

**TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS NATIONAL STANDARDS  
IN LOCAL CLASSROOMS**

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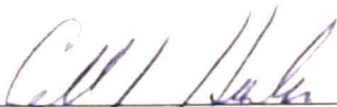


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Date March 20, 2001

# Teachers' Attitudes Towards National Standards in Local Classrooms

A Field Study

Presented to the

Graduate and Research Council of

Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment

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Education Specialist

By

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As in all of my life's endeavors, I am thankful to God for giving me the dedication and intelligence required. Truly, I can do all things through Christ, who gives me strength.

## ABSTRACT

This research study was conducted to examine classroom teachers' attitudes towards standards. Surveys were used to evaluate the preset attitudes of teachers towards national standards, prior to their implementation in local classrooms. Survey results were used to identify the teachers' current understanding of local, state, and national standards, and to examine the perceptions that teachers have concerning the implementation of national standards in local classrooms.

The study group consisted of 50 classroom teachers, all of whom are licensed to teach in the state of Tennessee. Selected participants were asked to complete a survey anonymously. The data collected provided useful insights about attitudes and perceptions towards all standards. Results will be helpful in determining the most effective way to implement the National Standards into the targeted school system.

Conclusions from the study suggest that teachers in the targeted school system have positive attitudes towards standards. It was determined that most teachers are aware that national standards are being developed in all subject areas. Most teachers surveyed were willing to implement national standards in their classroom. No teachers were opposed to the idea. Factors that appeared to contribute to the teachers' attitudes included age, educational background, and years of teaching experience. Because standards are already in place in this school system, gradual changes to the existing standards should result in a successful transition to national standards.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Importance of the Problem

A movement to develop national standards for student achievement is gaining popularity in the United States (O'Neil, 1991). Proposals include national standards that will drive the curriculum in all schools and in all grade levels. Teams of individuals have been given the job of creating national standards for various subject areas (Harrington-Leuker, 1994). Unfortunately, classroom teachers have been excluded in this planning. Many teachers are even unaware of the movement toward a system of national standards. Educators who are aware of national standards have mixed feelings towards the implementation of these new standards in their classrooms (Lewis, 1995).

Supporters of national standards believe that, if implemented, national standards will provide an equal education to all children (Brannon, 1995). However, without appropriate resources and staff development sessions, new curriculums will do little more than sit on a shelf (Harrington-Leuker, 1994). In addition, if classroom teachers do not have a positive attitude toward the new standards, effective implementation will probably not take place. Because this is a national issue, it would be expected that teachers in various locations may have differing opinions. However, the resulting research will be helpful to all educators. Recommendations will be made which will encourage a smooth transition to the new standards.

### Statement of the Problem

The problem was to evaluate the preset attitudes of teachers towards national standards, prior to their implementation in local classrooms, and to compare these preset attitudes with current attitudes towards adopted local and/or state standards by the same teachers. An additional goal was to identify the teachers' current understanding of standards, including local, state, and national, and to examine the positive and/or negative effects that these teachers believe will occur as a result of implementing national standards in local classrooms.

### Hypothesis

There will be no significant relationship between the current classroom implementation of local or state standards and the preset attitudes of teachers toward national standards.

### Definition of Terms

Local standards: Specific guidelines telling exactly what students need to know in each subject area and grade level, developed by individual school districts.

National standards: Sets of standards created for specific subject areas, sanctioned by the federal government, and designed to be used in any school system.

Negative attitudes: Attitudes developed which are in opposition to the implementation of National Standards.

Positive attitudes: Attitudes developed supporting the National Standards in local classrooms.



State standards: Guidelines provided to local school districts by the State

Department of Education.

### Limitations

This study had several limitations. This study involved a selected public school system. The targeted school system currently subscribes to a set of standards which are very similar to the newly developed National Standards. Curriculum guides are updated frequently; therefore, teachers in this system are often exposed to changes in the standards. The study group will consist only of public school teachers in grades K-12. Each locality has individual characteristics, and thus the results found in this study may be unique to the targeted school system.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The issue of standards, like other educational issues, has been given attention for many years. As early as 1920, standards were discussed in educational literature (Edmonson, 1995). At the time, standards in content areas applied to requirements about the number of units in each subject, according to Edmonson. Standards also applied to teachers, and covered such aspects of teaching as the number of college hours required, the number of classes that could be taught, and the maximum number of students that would be in a class.

Although many years have passed, the issue of standards in education still receives much attention. The current debates concerning problems in American education often center around creating higher standards for students and using standardized tests to assess performance. Currently, there are no required federal guidelines for educational standards among various states. A movement to create national standards for student achievement is gaining popularity. Assessments to determine if the students have met the standards are also expected to be implemented (Kean, 1992). Depending on whether the standards are met, a system of rewards or punishments aimed at the students, their teachers, and the school systems is implemented (D'Amico & Corcoran, 1985).

Discussion in the literature focuses on the development and outcomes of such standards. It is thought that administrators in today's schools have no clear sense of



what all students need to learn and whether or not they are actually learning (O'Neil, 1991). Many educators question the authority of the federal government to make decisions about what standards are important. Instead, those opposing the national standards are in favor of keeping local control of education (Harrington-Leuker, 1994).

Educators also question the logistics of a system of national standards. Who will develop the standards? Many groups are currently working to create or improve standards. As early as 1989, national standards were released by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). According to Diane Ravitch (1992), math teachers realized that their concept of New Math was failing. In an attempt to improve mathematics education, they began researching and discussing their options. The result, NCTM standards, set high expectations for all students and were quickly accepted nationwide (Ravitch, 1992). According to McLaughlin and Shepard (1995), the standards being developed today emphasize reasoning and problem solving skills. Instead of simply rewriting past standards, the new standards recognize that today's students must meet the demands of an ever-changing society (McLaughlin & Shepard, 1995).

During President George H. Bush's term, the U.S. Department of Education funded subject-area groups to prepare standards. The public reaction to these standards was very negative, however, and the funding was canceled (Lewis, 1995). Ravitch (1992) stated that the Department of Education spends a "laughable amount" of money on educational research and development. As a result, there has been little money allowed by the federal government to improve teaching strategies or develop standards.

