

Comparison of Alaska's standards and the Common Core



LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH SERVICES

Alaska State Legislature
Division of Legal and Research Services
State Capitol, Juneau, AK 99801

(907) 465-3991 phone
(907) 465-3908 fax
research@legis.state.ak.us

Research Brief

TO: Representative Lynn Gattis
FROM: Susan Haymes, Legislative Analyst
DATE: May 31, 2013
RE: A Comparison of National and Alaska Common Core Education Standards
LRS Report 13.391

You asked for a comparison between the Common Core State Standards and the Alaska Common Core Standards.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English/Language Arts and Mathematics is the result of a state-led effort to establish a single set of educational standards for grades kindergarten through 12th that states may voluntarily adopt.¹ The CCSS initiative was led by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), with input from educators, parents, and state leaders. According to the CCSS, the standards are 1) research and evidence based, 2) aligned with college and work expectations, 3) rigorous, and 4) internationally benchmarked. To date, 45 states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted the Common Core State Standards.² The five states that have not adopted the CCSS are Alaska, Minnesota (adopted reading standards only), Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia. These five states, including Alaska, have adopted their own core standards.

The Alaska Board of Education adopted new core standards for Alaska in June 2012.³ The Alaska standards were developed by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) with the support of educators, parents, and other experts.⁴ According to the DEED, Alaska educators and policymakers wanted to develop state standards based on the "unique context of our state." Educators and DEED staff reviewed the CCSS, evaluated Alaska Grade Level Expectations (GLEs), and developed the Alaska English/Language Arts and Mathematics Standards. According to the DEED, Alaska standards and the CCSS are very similar and equal in rigor. The DEED prepared a comparison of the CCSS and Alaska standards, which we include as Attachment A. Generally, where differences exist between the standards, it is for the following reasons:

1. Alaska educators were focused on making sure that the standards had clarity to ensure that teachers would easily understand the focus and purpose of each standard; and
2. Alaska educators wanted key Alaskan standards retained, especially math standards in measurement for the elementary grades.

Pages 2-4 of the document describe the differences in the English/Language Arts standards. Pages 5-10 describe the differences in Math standards. The DEED highlights in gray the Alaska standards that do not have a counterpart in the CCSS.⁵

We hope this is helpful. If you have questions or need additional information, please let us know.

¹ More information on the CCSS can be accessed at www.corestandards.org/.

² While the majority of states have approved the CCSS, the standards have not been without controversy. Several state legislatures have considered blocking the standards and other states have expressed concerns about the costs of implementing them (<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/lawmakers-push-back-standards-19268688>).

³ Alaska's core standards can be accessed at <http://education.alaska.gov/tls/assessment/2012AKStandards.html>.

⁴ Karin Hess, senior associate, from the nonprofit National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment provided leadership throughout the process.

⁵ Elizabeth Davis, Assessment Administrator, DEED, 907.465.8431, is the contact person for questions regarding Alaska's core standards.

How the Alaska English/Language Arts and Mathematics Standards Differ from the Common Core State Standards

Driven by a desire to better prepare graduates for college and careers, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (EED), with the support of Alaska educators and stakeholders, have created new English/Language Arts and Mathematics Standards to adequately prepare Alaskan students for college and careers. The new, more rigorous, academic standards clearly outline what students should know and be able to do at each grade level to be globally competitive. The State Board of Education adopted the standards in June 2012.

Forty-five states have adopted a common set of academic standards, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which are designed to help prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and careers. Alaska did not choose to adopt the CCSS; it was important to Alaskan educators to have the opportunity to adjust portions of the standards based on the unique context of our state. Educators from across the state assisted department staff in reviewing the CCSS, evaluating Alaska Grade Level Expectations (GLEs), and, based on this rich review of information, developing the new Alaska English/Language Arts and Mathematics Standards.

Across the nation, many educational materials and resources aligned to the Common Core State Standards are being created. Educators and others have asked if Alaska will be able to take advantage of these materials. The answer is yes. One goal of Alaska's standards revision process was to ensure that Alaskan schools would be able to use the materials produced for the CCSS. Alaska standards and the CCSS are very similar, and Alaska took great care to make sure that its standards are equal in rigor. Although the sets of standards are equivalent, they are not identical. In general, where differences exist, it is for the following reasons:

Acronym Guide

CCSS: Common Core State Standards
ELA: English Language Arts
GLE: Grade Level Expectation
EED: The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development

1. Alaska educators were focused on making sure that the standards had clarity to ensure that teachers would easily understand the focus and purpose of each standard; and
2. Alaska educators wanted key Alaskan standards retained, especially math standards in measurement in the elementary grades.

