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About the Standards

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts, to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce.

The NGA Center and CCSSO received initial feedback on the draft standards from national organizations representing, but not limited to, teachers, postsecondary educators (including community colleges), civil rights groups, English language learners, and students with disabilities. Following the initial round of feedback, the draft standards were opened for public comment, receiving nearly 10,000 responses.

The standards are informed by the highest, most effective models from states across the country and countries around the world, and provide teachers and parents with a common understanding of what students are expected to learn. Consistent standards will provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live.

These standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs. The standards:

- Are aligned with college and work expectations;
- Are clear, understandable and consistent;
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- Are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- Are evidence-based.

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Key Points In English Language Arts

Reading

- The standards establish a "staircase" of increasing complexity in what students must be able to read so that all students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading no later than the end of high school. The standards also require the progressive development of reading comprehension so that students advancing through the grades are able to gain more from whatever they read.
- Through reading a diverse array of classic and contemporary literature as well as challenging informational texts in a range of subjects, students are expected to build knowledge, gain insights, explore possibilities, and broaden their perspective. Because the standards are building blocks for successful classrooms, but recognize that teachers, school districts and states need to decide on appropriate curriculum, they intentionally do not offer a reading list. Instead, they offer numerous sample texts to help teachers prepare for the school year and allow parents and students to know what to expect at the beginning of the year.
- The standards mandate certain critical types of content for all students, including classic myths and stories from around the world, foundational U.S. documents, seminal works of American literature, and the writings of Shakespeare. The standards appropriately defer the many remaining decisions about what and how to teach to states, districts, and schools.

Writing

- The ability to write logical arguments based on substantive claims, sound reasoning, and relevant evidence is a cornerstone of the writing standards, with opinion writing—a basic form of argument—extending down into the earliest grades.
- Research—both short, focused projects (such as those commonly required in the workplace) and longer term in depth research—is emphasized throughout the standards but most prominently in the writing strand since a written analysis and presentation of findings is so often critical.
- Annotated samples of student writing accompany the standards and help establish adequate performance levels in writing arguments, informational/explanatory texts, and narratives in the various grades.

Speaking and Listening

- The standards require that students gain, evaluate, and present increasingly complex information, ideas, and evidence through listening and speaking as well as through media.
- An important focus of the speaking and listening standards is academic discussion in one-on-one, small-group, and whole-class settings. Formal presentations are one important way such talk occurs, but so is the more informal discussion that takes place as students collaborate to answer questions, build understanding, and solve problems.

Language

- The standards expect that students will grow their vocabularies through a mix of conversations, direct instruction, and reading. The standards will help students determine word meanings, appreciate the nuances of words, and steadily expand their repertoire of words and phrases.
- The standards help prepare students for real life experience at college and in 21st century careers. The standards recognize that students must be able to use formal English in their writing and speaking but that they must also be able to make informed, skillful choices among the many ways to express themselves through language.
- Vocabulary and conventions are treated in their own strand not because skills in these areas should be handled in isolation but because their use extends across reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Media and Technology

- Just as media and technology are integrated in school and life in the twenty-first century, skills related to media use (both critical analysis and production of media) are integrated throughout the standards.

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Key Points In Mathematics

- The K-5 standards provide students with a *solid foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions and decimals*—which help young students build the foundation to successfully apply more demanding math concepts and procedures, and move into applications.
- In kindergarten, the standards follow successful international models and recommendations from the National Research Council's Early Math Panel report, by focusing kindergarten work on the number core: learning how numbers correspond to quantities, and learning how to put numbers together and take them apart (the beginnings of addition and subtraction).
- The K-5 standards build on the best state standards to provide detailed guidance to teachers on how to navigate their way through knotty topics such as *fractions, negative numbers, and geometry*, and do so by maintaining a continuous progression from grade to grade.
- The standards stress not only procedural skill but also conceptual understanding, to make sure students are learning and absorbing the critical information they need to succeed at higher levels - rather than the current practices by which many students learn enough to get by on the next test, but forget it shortly thereafter, only to review again the following year.
- Having built a strong foundation K-5, students can do hands on learning in geometry, algebra and probability and statistics. Students who have completed 7th grade and mastered the content and skills through the 7th grade will be *well-prepared for algebra* in grade 8.
- The middle school standards are robust and provide a coherent and rich *preparation for high school mathematics*.
- The high school standards call on students to *practice applying mathematical ways of thinking to real world issues and challenges*; they prepare students to think and reason mathematically.
- The high school standards set a *rigorous definition of college and career readiness*, by helping students develop a depth of understanding and ability to apply mathematics to novel situations, as college students and employees regularly do.
- The high school standards *emphasize mathematical modeling*, the use of mathematics and statistics to analyze empirical situations, understand them better, and improve decisions. For example, the draft standards state: "Modeling links classroom mathematics and statistics to everyday life, work, and decision-making. It is the process of choosing and using appropriate mathematics and statistics to analyze empirical situations, to understand them better, and to improve decisions. Quantities and their relationships in physical, economic, public policy, social and everyday situations can be modeled using mathematical and statistical methods. When making mathematical models, technology is valuable for varying assumptions, exploring consequences, and comparing predictions with data."