Individuals and groups continue the strive for national standards. In 1994, there were 13 professional groups working to develop voluntary national content standards in their fields, according to Donna Harrington-Lueker (1994). The National Education Goals Panel, created in 1990 by President Bush, is still in existence. This group consists of eight governors, four members of the United States Congress, four state legislators, and two members appointed by the President. The group has many purposes, one of which is to establish a system of high academic standards and assessments.

Many states continue to improve standards, and some states have created special assessment tools to measure student progress. Unfortunately, according to Lewis (1995), the group that seems to have been ignored is the teachers. Although some teachers have been selected to serve on standards committees, most teachers continue to teach according to the content of the provided textbooks, or by standards that were in place when they began their careers. If change is to occur in the schools, the districts will need to support staff development for teachers.

There appears to be no consensus as to the definition of a standard. According to Phillips (1996), there are two important terms that must be understood when discussing standards. First, a standard is a statement describing what students should know and be able to do in a content area. These specific statements are referred to as descriptive standards. Second, the passing score relates to the achievement of a standard as measured by a state or district. There are often many levels of proficiency attached to a single standard. Thus, assessment is measured on a scale

If national standards are formulated, there must be a way to evaluate those standards. If the standards are too high, local schools are going to ignore them,

according to Cohen (1995). On the other hand, if the standards are too low, the schools will continue to do what they are currently doing, and no improvement will be seen (Cohen, 1995). Standards need to be very objective (Eisner, 1995). Just as an Olympic diver knows exactly what the judges expect, students will have to understand the desired performance. Certain subjects, such as spelling and math, may be easy to assess. However, many skills cannot be evaluated on a multiple-choice test. Some educators wonder how a national assessment program will measure a student's ability to reason and express ideas.

The drive to improve standards is supported by college professors who are concerned about the amount of remedial education needed by today's high school graduates. In addition, employers complain that the products of the schools require basic skill training to function in the workplace (Kean, 1992). Students are finding that what they learn is not as important as simply staying in school until graduation, thus earning their way into college or a job regardless of their knowledge. Although national standards could not solve all problems, it is hoped that positive changes would result. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Standards has already had an impact in schools where they are used. Students are performing as well as control groups on traditional mathematics skills, and they are out performing control groups in the areas of problem solving and reasoning (Reys, Robinson, Sconiers & Mark, 1999).

Some schools already have rigorous standards in place for their students, while other schools appear to have no standards at all (Wiggins, 1992). It is hoped that implementing national standards would create a rigorous requirement for all students, forcing students to achieve a certain proficiency level before graduating. Parents would



be aware of exactly what was expected and required of their children, hopefully resulting in parents taking a more active role in their children's education. Supporters of national standards point to the fact that our system of education is extremely decentralized, making it difficult for students to transfer successfully (Aronowitz, 1996). National standards would eliminate this problem. Transient students would be less disadvantaged, as all schools would be covering the same content.

What has been missing from the debate about national standards, according to Gerald Bracey, is any evidence that they produce higher achievement. Of 29 countries with a national curriculum, 14 scored higher than the United States in mathematics, eight countries had no difference, and seven countries performed lower than the United States. When 11 countries without a national curriculum were compared, six scored higher than the United States, five were the same, and none were lower (Bracey, 1999). Results in other subject areas were similar. As Sheldon and Biddle pointed out in 1998, schools are "complex organizations, with many goals, whose success is often hard to measure" (p. 165).

Though some educators are firmly attached to the idea of national standards as a solution to America's educational troubles, others are frightened of the control that would result from a national set of standards coupled with a national assessment program. Additionally, requiring a student to achieve a particular score on a specific test in order to graduate may not be appropriate. Traditionally, Americans have been proud to offer students many chances to achieve success, and in the proposed system the students would not be given second chances. At a time when the focus is on equity in education, national standards could actually threaten our commitment to improvements in the system.

Although this sounds contradictory, Marilyn Gittell (1996) successfully points out some problems involved in creating national standards. At the school district level, educators are accustomed to having local control over the educational system. They are given flexibility in choosing books and other resources. By moving the curriculum decisions to a national level, according to Gittell, the school systems would be forced to teach a curriculum that may not fit the school's situation. Children may not be able to learn the skills that are necessary for survival in their society.

Teachers historically teach the content that they know will be tested; thus, the standards movement may strip the local schools of control over the curriculum. In a study by Fletcher (1998), teachers who received little training on national science standards were found to teach only what they knew was going to be tested. However, in contrast, the teachers who were given adequate training and modeling of new instructional strategies did focus on the desired standards. In conclusion, Fletcher stated that school systems must be able to offer appropriate training and resources if national standards are implemented.

School systems will need funding if they are to offer quality training for implementing national standards. Berube (1996) believes that the issue of financial responsibility must be examined. Much of the money which is budgeted to school districts comes from the local level. If national standards are adopted, some educators wonder if money will be given to all the schools to buy necessary equipment. Schools with large minority and working class enrollments often do not possess the funding for new science labs or French teachers. Additionally, intervention programs would require funding. Without additional money, at-risk students would probably continue to fail

(Berube, 1996). If the government does not make a commitment to raising the funding given to schools, it will be difficult for poor school districts to implement national standards (Aronowitz, 1996).

The pressure is on to raise standards and, hopefully, to increase student achievement. Educators must play an active role in ensuring that the standards are created fairly and implemented effectively. After all, it is not the standards, but the teacher who makes the real difference in the classroom (Klein, 1999). According to O'Neil (1991) and Mayher (1999), there are no firm answers yet as to whether increased standards will solve problems in education, but resistance by educators will probably only worsen the situation in today's schools.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### The Study Group

The study group consisted of 50 classroom teachers, all of whom are licensed to teach in the state of Tennessee. To ensure a representation of various grade levels, the study group was a stratified sample, with elementary, middle, and high school teachers each representing a percentage of the group. Participants were randomly selected from six schools in the targeted school system. Selected participants were asked to complete a survey anonymously, and participation was voluntary. The selected study group also submitted a demographic survey. Although the study group was not stratified based on demographics, the subjects represented differences in age, gender, and years of teaching experience.

