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The Status of Middle Level Curriculum in U.S. Public Schools

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Abstract

In response to the Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group's (MLER SIG) research agenda (Brinegar, 2024), this article examines middle level curriculum across the United States by investigating how the curriculum is determined and by whom. Using a qualitative content analysis of publicly accessible data from department of education websites for each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, we found that much of the middle level curriculum is determined by state content standards aligned with national standards and implemented often at the school district level, creating a wide variety of content-specific curriculum in middle schools. We contend that, while states focus on content specific curricula, many states forgo the opportunity to integrate middle grades' philosophy and practice into curricula taught in today's middle schools.

The middle school movement has long emphasized that curriculum should be challenging, exploratory, and responsive to the developmental needs of young adolescents (Arnold, 1985; Beane, 1993; Bishop & Harrison, 2021; Pate, 2013; Springer, 2006). Curriculum in U.S. public schools is dynamic and fluid, while being subject to ongoing scrutiny and revision at the federal, state, and local levels. The landscape of middle level education, and specifically middle level curriculum, continues to evolve and be reshaped by many factors (Weiler et al., 2024a) including shifting sociopolitical factors, the effects of high-stakes testing and accountability, and fluctuating policy mandates that include changes to state-level middle grades certification and licensure (Dever et al., 2024).

Understanding the landscape of middle level curriculum is necessary to better understand the experiences of young adolescents in diverse school contexts across the United States. In our recent literature review, Weiler et al. (2024b) found the importance of mapping the curriculum to uncover its relationship to equity, opportunity, coherence, and young adolescent development. Yet, as we note, comprehensive, empirical research exploring the current status of middle level curriculum across the United States is limited. This exploratory study aims to address this gap by systematically examining how state-level structures—such as middle grades definitions, standards frameworks, assessment systems, and licensure policies—shape the curriculum environment in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The impetus for this study was the Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group's (MLER SIG) research agenda, which emphasized the need to understand and address the most pressing issues in middle level education (Brinegar et al., 2024). The national sociopolitical context fuels discourse and policy decisions at the state and local level, which creates the need to interrogate state and local level policy decisions surrounding middle grades curriculum. The present study extends our framework, analyzing how middle level curriculum interacts with equity, power, student well-being, and the sociopolitical demands placed on schools, and begins to answer their first guiding question: *How is the middle level curriculum developed, selected, and evaluated?* (Brinegar et al., p. 29).

In this article we present findings from a national review of state-level curriculum policies and standards, exploring how each state defines the middle grades, what standards govern the development and implementation of middle level curricula, what assessment measures and mandates are utilized, and what entities make curricular decisions. By identifying these elements, we aim to assist middle level researchers in developing a broader understanding of how middle level curriculum is developed and assessed in different contexts.

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Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in five interconnected areas of middle level research and philosophy: (a) the MLER SIG research agenda (Brinegar et al., 2024); (b) the belief that specialized middle level licensure (Dever et al., 2024; Howell et al., 2018) can affect the development of middle level focused curriculum; (c) a view that curriculum is designed in keeping with the needs of young adolescents and the guidelines espoused by Bishop and Harrison's *The Successful Middle School: This We Believe* (2021); (d) the updated *Association for Middle Level Education Teacher Preparation Standards* (2022); and (e) an understanding of the importance of context and impact of federal versus state versus local control on the development of state systems of standards, assessments, and district-level curriculum. We have woven all five of these conceptual underpinnings into our study and will briefly discuss in greater length how each of these impacted the conceptual underpinnings of our study.

This article is an extension of our team's contribution to the most recent publication of the MLER SIG, *Navigating Opportunities for Middle Level Education Research: The MLER SIG Research Agenda* (Brinegar et al., 2024). That agenda, developed by over 40 middle level researchers—including the authors of this manuscript—identified curriculum, pedagogy, licensure, school structures, teacher development, social emotional wellness, and young adolescent experience as priority areas for research. As Brinegar et al. argue, politically charged rhetoric and intrusive legislation have constrained educators' ability to provide purposeful, meaningful, developmentally responsive curriculum—a challenge that underscores the need for empirical work examining state curriculum contexts. This study also builds on our prior analysis of the literature on middle grades curriculum to identify extant empirical research and theoretical pieces, identify current themes, and create research questions for middle level researchers. We use one of the guiding questions in our study, which will be described below (Weiler et al., 2024a).

A second foundational area for our work is the belief, grounded in research, that it is necessary to have specialized middle level licensure (Dever et al., 2024; Howell et al., 2016, 2018). In our view, this specialized preparation of middle level teacher candidates affects the development of middle level focused curriculum. As part of our work, we examined the current status of state middle level licensure, extending McEwin's (n.d.) earlier analysis, hosted on the Association for Middle Level Education's (AMLE) website.

The third underpinning of our work is the view that curriculum is designed in keeping with the needs of young adolescents and the guidelines espoused by Bishop and Harrison's updated *The Successful Middle School: This We Believe* (2021). Our previous work interrogated the current literature on middle grades school curriculum using Bishop and Harrison's framework (Weiler et al., 2024b). For instance, we determined what extant literature illuminated in terms of how current school curricula are "challenging, exploratory, integrative, and diverse" (p. 27). This work led us to the understanding of the importance of state-level standards and assessments in providing opportunities for young adolescents in keeping with these tenets. For instance, Bishop and Harrison called for "varied and ongoing assessments that advance learning as well as measure it" (p. 9). This prompted us to inquire what assessment measures were being used in each state, which will be a beginning to determining whether these assessments are varied, ongoing, and advance learning.

A fourth foundation is Standard 3: Middle Level Curriculum in the *Association for Middle Level Education Teacher Preparation Standards* (2022). The standard states:

> Middle level teacher candidates use their knowledge of the distinct nature of young adolescents when planning and implementing curriculum and instruction. They understand and use concepts, standards, and research to design, implement, and evaluate curriculum. Candidates' understanding covers the broad scope of content standards within their subjects and reflects a thorough grasp of those standards and major concepts … . (p. 12)

Additionally, we specifically focused on "Component 3.c. Middle Level Curriculum Standards." This component states:

> Middle level teacher candidates use their knowledge of local, state, national, and international standards to frame

> their teaching. These standards include academic content standards as well as other standards that address the holistic needs of young adolescents … . [Teacher candidates] draw on their knowledge of these standards to design, implement, and evaluate developmentally responsive, meaningful, challenging, exploratory, integrative, and diverse curriculum for all adolescents. (p. 12)

Standard 3 and Component 3.c. indicate the necessity to prepare teacher candidates to understand, interpret, analyze, and critique the standards in the content areas they will teach. Many teacher preparation programs focus on the standards in their state. However, since many programs prepare students who will teach outside of the state in which the program is located, teacher educators and candidates must be aware of the standard and assessment systems in multiple states. Our investigation will provide assistance with this.

Finally, given the current polarized nature of education at all levels of government, we entered this work with a collective understanding of the importance of context and potential impact of the interplay between federal, state, and local control of schools on the curricular process, which, given the current political environment, is shifting seismically from modest federal control to much more decentralized/state-level control (Blinkley, 2025; Wood & Claybourn, 2025). Though the federal government has never been responsible for state-level standards and curriculum, historically federal accountability systems such as *No Child Left Behind* (2002) and *Race to the Top* (The White House, n.d.), part of the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (2009), have been and/or are currently administered by the U.S. Department of Education. There has been little discussion in the press about how the potential dismantling of the Department of Education will affect the current structure and system of accountability. However, one of the main talking points of the Trump administration has been increased state-level control in education (Blinkley; Wood & Claybourn). This increased control by states with less federal accountability may influence the development of states' systems of standards, assessments, and overall systems of accountability. This will no doubt have an impact on district-level curriculum. This led us to investigate the current state systems of standards and assessments at the middle level. The "current state," however, is constantly changing, so the published data only represents a snapshot in time.