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Process

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort, launched more than a year ago by state leaders, including governors and state commissioners of education from 48 states, 2 territories and the District of Columbia, through their membership in the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

The process used to write the standards ensured they were informed by:

- The best state standards;
- The experience of teachers, content experts, states and leading thinkers; and
- Feedback from the general public.

To write the standards, the NGA Center and CCSSO brought together content experts, teachers, researchers and others.

The standards have been divided into two categories:

- College and career readiness standards, which address what students are expected to learn when they have graduated from high school; and
- K-12 standards, which address expectations for elementary through high school.

The NGA Center and CCSSO received nearly 10,000 comments on the standards during two public comment periods. Comments, many of which helped shape the final version of the standards, came from teachers, parents, school administrators and other citizens concerned with education policy.

- The draft college and career ready graduation standards were released for public comment in September 2009; and
- The draft K-12 standards were released for public comment in March 2010.
- The final standards were released in June 2010.

An advisory group has provided advice and guidance to shape the initiative. Members of this group include experts from Achieve, Inc., ACT, the College Board, the National Association of State Boards of Education and the State Higher Education Executive Officers.



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Statements of Support

Statements About the Final Common Core State Standards

- American Council on Education
- American Statistical Association
- America's Great City School Superintendents, Chancellors and Chief Executive Officers
- Bill Schmidt, University Distinguished Professor of statistics and education at Michigan State University
- Business Endorsement Letter
- California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell
- The College Board
- Coalition for a College and Career Ready America (CCCRA)
- Colorado Governor Bill Ritter, Jr.
- Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE)
- Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
- Council of the Great City Schools
- Maryland Board of Education
- Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education
- Michigan Department of Education
- Missouri Board of Education
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
- National Mathematics Education Organizations
- National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
- NCTM, NCSM, ASSM and AMTE Joint Statement
- North Carolina Board of Education
- Ohio Department of Education
- Partnership for 21st Century Skills
- Presentation by Dr. Hung-Hsi Wu
- Quotes from Supporters
- Statement by the National Higher Education Organizations
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Statements about the K-12 Standards

- Achieve
- Alliance for Excellent Education
- American Federation of Teachers
- Association of American Colleges and Universities
- Business Roundtable
- Coalition for Student Achievement
- Core Knowledge Foundation
- International Reading Association
- National Association of State Boards of Education
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education
- National Education Association
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Statements about the Common Core Standards Initiative

- Achieve
- ACT, Inc.
- Alliance for Excellent Education Statement
- American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
- ASCD
- The Business-Higher Education Forum
- The College Board
- Evans Newton Incorporated (ENI)
- Great City Schools
- Hunt Institute
- Military Child Education Coalition
- National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) Statement
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) Statement
- National Education Association
- National PTA
- National School Boards Association (NSBA)
- State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO)
- The United States Army
- U.S. Department of Education

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Common Core Endorsing Partners

