

Tensions in Russia's Educational Standardization Project (Literature Curriculum Focus)

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This article examines the implementation of Russia's national project for a unified educational space, focusing on the pivotal roles of Federal Basic General Education Programs (FOPs) and Federal State Educational Standards (FGOS). Through a detailed analysis of recent revisions to the literature curriculum standards (FGOS), the study identifies two core policy objectives driving standardization: reinforcing state-aligned traditional values (patriotism, national identity, historical memory) and enhancing educational efficiency and equity (reducing teacher/student workload, bridging regional disparities). However, the analysis reveals significant tensions in practice. Curriculum restructuring—prioritizing Russian classics, multi-ethnic literature, and war narratives while reducing foreign (especially Western) contemporary works—faces challenges including misalignment with the national university entrance exam (EGE) requirements, pedagogical difficulties in teaching lengthy canonical texts (e.g., *War and Peace*), and ideological debates surrounding specific mandated authors (e.g., Fadeev). Furthermore, the conspicuous absence of non-Western literature, despite the official “Pivot to the East” strategy, highlights a gap between geopolitical rhetoric and curricular content. The Russian case demonstrates the complex interplay between centralized educational standardization, cultural-political objectives, and the practical realities of classroom implementation in a globalized context.

Keywords: educational standardization, national curriculum policy, literature education, traditional values, Russia

Introduction: The Drive for Educational Unification

In recent years, the Russian Federation has prioritized the construction of a unified educational space (Кашаев & Гукаленко, 2024; Иванова & Иванов, 2020). On September 24, 2022, President Vladimir Putin signed Federal Law No. 371-FZ “On Amending Article 1 of the Federal Law ‘On Education in the Russian Federation’ and the Federal Law ‘On Mandatory Requirements in the Russian Federation’”¹, mandating the implementation of unified educational standards and textbook systems in general education institutions. Consequently, the compilation of state-unified history textbooks commenced in December 2022. New editions of *Russian History* and *General History* were introduced for Grades 10-11 in selected secondary schools by September 1, 2023. History textbooks for Grades 5-9 are planned for nationwide adoption by September 2025.² On November 26, 2024, Minister of Education Sergey Kravtsov announced that the compilation of state-unified

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¹ Федеральный закон от 09.02.2007г. №17-ФЗ. О внесении изменений в Закон Российской Федерации Об образовании и Федеральный закон О высшем и послевузовском профессиональном образовании в части проведения единого государственного экзамена.

² Новые учебники истории Мединского для 5-9-х классов примечат в сентябре [EB/OL]. (2024-09-02) [2025-4-15]. <https://www.vedomosti.ru/society/articles/2024/09/02/1059273-novie-uchebniki-istorii-medinskogo-dlya-59-h-klassov-primenyat-v-sentyabre>.

textbooks for all subjects in Russian primary and secondary schools is expected to be completed by 2029.³

This policy shift responds to Russia's international standing and domestic realities. As the direct guidelines for unified textbook development, Federal Basic General Education Programs (FOPs) and Federal State Educational Standards (FGOS) constitute critical dimensions for analyzing Russia's unified educational space. This study examines revisions to the FGOS (particularly in literature) to identify new trends in this endeavor.

FOPs and FGOS: Dual Engines of Standardization

FOPs: From Institutional Autonomy to Centralized Mandate

The nationwide implementation of FOPs in September 2023 is not entirely novel, tracing its origins to practices between 1923-1927. Prior to this, educational institutions retained autonomy in developing their educational programs within the FGOS framework, as stipulated in the *Procedure for Organizing and Implementing Educational Activities for Basic General Education Programs* (Order of the Ministry of Education No. 115, March 22, 2021)⁴. However, amendments to the *Law on Education* via Federal Law No. 371-FZ (September 24, 2022)⁵ abolished this autonomy. Article 3(4) mandated that all educational programs align with the FOPs by September 1, 2023.

FOPs serve as instructional guides, operationalizing FGOS requirements by specifying *how to organize teaching, resource allocation, and implementation timelines*. Crucially, FOP development is intrinsically linked to FGOS:

(1) FOPs must be formulated *based on* FGOS (Order No. 115, 2021)⁶.

(2) FGOS explicitly dictates FOP implementation conditions: (1) systemic requirements, (2) material-technical and methodological support, (3) psycho-pedagogical, personnel, and financial conditions.

Thus, FOPs and FGOS now function as unified policy instruments, with FGOS providing the direct foundation for constructing the unified educational space.

FGOS Evolution: Three Generations of Reform

Russian general education standards have evolved through distinct phases (Княгинина, 2020):

(1) Early Standardization (Pre-2004): The 1992 *Law on Education* introduced "State Educational Standards" defining minimum core content, student workload limits, and graduate competency levels. Standards expanded to vocational education (1993-1996). The 1993 Constitution first mentioned "Federal State Educational Standards" (FGOS), but the term saw no practical use until 2007.

