

To: ORCSD School Board
From: Jim Morse, Superintendent
Date: October 7, 2015
Re: Standards for Public School Approval

On March 3, 2014 the New Hampshire State Board of Education updated the “Minimum Standards for Public School Approval.” This 104 page document addresses requirements that all public schools in New Hampshire must meet in order to meet “minimum” standards. Within this document the State outlines its expectations inclusive of the term “competencies.”

To quote from the State Board of Education Minimum Standards for Public School Approval (2014):

“The local School Board shall require that graduation competencies as demonstrated through the accumulation of credits as outlined in Table 306-3 and by the certified educator. Each high school shall determine how completion of a classroom course, career and technical education courses, independent study, distance learning courses, or extended learning opportunity can support student achievement and demonstration of District or graduation competencies.”

The work related to competencies and standards is on-going throughout NH and ORCSD. In point of fact the District will be required to demonstrate that the graduates of 2017, one short year away, will have met the competencies outlined in NH law and regulations.

Standards, curriculum and competencies, are not the same thing though often used interchangeably.

Definitions

The standards are end of the year grade level expectations as defined in Common Core.

Standards based, refers to a system of instruction, assessment, grading and academic reporting that are based on student reporting. A standards based system requires a student to demonstrate an understanding or mastery of knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education. (1)

Standard clusters represent group standards that, when mastered, represent mastery in a given competency.

Learning standards are concise, written descriptions of what students are expected to know and be able to do at specific stages of their education.

Curriculum refers to the means and materials with which students will interact for the purpose of achieving identified educational outcomes (standards). (2)

The curriculum is “how” a teacher decides to teach. It’s a choice of methodology/pedagogy. It’s a decision by the teacher on how best to engage the learner, how to use the materials, and the most effective measures to access day to day progress.

Competency based system in which students are provided with personalized learning that provides “flexibility in the way that credit can be earned and awarded,” and that allows them to “advance when they demonstrate the desired level of mastery.” (3)

Competencies is a demonstrated mastery of learning across the continuum of District competencies within and across content.

The State has published model competencies for core content. ORCSD must adopt them “as is” or adapt them. Administration is working with our staff to review the State’s competencies and adapt them to the ORCSD experience. Although there is no state law or guidance specific to progress reports or report cards, a traditional report card cannot inform parents/students of progress toward mastery of State competencies or standards effectively. Utilizing behaviors to impact grades is also not a measure of academic progress. Therefore separating behaviors from academic mastery is necessary.

Our staff is required to monitor progress toward meeting graduation competencies by 2017. This does not mean that all competencies are met at ORHS. Some may be met at ORMS, since competencies are progress toward learning goals. Therefore, the middle school by default must work on this issue as well.

In the end, NH law requires ORCSD, like all school systems in NH, to have a comprehensive system of competencies mastered. This work must include engagement of staff, reports to the School Board and communication to parents.

Administration failed to communicate the on-going work related to competencies and standards at the middle school. From this point forward we will consistently communicate on these important issues as we move forward together.

We will develop a strategic plan document related to competencies/standards so that the staff, School Board and Community can monitor our progress. We will report back to the Board quarterly.

Attachments:

- I. State Board of Education Minimum Standards for Public School Approval
- II. NH DOE Technical Advisory School Approval
- III. NH DOE Technical Advisory School Approval Definitions
- IV. NH DOE Mathematics Competencies
- V. Achieve – Competency-Based Pathways: Definition, Key Messages & Talking Points
- VI. Achieve – Competency-Based Pathways: Frequently Asked Questions

(1) <http://edglossary.org/standards-based/>

(2) <http://www.education.com/reference/article/curriculum-definition/>

(3) Department of Education NH Work Study Practices 8/14/14