Sunshine State Standards

The Sunshine State Standards are part of an ongoing educational effort within the State of Florida. The SSS will provide the impetus needed to begin a statewide movement in which local school districts will start working to build viable and useful curriculum that will prepare today's students for the challenges of the 21st Century.

In this tutorial you will learn more about the SSS. To examine a topic click on one of the links below. When you have finished with that section return to the Table of Contents.

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Why were the SSS Developed?

If the SSS were developed as a part of an educational reform effort, then why, is education reform needed? It has been made clear from both parents and businesses that they are dissatisfied with what is happening in schools today. They are no longer confident that the public school education prepares all students adequately for either the workplace or for college.

Clearly, parents want:

1. a return to teaching high standards in reading, writing, and mathematics
2. challenging courses that make students think hard and work smart
3. a clear picture of what students are expected to know
4. a measurement of how well students are learning
5. schools held accountable for student performance, and
6. information on how students and schools compare against others.

These are today's educational priorities and they are the foundation on which the SSS are built.

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Historical Perspective

The standards movement can be traced back to 1989, when the U.S. Governors and President Bush met to establish national education goals and a plan to meet these goals. This document, now known as GOALS 2000, inspired the National Council on Education Standards and Testing to recommend the development of voluntary national standards. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics led the way in development of national standards, subsequently standards have been developed in many other academic areas.

Another important event in the standards movement occurred when the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) was commissioned by the U.S. Department of Labor. Its report, released in 1991, identified workplace competencies and foundational skills required for effective job performance in today's marketplace as well as for the future. These competencies were researched and verified as necessary for Florida's job market. As a result, the SCANS competencies provide the basis for Florida's Education Goal 3 Standards.

The activities of Goals 2000 and the SCANS report has helped shape Florida's plan of education reform, known as School Improvement and Accountability (formerly known as Blueprint 2000). The SSS is one of the 6 major components that will work together to improve education in Florida. The other 5 components of the plan include the state education goals, the school improvement process, local flexibility, performance indicators, and reporting and accountability for results.

The process of developing the standards began in 1994 when the DOE started conducting extensive research on content standards as well as instructional practices. They consulted national experts, along with teachers and administrators throughout Florida. Drafts were completed and then reviewed by business leaders, parents, teachers, higher education faculty and citizens. The present version was completed in the Spring of 1996.

What Are The SSS?

The SSS are a set of higher level student achievement standards for Florida public schools that identify what students should know and be able to do by the end of four developmental levels: grades PreK-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. They form the basis for accountability to the citizens of Florida. Standards have been developed in the areas of language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, health and physical education and foreign languages.

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How Are the SSS Organized?

The contents of the SSS, presented in Chapter 3 of the Florida Curriculum Frameworks, are outlined through a specific hierarchical structure. There are several levels of information, each more specific than the one above it.

- **Subject Area** = domain, content area, such as language arts, mathematics, or science.

- **Strand** = label (word or phrase) for a category of knowledge such as measurement, writing, culture, or nature of matter is located at the top of each page. The strand follows a capital letter, "A", "B", "C",...

- **Standard** = general statement of expected learner achievement. It is located beneath the strand and follows a number, "1", "2", "3",...

- **Benchmark** = learner expectations (what a student should know and be able to do) at the end of one of four developmental levels: grades PreK-2 (level 1), grades 3-5 (level 2), grades 6-8 (level 3), and grades 9-12 (level 4) the grade level appears in column one of each of the SSS located in Chapter 3 of the Florida Curriculum Frameworks. The benchmark appropriate for the developmental level appears in the second column.

- **Sample Performance Descriptions** = examples of things a student could do to demonstrate achievement of the benchmark are found in column three.

And

- **Correlations to Goal 3 Standards** = identification of the specific Goal 3 standards that are incorporated into the sample performance descriptions are located in the last column of the SSS.

Listed below is an example of the structure for Mathematics Subject Area.

### B. Measurement Strand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Benchmark The Student</th>
<th>Sample Performance Descriptions</th>
<th>Goal 3 Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grades PreK-2</td>
<td>MA.B.4.1.1 selects and uses an object to serve as a unit of measure, such as a paper</td>
<td>MA.B.4.1.1.a given a variety of objects, decides which would be the most accurate</td>
<td>3, 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### How are the SSS Coded

Each subject area, strand, standard, level, and benchmark can be identified by its own code:

```
Subject Area: "MA" (Mathematics)  
Strand: "B" (Measurement)  
Standard: "#4" (PreK-2)  
Level: "#1"  
Benchmark: "#1"
```

The first two letters in the code indicate the subject area (Example: MA stands for mathematics) the next letter in the code indicates the strand. (Example: Strand B. Measurement) the first number in the code identifies the standard. (Example: 4. refers to the following standard, "The student selects and uses appropriate units and instruments for measurement to achieve the degree of precision and accuracy required in real-world situations").

The second number in the code refers to the developmental level (Example: 1 represents level one [PreK-2]). The last number in the code identifies the benchmark specific for that developmental level. (Example: 1 refers to the following benchmark, "the student selects and uses an object to serve as a unit of measure, such as a paper clip, eraser, or marble.

```markdown
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PreK-2</th>
<th>a unit of measure, such as a paper clip, eraser, or marble.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MA.B.4.1.2</td>
<td>selects and uses appropriate instruments and technology, such as scales, rulers, and clocks, to measure within customary or metric systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA.B.4.1.2.a</td>
<td>decides which would be the most appropriate tool to use for the expected measurement when given a variety of objects. Example: The student uses a 12&quot; ruler to determine the length of a table to the nearest foot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3, 4</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```
How will the SSS be assessed?

As standards begin to influence what is taught in the classroom, the State has mandated that local, teacher-managed classroom assessments be implemented. The results of these local assessments will then be reported to the education stakeholders in a school's community, and but need not be reported to the State. However, the DOE is developing a new statewide assessment system to "spot check" how well students are progressing in reading, writing, mathematical computation and critical thinking skills. In addition to the ongoing administration of the Florida Writes program, the new Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) will cover the areas of reading and mathematics. The test will be administered at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels and will include higher-level performance items such as written explanation of mathematical computations. The new test will be given as a statewide field test in March 1997, for baseline data in February 1998 and for accountability purposes in February of 1999.

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How will the SSS affect Classroom Teachers?

In order for the SSS to have a positive impact on educational reform in Florida, teachers should have a clear understanding of how the Standards should be incorporated into their day-to-day lessons. Without a doubt teachers should play a big role in the development of this new curriculum both at the district level and within their own school. Many important instructional decisions will need to be resolved, such as what should be taught at each grade level and also within each subject area in order to insure that students can achieve the benchmarks.

Realigning the existing curriculum to incorporate the SSS within each school district will be a monumental task. This undertaking will require a collaborative effort between the state, district staff, school administrators, and teachers. Much time and effort will be expended in order to complete this task. Although upon completion, teachers will have a much clearer picture of what they will be expected to teach, and should provide instructional continuity within public schools throughout the state. We must keep in mind throughout this undertaking that the ultimate goal is to provide Florida's students with the best education possible.

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