After establishing the general framing for our work around the middle level movement and its stance on curriculum, we realized the need to broaden our view of the curriculum as a whole. The most important first step was to define curriculum. While middle grades educators have long advocated for an integrative approach for middle level curriculum to address the unique nature and needs of young adolescents (Beane, 1993; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989), in *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), middle grades policy makers made a significant shift and took an adaptive approach to curriculum by incorporating the standards movement into its recommendations for middle level curriculum (Brown & Saltman, 2005). This shift to "teach a curriculum grounded in rigorous, public, academic standards for what students should know and be able to do" marks the inclusion of standards as a prominent structural component in middle level curriculum (Jackson & Davis, p. 23).

Having established a definition of curriculum, we began to discuss and brainstorm the ways in which we wanted to approach our work, given its imposing complexity. We began to focus on state standards as an inextricable element and driver for curriculum. Our approach was built on curricular coherence research, which uncovered and pointed to the importance of state standards as an influence on school curricula. Scholars in this field uncovered the connections between standards, which define required learning; assessment, which reinforces what is prioritized through accountability; and curriculum, which is shaped by the system (Polikoff et al., 2011; Porter, 2002; Schmidt & Houang, 2012). For instance, scholars found that state standards, assessments, and district curricula form a linked system intended to provide a coherent set of expectations to teachers. (Polikoff et al.; Porter; Schmidt & Houang). In fact, in many cases, scholars uncovered one primary aim of state content standards: they were designed to be the intended curriculum, which should anchor district curriculum frameworks, instructional materials, and classroom practice (Porter; Schmidt & Houang).

Curricular coherence studies also found that stronger standards-based policy environments are associated with tighter alignment between classroom instruction and state content standards, underscoring the role of state policy in shaping local curriculum and teaching (Polikoff, 2012; Polikoff et al., 2011). On the other hand, less centralized state policy environments led to standards-systems that were more fragmented and tended to produce equally fragmented district curricula (Polikoff, 2015; Schmidt et al., 2005). Additionally, they found standards are so important that they guide the selection of textbooks and the design of local syllabi (Porter, 2002; Schmidt & Houang, 2012). Wang et al. (2023) found that teachers perceive state standards and district curriculum materials as conveying the most similar messages about what and how to teach. However, when state standards and district-level curricular messages conflict, teachers typically prioritize state standards.

Another element that has been found to have an effect on curriculum enactment is teacher licensure. For instance, Howell et al. (2018) documented how wide variation in middle-level teacher credentialing across states creates conditions that affect how curriculum can be enacted in the middle grades. They argued that the structure of licensure and certification functions as one of the levers that shape curriculum enactment, by influencing teacher preparation and readiness to deliver developmentally responsive middle level curriculum. This suggests that credentialing variability is a structural factor influencing how curriculum is enacted in middle grades classrooms.

This analysis revealed that state policies (systems/intended curriculum) are the architecture supporting the development and implementation of local curriculum (enacted curriculum). Districts operate within the boundaries of state policy, and thus use these standards as the foundation for their own written curriculum document and the enacted curriculum, i.e., what teachers do. Thus, it is important for researchers to investigate state websites as documents that demonstrate the ways in which state standards systems are developed and implemented. As a result, in this study, we chose to investigate the macro-level/state-oriented architecture and systems that are determinative to district-level decision making.

Methodology

The purpose of this research was to gather, analyze, and share information about middle level curriculum in each state. For this qualitative study, we employed a content analysis approach (Krippendorff, 2004) to explore publicly accessible data from department of education websites for each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. We decided to use data on state documents via websites, standards, and licensure bands because all have been found to influence both the written and enacted curriculum as described above (Howell et al., 2018; Schmidt & Houang, 2012). Through content analysis, a qualitative research method, we analyzed the website data as our documents for recurring themes and patterns. This approach has been useful for broadly understanding how curriculum is developed. Content analysis is particularly well-suited for examining online data due to its ability to handle large volumes of text and identify recurring patterns (Creswell, 2022). The following sections outline the steps involved in the methodology chosen for this study including: (a) defining our research questions, (b) identifying our study sample, (c) collecting the data, (d) creating a system for categorizing the content, and (e) analyzing the results.

Research Questions

The genesis for the current study emanated from our previous work as members of the MLER SIG research agenda curriculum group (Weiler et al., 2024a, 2024b). Our extensive literature review led to the development of numerous research questions to guide middle level educational researchers in the area of curriculum. Through our iterative analysis and discussions, we constructed a thematic framework to guide middle level education researchers. This process resulted in the identification of five key areas of inquiry related to middle level curriculum, which we refer to as our middle level curricular framework. What follows are the five thematic areas for inquiry we identified:

A) The curriculum and equity of experience and opportunity;

B) Stakeholder power and the curriculum (development, implementation, and accountability);

C) Goals and purposes for the curriculum;

D) Teacher learning, roles, and enactment related to the curriculum; and

E) Young adolescent well-being and experience with the curriculum (Weiler et al., 2024a).

We then revisited and revised the research questions, resulting in a final set of 26 research questions that we categorized by one or more of the five thematic areas (Weiler et al., 2024a). The current study is focused on our first, overarching research question, "How is middle school curriculum developed, selected, and evaluated?" (Weiler et al., p. 17).

Our literature review of curriculum theory and coherence revealed that curriculum is a system shaped by policy, governance structures, content standards, assessment mechanisms, and teacher enactment (Polikoff et al., 2011; Porter, 2002; Schmidt & Houang, 2012). Because state-level structures define the intended curriculum, they influence what districts design and adopt, what teachers implement, and what students ultimately experience. Thus, to understand how curriculum is developed, selected, and evaluated, we first examine the state-level structures that shape curriculum development, guide its selection, and establish the parameters for its evaluation.

Among the five thematic areas identified in our middle level curricular framework, *stakeholder power in curriculum development, implementation, and accountability* (Theme B) aligns most closely with this study. This theme, and our original research question, guided the development of the four sub-questions in creating the following more focused research questions for the current study. Specifically, our sub-questions examine the primary levers through which states exert influence over curriculum—teacher licensure, curriculum decision-making authority, content standards, and statewide assessment systems.

RQ 1 – What types of teacher licensures and/or certifications exist within each state?

Rationale: Teacher licensure defines who is authorized to teach the middle grades and shapes the expertise available to design, interpret, and enact curriculum.

RQ 2 – What entities are involved in selecting and evaluating middle level curriculum in each state?

Rationale: State and district governance structures determine where authority for curriculum development resides and how it is regulated and evaluated.

RQ 3 – What middle level content standards have been adopted in each state, and when were they adopted?

Rationale: Standards function as the intended curriculum and serve as the foundational driver of curricular design, selection, and instructional expectations.

RQ 4 – What statewide summative assessments are used at the middle level?

Rationale: Assessment systems define how curriculum is evaluated and shape the priorities, pacing, and content emphasis within middle level classrooms.

When investigated together, these four research questions provide an analytical structure for examining how curriculum is shaped at the state level and allow us to address the broader question of how middle school curriculum is developed, selected, and evaluated across the United States.

Study Sample

We identified the sample (Krippendorff, 2004) as state departments of education for each of the 50 states plus the District of Columbia. Here, we use the general term "state department of education" to refer to the department, office, or agency in each state, even though the name varies between states (e.g., Connecticut State Department of Education, Montana Office of Public Instruction, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction). Appendix C includes the names and websites (as of May 2025) for each of these state entities.

Data Collection

Data collection from each state department of education's website included descriptive information: number of districts/counties, type(s) of certification/licensure/endorsements for middle grades, and what grade levels constitute the middle grades. This step of our data collection aligns with Krippendorff's (2004) step of defining the units of analysis or unitizing. Through unitizing, we identified sections within the website data that

were relevant to the research questions. In our study, data were collected from various subpages of the websites, including curriculum and licensure, using a manual coding scheme derived from the column titles in Appendices A and B. For the number of districts, we tallied public school districts; we recognize distinctions across states in the ways districts are counted (e.g., how charter schools or districts, magnet or technical schools, and/or regional schools may be counted). We did not eliminate any districts based on any set criteria and utilized web search engines to provide the number of districts in each state. We also acknowledge and found difficulty with differing terms including parish, tribal district, boroughs, regions, counties, and cities not part of a county that may have affected the reported numbers for Appendix A.