English/Language Arts Differences

The primary differences between the Alaska and CCSS ELA Standards are found in the five standards described below. The coding of the CCSS ELA Standards and the Alaska ELA Standards is identical.

Reading

Standard 2 for Reading

CCSS Anchor Standard 2 is about themes and summaries of texts. The Alaska Anchor Standard is more specific about how to restate and summarize text.

For example, in the grade 7 Reading Literature standards in the chart below, the Alaska Standard provides teachers with additional information about what students should know and be able to do after reading a text.

CCSS Grade 7 Standard 2 for Reading Literature code: RL.7.2	Alaska's Grade 7 Standard 2 for Reading Literature code: RL.7.2
Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; restate and summarize main ideas or events, in correct sequence, after reading a text.

Similarly, Alaska's Standard 2 for grade 7 Reading Informational Text (below) provides clarity for teachers. In addition, Alaska removed the word "objective" in the standard because a summary, by definition, is objective.

CCSS grade 7 Standard 2 for Reading Informational Text code: RI.7.2	Alaska's grade 7 Standard 2 for Reading Informational Text code: RI.7.2
Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.	Determine the central idea and subtopics in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; restate and summarize the central idea or events, in correct sequence when necessary, after reading a text.

Standard 10 for Reading

One key difference between the CCSS and Alaska standards is found in ELA Anchor Standard 10 in Reading Standards for Literature and Reading Standards for Informational Text. Below is the CCSS Standard 10 for Reading for Literature for grade 4 and grade 5 (emphasis added).

Grade 4: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, in the grades 4–5 text complexity band proficiently, **with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.**

Grade 5: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 4–5 text complexity band **independently and proficiently**.

This pattern of decreasing supports given to students occurs throughout the grades in the CCSS standards. In the lower grades students read with scaffolding, as needed, when reading text at the high end of the range. In the adjacent grade, the students read independently and proficiently. Alaska educators chose *not* to include this division of support offered to students; they felt that this artificial division assumes that text can be divided up neatly into two-year grade bands. Instead, the Alaska Standard 10 recognizes that students are always reading a range of text and that teachers recognize when scaffolding is appropriate or needed at each grade. The Alaska Standard 10 for Reading for Literature also includes the phrase “from a variety of cultures” to emphasize that is important to draw upon a wide range of texts.

Below is the grade 5 CCSS and corresponding Alaska Standard 10 for Reading Standards Literature.

CCSS grade 5 standard 10 for Reading Literature	Alaska’s grade 5 standard 10 for Reading Literature
RL.5.10	RL.5.10
By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 4–5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	By the end of the year, read and comprehend a range of literature from a variety of cultures, within a complexity band appropriate to grade 5 (from upper grade 4 to grade 6), with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

Writing

Writing Standard 3

The CCSS Writing Anchor Standard 3 states that students “Write narratives....” The Alaska Writing Anchor Standard 3 states that students “Use narrative writing...”(emphasis added). Additionally, the Alaska standard does not restrict Standard 3 to the creation of stories; it includes the use of narrative writing in nonfiction accounts.

CCSS grade 3 Writing Standard 3	Alaska’s grade 3 Writing Standard 3
W.3.3a-d	W.3.3a-d
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences. a. Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally. b. Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations. c. Use temporal words and phrases to signal event order.	Use narrative writing to develop real or imagined characters, experiences, or events using effective narrative techniques (dialogue, description, elaboration, problem-solution, figurative language), and clear event sequences (chronology). a. Establish a context or situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally. b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description and elaboration, and concrete and sensory details to describe actions, thoughts, and

d. Provide a sense of closure.	<p>feelings and to develop experiences and events showing the response of characters to situations or problems.</p> <p>c. Use transitional words and phrases to signal event sequences (e.g., later, soon after).</p> <p>d. Provide a sense of closure (e.g., how a problem was solved or how the event ended).</p>
--------------------------------	---

Language

Language Standard 1.a.