- Adobe
- Academic Merit
- Academic Success for All Learners
- Achieve
- ACT, Inc.
- Adaptive Curriculum
- ADE Consulting Services, Inc. (ADECS)
- Advanced Mathematics Now LLC
- Alliance for Excellent Education
- American Association of School Administrators
- American Mathematical Society's Committee on Education
- American Reading Company
- America's Choice
- AOIS & Corporate Computer, Inc.
- ASCD
- Assessment Technology Incorporated (ATI)
- Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE)
- Association for Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB)
- Atomic Learning
- AUSSIE (Australian United States Services in Education)
- AWARD Reading
- The Business Higher-Education Forum
- Battelle
- Blue Ribbon LLC
- Butte County Office of Education – California
- Cambridge Educational Services
- Cambium Learning Group, Inc.
- Campaign for High School Equity
- Carnegie Learning
- Castle Learning Online
- Center for Development and Learning (CDL)
- Center for the Advancement of Digital Resources in Education (CADRE)
- C&M Education Consultants Charities
- Collaborative Learning Inc.
- The College Board
- Common Curriculum
- Commonwealth Learning Online Institute
- Computers for Youth (CFY)
- Continental Press, Inc.
- Core4All, LLC
- Council of the Great City Schools
- Curriculum Advantage
- Curriki
- dataMetrics Software

- Datawise, Inc.
- Dell, Inc.
- Deloitte Consulting
- Desire Learning Incorporated
- Digital Tech Frontier (DTF)
- Discovery Post
- Don Johnston Incorporated
- EdisonLearning
- EDtrainingcenter.com
- Education Alliance of Washoe County, Inc.
- Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC)
- Education Technology Partners
- Educational Teaching Aids Cuisenaire
- Educational Testing Service (ETS)
- Encyclopaedia Britannica
- Edvantia, Inc.
- Envision Excellence in STEM Education
- Encyclopedia Britannica
- eScholar LLC
- Essential Skills Software Inc. (ESS)
- ETA/Cuisinaire
- Evans Newton Incorporated (ENI)
- Florida College Access Network (FloridaCAN)
- GlaxoSmithKline (GSK)
- Grade Results, LLC
- The Great Books Foundation
- Hercules Middle/High School (HMHS) (Hercules, California)
- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company
- Ignite! Learning
- Imagine Education
- Imagination Station, Inc.
- Infinite Campus, Inc.
- Infinity Software Development, Inc.
- Institute for Collaborative Leadership (ICL)
- Intel-Assess, Inc.
- Intel Corporation
- Interactive Achievement, Inc.
- Iowa Testing Programs
- JP Associates, Inc.
- Kaplan K12
- KDSL – Know.Do.Serve.Learn
- Knowledge Delivery Systems, Inc.
- The Leadership and Learning Center
- Laying the Foundation
- LearnBoost
- Learning-Focused
- The Learning Institute
- Learning Plus
- Learning Today, Inc. (LT)
- MasteryConnect
- McGraw-Hill Education

- Mentoring Minds, L.P.
- The Merck Institute for Science Education (MISE)
- MetaMetrics
- Microsoft U.S. Partners in Learning
- Military Child Education Coalition
- Multimodal Learning Association (MLA)
- My Lesson Planner
- National Academic Educational Partners
- National Association for Hispanic Education's Hispanic STEM Initiative
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Parent Teacher Association
- National School Supply and Equipment Association
- National Student Clearinghouse
- National Training Network (NTN)
- The Official CMT League
- Okapi Educational Publishing
- OpenVES
- Paradigm Pioneers, Inc. (PIHX.com)
- Parametric Technology Corporation
- partners4results
- Pathways Learning Group, LLC
- Pathways to Reading, Inc.
- Peoples Education
- Pearson
- PlanbookEdu
- Prestwick House, Inc.
- Questar Assessment, Inc.
- RANDA Solutions, Inc.
- Renaissance Learning, Inc. (RLI)
- Resources for Inner City Children (RICH)
- Sadlier
- San Bernardino City Unified School District
- SAS Institute, Inc.
- Scantron Corporation
- Scholastic Inc.
- School Improvement Network (SINET)
- SchoolKIT
- School Software Group, Inc.
- School Specialty Literacy and Intervention
- Shawnee Community College (Ulin, IL)
- Southeastern Regional Vision for Education Center at the University of North Carolina
- Starboard Training Systems
- State Farm
- State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO)
- Student Solutions, Inc. (SSI)
- Success for All Foundation (SFAF)
- Successful Practices Network
- Success4School
- T.A.L.K. Associates
- Teacher Created Materials (TCM)
- Teaching Institute for Excellence in STEM Education (TIES)

- Teachscape
- Texas Instruments Education Technology
- Triumph Learning
- Turning Technologies
- Unbound Concepts
- Usborne Books & More
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- Verizon
- Walch Education
- Wireless Generation
- Worldwide Instructional Design System (WIDS)
- YouthBuild Network


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Myths vs. Facts

Myths About Content and Quality: General

Myth: Adopting common standards will bring all states' standards down to the lowest common denominator, which means states with high standards, such as Massachusetts, will be taking a step backwards if they adopt the *Standards*.