In addition, we collected information regarding curriculum, instruction, and assessment, including at what level curriculum was determined (e.g., state, county, district); what content/learning standards were currently in place; and how the standards were assessed (i.e., standardized assessments). We noted whether specific state standards were or were not aligned with Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010a), *Next Generation Science Standards* (2013), or the *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). In order to retrieve accurate and current information, we also searched websites beyond state departments of education when needed, as noted below.

We charted this information in a password-protected spreadsheet. Each of our five researchers was responsible for compiling the relevant data for 10 states. After initial data gathering, in an effort to ensure the reliability of the data, each researcher member-checked the data collected by another researcher for 10 other states. When we were unable to locate the necessary data on the state department of education's website, we searched other sites such as teacher education programs in that state, large school district sites (e.g., Clark County Schools for statewide information for Nevada), or databases for state elections, policy, and legislation. We acknowledge that there is more variation among districts than the large districts can account for, but in the instances large districts were used, it was merely to identify state information that was difficult to ascertain elsewhere. As noted, we collected this information in Spring 2025. Much of this information (e.g., licensure bands, numbers of districts, standards used, assessment procedures) is dynamic and subject to ongoing changes at state and local levels. In the tables (Appendix A & B), we aimed to capture direct language for each state, so wording is quoted directly or modified minimally from each state site listed in the Appendix A. An example is wording in Appendix A, in the "Curriculum Implementation Process" column.

Data Analysis

Deriving the information for our subsequent analysis was the next step in our content analysis as content was coded into different categories (Krippendorff, 2004). Our original spreadsheet was a way to create a system for categorizing the content through ongoing analysis and discussion (Merriam, 2009), we added and refined categories. For example, we refined how we categorized whether state standards aligned with Common Core State Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, or the C3 Framework. We also discussed varying terminology across the 50 states. The example of the name of each state department of education was noted earlier. Additionally, we noted different terms related to licensure (e.g., endorsement, licensure) and regions (e.g., county, parish, school administrative unit). We aimed to reflect terminology used in each state while selecting terms that would allow us to analyze and report trends across the 50 states. Our final step involved examining relationships or patterns in the data during the analysis phase. Throughout the design and application, we sought to limit the uncertainty of the inferences through discussion, analysis, and member checking as well as regular research group data discussion meetings via Zoom.

Findings

Our key research question, from the MLER SIG research agenda was, "How is middle school curriculum developed, selected, and evaluated?" From this question, we generated the following questions:

> RQ 1 – What types of teacher licensures and/or certifications exist within each state?

> RQ 2 – What entities are involved in selecting and evaluating middle level curriculum in each state?
>
> RQ 3 – What middle level content standards have been adopted in each state, and when were they adopted?
>
> RQ 4 – What statewide summative assessments are used at the middle level?

We frame our findings in two domains, description of the middle level curricular context (RQs 1 and 2) and middle level standards and assessments (RQs 3 and 4).

Description of the Middle Level Curricular Context

To address our research question of how middle school curriculum is developed, implemented, and evaluated, we collected data to provide general information about the middle level curricular context for each state. The data collected came primarily from each state department of education's website. Appendix A provides general curricular information for each state including: (a) number of school districts; (b) grade bands for middle grades licensure; (c) entities involved in determining middle grades curriculum; and (d) process for implementing middle level curriculum.

The rationale for collecting these criteria was to enable us to understand the general educational context of each state as to how middle level standards and curricula are selected and enacted in schools. In Appendix A, the number of districts/regions column provides the educational governance structures in place when curricular decisions are made. All states have a state department of education, a regional governance structure which could be at a regional level, county level, borough level (Alaska), or supervisory level (Vermont), and then also a district level. While the number of regions and districts vary widely across states, they tend to follow previously imposed governmental structures—county government, city/town government, or specifically created school districts that include a group of towns. These administrative bodies all have some responsibility in enacting educational reform at the school level. For our purposes in reviewing stakeholders involved in developing, adopting, and implementing middle level curriculum, the most active players are at the state level and school district level. As we will see in our analysis of entities involved and how curriculum is implemented, almost all curricular decisions are made at the state and district level.

To further understand the curricular context at the middle level, Appendix A also includes a column identifying the type of middle level licensure by state. This column identifies whether a middle level licensure is offered, and if it is, what grade level it covers. All states have stand-alone licensure, certification and/or an endorsement encompassing the middle grades except for the District of Columbia, Montana, and Wisconsin. South Dakota had a stand-alone license until as recently as 2022, but no longer does.

In our analysis, we began to question the distinction between the terms licensure and certification. The U.S. Department of Education (2025) makes the distinction between licensure and certification as follows:

> "Licensure" generally refers to an official process, administered by a state-level authority, that is required by law in order for an individual to practice a regulated profession. The term "certification" generally refers to a function administered by a nongovernmental organization, which is intended to further recognize professional competence based on having met the quality standards of the organization. (para. 4)

However, state departments of education across the country seem to use licensure, license, certification, and certificate interchangeably, meaning the process for a teacher to earn a credential to practice teaching at the state level.

While noting a wide range in the number of school districts across states, along with understanding the variance in state-level middle level licensure is helpful in understanding how middle level curriculum may be enacted at the school level, the question of which stakeholders ultimately wield the power of control over middle level curriculum comes down to the entities authorized by the state boards for education and the actual implementation process. The last two columns in Appendix A, *Entities Involved* and *Curriculum Implementation Process*, provide

a clear picture about which stakeholders drive middle level curriculum. The *Entities Involved* column overwhelmingly illustrates that the state board/department of education selects or adopts middle level standards and in many, but not all instances, school districts have discretion in how the standards are applied in middle schools. In a few states the levers of control (adoption of state standards and curriculum selection) are at the state level (Oklahoma, Texas, and Florida at grades K-8). For example, Texas not only adopts standards known as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), but it also selects the curriculum materials to be used in its 1250 school districts.

When reviewing the *Curriculum Implementation Process* column of Appendix A, a more nuanced and detailed pattern can be observed. While most states share responsibility for middle level curriculum decisions where the board/department of education sets the standards and the school districts enact pedagogy guided by those standards, the level of discretion for those districts varies among states. The level of autonomy for school districts can be grouped in three ways: 1) complete autonomy; 2) guided autonomy; and 3) approved autonomy. Complete autonomy refers to states that provide standards and allow for school districts to design curriculum and select instructional materials and pedagogy to meet the specific needs of the schools in their districts. Most states fall into this category. Maryland is an example of this group in which local school systems have the flexibility to expand and enrich the state standards, and the districts adopt their own curriculum that includes instruction of those standards. Fewer states fall into the guided autonomy category in which states adopt standards and then guide districts in what curriculum to use (Arkansas, Illinois, and Kentucky). For example, in Kentucky, the Board of Education provides local districts and schools with a model curriculum framework that aligns directly with state goals, outcomes, and assessment strategies. Approved autonomy refers to the state's ability to control what is taught at the district level by either approving district curriculum or providing curriculum that can be adopted by the district. States in this group include California at the K-8 level, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Virginia. For instance, in Louisiana, local school districts can develop their own curriculum, but that curriculum must align with the state standards and be approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Middle Level Standards and Assessments

As part of our analyses of middle level curriculum, we investigated and documented the types of learning/content standards currently in use within each state. In addition, and related to the standards, we also analyzed the various state-level standardized assessments in current use to assess student learning/knowledge.

Content Standards

A summary of our research and analysis of the state standards can be found in Appendix B which contains a listing of the various learning standards adopted by each state. As the focus of our investigation was specific to middle level curriculum, we limited the standards we investigated to the four major content areas: English language arts/reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. The content standards are documented in columns two through five of Appendix B. In addition, we indicated the year the standards were adopted or implemented for each state. As will be seen below, many states use nationally-developed content/learning standards or are aligned with national standards developed for English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. In our analyses of the state standards, we also observed that some states had implemented standards in other areas including English language learners (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment, 2020) and special education (Council for Exceptional Children, 2025). The research team decided to preserve information on these standards for continuing work, so these standards are not noted in Appendix B. For purposes of this study, we focused on state and national content standards only. In our analysis we identified three main nationally developed content standards implemented at the state level: Common Core Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, and College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies Standards. We will describe these below.