(2) First-Generation FGOS (2004): The *FGOS for General Education* was enacted, incorporating the *Basic Curriculum* still used today.⁷

³ Кравцов рассказал, когда в школах появятся единые госучебники [EB/OL]. (2024-11-26) [2025-4-15]. <https://ria.ru/20241126/uchebniki-1985843113.html?ysclid=maklm251jb502003095>.

⁴ Приказ Министерства просвещения РФ от 22 марта 2021 г. № 115 "Об утверждении Порядка организации и осуществления образовательной деятельности по основным общеобразовательным программам-образовательным программам начального общего, основного общего и среднего общего образования" [EB/OL]. [2025-4-15] <https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/400563548/>.

⁵ Федеральный закон от 24.09.2022 г. № 371-ФЗ.

⁶ Приказ Министерства просвещения РФ от 22 марта 2021 г. № 115 "Об утверждении Порядка организации и осуществления образовательной деятельности по основным общеобразовательным программам - образовательным программам начального общего, основного общего и среднего общего образования" [EB/OL]. [2025-4-15] <https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/400563548/>.

⁷ Приказ Минобразования РФ от 05.03.2004г. № 1089 Об утверждении федерального компонента государственных образовательных стандартов начального общего, основного общего и среднего (полного) общего образования.

(3) Fundamental Shift (2007 onwards): The 2007 *Law on Education* abolished the “elements of educational standards”, consolidating under “FGOS”. Its objectives shifted to: ensuring educational space unity and program continuity; serving as the basis for evaluating graduate attainment. Crucially, FGOS “no longer prescribed specific content, workload, or attainment levels.” Instead, it defined: program structure, component ratios/credit hours, implementation conditions (staffing, finance, infrastructure), and learning outcomes. The 2007 law also mandated the nationwide Unified State Exam (USE) from 2009.

(4) Second & Third Generations: Second-generation FGOS for general education was adopted (2009-2012)⁸⁹. The 2012 *Law on Education* retained the 2007 framework but removed the “10-year renewal” clause and defined “educational quality” as alignment with FGOS¹⁰. Third-generation FGOS for all levels followed (2013-2017). The current third-generation FGOS for general education, enacted via Ministry Orders No. 992¹¹, 993¹², 1014 (November 16 & 23, 2022)¹³ and revised multiple times (2024-2025)¹⁴, is now in force.

Literature Curriculum Restructuring: A Case Study in Ideological Alignment

Value-Laden Explanatory Additions

Revisions to the FOPs (March 19, 2024) added explanatory clauses emphasizing literature's sociocultural role¹⁵:

(1) Clause 20.2.4: Literature plays a decisive role in shaping youth's spiritual character and moral values through emotional cultivation, cognitive development, and aesthetic capacity building. Its essence lies in cultural attributes: literary works, as vehicles of aesthetic cognition, present diverse human experiences through artistic imagery, fostering national identity and universal moral-aesthetic values.

(2) Clause 20.2.5: Literature education cultivates moral concepts (kindness, justice, honesty, patriotism) via studying Russian/world classics. Reader comprehension depends on age, psychological development, and life experience.

(3) Clauses 20.2.9 & 20.2.10.1: Develop belonging to national culture and respect for others; perfect personality based on spiritual-moral ideals; understand literature's function as a carrier of core national values, safeguarding cultural identity and unlocking Russian language potential; foster reverence for national classics to strengthen patriotism and cultural identity.

These additions frame literature as a tool for cultural sovereignty and ideological consolidation, aiming to resist external cultural influences and guide individual thought within a state-defined narrative.

⁸ Приказы Минобрнауки РФ от 06.10.2009г. №373.

⁹ Приказы Минобрнауки РФ от 17.12.2010г. №1897.

¹⁰ Приказы Минобрнауки РФ от 17.05.2012г. №413.

¹¹ Приказ Министерства просвещения Российской Федерации от 16.11.2022 № 992 Об утверждении федеральной образовательной программы начального общего образования.

¹² Приказ Министерства просвещения Российской Федерации от 16.11.2022 № 993 Об утверждении федеральной образовательной программы основного общего образования.

¹³ Приказ Министерства просвещения Российской Федерации от 23.11.2022 № 1014 Об утверждении федеральной образовательной программы среднего общего образования.

¹⁴ Нормативные документы [ЕВ/ОЛ]. [2025-4-16]. <https://edsoo.ru/normativnye-dokumenty/>.

¹⁵ Приказ Министерства просвещения Российской Федерации от 19.03.2024 № 171О внесении изменений в некоторые приказы Министерства просвещения Российской Федерации, касающиеся федеральных образовательных программ начального общего образования, основного общего образования и среднего общего образования.