#### Research Instruments

Participants were asked to read a statement of informed consent before volunteering to participate. The consent form stated, "completion and return of the surveys constitutes your informed consent to participate in this project" (see Appendix A). A packet that included a two-part, researcher-generated study, along with the demographic information, was used for this study (see Appendixes B, C, and D for complete packet). One part of the survey consisted of questions concerning current implementation of adopted local and/or state standards. Based on multiple-choice answers, participants were asked to determine the degree to which they use provided

standards in their classrooms. Additionally, participants were asked to determine if current standards are appropriate in various subject areas.

The second part of the survey consisted of ten questions. These questions assessed the subjects' current knowledge about the formation of National Standards, as well as their willingness to implement these new standards in their classrooms. The questions in this part of the survey allowed participants to report their perceptions about the eventual success or failure of the standards. The questions were scored on a modified three point Likert scale as follows: A- agree; U- undecided; D- disagree.

The survey packet included a demographic survey. The information collected did not include the subject's name or any identifying information. Collected demographic information was useful in the evaluation of this study, in determining limitations, and in developing recommendations for the future.

### The Procedure

Before beginning this study, permission was granted from Austin Peay State University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix E) and from the targeted school system (see Appendix F). Once permission was granted, the sample of teachers was selected from the targeted school system. Three elementary, two middle, and one high school were randomly selected. Permission was granted from each of the chosen school's principal. Participants were then randomly selected from these six schools. Survey packets were mailed using the school's mail courier. Included in each survey packet was an informed consent statement, instructions, the two part-survey, a demographic survey, and an addressed envelope for the return of the questionnaire. Participants in the study were asked to read the Informed Consent Statement (see

Appendix A), which explained that participation was voluntary. There were no known risks for participating in this study, and if a subject chose not to participate, there was no penalty.

Fifty surveys were sent to selected participants in the spring semester of 2000. Thirty-six surveys (72%) were returned. The surveys were hand-scored as needed and scored by computer to compile a percentage result of subjects' responses to each question. Results were computed using the StatView software program.

Validity was related to the responses made by the study group. The clear wording of survey questions, the anonymity of the subjects, and the utilization of a three-point scale improved validity of the study.

To present the information, the questionnaire is shown with the tabulated results for each question. The results represent teachers' attitudes and opinions about National Standards, as well as the current degree of implementation of local and/or state standards in local classrooms (see Appendixes G, H, and I for analysis of surveys). Responses to survey questions were grouped according to demographic information including gender, age, educational background, total years teaching, number of students in classroom, and number of states where teaching positions have been held. Demographics were analyzed for any possible relationship to question responses. The seemingly most significant and relevant questions are highlighted in tables and discussed in the text. The data collected provided useful insights about attitudes towards all standards. Results will be helpful in determining the most effective way to implement the National Standards into the targeted school system.



## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the preset attitudes of teachers towards national standards, prior to their implementation in local classrooms, and to compare these preset attitudes with current attitudes towards adopted local and/or state standards by the same teachers. An additional goal was to identify the teachers' current understanding of standards, including local, state, and national, and to examine the positive and or negative effects that these teachers believe will occur as a result of implementing national standards in local classrooms. The study asked selected participants to answer questions using the questionnaire and procedures described in chapter three.

It was important to determine if participants had prior knowledge about national standards. Fortunately, 75% of all surveyed teachers are aware that national standards are being developed in all subject areas (see Table 1). Participants who were not aware that national standards are being developed in all subject areas represented 14% of the sample. Of the teachers surveyed, those who reported holding a Bachelor's degree as their highest level of education were the least aware of the national standards, with 27% of this group not aware of standards as reflected in their response to the noted question. Of the participants who hold a Master's degree with additional graduate hours, 100% reported being aware of the national standards. Some participants (11%), were undecided on this item. Table 2 indicates a statistical comparison between groups concerning awareness of national standards. The results showed that there were no significant differences in their responses.

Table 1

Responses to Question 1 of National Standards Survey

<b>Educational Background</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
BA	64% (7)	9% (1)	27% (3)	100% (11)
BA+	89% (8)	11% (1)	0	100% (9)
MA	67% (6)	11% (1)	22% (2)	100% (9)
MA+	100% (5)	0	0	100% (5)
EDS	0	100% (1)	0	100% (1)
ALL	75% (26)	11% (4)	14% (5)	100% (35)

Note. Question 1 of the national standards survey states, "I am aware that national standards are being developed in all subject areas."

Table 2

Unpaired t-test for Question 1 of National Standards Survey

<b>Educational Background</b>	<b>t-Value</b>	<b>P-Value</b>
BA, BA+	-1.614	.1239
BA, MA	-.198	.8449
BA, MA+	-1.510	.1532
BA+, MA	1.414	.1765
BA+, MA+	-.732	.4783
MA, MA+	-1.383	.1918

\* $p < .05$

Most teachers in the targeted school system are willing to implement national standards in their classrooms (see Table 3). In the 20-29 year age category, 80% of participants responded positively to this item. Older participants were less willing to implement national standards. Only 57% of teachers ages 40-49 and 50% of teachers

ages 50-59 reported to be willing to implement national standards in their classrooms. Although some teachers (31%) were undecided about implementing national standards in their classrooms, no teachers disagreed with the survey question. Although some relationships can be drawn from the data, there is no significant difference in their responses (see Table 4).

Table 3

Responses to National Standards Question 5 by Age

Age	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Total
20-29	80% (8)	20% (2)	0	100% (10)
30-39	69% (11)	31% (5)	0	100% (16)
40-49	57% (4)	33% (3)	0	100% (7)
50-59	50% (1)	50% (1)	0	100% (2)
All	69% (24)	31% (11)	0	100% (35)

Note. Question 5 of national standards survey states, "I am willing to implement national standards in my classroom."

Table 4

Unpaired t-test for National Standards Question 5 by Age

Age	t-Value	P-value
20-29, 30-39	.609	.5481
20-29, 40-49	.987	.3394
20-29, 50-59	.845	.4178
30-39, 40-49	.517	.6105
30-39, 50-59	.504	.6212
40-49, 50-59	.158	.8786

\* $p < .05$



Educational background appears to influence teachers' perceptions about national standards. Teachers holding only a Bachelor's degree were more likely to report being undecided about implementing national standards in their classrooms than those with more education (see Table 5). The one survey respondent who has an Education Specialist degree agreed with the survey item, and 80% of teachers with a Master's degree plus additional graduate hours, were willing to implement national standards in their classroom. The percentage of teachers in agreement with this statement decreased with less education, and only 55% of teachers with only a Bachelor's degree reported that they were willing to implement national standards. Table 6 shows the statistical comparison between groups who responded to the question, "I am willing to implement national standards in my classroom." The results show no significant difference in the responses to this question.