Fact: The *Standards* are designed to build upon the most advanced current thinking about preparing all students for success in college and their careers. This will result in moving even the best state standards to the next level. In fact, since this work began, there has been an explicit agreement that no state would lower its standards. The *Standards* were informed by the best in the country, the highest international standards, and evidence and expertise about educational outcomes. We need college and career ready standards because even in high-performing states – students are graduating and passing all the required tests and still require remediation in their postsecondary work.

Myth: The *Standards* are not internationally benchmarked.

Fact: International benchmarking played a significant role in both sets of standards. In fact, the college and career ready standards include an appendix listing the evidence that was consulted in drafting the standards and the international data consulted in the benchmarking process is included in this appendix. More evidence from international sources will be presented together with the final draft.

Myth: The *Standards* only include skills and do not address the importance of content knowledge.

Fact: The *Standards* recognize that both content and skills are important.

In English-language arts, the *Standards* require certain critical content for all students, including: classic myths and stories from around the world, America's Founding Documents, foundational American literature, and Shakespeare. Appropriately, the remaining crucial decisions about what content should be taught are left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the *Standards* require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

In Mathematics, the *Standards* lay a solid foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, and decimals. Taken together, these elements support a student's ability to learn and apply more demanding math concepts and procedures. The middle school and high school standards call on students to practice applying mathematical ways of thinking to real world issues and challenges; they prepare students to think and reason mathematically. The *Standards* set a rigorous definition of college and career readiness, not by piling topic upon topic, but by demanding that students develop a depth of understanding and ability to apply mathematics to novel situations, as college students and employees regularly do.

Myth: The *Standards* suggest teaching "Grapes of Wrath" to second graders.

Fact: The ELA *Standards* suggest "Grapes of Wrath" as a text that would be appropriate for 9th or 10th grade readers. Evidence shows that the complexity of texts students are reading today does not match what is demanded in college and the workplace, creating a gap between what high school students can do and what they need to be able to do. The Common Core State Standards create a staircase of increasing text complexity, so that students are expected to both develop their skills and apply them to more and more complex texts.

Myth: The *Standards* are just vague descriptions of skills; they don't include a reading list or any other similar reference to content.

Fact: The *Standards* do include sample texts that demonstrate the level of text complexity appropriate for the grade level and compatible with the learning demands set out in the *Standards*. The exemplars of high quality texts at each grade level provide a rich set of possibilities and have been very well received. This provides teachers with the flexibility to make their own decisions about what texts to use – while providing an excellent reference point when selecting their texts.

Myth: English teachers will be asked to teach science and social studies reading materials.

Fact: With the Common Core ELA *Standards*, English teachers will still teach their students literature as well as literary non-fiction. However, because college and career readiness overwhelmingly focuses on complex texts outside of literature, these standards also ensure students are being prepared to read, write, and research across the curriculum, including in history and science. These goals can be achieved by ensuring that teachers in other disciplines are also focusing on reading and writing to build knowledge within their subject areas.

Myth: The *Standards* don't have enough emphasis on fiction/literature.

Fact: The *Standards* require certain critical content for all students, including: classic myths and stories from around the world, America's Founding Documents, foundational American literature, and Shakespeare. Appropriately, the remaining crucial decisions about what content should be taught are

left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the Standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Myths About Content and Quality: Math

Myth: The *Standards* do not prepare or require students to learn Algebra in the 8th grade, as many states' current standards do.

Fact: The *Standards* do accommodate and prepare students for Algebra 1 in 8th grade, by including the prerequisites for this course in grades K-7. Students who master the K-7 material will be able to take Algebra 1 in 8th grade. At the same time, grade 8 standards are also included; these include rigorous algebra and will transition students effectively into a full Algebra 1 course.

Myth: Key math topics are missing or appear in the wrong grade.

Fact: The mathematical progressions presented in the common core are coherent and based on evidence.

