Content-Area Graduation Standards
Design Guide

Districts should define 5–8 standards per content area, which together will allow a district to determine students' proficiency in that content area. Standards should be broad enough that they apply to all grade levels, PK-12. Each standard will be defined by approximately 5–10 performance indicators.

Criteria	Weaker Statements	Stronger Statements
Alignment *To what extent does the statement align with national and state standards? Is the statement central to understanding the content area?*	• Do not align with national, state, and/or local standards and frameworks; • Are so narrow, specific, or vague that they are not central to understanding the content area as a whole.	• Align with national, state, and/or local standards and frameworks; • Use precise, descriptive language that clearly communicates what is essential to building proficiency in the content area.
Transfer *Does the statement describe knowledge, and skills that can be applied across multiple disciplines and that will be of value beyond a particular point in time?*	• Describe topics that are only relevant to or applicable within a unit, textbook, resource, course, or program; • Focus on factual content without connecting the statements to enduring cross-curricular and	• Require students to develop an understanding of relationships among principles, theories, and/or concepts; • Require students to develop and demonstrate skills and knowledge that will endure throughout their education, careers, and civic lives.

	content-specific skills.	
Cognitive Demand *Does the statement imply higher order thinking, deep conceptual understanding and transferable skill acquisition?*	• Require only basic recall and lower-level cognitive skills, such as identifying, defining, summarizing, or listing; • Do not require the application of knowledge to diverse or novel problems, texts, or situations.	• Require students to demonstrate higher-order cognitive skills such as reasoning, analyzing, planning, interpreting, hypothesizing, investigating, or creating; • Require the application of knowledge to diverse or novel problems, texts, or situations.