Table 5

Responses to National Standards Question 5 by Educational Background

<b>Educational Background</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
BA	55% (6)	45% (5)	0	100% (11)
BA+	67% (6)	33% (3)	0	100% (9)
MA	78% (7)	22% (2)	0	100% (9)
MA+	80% (4)	20% (1)	0	100% (5)
EDS	100% (1)	0	0	100% (1)
ALL	69% (24)	31% (11)	0	100% (35)

Note. Question 5 of national standards survey states, "I am willing to implement national standards in my classroom"

Table 6

Unpaired t-test for Responses to National Standards Question 5 by EducationalBackground

<b>Educational Background</b>	<b>t-Value</b>	<b>P-value</b>
BA,BA+	-.526	.6051
BA,MA	-1.060	.3033
BA, MA+	-.940	.3630
BA+, MA	-.500	.6239
BA+, MA+	-.495	.6296
MA, MA+	-.090	.9298

\* $p < .05$ 

Although age and educational background seemed to influence responses concerning implementing national standards, years of teaching did not appear to be significant (see Table 7). All surveyed teachers either agreed or were undecided on this survey question. Participants who have been teaching 11-20 years were the least likely to report being willing to implement national standards in their classrooms, while 100% of respondents who have been teaching 4-6 years reported being willing to implement national standards in their classrooms. In all other age categories, at least 50% of surveyed teachers agreed that they were willing to implement national standards. Table 8 shows that there were no significant differences in the responses to this survey item.

Table 7

Responses to National Standards Question 5 by Total Years Teaching

<b>Total Years Teaching</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
1-3	70% (7)	30% (3)	0	100% (10)
4-6	100% (10)	0	0	100% (10)
7-10	57% (4)	43% (3)	0	100% (7)
11-20	40% (2)	60% (3)	0	100% (5)
21-30	50% (1)	50% (1)	0	100% (2)
31+	50% (1)	50% (1)	0	100% (2)
All	69% (25)	31% (11)	0	100% (36)

Note. Question 5 of national standards survey states, "I am willing to implement national standards in my classroom."

Table 8

Unpaired t-test for Responses to National Standards Question 5 by Total Years TeachingExperience

<b>Total Years Teaching</b>	<b>t-Value</b>	<b>P-value</b>
1-3, 10-20	.883	.3947
1-3, 4-6	-1.406	.1769
1-3, 7-10	-.664	.5166
10-20, 20-30	-.667	.5415
10-20, 30+	-.667	.5415
10-20, 4-6	-1.908	.0807
10-20, 7-10	-1.483	.1722
20-30, 4-6	-.845	.4178
20-30, 7-10	-.509	.6263
30+, 4-6	-.845	.4178
30+, 7-10	-.509	.6263
4-6, 7-10	.718	.4837

\* $p < .05$



Surveyed teachers were asked to decide if the guidelines provided by their school were too few, adequate, or too many. Most teachers surveyed (80%) believe that the guidelines provided by their school are adequate (see Table 9). However, 40% of the youngest surveyed teachers, ages 20-29, believe that they have been given too many guidelines. This may reflect the fact that new teachers often feel overwhelmed with the many responsibilities placed upon them. Teachers between the ages of 40 and 49 were split in their responses, with 57% believing that the guidelines are adequate. Only 6% of all surveyed teachers believed that they were given too few guidelines. Interestingly, these teachers were all between the ages of 40 and 49. Teachers in the remaining age groups agreed that the guidelines provided by their school were adequate. Table 10 indicates a statistical comparison between groups concerning guidelines provided by the schools. The unpaired t-test for the age groups 20-29 and 30-39 shows significance. There were no significant differences in the other age categories.

Table 9

Responses to Local Standards Question 3 by Age

Age	Too Few	Adequate	Too Many	Total
20-29	0	60% (6)	40% (4)	100% (10)
30-39	0	100% (16)	0	100% (16)
40-49	29% (2)	57% (4)	14% (1)	100% (7)
50-59	0	100% (2)	0	100% (2)
All	6% (2)	80% (28)	14% (5)	100% (35)

Note. Question 3 of the local classrooms survey states, "The amount of guidelines provided to me by my school is...."

Table 10

Unpaired t-test for Local Standards Question 3 by Age

Age	t-Value	P-value
20-29, 30-39	3.033	.0059
20-29, 40-49	1.861	.0825
20-29, 50-59	1.054	.3166
30-39, 40-49	.826	.4187
40-49, 50-59	-.279	.7884

\* $p < .05$ 

When participants were asked about the amount of guidelines provide by their school, educational background did not appear to have an impact on responses (see Table 11). The results of a statistical comparison further indicates that there were no significant differences in responses (see Table 12). Most participants (79%) answered that the amount of guidelines provide by their school was adequate. No participants with a Master's Degree or higher educational background reported having too few guidelines, and only one respondent in each of the other two categories believed that they were given too few guidelines. A small percentage of surveyed teachers in each category for educational background believed that they have been given too many guidelines, with the one exception of the participant with an EdS degree. This participant believed that the amount of guidelines provided by the school were adequate.

Table 11

Responses to Local Standards Question 3 by Educational Background

<b>Educational Background</b>	<b>Too Few</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Too Many</b>	<b>Total</b>
BA	9% (1)	82% (9)	9% (1)	100% (11)
BA+	11% (1)	67% (6)	22% (2)	100% (9)
MA	0	88% (7)	12% (1)	100% (8)
MA+	0	80% (4)	20% (1)	100% (5)
EDS	0	100% (1)	0	100% (1)
ALL	6% (2)	79% (27)	15% (5)	100% (34)

Note. Question 3 of the local classrooms survey states, “The amount of guidelines provided to me by my school is....”