Part of the problem with having 50 different sets of state standards is that today, different states cover different topics at different grade levels. Coming to consensus guarantees that from the viewpoint of any given state, topics will move up or down in the grade level sequence. This is unavoidable. What is important to keep in mind is that the progression in the Common Core State Standards is mathematically coherent and leads to college and career readiness at an internationally competitive level.

Myths About Content and Quality: English-language arts

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Myth: The standards don't have enough emphasis on fiction/literature.

Fact: The standards require certain critical content for all students, including: classic myths and stories from around the world, America's Founding Documents, foundational American literature, and Shakespeare. Appropriately, the remaining crucial decisions about what content should be taught are left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Myths About Process

Myth: No teachers were involved in writing the *Standards*.

Fact: The common core state standards drafting process relied on teachers and standards experts from across the country. In addition, there were many state experts that came together to create the most thoughtful and transparent process of standard setting. This was only made possible by many states working together.

Myth: The *Standards* are not research or evidence based.

Fact: The *Standards* have made careful use of a large and growing body of evidence. The evidence base includes scholarly research; surveys on what skills are required of students entering college and workforce training programs; assessment data identifying college- and career- ready performance; and comparisons to standards from high-performing states and nations.

In English language arts, the *Standards* build on the firm foundation of the NAEP frameworks in Reading and Writing, which draw on extensive scholarly research and evidence.

In Mathematics, the *Standards* draw on conclusions from TIMSS and other studies of high-performing countries that the traditional US mathematics curriculum must become substantially more coherent and focused in order to improve student achievement, addressing the problem of a curriculum that is “a mile wide and an inch deep.”

Myths About Implementation

Myth: The Standards tell teachers what to teach.

Fact: The best understanding of what works in the classroom comes from the teachers who are in them. That’s why these standards will establish *what* students need to learn, but they will not dictate *how* teachers should teach. Instead, schools and teachers will decide how best to help students reach the standards.

Myth: The Standards will be implemented through No Child Left Behind (NCLB) - signifying that the federal government will be leading them.

Fact: The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort that is not part of No Child Left Behind and adoption of the Standards is in no way mandatory. States began the work to create clear, consistent standards before the Recovery Act or the Elementary and Secondary Education Act blueprint was released because this work is being driven by the needs of the states, not the federal government.

The NGA Center and CCSSO are offering support by developing a State Policymaker Guide to Implementation, facilitating opportunities for collaboration among organizations working on implementation, planning the future governance structure of the standards, and convening the publishing community to ensure that high quality materials aligned with the standards are created.

Myth: These *Standards* amount to a national curriculum for our schools.

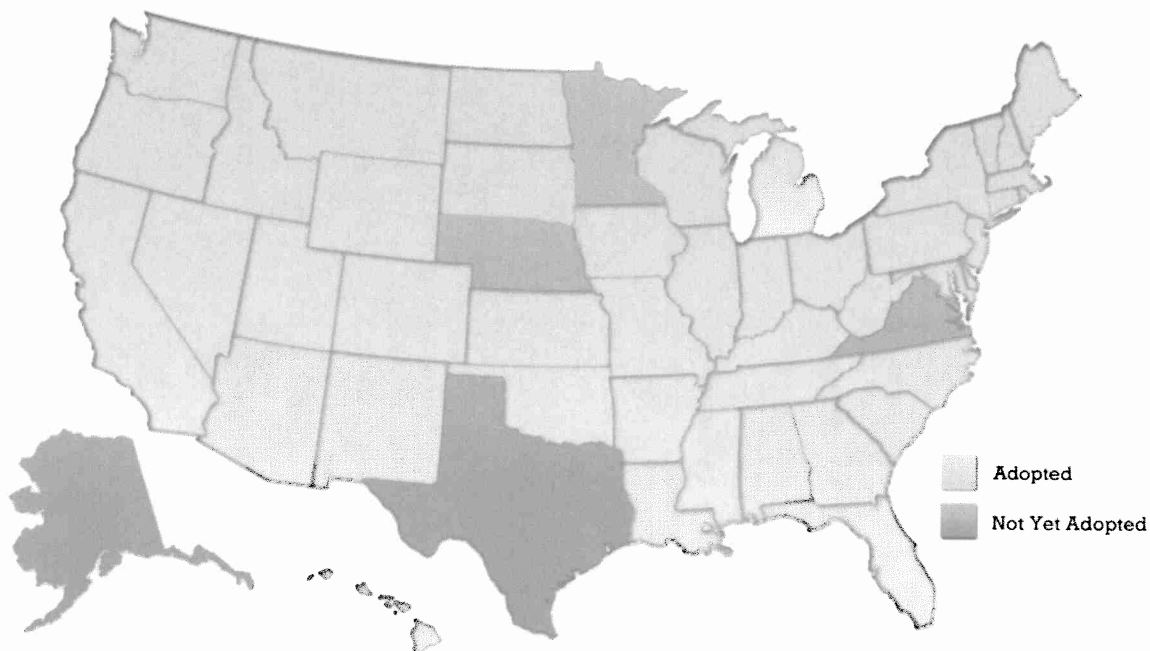
Fact: The *Standards* are not a curriculum. They are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents and others will decide *how* the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.