Common Core Standards. The Common Core standards are a set of clear, high-quality academic

standards for the English language arts and mathematics. They were developed in partnership with the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (2010a). They were designed to outline what students should know and be able to do at each grade level with the goal of ensuring that all students graduate high school prepared for their future.

Next Generation Science Standards. Published in 2013, the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) are K–12 science content standards that were developed to improve science education for all students. They set the expectations for what students should know and be able to do and provide "local educators the flexibility to design classroom learning experiences that stimulate students' interests in science and prepares them for college, careers, and citizenship" (NGSS, 2013, para 2).

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards. *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* was developed by the National Council for the Social Studies (2013) to strengthen social studies programs across the country. According to NCSS, the objectives of the C3 standards are to: a) enhance the rigor of the social studies disciplines; b) build critical thinking, problem solving, and participatory skills to become engaged citizens; and c) align academic programs to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, (2013, para 1).

State Standardized Assessments

All 50 states and the District of Columbia employ some type of standardized assessment of student learning and achievement (Appendix B). The names of the various state assessments (ELA, math, science, or social studies) are listed in Appendix B with the specific middle level grades assessed in parentheses. This information was gathered directly from each state department of education's website. Most states have developed their own summative assessments to measure student progress in ELA, math, science, and, for a limited number of states, social studies. Some state assessments are specific to reading (Minnesota, North Carolina, Texas, & Virginia), whereas in most states, the state assessment is simply listed as ELA. Five states—California, Connecticut, Hawai'i, Nevada, and Washington—utilize the Smarter Balanced system to assess students in ELA and mathematics (Smarter Balanced, 2025).

Discussion

In reviewing the data collected and analyzed from the individual state department of education websites, we noted several interesting findings. The current study was designed to address the following research questions:

> RQ 1 – What types of teacher licensures and/or certifications exist within each state?
>
> RQ 2 – What entities are involved in selecting and evaluating middle level curriculum in each state?
>
> RQ 3 – What middle level content standards have been adopted in each state, and when were they adopted?
>
> RQ 4 – What statewide summative assessments are used at the middle level?

These questions were analyzed using our second theme (Weiler et al., 2024b), *stakeholder power and the curriculum* and through the conceptual framework of curricular coherence theory (Polikoff et al., 2011; Porter, 2002; Schmidt & Houang, 2012).

In addressing RQ 1, we found that, with few exceptions, the overwhelming majority of states have a stand-alone license, certificate and/or endorsement that encompass the middle grades. The exceptions included the District of Columbia, Montana, and Wisconsin. Seven states afford educators the opportunity to earn a middle level license or endorsement; and in 18 states educators can add a middle level endorsement to an existing license (i.e., elementary or secondary). However, our work also unearthed the shifting landscape of middle level teacher preparation. In McEwin's work, published on the AMLE website in 2007, 40 states were identified as having a middle level licensure/certification; six had a middle level endorsement; and five had no endorsement. As of May 2025, only 30 states still have certification/endorsement; 18 now have endorsements; and 3 have no certification. The extent to which states have stand-alone middle level licenses and/or endorsements may affect how well educators are

trained to address the unique academic, social, and developmental needs of young adolescents in middle schools.

In determining what entities are involved in selecting and evaluating middle level curriculum in each state (RQ 2), we found that in the vast majority of states, the state board/department of education selects or adopts middle level standards and local school districts have the autonomy and discretion in how the standards are implemented within their middle level schools. As noted above, we observed that this level of school district autonomy could be grouped into three categories: complete autonomy (42 states), guided autonomy (3 states), and approved autonomy (5 states).

When investigating what content standards were being utilized in the various states (RQ 3), we observed that the states' use of standards could be classified into one of three categories: (a) states that adopted national standards (Common Core, Next Generation, or C3 Framework) as is, with no modifications; (b) states that aligned their standards with the national standards; or (c) states that developed and implemented their own content standards.

Our analyses of the state standards found that a majority of states had adopted, or were aligned with, the Common Core standards for English language arts (35 states) and mathematics (34 states) (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010b; 2010c). Sixteen states had developed and implemented their own, state-specific standards for English language arts and 17 states for mathematics. With regard to the Next Generation Science Standards (2013), 40 states had adopted, or were aligned with these standards; 11 states developed their own science standards. The most significant differences with regard to adopting national standards were with social studies. In this case, only one state, Vermont, had adopted the National Council for the Social Studies C3 Framework standards (2013) verbatim. Twenty-seven states reported that their social studies standards were aligned with the C3 Framework standards and 23 states developed their own social studies standards.

In addressing our fourth research question—what statewide summative assessments are used at the middle level—we found that all 50 states and the District of Columbia employ some type of standardized assessment of student learning and achievement (Appendix B). The overwhelming majority of states assess students in both English language arts/reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 (43 states). These content areas are assessed in varying grade levels for other states, including grades 2-8 (Alabama), 3-9 (Alaska and Vermont), 3-7 (Michigan), 3-10 (Alaska, ELA only and Florida), and 4-8 (New Mexico and Pennsylvania).

A majority of states (39) assess their students in science in grades 5 and 8. The grade levels for science assessments vary widely across the other states, including grades 3-8 (Arkansas and Tennessee), 4 and 8 (North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming), 6 only (Indiana), 7 only (Kentucky), and 6 and 8 (Alabama and South Carolina). Lastly, and most interestingly, very few states (13) include any type of state-level assessment of social studies. In those states with a social studies assessment, the grades assessed varied widely: 4-7 (Colorado and Delaware), 4-8 (Wisconsin), 5 only (Indiana), 5 and 7 (South Carolina), 5 and 8 (Kentucky and Michigan), 6-8 (Tennessee), and 8 only (Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Texas).

In comparing the results of our data collection from the individual state department of education websites we observed other interesting findings. First, as noted above, very few states offer a separate, or stand-alone, teaching license or certification specific to middle level education (e.g., grades 5-8, grades 6-8). When comparing the lack of middle level licensure or certification in most states to the state-level standardized assessments, it is interesting to note that the vast majority of states (43) assess students in English language arts/reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 8, and 39 states assess their students in science in grades 5 and 8. In other words, 84% of states assess their students in ELA and math in all the middle level grades and 76% in science in the middle level grades; however, very few of these states offer a middle level specific educator license or certification. The extent to which states have stand-alone middle level licenses and/or endorsements may affect how well educators are trained to address the unique academic, social, and developmental needs of young adolescents

in middle schools. There are numerous, national, research-based recommendations calling for the specialized preparation of educators to teach young adolescents (AMLE, 2022; Bishop & Harrison, 2021, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; Curtis, 1972; Howell et al., 2016, 2018; Terrell Shockley et al., 2024).

In our analysis of the various state teaching and learning standards currently in use, it was interesting to note that none of the states made any mention of interdisciplinary curriculum. A middle level interdisciplinary curriculum integrates knowledge from multiple disciplines around a central theme or concept, promoting deeper understanding and real-world connections for students, encouraging collaboration, critical thinking, and the application of knowledge in diverse contexts (Beane, 1993; Hays Jacobs, 1989; Lounsbury, 1992; Lounsbury & Vars, 1978; Vars, 1993). Research suggests that interdisciplinary curricula can significantly benefit students, enhancing their problem-solving abilities, communication skills, and critical thinking. These benefits extend to greater intellectual curiosity, improved attitudes toward learning, and higher academic achievement (Drake & Burns, 2000; Lipka et al., 1998).