Canon Reshaping: Strategic Additions and Omissions

Based on official FOP revisions and teacher discussions¹⁶, significant changes were made to the Grades 5-11 literature reading lists:

Table 1

Changes to the Literature Curriculum (Grades 5-11)

Grade	Added works/genres	Removed works/authors
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Russian prose: "Humans in War" (≥ 2); "Childhood" themes (≥ 2) - Russian adventure (1) - Poetry from RF ethnic groups (1) - Foreign fairy tales (1) - Foreign adventure (2) 	Simonov's <i>The Artilleryman's Son</i> ; Korolenko; Astafyev; Givargizov; Alomstam; Abgaryan
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Russian/foreign folk songs/epics (e.g., <i>Song of Roland</i>) - Russian prose on Great Patriotic War (GPW, post-1990s) (≥ 2) - Poetry from RF ethnic groups (e.g., Rasul Gamzatov) (≥ 2) - Modern Russian sci-fi (K. Bulychev) 	Poetry: Yevtushenko; Kushner; Levitansky; Okudzhava <i>The True Story of Father Frost</i> (Ch. "The Terrifying New Year 1942") Zhivalevsky; Pasternak <i>Time is Always Right</i> <i>Lederle May Calendar</i> Entire unit on foreign modern literature: J. K. Rowling (<i>Harry Potter</i>); Diana Wynne Jones
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 20th-21st Century Russian poetry (≥ 4 poems by ≥ 2 poets) 	Gamzatov; Okudzhava; Vysotsky Themes on generational relations/personal growth: Volkova <i>All on Camera</i> ; Mikheeva <i>Light Mountains</i> ; Ulf Stark <i>Can You Whistle, Johanna?</i>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early 20th Century poetry ("Man and Era" theme, ≥ 3 poems: Akhmatova; Mayakovsky; Tsvetaeva; etc.) - Late 20th-21st Century Russian prose (≥ 2) & poetry (≥ 3) 	Late 20th-21st Century Russian/foreign prose on "Personal Moral Choice" (J. D. Salinger; Katherine Paterson; Bel Kaufman) Gamzatov; Okudzhava; Vysotsky
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pushkin & Lermontov poetry/prose (≥ 5 each, e.g., <i>The Bronze Horseman</i>; <i>Eugene Onegin</i>; <i>A Hero of Our Time</i>) 	19th Century Russian prose unit (1 text) Pogorelsky <i>Lafertovskaya Poppy Grandma</i> ; Bestuzhev-Marlinsky <i>The Clock and the Mirror</i> ; Herzen <i>Who is to Blame?</i>
11	Advanced Track Added: Fadeev <i>The Young Guard</i> ; Bondarev <i>Hot Snow</i> ; Simonov <i>The Artilleryman's Son</i> ; N. Ostrovsky <i>How the Steel Was Tempered</i> ; A. Tolstoy <i>Russian Character</i> ; Smirnov <i>Brest Fortress</i> ; Bogomolov <i>August '44</i> ; Prilepin <i>White Square</i> ; B. Brecht <i>Mother Courage and Her Children</i>	Basic Track Removed: Abramov <i>Brothers and Sisters</i> ; Aitmatov <i>The White Ship</i> ; Belov <i>Hunting Three Wolves</i> ; Iskander <i>The Rabbit and the Boa Constrictor</i> ; Kazakov <i>You Wept in Your Sleep</i> ; Strugatsky <i>Roadside Picnic</i> ; Trifonov <i>The House on the Embankment</i> ; Vladimov <i>Faithful Ruslan</i> ; Pelevin <i>The Life of Insects</i> ; Shalamov <i>Kolyma Tales</i> ; Dragunskaya <i>Red-Headed Play</i> ; E. M. Remarque <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i> ; A. Camus <i>The Stranger</i> ; F. Kafka <i>The Metamorphosis</i> ; G. Orwell <i>1984</i> ; A. Huxley <i>Brave New World</i>

Core Adjustment Strategies

↑ Russian Classics: Pushkin, Lermontov emphasized; mandatory long epics retained (e.g., *War and Peace*, *Quiet Flows the Don*).

↑ Multi-ethnic Literature: Increased representation (e.g., Gamzatov's Dagestani poetry).

↑ War Narratives: Added/modern GPW prose; Soviet/Russian wartime classics reinforced in Grade 11 advanced track.

¹⁶ Презентация "Изменения в ФОП ООО по литературе 2024" [EB/OL]. (2024-09-12) [2025-4-18]. <https://infourok.ru/prezentatsiya-izmeneniya-v-fop-ooo-po-literature-2024-7291404.html?ysclid=maqpbuqwli884026854>; Изменения в ФОП по литературе в 2024-2025 учебном году [EB/OL]. (2024-08-29) [2025-4-18] <https://rogovtseva-sch8-schel.edumsko.ru/articles/post/3512954>.

