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## The Roles of Government in Education

Explain the difference between a law and a regulation in the space below.

Traditionally, local governments determine what to teach to students in their district. Many people still favor this approach because it allows local governments and teachers the flexibility to teach the skills necessary for their particular area.

However, there is a growing trend to standardize primary and secondary education. The issue of standards for learning and teaching has developed in the United States as policymakers, legislators, educators, parents, and community leaders have all shown an increasing concern with students' achievement levels. The word "standards" has been used in many ways during public discussions. Sometimes the term has been used to represent established levels of achievement; in other cases it refers to commonly shared sets of academic subject content, such as those embodied in state curriculum guidelines.

As stated above, the federal government has historically played a minor role in education, and in fact, the federal government did not issue any educational policy until the 1960s.

The federal laws with the most impact on education concern:

- Equal access to education
- Safeguarding students' constitutional rights
- Safeguarding teachers' constitutional rights.

Education is not exactly a constitutional right, like free speech and assembly, but it is an important enough interest to warrant constitutional protection. Students are therefore protected against discrimination based on race, gender, religion, or disability, or ethnicity through the 14th Amendment.

### Every Student Succeeds Act

The federal government also influences education by allocating funding only to those school districts that follow certain federal guidelines. Roughly three percent of the federal budget is spent on education as of 2017 - a

### ***As you read:***

#### Standardize:

To *standardize* something is to make it fit a certain guideline or requirement.

#### Standards (education):

Educational *standards* are the learning goals for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level.

1. Define curriculum:

#### Allocate:

To *allocate* is to divide and give out for a special reason or to particular people or things.

small proportion, of course, but in many years this amounts to billions of dollars. Most of this money goes toward assistance programs for children with disabilities. The rest of the money is distributed to school districts under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The federal government plays a role in evaluating each school district by administering the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NEAP), also known as the Nation's Report Card. Finally, federal agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the Department of Education publish recommended teaching strategies and materials. States and local governments are free to adopt or ignore these recommendations as they see fit, although no funding will be awarded if the school district ignores these recommended practices.

#### State Authority

The states are the entities primarily responsible for the maintenance and operation of public schools. The states are also heavily involved in the establishment, selection, and regulation of curriculum, teaching methods, and instructional materials in their schools. Consequently, each state has different standards and policies which may impact the quality of education offered.

Each state's constitution requires it to provide a school system where children may receive an education. Many state constitutions also contain express provisions for creating educational curricula. Some state constitutions even empower state authorities to select textbooks and educational materials. Besides constitutional authority, state governments also have authority to legislate in this area, or they can authorize officials to establish, select, and regulate curriculum.

State legislatures have also set mandatory requirements for students to graduate. In cases where state rules and regulations for courses do exist, they must be followed. Local school districts may, however, offer courses and activities in the instructional program beyond those required by state statute. Other states delegate more of their authority. They usually prescribe a model curriculum framework, allowing local authorities to develop their own curricula based on the general state goals.

#### State and Local Influence

Curricular guidelines have been used to set standards in many states and have been linked to state-administered achievement tests. But standards in the United States also include more informal means by which schools maintain and promote the desired levels of achievement for their students.

2. What is the consequence of schools not following recommendations from the federal government?

Curricula:  
Plural of curriculum.

3. Who influences decision making about school curriculum?

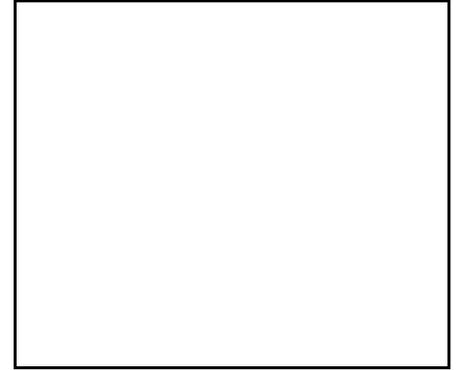
## School Curriculum and the Government

Unit by Educators from Scott County Schools,  
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These achievement levels for schools and for students have usually been extrapolated from community expectations, and local communities continue to greatly influence curriculum and instructional decisions made at the school level. In the end, school curriculum standards are partly a result of local decisions, such as those governing the selection of textbooks and those affecting a school's policy on the promotion or retention of students.



Source adapted from:

<https://www.findlaw.com/education/curriculum-standards-school-funding/the-roles-of-federal-and-state-governments-in-education.html>  
<https://www.findlaw.com/education/curriculum-standards-school-funding/national-school-curriculum-standards.html>

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***After you read:***

What role does each of the following levels of government play in education? Create a bulleted list in the space below.

<b>Federal</b>	
<b>State</b>	
<b>Local</b>	