

Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century

The Oregon Statewide Assessment System satisfies requirements in Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century. Introduced in 1991 as House Bill 3565 and amended in 1995 as House Bill 2991, the Act mandates a world-class educational system for Oregon. In order to bring this system about, the Oregon State Board of Education was to describe the skills and knowledge to be mastered by students in a set of explicit Content Standards. In addition, the State Board was to prescribe the performance standards that a student must meet in order to obtain a Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM). The CIM is awarded at around grade 10 to students who have met performance standards. At grades 3, 5, and 8 the State Board set performance standards for benchmarks leading to the CIM.

Assessments in the OSAS are directly related to content standards either through the content of test questions or through scoring guides based on standards. Scores or ratings on the assessments express the degree to which students have mastered content standards. The link between assessments and standards is fundamental to the design of Oregon's assessment. Procedures for writing test items, rating student performances, and adopting standards ensure a wide degree of public input and participation from educators across the state.

The Act was influenced by a model set forth by the National Center for Education and the Economy (<http://www.ncee.org/>) in their publication "America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages. The overriding concept governing the plan was that all students can and should be educated to a high standard. Among the features promoted by NCEE were the creation of content and performance standards at benchmark grades, the use of assessments to verify the performance of students and schools, certificates of initial and advanced mastery, and the use of multiple measures in assessment.

The implementation of these ideas caused a shift in the role of state regulatory agencies. Previously states had created curricula for schools to follow and monitored delivery of the curricula through appropriate teacher preparation, classroom methods, and textbook choice. Under standards based reform, states began to focus on what students had learned rather than what or how they had been taught. Assessment and evaluation are central to this model. If assessment results are to be meaningful, they must meet technical standards for accuracy and consistency. The documents in this collection demonstrate this technical adequacy.