Table 12

Unpaired t-test for Responses to Local Standards Question 3 by Educational Background

<b>Educational Background</b>	<b>t-Value</b>	<b>P-value</b>
BA, BA+	-.474	.6410
BA, MA	-.654	.5218
BA, MA+	-.829	.4209
BA+, MA	.057	.9553
BA+, MA+	-.287	.7787
MA, MA+	-.337	.7424

\* $p < .05$

Experienced teachers agreed that the amount of guidelines provided by their schools is adequate. Of the surveyed teachers, four participants have been teaching for



21 or more years. One hundred percent of these participants feel that the guidelines provided by their school are adequate (see Table 13). Teachers who have been teaching for fewer years are more divided in their responses to the survey item, but 80% of all participants believe the guidelines provided by their school are adequate. Teachers with the least amount of teaching experience (less than 11 years) were the only participants who believed that they have been given too many guidelines. Table 14 shows the results of a statistical comparison between groups based on total years of teaching. No significant differences in responses to the survey item were noted.

Table 13

Responses to Local Standards Question 3 by Total Years Teaching Experience

<b>Total Years Teaching</b>	<b>Too Few</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Too Many</b>	<b>Total</b>
1-3	10% (1)	80% (8)	10% (1)	100% (10)
4-6	0	70% (7)	30% (3)	100% (10)
7-10	0	86% (6)	14% (1)	100% (7)
11-20	25% (1)	75% (3)	0	100% (4)
21-30	0	100% (2)	0	100% (2)
31+	0	100% (2)	0	100% (2)
All	6% (2)	80% (28)	14% (5)	100% (35)

Note. Question 3 of the local classrooms survey states, “The amount of guidelines provided to me by my school is...”

Table 14

Unpaired t-test for Responses to Local Standards Question 3 by Total Years TeachingExperience

<b>Total Years Teaching</b>	<b>t-Value</b>	<b>P-value</b>
1-3, 10-20	.883	.3947
1-3, 4-6	-1.406	.1769
1-3, 7-10	-.664	.5166
10-20, 20-30	-.667	.5415
10-20, 30+	-.667	.5415
10-20, 4-6	-1.908	.0807
10-20, 7-10	-1.483	.1722
20-30, 4-6	-.845	.4178
20-30, 7-10	-.509	.6263
30+, 4-6	-.845	.4178
30+, 7-10	-.509	.6263
4-6, 7-10	.718	.4837

\* $p < .05$ 

Those who are in favor of national standards believe that a national set of standards would benefit students who change schools frequently. In the targeted school system, 80% of surveyed teachers agreed that national standards would benefit students who change schools frequently (see Table 15). Two surveyed teachers have held teaching positions in four states, and both agreed that national standards will be helpful for students who change schools frequently. Teachers who have held teaching positions in one or two states were slightly less certain, with 11% undecided about the impact that national standards would have on transient students. Only 9% of the sample disagreed with the survey item. Although there appears to be a relationship between the number of states where teaching positions have been held and the response to the survey item, no significant differences were observed (see Table 16).

Table 15

Responses to Question 9 According to Number of States where Teaching Positions Have Been Held

Number of states where teaching positions have been held	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Total
1	84% (20)	8% (2)	8% (2)	100% (24)
2	67% (4)	33% (2)	0	100% (6)
3	75% (3)	0	25% (1)	100% (4)
4	100% (2)	0	0	100% (2)
All	80% (29)	11% (4)	9% (3)	100% (36)

Note. Question 9 of the national standards survey states, “National standards would benefit students who change schools frequently.”

Table 16

Unpaired t-test for Responses to Question 9 According to Number of States where Teaching Positions Have Been Held

Number of states where teaching positions have been held	t-Value	P-value
1, 2	.308	.7603
1, 3	.696	.4926
1, 4	-.571	.5735
2, 3	.351	.7348
2, 4	-.866	.4198
3, 4	-.667	.5415

\* $p < .05$



## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The problem was to evaluate the preset attitudes of teachers towards national standards, prior to their implementation in local classrooms. Researcher-generated survey results were used to identify the teachers' current understanding of standards, including local, state, and national, and to examine the positive and/or negative effects that these teachers believe will occur as a result of implementing national standards in local classrooms.

Many of the surveyed teachers in the targeted school system are already familiar with standards. Of the participants in this study, only 6% reported having no copies of standards in their classrooms. Most teachers (80%) believe that the standards provided to them are adequate for their needs. Of the surveyed teachers, 78% stated that they have received some type of training on local standards. These factors will help smooth the transition to national standards.

It was determined that most teachers are aware that national standards are being developed in all subject areas. Educational background appears to be a factor, as all the teachers with a Master's degree plus additional graduate hours were aware of the national standards. Some teachers (11%) apparently did not understand either the question regarding their knowledge or they were unsure of their knowledge of standards.

Most teachers surveyed were willing to implement national standards in their classroom. No teachers were opposed to the idea, but 31% were undecided. Older

teachers were more likely to be undecided, and younger teachers (under age 40) were very willing to implement national standards in their classrooms.

Surveyed teachers overwhelmingly agreed that national standards will benefit students who change schools frequently. Teachers are not sure of the impact that national standards would have on test scores or student drop out rates. When asked if test scores would change as a result of national standards, 11% of teachers agreed that they would not change, and 58% were undecided. Most teachers (83%) were undecided about the impact that national standards would have on the student drop out rate.

Teachers in the targeted school system were very willing to attend staff development. Of the teachers surveyed, 86% agreed that professional development about national standards would be a benefit to them. Participants also believed that teachers should be developing standards, with 94% agreeing that national standards should be developed by practicing school teachers who are considered experts in their field.

The hypothesis stated "there will be no significant relationship between the current classroom implementation of local or state standards and the preset attitudes of teachers toward national standards." Although data analysis shows relationships between groups of teachers, significant differences were not found. As a result, the hypothesis cannot be rejected.

### Conclusions

Educators are often searching for ways to improve teaching and learning in the United States. The formation of national standards, like any change, will not solve all problems. In fact, if teachers do not have positive attitudes toward these new standards,

the time spent on developing and implementing standards may not encourage the use of those standards.

The participants in this survey responded favorably overall to the standards movement. The survey results reveal that most teachers are content with the amount of guidelines that have been provided to them by their school. Additionally, most teachers surveyed are aware that national standards are being developed, and they are willing to implement the new standards in their classrooms.

Implementing national standards may be somewhat more difficult for seasoned teachers who have seen an abundance of change during their careers. However, most teachers in the targeted school system are accustomed to using standards as a basis for their lessons. Because standards are already in place in this school system, some adjustments and slow changes to the existing standards will allow these educators time to get used to national standards.