Language Standard 1.a. frequently refers to using parts of speech or explaining parts of speech. The Alaska standard includes the phrase “in order to apply the conventions of English” to emphasize that the purpose of studying parts of speech is always to increase students’ ability to apply usage rules; the focus of all the language standards is application.

CCSS Language Standard 1.a. grade 7	Alaska Standard 1.a. grade 7
Explain the function of phrases and clauses in general and their function in specific sentences.	Explain the function of phrases and clauses in general and their function in specific sentences in order to apply the conventions of English.

Language Standard 4.a.

The Alaska Language Standard 4.a. for Vocabulary Acquisition and Use contains multiple, specific strategies for determining the meaning of unfamiliar words. The CCSS Language Standard 4.a. only references using context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

CCSS Grade 5 Language Standard 4.a	Alaska’s Grade 5 Language Standard 4.a
L.5.4a	L.5.4a
<p>Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 5 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <p>a. Use context (e.g., cause/effect relationships and comparisons in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.</p>	<p>Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 5 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <p>a. Determine meaning of unfamiliar words by using knowledge of word structure (root words, prefixes, suffixes, abbreviations) and language structure through reading words in text (word order, grammar, syntax), use context (e.g., cause/effect relationships and comparisons in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.</p>

Mathematics Differences

Most of the differences for the math standards are found in grades K-8. There are few differences between the two sets of standards at the high school level. As noted in the introduction to the document, where differences between the two documents exist, it is for the following reasons: (1) Alaska educators were focused on making sure that the standards had clarity to ensure that teachers would easily understand the focus and purpose of each standard; and (2) Alaska educators wanted key Alaskan standards retained, especially math standards in measurement found in the early grades.

Example of Difference in Mathematics in Grades K-2

The Grade 2 Measurement and Data Standard 9 below is an example of the Alaska Standard using simpler and more direct language. The Alaska standard also allows data to be collected from multiple sources and not specifically limited to length measurements.

CCSS Mathematics Standard 2.MD.9.	Alaska Mathematics Standard 2.MD.9.
Generate measurement data by measuring lengths of several objects to the nearest whole unit, or by making repeated measurements of the same object. Show the measurements by making a line plot, where the horizontal scale is marked off in whole number units.	Collect, record, interpret, represent, and describe data in a table, graph or line plot.

Example of Difference in Mathematics in Grades 3-5

The Grade 4 Number and Operations in Base 10 Standard 3 below is an example of the Alaska Standard language providing additional information for the standard. The Alaska standard encourages the use of estimation and the ability to provide explanations about possible solutions.

CCSS Mathematics Standard 4.NBT.3.	Alaska Mathematics Standard 4.NBT.3.
Use place value understanding to round multi-digit whole numbers to any place.	Use place value understanding to round multi-digit whole numbers to any place using a variety of estimation methods; be able to describe, compare, and contrast solutions.

Example of Difference in Mathematics in Grades 6-8

The Grade 6 Geometry Standard 2 below shows another example of the Alaska Standard using simpler and more direct language. The Alaska standard does not provide the specifics of the figure, fractional edge lengths and volume formulas. The Alaska Standard also includes cylinders.

CCSS Mathematics Standard 6.G.2.	Alaska Mathematics Standard 6.G.2.
Find the volume of a right rectangular prism with fractional edge length by packing it with unit cubes of the appropriate unit fraction edge lengths, and show that the volume is the same as would be found by multiplying the edge lengths of the prism. Apply the formulas $V = lwh$ and $V = bh$ to find the volume of right rectangular prisms with fractional edge lengths in the context of solving real-world and mathematical problems.	Apply the standard formulas to find volumes of prisms. Use the attributes and properties (including shapes of bases) of prisms to identify, compare or describe three-dimensional figures including prisms and cylinders.

Example of Difference in Standards for Mathematical Practice

To provide additional clarity for the Standards for Mathematical Practice, Alaska educators have provided grade-span proficiency descriptors as appropriate. These descriptors are meant to help students, parents and educators to picture how these practices might be demonstrated by students. Below is an example of two grade span descriptors for Standards for Mathematical Practice #1. The CCSS do not include grade-span descriptors for the Standards for Mathematical Practice.