Myth: The federal government will take over ownership of the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

Fact: The federal government will not govern the Common Core State Standards Initiative. The Initiative was and will remain a state-led effort. NGA and CCSSO are committed to developing a long-term governance structure with leadership from governors, chief state school officers, and other state policymakers.



In the States



District of Columbia

Puerto Rico

Guam

American Samoa Islands

U.S. Virgin Islands

Northern Mariana Islands

States that have formally adopted the Common Core State Standards

Alabama	Kentucky	Nevada
Arkansas	Louisiana	Ohio
Arizona	Maine	Oklahoma
California	Maryland	Oregon
Colorado	Massachusetts	Pennsylvania
Connecticut	Michigan	Rhode Island
Delaware	Mississippi	South Carolina
District of Columbia	Missouri	South Dakota
Florida	Montana	Tennessee
Georgia	New Hampshire	U.S. Virgin Islands
Hawaii	New Jersey	Utah
Idaho	New Mexico	Vermont

Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Kansas

North Carolina
North Dakota
Northern Mariana Islands
New York

Washington
West Virginia
Wisconsin
Wyoming

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Frequently Asked Questions

What are educational standards?

Educational standards help teachers ensure their students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful by providing clear goals for student learning.

Why do we need educational standards?

We need standards to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. Common standards will help ensure that students are receiving a high quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state. Common standards will provide a greater opportunity to share experiences and best practices within and across states that will improve our ability to best serve the needs of students.

Standards do not tell teachers how to teach, but they do help teachers figure out the knowledge and skills their students should have so that teachers can build the best lessons and environments for their classrooms. Standards also help students and parents by setting clear and realistic goals for success. Standards are a first step – a key building block – in providing our young people with a high-quality education that will prepare them for success in college and work. Of course, standards are not the only thing that is needed for our children's success, but they provide an accessible roadmap for our teachers, parents, and students.

How are educational standards determined now?

Each state has its own process for developing, adopting, and implementing standards. As a result, what students are expected to learn can vary widely from state to state.

Is having common standards the first step toward nationalizing education?

No. The Common Core State Standards are part of a state-led effort to give all students the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. The federal government was not involved in the development of the standards. Individual states choose whether or not to adopt these standards.

What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort to establish a shared set of clear educational standards for English language arts and mathematics that states can voluntarily adopt. The standards have been informed by the best available evidence and the highest state standards across the country and globe and designed by a diverse group of teachers, experts, parents, and school administrators, so they reflect both our aspirations for our children and the realities of the classroom. These standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to go to college or enter the workforce and that parents, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. The standards are benchmarked to international standards to guarantee that our students are competitive in the emerging global marketplace.

Why is the Common Core State Standards Initiative important?

We want to make sure that every child across the country is given the tools they need to succeed. High standards that are consistent across states provide teachers, parents, and students with a set of clear expectations that everyone can work toward together. This will ensure that we maintain America's competitive edge, so that all of our students are well prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to compete with not only their peers here at home, but with students from around the world.

These standards are a common sense first step toward ensuring our children are getting the best possible education no matter where they live.