Limitations

In this study, we sought to provide an overview of middle level curriculum in each of the 50 states as well as the District of Columbia. To gather information, we drew from publicly accessible websites for each state department of education and related sites. The limitations of this study relate to and underscore the emphasis on local control of education in each state and the dynamic nature of curriculum and assessment in schools. As we focused on middle level education, we noted how school configurations vary widely from state to state and within states. For example, middle level curriculum may be taught in a standalone middle school (typically, but not exclusively, grades 6-8), in a K-8 school, in a 7-12 school, or in some other configuration; in different districts, a school may have as many as 13 (i.e., K-12) or as few as one grade level.

Additionally, we documented the standards in place as 2025, although some states plan to introduce new standards in the upcoming academic year. We also noted the number of districts in each state. This presented a challenge in some states, as we were unable to verify with certainty the number of districts in each state (e.g., Oklahoma) because there were so many. Other states (e.g., Massachusetts, Vermont) are in the process of reconfiguring the size, scope, and number of school districts. Again, this limitation underscores the local control of curriculum as well as the changing nature of curriculum across the 50 states.

The purpose of this research was to gather, analyze, and share information from each state about middle level curriculum, following research questions anchored in the MLER SIG research agenda (Brinegar et al., 2024). We acknowledge that it was a challenge for us to locate and verify some pieces of information. This challenge in locating and verifying information may extend to others, for example, a pre-service teacher seeking information about licensure, a parent seeking for state standards, or a district leader searching for revised standards that have been approved but not yet implemented. These limitations connect to the significance of this research in providing a snapshot of middle level curriculum.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study is significant in providing an overview of middle level curriculum across each state. First, our data updates McEwin's (n.d.) survey of middle level certification and licensure and illustrates that there is indeed waning support for middle level education across the United States in terms of the changes to specialized preparation of middle level teachers. Fewer states today have specialized middle level licensure or certification, while more have only a middle level endorsement. Though our study does not provide direct causation between this waning support and changing middle school curricula, we cannot help but question what less specialized preparation will do in terms of developing middle school teachers who understand and advocate for the needs of all young adolescents. It is our view that if we desire to have the kinds of curriculum noted in *The Successful Middle School* (Bishop & Harrison, 2021) and the *AMLE Teacher Preparation Standards* (2022), then we need specialized licensure for educators at this level. This calls for middle level teacher educators and researchers to conduct empirical research in this area to (a) determine why there is

a movement away from specialized certification; and (b) investigate how this movement will affect state and local-level curriculum and assessment of middle level students. Additionally, these data call for middle level researchers and teacher educators to work with the Association for Middle Level Education, especially its advocacy groups and committees, to develop a plan to work with and influence state-level lawmakers to understand the large body of research that supports the need for specialized middle level teacher.

This study also takes up the call of the MLER SIG research agenda (Brinegar et al., 2024) by drawing one main question from the agenda, "How is middle school curriculum developed, selected, and evaluated?" (Weiler et al., 2024a), expanding this into four other questions, and exploring information from each state. Through our investigation, it is apparent that most curricula begin with state standards and the overwhelming majority of school systems have local control of the development and implementation of the curriculum. There are a few states, such as Oklahoma and Texas, which have centralized curriculum and pedagogy for all schools. There are other states, such as Maryland, which have county-wide systems, and thus curriculum is less locally controlled and slightly more centralized than states that do not have county-wide school districts. Future research in the area of standards and assessment should investigate and uncover how states evaluate their standards and systems of assessment, especially for equity in order to ensure that all middle school students are given the opportunity to develop and thrive with curricula and assessment measures that are culturally sustaining and responsive.

Additionally, our analysis of state standards and assessments demonstrated that all states silo both; that is, math, science, social studies, and English language arts have developed sets of standards and assessments that have little relationship with each other. This contrasts with one of the core philosophies of the middle school concept—interdisciplinary nature of curriculum called for by *The Successful Middle School* (2021) and the *AMLE Teacher Preparation Standards* (2022). There are certainly elements of content-area integration in some of the content-area standards, and most notably evidence of interdisciplinary thinking within the Next Generation Science Standards (2013) through its crosscutting concepts. However, there is a common misalignment: state standards and policies are siloed into single discipline work → districts implement the standards in content-area silos → and teachers and classrooms are often siloed into one discipline. The result may be disconnected, siloed lessons that do not provide young adolescents with the meaningful, integrative learning called for by middle level scholars (Beane, 1993; Drake & Burns, 2000; Hays Jacobs, 1989; Lounsbury, 1992; Vars, 1993). We cannot help but advocate for middle level teacher educators and scholars to bridge the divide between content areas through work with state-level curriculum and assessment developers to create interdisciplinary standards and assessments.

The data from this study offer breadth in understanding middle level curriculum. Our continuing research will expand on standards beyond academic content areas (as noted above) and pair this broad overview with in-depth study of how middle level curriculum is developed, selected, and evaluated in specific regions through other methodologies. These complementary approaches can offer expanded research on curriculum as well as instruction and assessment for this important age group.

Though beyond the scope of this work, our investigations revealed that some states are moving toward centralized adoption of curricular materials and textbooks. As middle level scholars continue to ask the question, delineated in the call for this issue, "How are teacher educators preparing middle level educators and administrators to advocate for schooling that is developmentally and culturally responsive for young adolescents?" We must ask how this more centralized adoption of curricular materials will affect the implementation of equitable curriculum, instruction, and assessment. It is imperative that scholars continue to investigate and uncover whose voices may be privileged and silenced by the texts being used, as well as how we prepare middle level educators who understand how to meet the needs of all students by both critiquing and possibly subversively circumventing given curricula that might be exclusionary or even harmful to middle level students.

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Appendix A
Middle Level Curricular Context by State[1]

State	# School Districts/ Regions[2]	ML Licensure w/Grade Bands	Entities Involved	Curriculum Implementation Process
Alabama	138/67	C, 4-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	Alabama State Board of Education sets the standards and frameworks that local school districts then use to develop their own specific curricula.
Alaska	54/20	E, 5-8	State: standards School: pedagogy	The State Board of Education sets the overall academic standards for the state, which districts then use as a framework for curriculum development and selection.
Arizona	230/15	B, 5-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Academic Standards team oversees the standards for learning. Curricula are adopted at a local level by districts and schools.
Arkansas	237/75	E, 4-8	State: standards; District: pedagogy	Curriculum adoption primarily occurs at the state level with the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) playing a key role. The Arkansas State Board of Education (SBE) adopts standards and frameworks, which then guide local school districts.
California	937/58	C, 6-8	State: standards District pedagogy	The California State Board of Education (SBE) adopts curriculum frameworks and instructional materials for grades K-8, while local school districts have the authority to adopt materials for grades 9-12. The SBE sets the standards for all students from kindergarten through high school.
Colorado	179/64	E, 6-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	In Colorado, curriculum adoption primarily occurs at the local school district level. While the state establishes academic standards, districts are responsible for selecting and adopting specific curricula that meet or exceed those standards.
Connecticut	169/8	E, 4-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	Curriculum adoption primarily occurs at the local school district level. The Connecticut State Board of Education adopts Connecticut Core Standards (CCS), which serve as a framework. School districts then use these standards to develop their own, locally tailored curricula.
Delaware	19/3	B, 6-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	While the state establishes standards, local school districts have some flexibility in choosing specific instructional materials.
District of Columbia	1	No ML	District: standards & pedagogy	DC has adopted academic learning standards to encourage high achievement of every student by defining the knowledge, concepts and skills that all students should acquire at each grade level. The standards define what students are expected to know and be able to do rather than how teachers should teach.
Florida	75/67	B, 5-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Florida Standards, developed by the state, provide guidelines and benchmarks, but they do not dictate specific curricula. Individual schools and teachers, along with principals, superintendents, and school boards, make decisions about which instructional materials and teaching methods to use.
Georgia	180/159	C, 4-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	The State Board of Education establishes content standards for K-12, which are then adopted by each local school system, allowing for local enrichment.
Hawai'i	1/5	L, 6-8	State: standards School: pedagogy	The Hawai'i State Department of Education's subject matter standards are used to ensure students are being exposed to rigorous and age-appropriate benchmarks of learning. Teachers have the flexibility to design lesson plans that incorporate the arts, social and cultural values, health and wellness principles and more.
Idaho	138/44	E, 5-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	In Idaho, each district is responsible for its own curriculum to meet these standards. Content standards are reviewed and revised every six years.
Illinois	852/102	E, 5-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	Individual school boards (districts) shall determine the scope and duration of this unit of instruction.
Indiana	351 / 92	L, 5-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Indiana State Board of Education establishes broad, uniform content standards for public schools, while individual local school districts have the authority to create their own specific curricula within those standards.
Iowa	328/ 99	B, 5-12 (ELA) B, 5-8 (math, sci, SS)	State: standards District: pedagogy	According to the Iowa Department of Education, decisions concerning curriculum and instruction are made locally by individual school districts, school leadership, and teachers.

