must emphasize that these are only draft standards. We encourage parents, educators and business leaders to actively participate in the review and input process by offering their comments and suggestions."

The Department of Education plans to actively solicit feedback on the draft standards between January and March 2002 at feedback sessions held with the cooperation of New Jersey United, New Jersey Statewide Systemic Initiative, and other content groups.

The revised standards will be mailed to all chief school administrators, colleges and universities, business and industry and all of the major educational organizations. They will also be posted on the Department of Education web site.

All feedback collected will be considered by the state revision committees, the statewide advisory committee and the Department of Education. They will decide whether additional changes need to be made before the standards are formally presented to the state board in May.

"Obviously, our timeline for moving to the formal state board process depends chiefly on the new administration," Gagliardi said. "They will need to embrace and endorse the standards, and they will need time to review and study them."

New Jersey was one of seven states that developed state-level standards in 1996. Now, 49 states have their own standards. The original standards have been evaluated independently by Achieve, Inc., an independent, bipartisan, nonprofit organization created by governors and corporate leaders to help states and the private sector raise standards and performance in America's schools, and by the Council of Chief State School officers.

Recommendations made in these evaluations were considered in developing the draft standards presented today.

For more information about the Core Curriculum Content Standards, visit the Department of Education's web site:

www.state.nj.us/education