Of course, standards cannot single-handedly improve the quality of our nation's education system, but they do give educators shared goals and expectations for their students. For example, the common core state standards will enable participating states to work together to:

- Make expectations for students clear to parents, teachers, and the general public;
- Encourage the development of textbooks, digital media, and other teaching materials aligned to the standards;

- Develop and implement comprehensive assessment systems to measure student performance against the common core state standards that will replace the existing testing systems that too often are inconsistent, burdensome and confusing; and
- Evaluate policy changes needed to help students and educators meet the standards.

Who is leading the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

Parents, teachers, school administrators and experts from across the country together with state leaders, through their membership in the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) are leading the effort to develop a common core of state standards.

In addition, CCSSO and the NGA Center have provided public comment periods for everyone to submit feedback on the draft standards documents. Those comments have been incorporated into the final standards.

How will states adopt the common core state standards?

The process of state standards adoption depends on the laws of each state. Some states are adopting the standards through their state boards of education, while others are adopting them through their state legislatures.

Will the common core state standards keep local teachers from deciding what or how to teach?

No. The Common Core State Standards are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents and others will decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms. Local teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards will continue to make decisions about curriculum and how their school systems are operated.

Were teachers involved in the creation of the standards?

Yes. Teachers have been a critical voice in the development of the standards. The National Education Association (NEA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), among other organizations have been instrumental in bringing together teachers to provide specific, constructive feedback on the standards.

We encourage teachers and practitioners to submit comments and feedback on the standards through the web site corestandards.org.

Does having common standards lead to dumbing down the standards across the board?

Not at all. The Common Core State Standards have been built from the best and highest state standards in the country. They are evidence-based, aligned with college and work expectations, include rigorous content and skills, and are informed by other top performing countries. They were developed in consultation with teachers and parents from across the country so they are also realistic and practical for the classroom. Far from looking for the "lowest common denominator," these standards are designed to ensure that all students, regardless of where they live, are learning what they need to know to graduate from high school ready for college or a career.

Will more standards mean more tests?

No. For states that choose to adopt these common standards, having one set of standards will make it easier for states to pool information and resources to develop a shared set of high-quality tests to better evaluate student progress. The goal is not to have more tests, but to have smarter and better tests that help students, parents, and teachers.

What is the appropriate way to cite the Common Core State Standards?

Authors: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers
Title: Common Core State Standards (insert specific content area if you are using only one)
Publisher: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, Washington D.C.
Copyright Date: 2010

Process

What makes this process different from other efforts to create common standards?

This process is different because it is state-led, and has the support of educators across the country as well as prominent education, business, and state leaders' organizations, including CCSSO, the NGA Center, Achieve, Inc, ACT, the College Board, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the Alliance for Excellent Education, the Hunt Institute, the National Parent Teacher Association, the State Higher Education Executive Officers, the American Association of School Administrators, and the Business Roundtable.

Are these national standards?

The federal government was NOT involved in the development of the standards. This has been a state-led and driven initiative from the beginning. States will voluntarily adopt the standards based on the timelines and context in their state.

Who or what entity determines the common core state standards?

CCSSO and the NGA Center led the standards' development process in consultation with teachers, parents, experts and administrators. To ensure that this process is open, inclusive, and rigorous, several working groups and committees have been formed.

They include the:

- Standards Development Work Group – responsible for determining and writing the common core state standards.
- Feedback Group – provides information backed by research to inform the standards development process by offering expert input on draft documents.
- Validation Committee – nominated by states and national organizations and selected by a group of 12 governors and chiefs who hold leadership positions at NGA Center and CCSSO. These independent, national education experts will review the common core state standards to ensure they meet the development criteria.

By what criteria are the standards being developed?

The standards are being developed by the following criteria:

- Aligned with expectations for college and career success
- Clear, so that educators and parents know what they need to do to help students learn
- Consistent across all states, so that students are not taught to a lower standard just because of where they live
- Include both content and the application of knowledge through high-order skills
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards and standards of top-performing nations
- Realistic, for effective use in the classroom
- Informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society
- Evidence and research-based criteria have been set by states, through their national organizations CCSSO and the NGA Center.

What grade levels will be included in the common core state standards?

The English-language arts and math standards are for grades K-12. Research from the early childhood and higher education communities have also informed the development of the standards.

What does this work mean for students with disabilities and English language learners?