### Recommendations

Implementation of national standards must begin with appropriate training. It would be helpful to provide a background of the standards movement in order to help teachers understand the expected benefits of national standards. Further staff development could focus on the similarities between national standards and state and local standards, which are already familiar to most teachers in the targeted system.

Administrators must be mindful of seasoned teachers, understanding that these teachers have seen many changes throughout their careers and may resent being faced with yet another set of standards. Younger teachers, on the other hand, must be exposed to new ideas and teaching strategies so that they will remain open to the necessary



changes. Once national standards are implemented, teams of teachers must be empowered to select appropriate textbooks and resources that will support the instructional goals. Sample lesson plans and activity guides would be appreciated by teachers, especially those who are not yet comfortable with the standards. It is recommended that staff development be provided to aid teachers in creating instructional timelines, thus enabling their students to master set standards during the term.

As with any instructional practice, national standards will be accompanied by some kind of assessment system. Teachers must be made aware of the type of assessment that will be used. Training should focus on the format of the assessment and should provide some examples of questions or activities that will be included. Administrators must be sure to focus mostly on the instructional practices which will enable the standards to be met, instead of placing an emphasis on assessments.

### Implications for Further Research

National standards will slowly replace local and state standards in many school systems. Assessments will be an important indicator as to the success or failure of these standards. Further research on the types of assessments used will be helpful in determining the effectiveness of such assessments.

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## REFERENCES

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## APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Interview schedule  
Appendix 2: Interview schedule  
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## **APPENDIX A Informed Consent**

### **Information for Participation in a Research Study**

#### **Austin Peay State University**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Please read the following material carefully. It describes the purpose of the study, the procedures to be used, risks and benefits of participation, and what will happen to the information that is collected from you. You may ask the researchers listed below about this study or you may call the Office of Grants and Sponsored Research, Box 4517, Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tn 37044, (931) 221-7881 with questions about the rights of research participants.

1. The purpose of this study is to determine the attitudes of teachers towards local/state standards being implemented in local classrooms, and to learn what teachers know about the national standards which are being developed.
2. The procedure includes filling out a demographic survey with limited personal information, which will not include your name or your school's name. You will also be given two surveys about national, state, and local standards. The estimated time needed to complete the packet is twenty minutes. When the information is completed, you will send the surveys back using the school courier. Please do not write your name or your school's name on any part of the survey packet.
3. Your participation is completely voluntary. There are no known risks for participating in this study. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during the study, you may discontinue your participation.
4. Teachers will benefit from this study by evaluating the use of standards in local classrooms. The school system will benefit from the study as they will learn about the attitudes and opinions of teachers towards standards. This will help administrators plan effective training sessions for the future.
5. The data collected will be analyzed and stored by the researcher for future research. It may be used for purposes of instruction and educational publication. Since your responses are anonymous, it will be impossible to identify the participants of this study. If you would like a summary of the findings of this study, please contact Karen Anderson or Dr. Ann Harris.
6. You may terminate your participation at any time without penalty.
7. Completion and return of the surveys constitutes your informed consent to participate in this project.



**Karen Anderson**  
**Graduate Student in Education**  
**3466 Hunters Ridge**  
**Woodlawn, TN 37191**  
**(931) 648-4162**

**Dr. Ann Harris**  
**Department of Education**  
**Austin Peay State University**  
**Clarksville, TN 37044**  
**(931) 221-7757**

**APPENDIX B**  
**Demographic Survey**

Place an "X" to the left of the appropriate response.

1. ☐ Male  
☐ Female

2. Age:  
☐ 20-29  
☐ 30-39  
☐ 40-49  
☐ 50-59  
☐ 60-69

3. Educational Background:

☐ BA  
☐ BA+  
☐ MA  
☐ MA+  
☐ Ed.S  
☐ Ed.D

4. Total Years Teaching (include current year)

☐ 1-3  
☐ 4-6  
☐ 7-10  
☐ 11-20  
☐ 21-30  
☐ 31+

5. Number of students in classroom (or average class size):

☐ Less than 20  
☐ 21-25  
☐ 26-30  
☐ 30+

6. Number of states (including Tennessee) where you have held teaching positions:

☐ 1  
☐ 2  
☐ 3  
☐ 4  
☐ 5  
☐ 6 or more

**APPENDIX C**  
**Survey: National Standards**

Please indicate your response to each statement by circling the appropriate letter.

**A- Agree**  
**U- Undecided**  
**D- Disagree**

1. I am aware that national standards are being developed in all subject areas.

A      U      D

2. National standards should be developed by practicing school teachers who are considered experts in their field.

A      U      D

3. I would benefit from attending staff development in order to become familiar with national standards.

A      U      D

4. National standards would improve achievement levels of all students in every subject area.

A      U      D

5. I am willing to implement national standards in my classroom.

A      U      D

6. If national standards were implemented in my school system, the student drop out rate would increase.

A      U      D



7. Professional development regarding national standards would not be necessary at my school.

A      U      D

8. I do not wish to implement national standards in my classroom.

A      U      D

9. National standards would benefit students who change schools frequently.

A      U      D

10. Test scores would probably not change as a result of national standards.

A      U      D

## APPENDIX D

### Survey: Local Standards

Please respond to the following statements concerning standards in local classrooms by placing a check to the left of the appropriate answer.

1. My classroom has copies of the following standards:

- ☐ Local standards
- ☐ State standards
- ☐ Other (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ None

2. I refer to the standards in my classroom:

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Other (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_

3. The amount of guidelines provided to me by my school is:

- ☐ Too few standards
- ☐ An adequate amount of standards
- ☐ Too many standards

4. Administrators at my school check teachers' lesson plans for objectives that match standards on a regular basis.

- ☐ True
- ☐ False
- ☐ Uncertain

5. I have received training on local standards:  
(Please check all that apply)

- ☐ During staff development at my school
- ☐ At conferences
- ☐ In college courses
- ☐ Other (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ None

6. I have seen copies of national standards for learning in the following subject areas:  
(Please check all that apply)

☐ Art  
☐ Language Arts  
☐ Math  
☐ Music  
☐ Science  
☐ Social Studies  
☐ Other (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ None

7. From the choices below, my first concern when beginning a new unit with my students is:

☐ Available Library resources  
☐ Students' past test scores  
☐ State or local standards  
☐ textbooks  
☐ Other (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_

8. When writing lesson plans, my objectives are taken mostly from:

☐ Internet  
☐ Local standards  
☐ State standards  
☐ Textbooks  
☐ Other (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ None

9. When students first begin in my class, they have usually:

☐ Mastered all standards for the previous grade level or subject area  
☐ Mastered a large percentage of standards for the previous grade level or subject area.  
☐ Mastered very few standards for the previous grade level or subject area  
☐ Unsure

10. Without standards, the instruction that I provide would be:

☐ Better than the instruction I currently provide  
☐ About the same  
☐ Worse than the instruction I currently provide  
☐ Unsure



11. Considering the subject(s) that you teach, please answer the following questions. If you do not teach a listed subject, please check "not applicable" for that subject area.