State	# School Districts/ Regions[2]	ML Licensure w/Grade Bands	Entities Involved	Curriculum Implementation Process
Kansas	287/ 105	L, 5-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	According to the Kansas State Board of Education, each school district develops its own curriculum, and teachers decide on how they will provide instruction to ensure student learning. Curricular standards are reviewed at least every seven years.
Kentucky	171/120	E, 5-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Kentucky Board of Education provides local school districts and schools with a model curriculum framework which is directly tied to the goals, outcomes, and assessment strategies.
Louisiana	72/64	C, 4-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	According to the Louisiana Department of Education, local school districts can develop their own curriculum, but it must align with the state standards and be approved by the Board of Elementary & Secondary Education.
Maine	192 /16	E, 5-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Maine Department of Education sets the standards and individual school districts are responsible for developing specific curriculum materials and instructional practices to meet those standards.
Maryland	24/24	L, 4-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Maryland State Board of Education sets the standards for instruction and graduation requirements. Local school systems have the flexibility to expand and enrich the state standards, and they adopt their own curriculum that includes instruction in those standards.
Massachusetts	316/14	L, 5-8 (sci & math), L, 5-12 (ELA & SS)	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education sets standards. State standards and frameworks guide local determination of curriculum.
Michigan	537/83	L, 5-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Michigan Department of Education lists state standards to guide local curriculum development.
Minnesota	325/87	E, 5-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	According to the Minnesota Department of Education, local school districts, schools, and educators decide content-specific curriculum and instructional approaches.
Mississippi	139/82	E, 7-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Mississippi Department of Education provides state curriculum frameworks and provides state adopted curriculum materials.
Missouri	554[3]/115	L, 5-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education sets state standards. Each school district in the state adopts or develops a written curriculum.
Montana	402/56	No ML	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Montana Office of Public Instruction sets standards. Each school district develops its own curriculum, with local teachers deciding how to implement instruction so as to ensure that all students are meeting grade level content standards.
Nebraska	244[4]/8	E, 5-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Nebraska Department of Education website includes questions for districts to consider as they develop curriculum.
Nevada	17/17	L, 7-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Nevada Department of Education sets standards. Districts use state standards as the basis for curriculum.
New Hampshire	163/108 /104[5]	B, 5-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	The New Hampshire Department of Education determines standards. Each district or public charter school adopts its own curriculum.
New Jersey	590/21	B, 5-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	The New Jersey Department of Education sets standards. District boards of education review and revise curriculum and instruction following state guidelines.
New Mexico	120/33	E, 5-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The New Mexico Public Education Department sets curricular standards and districts use them as the basis for the curriculum.
New York	731/62	L, 5-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The New York State Education Department sets NYS Learning Standards and districts use them as the basis for the curriculum.
North Carolina	115/100	L, 6-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction sets the North Carolina Course of Study to provide a uniform set of learning standards for all districts in NC. Grade-specific standards are published for grades K-8: The inclusion of standards is intended to make planning for instruction more efficient.
North Dakota	179/53	E, 5 - 8	State: standards District: pedagogy	The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction sets learning standards and districts use them as the basis for the curriculum.

State	# School Districts/ Regions[2]	ML Licensure w/Grade Bands	Entities Involved	Curriculum Implementation Process
Ohio	606/88	L, 4 - 9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Ohio Department of Education sets Ohio Learning Standards and districts use them as the basis for the curriculum.
Oklahoma	509/77	L, 6-8	State: standards & curriculum	The Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) sets learning standards and had teachers develop the OSDE Frameworks which are the basis of the curriculum
Oregon	197/36	E, 5-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Oregon Department of Education sets learning standards and districts use them as the basis for the curriculum.
Pennsylvania	500/67	L, 4-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Pennsylvania Department of Education sets learning standards and districts use them as the basis for the curriculum.
Rhode Island	66/5	L, 5-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Rhode Island Department of Education sets learning standards and districts use them as the basis for the curriculum.
South Carolina	79/46	L, 5-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	The South Carolina Department of Education sets learning standards and districts use them as the basis for the curriculum.
South Dakota	149/66	E, 5-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	The South Dakota Board of Education set the content standards with are reviewed every 5-7 years. The content standards do not mandate a specific curriculum.
Tennessee	147/95	L, 6-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	The State Board of Education requires schools to implement the Tennessee Academic Standards which are reviewed every 6 years. Local school districts design curriculum aligned with state standards.
Texas	1207/20	L, 4-8	State: standards & pedagogy	According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards are adopted by the State Board of Education after extensive input from educators and other stakeholders.
Utah	42/29	E, 6-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Utah Department of Education sets learning standards and districts use them as the basis for the curriculum.
Vermont	119/ 52	B, 5-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Agency of Education adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS) C3, and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The supervisory unions and school districts develop curriculum that is aligned with state standards.
Virginia	132/8	E, 6-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	Board of Education adopts the Standards of Learning (SOL). Standards, curriculum and textbook adoption are all at the state level. However, school districts can choose which textbooks they wish to use.
Washington	295 & 6 tribal /39	E, 4-9	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction develops, adopts, and periodically revises the state's learning standards and oversees the assessment of the learning standards.
West Virginia	55/55	L, 5-9	State: standards County: pedagogy	The state board of education adopts and revises content standards on a regular basis. The adoption of any instructional resources aligned to content standards shall be at the discretion of the county board as needed.
Wisconsin	421/12	No ML	State: standards District: pedagogy	The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has a multi-step process for reviewing and revising academic standards. Once adopted, the Wisconsin Academic Standards serve as goals for teaching and learning. Local school boards adopt academic standards to best meet the needs of their local community.
Wyoming	48/23	L, 5-8	State: standards District: pedagogy	According to the Wyoming Department of Education, local school boards and district staff are charged with how the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards get implemented, including methodology, instructional materials used, and how the material is delivered.

Key: C=Credential, E=Endorsement, B=Both, L=License

Notes:
[1]Information in Appendix A was sourced from individual state departments of education (as listed in Appendix C) between February 2025 – May 2025.
[2]Regions may connote Counties, Parishes, Boroughs, or School Administrative Units, Supervisory Unions. Numbers derived from state websites.
[3]Missouri lists 554 districts and charter schools. Missouri has 114 counties; St. Louis is not part of any county.
[4]Nebraska has 244 districts and 8 state board districts.
[5]New Hampshire has 163 districts in 108 School Administrative Units in 10 counties.

