



# The Link Between Academic Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment

## Wisconsin Academic Standards

Wisconsin Academic Standards specify what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. They serve as goals for teaching and learning, and define for students, parents, educators, and citizens what students should have learned at each grade level or grade band. A complete list of all content area standards is available on the [Wisconsin Academic Standards webpage](#).

## Curriculum

While standards provide the goals for learning, curriculum is the day-to-day activity that helps a student meet those goals. Curriculum creates the student's overall classroom experience and includes lesson plans, classroom assessments, textbooks, and more. In Wisconsin, curriculum is developed and approved by local school boards to meet local needs. Information about local curriculum is available at the school and district level.



## Statewide Assessment



The Forward Exam is designed to gauge how well students are doing in relation to the Wisconsin Academic Standards. All questions on the Forward Exam are linked directly to a Wisconsin Academic Standard for each tested grade-level and content area. The Forward Exam is administered online in the spring of each school year at:

- grades 3-8 in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics,
- grades 4 and 8 in Science, and,
- grades 4, 8, and 10 in Social Studies.

The exam provides a broad measure of achievement that should be used along with local measures such as report cards, schoolwide assessments, grades, and other information about a student's progress in school. Students receive a score based on their performance (demonstrating their knowledge and skill in relation to the grade-level standards) in each content area. Each score will fall in one of four performance levels:

- **Advanced** – Student demonstrates thorough understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills for their grade level that are associated with college content-readiness.
- **Proficient** – Student demonstrates adequate understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills for their grade level that are associated with college content-readiness.
- **Basic** – Student demonstrates partial understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills for their grade level that are associated with college content-readiness.
- **Below Basic** – Student demonstrates minimal understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills for their grade level that are associated with college content-readiness.

The Forward Exam results provide information about student performance which allows:

- students to reflect on their achievement.
- teachers to target instruction to student needs and reflect upon their own instructional practices.
- administrators to more fully understand what students know and can do in order to guide curriculum, improvement planning, and professional development decisions.
- parents/guardians to understand what their child knows and is able to do in ELA, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.
- all stakeholders to check how ready ALL students are for college and career, especially those groups that have historically been left behind.