A. I feel that the standards in place for Fine Arts are:

- ☐ Not challenging enough for my students
- ☐ Developmentally appropriate
- ☐ Very difficult for students to achieve
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Not applicable

B. I feel that the standards in place for Foreign Language are:

- ☐ Not challenging enough for my students
- ☐ Developmentally appropriate
- ☐ Very difficult for students to achieve
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Not applicable

C. I feel that the standards in place for Language Arts are:

- ☐ Not challenging enough for my students
- ☐ Developmentally appropriate
- ☐ Very difficult for students to achieve
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Not applicable

D. I feel that the standards in place for Mathematics are:

- ☐ Not challenging enough for my students
- ☐ Developmentally appropriate
- ☐ Very difficult for students to achieve
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Not applicable

E. I feel that the standards in place for Reading are:

- ☐ Not challenging enough for my students
- ☐ Developmentally appropriate
- ☐ Very difficult for students to achieve
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Not applicable

F. I feel that the standards in place for Science are:

- ☐ Not challenging enough for my students
- ☐ Developmentally appropriate
- ☐ Very difficult for students to achieve
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Not applicable

G. I feel that the standards in place for Social Studies are:

- ☐ Not challenging enough for my students
- ☐ Developmentally appropriate
- ☐ Very difficult for students to achieve
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Not applicable

H. I feel that the standards in place for Technology are:

- ☐ Not challenging enough for my students
- ☐ Developmentally appropriate
- ☐ Very difficult for students to achieve
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Not applicable

APPENDIX E  
Letter of Consent (APSU)

Austin Peay State University  
Institutional Review Board

44

March 3, 2000

Karen Anderson  
College of Education  
Austin Peay State University  
Clarksville, TN 37044

RE: Your application dated March 3, 2000 regarding study number 00-037: Teachers' Attitudes Towards National Standards in Local Classrooms (Austin Peay State University)

Dear Ms. Anderson:

Thank you for your response to requests from a prior review of your application for the new study listed above. This is to confirm that your application is now fully approved. The protocol is approved through one calendar year. You must obtain informed consent from all subjects; however, signed written consent is not required. This approval is subject to APSU Policies and Procedures governing human subjects research.

You are granted permission to conduct your study as most recently described effective immediately. The study is subject to continuing review on or before February 18, 2001, unless closed before that date.

Please note that any changes to the study as approved must be promptly reported and approved. Some changes may be approved by expedited review; others require full board review. Contact Sarah Lundin-Schiller or me (931-221-7881; fax 931-221-7304; email: grants@apsu.edu) if you have any questions or require further information.

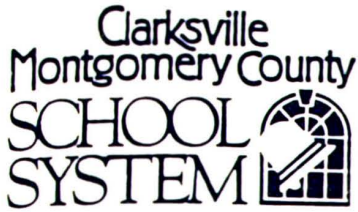
Sincerely,



Linda S. Freed  
Manager, Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs



APPENDIX F  
Letter of Consent (CMCSS)



Frank M. Hodgson, Ed.D.  
 Director of Instructional Support  
 Research and Development

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Board of Education	621 Gracey Avenue	Clarksville, Tennessee 37040
931-920-7813	Fax: 931-920-9813	email: HodgsonF@ten-nash.ten.k12.tn.us

February 22, 2000

Ms. Karen Anderson  
 3466 Hunters Ridge  
 Woodlawn, TN 37191

Dear Ms. Anderson:

Your research, survey and/or research project titled "**Teachers' Attitudes Towards National Standards in Local Classrooms.**" has been approved by the research committee. The date of approval was **February 21, 2000**.

Now that you have approval from the research committee, you may contact the principals for approval. According to Board Policy File IFA, the principal has the final authority and responsibility for approving or disapproving research conducted in his/her building.

Please read the Research Policy and Procedures Handbook for all information concerning research in the Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools.

If you have questions, please call my office at (931) 920-7813.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank M. Hodgson".

Frank M. Hodgson, Chairman  
 Research Committee

Attachments: 2

cc: Research Committee  
 File

# APPENDIX G

## Composition of the Sample

### Analysis of Respondents

#### 1. Sex

Male	14%	(5)
Female	86%	(31)

#### 2. Age

20-29	28%	(10)
30-39	46%	(16)
40-49	20%	(7)
50-59	6%	(2)
60-69	0	(0)

#### 3. Educational background

BA	31%	(11)
BA+	26%	(9)
MA	26%	(9)
MA+	14%	(5)
Ed.S	3%	(1)
Ed.D	0	(0)

#### 4. Total years teaching (Including current year)

1-3	28%	(10)
4-6	28%	(10)
7-10	19%	(7)
11-20	13%	(5)
21-30	6%	(2)
31+	6%	(2)

#### 5. Number of students in classroom (or average class size).

Less than 20	31%	(11)
21-25	39%	(14)
26-30	11%	(4)
31+	19%	(7)

#### 6. Number of states (including Tennessee) where you have held teaching positions.

1	67%	(24)
2	17%	(6)
3	11%	(4)
4	5%	(2)
5	9	(0)
6 or more	0	(0)

## APPENDIX H

### Analysis : National Standards

1. I am aware that national standards are being developed in all subject areas.
 

Agree	75%	(27)
Undecided	11%	(4)
Disagree	14%	(6)
  
2. National standards should be developed by practicing school teachers who are considered experts in their field.
 

Agree	94%	(34)
Undecided	0%	(0)
Disagree	6%	(2)
  