Appendix B
Middle Level State Standards and Assessments[1]

State	Standards & Adoption Dates				Assessments
	ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies	
Alabama	Course of Study (2021), aligned w/CC	Course of Study (2019), aligned w/CC	Course of Study (2023)	Course of Study (2024)	Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program: ELA & math (2-8); science (6 & 8)
Alaska	ELA Standards (2012)	Mathematics Standards (2012)	Science Standards (2019), aligned w/NGSS	Social Studies Standards (2024), aligned w/C3	System of Academic Readiness (STAR): ELA & math (3-9); Alaska Science Assessment (5 & 8)
Arizona	ELA Standards (2016)	Math Standards (2016)	Science Standards (2018), aligned w/NGSS	History & Social Studies Standards (2018)	Arizona Academic Standards Assessments (AASA): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Arkansas	ELA Standards (2023)	Mathematics Standards (2023)	Science Standards (2015)	History & Social Studies Standards (2022)	Arkansas Teaching, Learning, and Assessment System (ATLAS): ELA (3-10); math & science (3-8)
California	CA Common Core State Standards (2013)	CA Common Core State Standards (2013)	NGSS (2013)	History-SS Content Standards (1998)	Smarter Balance: ELA & math (3-8); California Science Test (5 & 8)
Colorado	Academic Standards (2020), aligned w/CC	Academic Standards (2020), aligned w/CC	Academic Standards (2020)	Academic Standards (2022)	Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) Assessments: ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8); social studies (4 & 7)
Connecticut	Common Core (2010)	Common Core (2010)	NGSS (2015)	Elementary & Secondary Social Studies Standards (2021), aligned w/C3	Smarter Balance: ELA & math (3-8); science (5-8)
Delaware	Common Core (2010)	Common Core (2010)	NGSS (2013)	Social Studies Standards (2016), aligned w/C3	Delaware System of Student Assessment (DESSA): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8); social studies (4 & 7)
District of Columbia	Common Core (2010)	Common Core (2010)	NGSS (2013)	Social Studies Standards (2023)	DC Comprehensive Assessments of Progress in Education (DC CAPE): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Florida	B.E.S.T. Standards (2020)	B.E.S.T. Standards (2020)	Florida's State Academic Standards for Science (2008), aligned w/ NGSS	Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (2008)	Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST): ELA (3-10); math (3-8); Statewide Science Assessment (5 & 8)
Georgia	Standards of Excellence (2015), CC	K-12 Mathematics Standards (2023)	Standards of Excellence – Science (2016)	Standards of Excellence – Social Studies (2016)	Georgia Milestones Assessment System: ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8); social studies (8)
Hawai'i	Common Core (2025)	Common Core (2025)	NGSS (2015)	Core Standards for Social Studies (2019), aligned w/C3	Hawai'i Smarter Balanced Assessment: ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Idaho	Content Standards (2022)	Content Standards (2022)	Content Standards (2013), aligned w/ NGSS	Content Standards (2016), aligned w/C3	Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Illinois	Learning Standards 2010), CC	Learning Standards 2010), CC	Learning Standards 2017 (NGSS)	Learning Standards for Social Science (2025), aligned w/C3	Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Indiana	Academic Standards (2023)	Academic Standards (2023)	Academic Standards (2023), aligned w/NGSS	Academic Standards for Social Studies (2023), aligned w/C3	Indiana's Learning Evaluation and Assessment Readiness Network (ILEARN): ELA & math (3-8); science (6); social studies (5)

State	Standards & Adoption Dates				Assessments
	ELA	**Math**	**Science**	**Social Studies**	
Iowa	Academic Standards (2024), aligned w/CC	Academic Standards (2024), aligned w/CC	Science Standards (2025), aligned w/NGSS	Social Studies Standards (2023), aligned w/C3	Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Kansas	Standards for ELA (2023), aligned w/CC	Math Standards (2023), aligned w/CC	Science Standards (2023), aligned w/NGSS	Standards for History, Gov't & Social Studies (2020), aligned w/C3	Kansas Assessment Program: ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Kentucky	Academic Standards (2019), aligned w/CC	Academic Standards (2019), aligned w/CC	Academic Standards for Science (2024), aligned w/ NGSS	Academic Standards for Social Studies (2022), aligned w/C3	Kentucky Summative Assessment: ELA & math (3-8); science (7); social studies (5 & 8)
Louisiana	Student Standards (2019), aligned w/CC	Student Standards (2017), aligned w/CC	Student Standards (2017), aligned w/NGSS	Student Standards for Social Studies (2022), aligned w/C3	Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP): ELA & math (3-8); science (5-8); social studies (5-8)
Maine	Learning Results (2019), CC	Learning Results (2020), CC	State Learning Standards for Science & Engineering (2019), aligned w/NGSS	Learning Results (2019), aligned w/C3	Maine Comprehensive Assessment System (MECAS): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Maryland	College and Career Ready Standards (2010), aligned w/CC	College and Career Ready Standards (2010), aligned w/CC	NGSS (2013)	Grade 6 & 7 Social Studies Framework (2023), aligned w/C3	Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8); social studies (8)
Massachusetts	English Language Arts & Literacy Curriculum Framework (2017), aligned w/CC	Mathematics Curriculum Framework (2017), aligned w/CC	Science & Technology Curriculum Framework (2016), aligned w/NGSS	History & Social Science Curriculum Framework (2018), aligned w/C3	Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8); social studies-Civics (8)
Michigan	K-12 Standards (2010), aligned w/CC	K-12 Standards (2010), aligned w/CC	K-12 Standards (2015,), aligned w/NGSS	K-12 Standards (2019), aligned w/C3	Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP): ELA & math (3-7); science & social studies (5 & 8)
Minnesota	K-12 Academic Standards (2010) (aligned/CC)	K-12 Academic Standards (2007), aligned w/CC	K-12 Academic Standards (2019), aligned w/NGSS	MN K-12 Academic Standards (2011), aligned w/C3	Minnesota's Academic Standards-Based Assessments: reading & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Mississippi	College- & Career-Readiness Standards (2016), aligned w/CC	College- & Career-Readiness Standards (2016), aligned w/CC	College- & Career-Readiness Standards (2018), aligned w/NGSS	College- & Career-Readiness Standards (2022), aligned w/C3	Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Missouri	Learning Standards (2016), aligned w/CC	Learning Standards (2016), aligned w/CC	Learning Standards (2016), aligned w/NGSS	Learning Standards (2016), aligned w/C3	Missouri Assessment Program (MAP): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Montana	K-12 Content Standards (2011), aligned w/CC	K-12 Content Standards (2011), aligned w/CC	K-12 Content Standards (2016), aligned w/NGSS	K-12 Content Standards (2021), aligned w/C3	Montana Comprehensive Assessment System (MontCAS): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Nebraska	Content Area Standards (2021), aligned w/CC	Content Area Standards (2022), aligned w/CC	Content Area Standards (2024), aligned w/NGSS	Content Area Standards (2019), aligned w/C3	Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Nevada	Academic Content Standards (2010), aligned w/CC	Academic Content Standards (2010), aligned w/CC	Academic Content Standards (2014), aligned w/NGSS	Academic Content Standards (2018), aligned w/C3	Smarter Balance: ELA & math (3-8); State Science Accountability Assessment (5 & 8)