↓ Foreign Contemporary Works: Significant reduction, especially Western post-1950s literature (e.g., Salinger, Rowling, Camus, Orwell removed).

↓ Selected Soviet/Russian Texts: Works deemed ideologically complex or thematically misaligned removed (e.g., Okudzhava, Vysotsky, Trifonov, Shalamov).

This restructuring aims to: (1) strengthen historical continuity and national narrative; (2) foster collective memory and resilience; (3) cultivate patriotism and cultural identity. The inclusion of Brecht's *Mother Courage* suggests nuanced engagement with war's complexity while maintaining a focus on national priorities.

Tensions Between Policy Goals and Implementation Realities

Institutionalizing Traditional Values: Policy Success

The *State Policy on Preserving and Strengthening Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values* (November 9, 2022)¹⁷ defined core values: life, dignity, rights, patriotism, civic duty, family, labor, spirituality, humanism, justice, collectivism, historical memory, national unity. The literature curriculum demonstrably reinforces these:

(1) Patriotism & Civic Identity: Explicitly stated in FOP learning outcomes; increased classic Russian literature exposure.

(2) Historical Memory: GPW literature prioritized across grades; Soviet-era heroic narratives retained/added (e.g., *How the Steel Was Tempered*).

(3) National Unity: Incorporation of ethnic minority literature (e.g., Dagestan poetry) balances cultural diversity with overarching state identity.

Unresolved Contradictions: Implementation Challenges

Despite policy intent, significant tensions persist.

(1) Misalignment with USE (national exam). Teachers argue that removed authors (e.g., Astafyev, Korolenko) and themes (e.g., generational conflict, moral choice) frequently appear in USE essay prompts, creating a disconnect between curriculum and assessment.¹⁸

(2) Pedagogical burden of lengthy texts. The Samara Regional Education Development Center's 2024 report highlights the infeasibility of teaching massive classics like *Quiet Flows the Don* (~2000 pages). Full reading overloads students; abridged versions distort meaning. This contradicts the workload reduction goal.¹⁹

(3) Ideological legitimacy debates. Educators question mandated texts like Fadeev's *The Young Guard* due to: (a) dated ideological language; (b) questions about historical accuracy stemming from the author's revisions and political persecution; (c) misalignment with contemporary values. Teaching such texts *increases* teacher burden in contextualization.²⁰

(4) "Pivot to the east" rhetoric vs. curricular reality. Despite the foreign policy strategy and Russian Academy of Sciences critiques of Eurocentrism, zero non-Western authors (especially Asian) appear in the

¹⁷ Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 09.11.2022 г. № 809.

¹⁸ Изменения в литературе: что нового в учебной программе 2024/2025 года [EB/OL]. (2024-09-02). [2025-4-19]. https://interneturok.ru/blog/uchebnye_voprosy/izmeneniya_v_literature?ysclid=maqm0jxtwq39251721.

¹⁹ Доклад "Изменения в преподавании литературы в 2024-2025 учебном году". [EB/OL]. (2024-09-12) [2025-4-19]. https://урок.рф/library/izmeneniya_v_prepodavanii_literaturi_v_20242025_uch_172935.html.

²⁰ Доклад "Изменения в преподавании литературы в 2024-2025 учебном году". [EB/OL]. (2024-09-12) [2025-4-19]. https://урок.рф/library/izmeneniya_v_prepodavanii_literaturi_v_20242025_uch_172935.html.

curriculum. This exposes a significant gap between geopolitical rhetoric and educational content.²¹

Conclusion: Sovereignty, Standardization, and Enduring Stalemates

Russia's drive for a unified educational space, operationalized through FOPs and FGOS, represents a significant project of educational sovereignty and cultural consolidation. The literature curriculum revisions serve as a potent tool for promoting state-defined traditional values, particularly patriotism, historical memory, and national identity, while attempting to streamline resource allocation and reduce workload.

However, the project faces inherent stalemates:

- (1) The tension between centralized ideological goals (reinforced via canon control) and the practical demands of pedagogy (text length, student engagement) and assessment (USE alignment) remains unresolved.
- (2) The conspicuous absence of non-Western literature undermines the "Pivot to the East" strategy, revealing a disconnection between foreign policy and domestic cultural-educational policy.
- (3) Attempts to reduce workload are paradoxically undermined by mandated ideologically-loaded texts requiring complex contextualization and by the sheer volume of canonical works. Russia's experience underscores the complex challenges of deploying educational standardization as a tool for cultural-political integration within a globalized context, where the pursuit of internal cohesion must constantly negotiate practical realities and external pressures.

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²¹ С новым ФГОСом! [ЕВ/ОЛ]. (2022-07-04) [2025-4-19]. https://zavtra.ru/blogs/s_novim_fgosom.