Common standards will provide a greater opportunity for states to share experiences and best practices within and across states that can lead to an improved ability to best serve young people with disabilities and English language learners. Additionally, the K-12 English language arts and mathematics standards include information on application of the standards for English language learners and students with disabilities.

Why are the Common Core State Standards for just English-language arts and math?

English-language arts and math were the first subjects chosen for the common core state standards because these two subjects are skills, upon which students build skill sets in other subject areas. They are also the subjects most frequently assessed for accountability purposes.

Of course, other subject areas are critical to young people's education and their success in college and careers. However, the NGA Center and CCSSO will not be developing standards in other subjects and are now focusing on implementing the standards in ELA and mathematics.

Will these standards incorporate both content and skills?

Both content and skills are important and have been incorporated in the common core state standards. One of the criteria by which the standards will be evaluated is whether or not they include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order thinking skills.

Implementation and Future Work

What will these common core state standards mean for students?

The standards will provide more clarity about and consistency in what is expected of student learning across the country. Until now, every state has had its own set of academic standards, meaning public education students at the same grade level in different states have been expected to achieve at different levels. This initiative will allow states to share information effectively and help provide all students with an equal opportunity for an education that will prepare them to go to college or enter the workforce, regardless of where they live. Common standards will not prevent different levels of achievement among students. Rather, they will ensure more consistent exposure to materials and learning experiences through curriculum, instruction, and teacher preparation among other supports for student learning. In a global economy, students must be prepared to compete with not only their American peers in the next state, but with students from around the world. These standards will help prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and careers.

How will these standards impact teachers?

The standards will provide important goals for teachers to ensure they are preparing students for success in college and the workforce. They will help teachers develop and implement effective strategies for their students by providing benchmarks for skills and knowledge that their students should have by the end of the year. The common core state standards will help colleges and professional development programs better prepare teachers; provide the opportunity for teachers to be involved in the development of assessments linked to these top-quality standards; allow states to develop and provide better assessments that more accurately measure whether or not students have learned what was taught; and guide educators toward curricula and teaching strategies that will give students a deep understanding of the subject and the skills they need to apply their knowledge.

Will the Common Core State Standards be updated?

Yes. There will be an ongoing state-led development process that can support continuous improvement of the standards.

Will common assessments be developed?

Like adoption of common core standards, it will be up to the states: some states plan to come together voluntarily to develop a common assessment system, based on the common core state standards. A state-led consortium on assessment would be grounded in the following principles: allow for comparison across students, schools, districts, states and nations; create economies of scale; provide information and support more effective teaching and learning; and prepare students for college and careers.

Will CCSSO and NGA Center be playing a role in the implementation process, such as creating common instructional materials and curricula?

The release of the final Common Core State Standards marks a historic moment in time. However, the NGA Center and CCSSO recognize that state adoption of the Common Core does not signify the conclusion of standards work. States that have adopted the Common Core must now turn their attention to the critical work of ensuring that implementation of the standards is carried out thoughtfully.

To that end, the NGA Center and CCSSO are committed to assisting state policymakers in the following ways:

- Developing a State Policymaker Guide to Implementation of the Common Core State Standards, which will provide state policymakers with the key areas that require attention and work as states transition to the standards;

- Convening organizations to facilitate conversations about the standards' implementation so states, districts and teachers have the tools they need and providing opportunities for groups with similar activities to collaborate;
- Planning and implementing the future governance structure of the Common Core State Standards Initiative; and
- Convening the publishing community to ensure that high quality materials aligned with the standards are created.

What is the role of the federal government in standards implementation?

The federal government has had no role in the development of the common core state standards and will not have a role in their implementation.

However, the federal government will have the opportunity to support states as they begin adopting the standards. For example, the federal government can

- Support this effort through a range of tiered incentives, such as providing states with greater flexibility in the use of existing federal funds, supporting a revised state accountability structure, and offering financial support for states to implement the standards.
- Provide long-term financial support for the development and implementation of common assessments, teacher and principal professional development, and research to help continually improve the common core state standards over time.
- Revise and align existing federal education laws with the lessons learned from the best of what works in other nations and from research.

Who will manage (or own) the Common Core State Standards Initiative in the future?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative was and will remain a state-led effort. In addition to supporting effective implementation of the Common Core, NGA and CCSSO are committed to developing a long-term governance structure with leadership from governors, chief state school officers, and other state policymakers.