3. I would benefit from attending staff development in order to become familiar with national standards.
 

Agree	86%	(31)
Undecided	8%	(3)
Disagree	6%	(2)
  
4. National standards would improve achievement levels of all students in every subject area.
 

Agree	36%	(13)
Undecided	39%	(14)
Disagree	25%	(9)
  
5. I am willing to implement national standards in my classroom.
 

Agree	69%	(25)
Undecided	0%	(0)
Disagree	31%	(11)
  
6. If national standards were implemented in my school system, the student drop out rate would increase.
 

Agree	6%	(2)
Undecided	83%	(30)
Disagree	11%	(4)
  
7. Professional development regarding national standards would not be necessary at my school.
 

Agree	3%	(1)
Undecided	28%	(10)
Disagree	69%	(25)



8. I do not wish to implement national standards in my classroom.

Agree	6%	(2)
Undecided	25%	(9)
Disagree	69%	(25)

9. National standards would benefit students who change schools frequently.

Agree	81%	(29)
Undecided	11%	(4)
Disagree	8%	(3)

10. Test scores would probably not change as a result of national standards.

Agree	11%	(4)
Undecided	58%	(21)
Disagree	31%	(11)

# APPENDIX I

## Analysis: Local Standards

1. My classroom has copies of the following standards:

Local standards	69%	(25)
State standards	89%	(32)
Other	11%	(4)
None	6%	(2)

1. I refer to the standards in my classroom:

Daily	14%	(5)
Weekly	22%	(8)
Monthly	25%	(9)
Never	14%	(5)
Other	25%	(9)

2. The amount of guidelines provided to me by my school is:

Too few standards	6%	(2)
An adequate amount of standards	80%	(28)
Too many standards	14%	(5)

3. Administrators at my school check teachers' lesson plans for objectives that match standards on a regular basis.

True	53%	(19)
False	6%	(2)
Uncertain	42%	(15)

4. I have received training on local standards:  
(Please check all that apply)

During staff development at my school	50%	(18)
At conferences	33%	(12)
In college courses	36%	(13)
Other	6%	(2)
None	22%	(8)

5. I have seen copies of national standards for learning in the following subject areas:

(Please check all that apply)

Art	14%	(5)
Language Arts	28%	(10)
Math	44%	(16)
Music	17%	(6)
Science	25%	(9)
Social Studies	17%	(6)
Other	0%	(0)
None	39%	(14)

6. From the choices below, my first concern when beginning a new unit with my students is:

Available Library resources	15%	(5)
Students' past test scores	19%	(7)
State or local standards	44%	(16)
Textbooks	11%	(4)
Other	11%	(4)

7. When writing lesson plans, my objectives are taken mostly from:

Internet	3%	(1)
Local standards	22%	(8)
State standards	28%	(10)
Textbooks	36%	(13)
Other	11%	(4)
None	0%	(0)

8. When students first begin in my class, they have usually:

Mastered all standards for the previous grade level or subject area	0%	(0)
Mastered a large percentage of standards for the previous grade level or subject area.	47%	(17)
Mastered very few standards for the previous grade level or subject area	28%	(10)
Unsure	25%	(9)

9. Without standards, the instruction that I provide would be:

Better than the instruction I currently provide	0%	(0)
About the same	64%	(23)
Worse than the instruction I currently provide	22%	(8)
Unsure	14%	(5)

10. Considering the subject(s) that you teach, please answer the following questions.  
If you do not teach a listed subject, please check "not applicable" for that subject area.

A. I feel that the standards in place for Fine Arts are:

Not challenging enough for my students	0%	(0)
Developmentally appropriate	14%	(5)
Very difficult for students to achieve	11%	(4)
Unsure	14%	(5)
Not applicable	61%	(22)

B. I feel that the standards in place for Foreign Language are:

Not challenging enough for my students	3%	(1)
Developmentally appropriate	3%	(1)
Very difficult for students to achieve	0%	(0)
Unsure	11%	(4)
Not applicable	83%	(30)

C. I feel that the standards in place for Language Arts are:

Not challenging enough for my students	3%	(1)
Developmentally appropriate	39%	(14)
Very difficult for students to achieve	14%	(5)
Unsure	8%	(3)
Not applicable	36%	(13)

D. I feel that the standards in place for Mathematics are:

Not challenging enough for my students	3%	(1)
Developmentally appropriate	36%	(13)
Very difficult for students to achieve	19%	(7)
Unsure	3%	(1)
Not applicable	39%	(14)

E. I feel that the standards in place for Reading are:

Not challenging enough for my students	3%	(1)
Developmentally appropriate	42%	(15)
Very difficult for students to achieve	17%	(6)
Unsure	5%	(2)
Not applicable	33%	(12)



F. I feel that the standards in place for Science are:

Not challenging enough for my students	0%	(0)
Developmentally appropriate	39%	(14)
Very difficult for students to achieve	6%	(2)
Unsure	11%	(4)
Not applicable	44%	(16)

G. I feel that the standards in place for Social Studies are:

Not challenging enough for my students	6%	(2)
Developmentally appropriate	44%	(16)
Very difficult for students to achieve	0%	(0)
Unsure	8%	(3)
Not applicable	42%	(15)

H. I feel that the standards in place for Technology are:

Not challenging enough for my students	8%	(3)
Developmentally appropriate	28%	(10)
Very difficult for students to achieve	6%	(2)
Unsure	19%	(7)
Not applicable	39%	(14)

## VITA

Karen Suzanne Sigmon Anderson was born in Stone Mountain, Georgia, on February 7, 1972. She attended schools in Norcross, Georgia, and Roanoke, Virginia, before entering Emory and Henry College in 1990. In 1994, Karen graduated from Emory and Henry with a degree in Interdisciplinary English and teacher certification in grades NK-8. After teaching sixth grade in Cumberland County, Virginia, Karen moved to Columbus, Georgia, and began work on a Masters' Degree. Karen taught pre-kindergarten for Georgia's lottery-funded program while completing a Master's Degree in Administration and Supervision from Columbus State University.

In the fall of 1997, Karen moved to Clarksville, Tennessee, where she began teaching first grade at Kenwood Elementary School. She entered Austin Peay State University's Educational Specialist program in August, 1997. Karen has recently completed her third year of teaching at Kenwood Elementary School.