State	Standards & Adoption Dates				Assessments
	ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies	
New Hampshire	Common Core (2010)	Common Core (2010)	NGSS (2013)	K-12 Social Studies Curriculum Framework (2014), aligned w/C3	New Hampshire Statewide Assessment System (NH SAS): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
New Jersey	Student Learning Standards (2023), aligned w/CC	Student Learning Standards (2023), aligned w/CC	Student Learning Standards (2020), aligned w/NGSS	Student Learning Standards (2020), aligned w/C3	New Jersey Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
New Mexico	Common Core (2010)	Common Core (2010)	STEM Ready! Science Standards (2018)	Social Studies Standards (2022)	Measures of Student Success & Achievement (MSSA): ELA & math, (4-8); Assessment of Science Readiness (5 & 8)
New York	Next Generation ELA Learning Standards (2017), aligned w/CC	Next Generation Mathematics Standards (2019), aligned w/CC	P-12 Science Learning Standards (2016) (NGSS)	K-8 Social Studies Framework (2016)	State Assessment: ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
North Carolina	Standard Course of Study – English Language Arts (2017)	Standard Course of Study – Mathematics (2017)	K-12 Science Standards (2023)	K-12 Social Studies Standards (2021)	North Carolina Personalized Assessment Tool (NCPAT): reading & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
North Dakota	English Language Arts Content Standards (2023)	Mathematics Content Standards (2023)	Science Content Standards (2019)	Social Studies Content Standards (2019)	North Dakota State Assessments (NDSA): ELA & math (3-8); science (4 & 8)
Ohio	Learning Standards for English Language Arts (2017)	Learning Standards for Mathematics (2017)	Learning Standards for Science (2018)	Learning Standards for Social Studies (2018)	Ohio's State Tests (OST): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Oklahoma	Academic Standards, English Language Arts (2021)	Academic Standards, Mathematics (2022)	Academic Standards, Science (2020), aligned w/ NGSS	Academic Standards, Social Studies (2019)	Oklahoma School Testing Program (OSTP): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Oregon	English Language Arts and Literacy Standards (2019), aligned w/CC	Mathematics Standards (2021), aligned w/CC	Science Standards (2022), aligned w/NGSS	K-12 Social Sciences Standards (2018)	Oregon's Statewide Assessment System (OSAS): ELA & math, science (5 & 8)
Pennsylvania	Core Standards for English Language Arts (2010), aligned w/CC	Core Standards for Mathematics (2010), aligned w/CC	Integrated Standards for Science, Environment & Ecology (2025), aligned w/ NGSS	Academic Standards (2002), aligned w/C3	Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA): ELA & math (4-8); science (4 & 8)
Rhode Island	Rhode Island Core Standards for Mathematics (2021), aligned w/CC	Rhode Island Core Standards for ELA/Literacy (2021), aligned w/CC	Next Generation Science Standards (2013)	Rhode Island Social Studies Standards (2021), aligned w/C3	Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS): ELA & math (3-8); Rhode Island Next Generation Science Assessment (5 & 8)
South Carolina	South Carolina College-And-Career Ready ELA Standards (2023)	South Carolina College-And-Career Ready Standards for Mathematics (2015)	South Carolina College-And-Career Ready Science Standards (2015), aligned w/NGSS	South Carolina Social Studies College-And-Career Ready Standards (2019)	South Carolina College-and-Career-Ready Assessment (SC READY): ELA & math (3-8); science (4, 6, & 8); social studies (5 & 7)

State	Standards & Adoption Dates				Assessments
	ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies	
South Dakota	Academic Content Standards (2025)	Academic Content Standards (2018)	State Standards (2024), aligned w/NGSS	State Standards (2023)	South Dakota ELA & math assessments (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Tennessee	English Language Arts Standards (2017)	Standards for Mathematical Practice (2024)	Academic Standards for Science (2016), aligned w/ NGSS	Academic Standards for Social Studies (2017)	Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP): ELA & math (3-8); science (3-8); social studies (6-8)
Texas	Essential Knowledge & Skills for ELA & Reading (2017)	Essential Knowledge & Skills for Mathematics (2012)	Essential Knowledge and Skills for Science (2021)	Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies (2022)	State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR): reading language arts & math (3-8); science (5 & 8); social studies (8)
Utah	Core Standards for ELA (2022)	Core Standards for Mathematics (2016)	Utah Science with Engineering Education Standards (2023), aligned w/NGSS	Core Standards in Social Studies (2022)	The Readiness Improvement Success and Empowerment (RISE): ELA & math (3-8); writing (5-8); science (4-8)
Vermont	Common Core (2010)	Common Core (2010)	NGSS (2013)	C3 (2017)	Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Program (VTCAP): ELA & math (3-9); science (5 & 8)
Virginia	English Standards of Learning (2024)	Mathematics Standards of Learning (2023)	Science Standards of Learning (2018)	History and Social Science Standards of Learning (2023)	Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL): reading & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Washington	Common Core (2011)	Common Core (2011)	NGSS (2013)	Social Studies Learning Standards (2019), aligned w/C3	Smarter Balance Assessments (SBAs): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
West Virginia	College & Career Readiness Standards for English Language Arts (2020), aligned w/CC	College & Career Readiness Standards for Mathematics (2024), aligned w/CC	College & Career Readiness Standards for Science (2022), aligned w/NGSS	College & Career Readiness Standards for Social Studies (2025)	West Virginia General Summative Assessment (WVGSA): ELA & math (3-8); science (5 & 8)
Wisconsin	Standards for ELA (2020), CC	Standards for Mathematics (2021), CC	Standards for Science (2017) (NGSS)	Standards for Social Studies (2018), aligned w/C3	Wisconsin Forward Exam: ELA & math (3-8); science (4 & 8); social studies (4 & 8)
Wyoming	Content and Performance Standards – ELA (2012), aligned w/CC	Content and Performance Standards – Mathematics (2018), aligned w/CC	Content and Performance Standards – Science (2016), aligned w/ NGSS	Content and Performance Standards – Social Studies (2018)	Wyoming Test of Proficiency and Progress: ELA & math (3-8); writing (5 & 7); science (4 & 8)

Note:
[1]Information in Appendix B was sourced from individual state departments of education (as listed in Appendix C) between February 2025 – May 2025.

Appendix C
List of State Education Entities and Websites[1]

State	Name of Entity	Website
Alabama	Department of Education	https://www.alabamaachieves.org/
Alaska	Department of Education & Early Development	https://education.alaska.gov/
Arizona	Department of Education	https://www.azed.gov/
Arkansas	Division of Elementary & Secondary Education	https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/
California	Department of Education	https://www.cde.ca.gov/
Colorado	Department of Education	https://www.cde.state.co.us/
Connecticut	Department of Education	https://portal.ct.gov/sde
Delaware	Department of Education	https://education.delaware.gov/
District of Columbia	Office of the State Superintendent of Education	https://osse.dc.gov/
Florida	Department of Education	https://www.fldoe.org/
Georgia	Department of Education	https://gadoe.org/
Hawaii	Department of Education	https://hawaiipublicschools.org/
Idaho	Department of Education	https://www.sde.idaho.gov/
Illinois	State Board of Education	https://www.isbe.net/
Indiana	Department of Education	https://www.in.gov/doe/
Iowa	Department of Education	https://educate.iowa.gov/
Kansas	Department of Education	https://www.ksde.gov/
Kentucky	Department of Education	https://www.education.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx
Louisiana	Department of Education	https://doe.louisiana.gov/
Maine	Department of Education	https://www.maine.gov/doe/
Maryland	Department of Education	https://marylandpublicschools.org/Pages/Default.aspx
Massachusetts	Department of Elementary & Secondary Education	https://www.doe.mass.edu/
Michigan	Department of Education	https://www.michigan.gov/mde
Minnesota	Department of Education	https://education.mn.gov/MDE/index.htm
Mississippi	Department of Education	https://mdek12.org/
Missouri	Department of Elementary & Secondary Education	https://dese.mo.gov/
Montana	Office of Public Instruction	https://opi.mt.gov/
Nebraska	Department of Education	https://www.education.ne.gov/
Nevada	Department of Education	https://doe.nv.gov/
New Hampshire	Department of Education	https://www.education.nh.gov/
New Jersey	Department of Education	https://www.nj.gov/education/
New Mexico	Public Education Department	https://web.ped.nm.gov/
New York	Education Department	https://www.nysed.gov/
North Carolina	Department of Public Instruction	https://www.dpi.nc.gov/
North Dakota	Department of Public Instruction	https://www.nd.gov/dpi/
Ohio	Department of Education & Workforce	https://education.ohio.gov/
Oklahoma	Department of Education	https://oklahoma.gov/education.html
Oregon	Department of Education	https://www.oregon.gov/ode/pages/default.aspx
Pennsylvania	Department of Education	https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education.html
Rhode Island	Department of Education	https://ride.ri.gov/
South Carolina	Department of Education	https://ed.sc.gov/
South Dakota	Department of Education	https://doe.sd.gov/
Tennessee	Department of Education	https://www.tn.gov/education.html
Texas	Education Agency	https://tea.texas.gov/
Utah	State Board of Education	https://schools.utah.gov/
Vermont	Agency of Education	https://education.vermont.gov/
Virginia	Department of Education	https://www.doe.virginia.gov/
Washington	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction	https://ospi.k12.wa.us/
West Virginia	Department of Education	https://wvde.us/
Wisconsin	Department of Public Instruction	https://dpi.wi.gov/
Wyoming	Department of Education	https://edu.wyoming.gov/

Note:
[1]These sites were accessed on various dates, February 2025 – May 2025.