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
In grades K-2 mathematically proficient students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• focus on the problem and check for alternate methods• check if the solution makes sense•
In grades 3-5 mathematically proficient students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• explain correspondences between equations, verbal descriptions, tables, and graphs• draw diagrams of important features and relationships, graph data, and search for regularity or trends• use concrete objects or pictures to help conceptualize and solve a problem• understand the approaches of others to solving complex problems• identify correspondences between different approaches• check if the solution makes sense

Mathematics Coding Differences

Almost all the coding is the same for the mathematic CCSS and Alaska standards. The following list provides a quick reference to all of the coding differences at each grade level.

KEY to the Coding Difference List

- 1) Domains, clusters, or standards highlighted in gray do not have counterparts in the CCSS standards.

For example, in Kindergarten, Operations and Algebraic Thinking (OA) is a domain found in both the CCSS and the Alaska Mathematics Standards. The cluster “Identify and continue patterns” and standard K.OA. 6 are found only in the Alaska standards, as shown by gray highlighting.

Operations and Algebraic Thinking K.OA

Identify and continue patterns.

K.OA.6.

- 2) Standards found in both the CCSS and the Alaska Mathematics Standards that have identical wording but different numbering are linked with an —>. These numbering differences occurred when standards inserted by Alaska caused the numbering to shift.

For example, in the domain of Measurement and Data, the first grade CCSS Standard 1.MD.4 is the Alaska standard 1.MD.7.

Represent and interpret data.

CCSSStandard 1.MD.4—>Alaska Standard 1.MD.7

This shift occurred due to the inclusion of Alaska Standards for time and money.

Note: All numbering coding differences are found in the Measurement and Data domain, with the exception of 7.NS.2.e. (Number System, grade 7).

Kindergarten Coding Differences

Operations and Algebraic Thinking K.OA

Identify and continue patterns.

K.OA.6.

Measurement and Data K.MD

Work with time and money.

K.MD.4.

K.MD.5.

K.MD.6.

First Grade Coding Differences

Counting and Cardinality, 1.CC

Know ordinal numbers.

1.CC.1.

1.CC.2.

1.CC.3.

Count to tell the number of objects.

1.CC.4.

Compare numbers.

1.CC.5.

1.CC.6.

Operations and Algebraic Thinking 1.OA

Identify and continue patterns.

1.OA.9.

Measurement and Data 1.MD

Work with time and money.

1.MD.4.

1.MD.5.

1.MD.6.

Represent and interpret data.

CCSS Standard 1.MD.4.—> Alaska Standard 1.MD.7.

Second Grade Coding Differences

Operations and Algebraic Thinking 2.OA

Identify and continue patterns.

2.OA.5.

Third Grade Coding Differences

Measurement and Data 3.MD

Solve problems involving measurement and estimation of intervals of time, liquid volumes, and masses of objects.

3.MD.3. (L)

Represent and interpret data.

CCSS Standard 3.MD.3.—> Alaska Standard 3.MD.4.

CCSS Standard 3.MD.4.—> Alaska Standard 3.MD.5.

3.MD.6. (L)

Geometric measurement: understand concepts of area and relate area to multiplication and to addition.

CCSS Standard 3.MD.5.—> Alaska Standard 3.MD.7.

CCSS Standard 3.MD.6.—> Alaska Standard 3.MD.8.

CCSS Standard 3.MD.7.—> Alaska Standard 3.MD.9.

Geometric measurement: recognize perimeter as an attribute of plane figures and distinguish between linear and area measures.

CCSS Standard 3.MD.8.—> Alaska Standard 3.MD.10.

Fourth Grade Coding Differences

Operations and Algebraic Thinking 4.OA

Generate and analyze patterns.

4.OA.6. (L)

Measurement and Data 4.MD

Solve problems involving measurement and conversion of measurements from a larger unit to a smaller unit, and involving time.

4.MD.4. (L)

Represent and interpret data.

CCSS Standard 4.MD.4.—> Alaska Standard 4.MD.5.

4.MD.6. (L)

Geometric measurement: understand concepts of angle and measure angles.

CCSS Standard 4.MD.5.—> Alaska Standard 4.MD.7.

CCSS Standard 4.MD.6.—> Alaska Standard 4.MD.8.

CCSS Standard 4.MD.7.—> Alaska Standard 4.MD.9.

Fifth Grade Coding Differences

Measurement and Data 5.MD

Convert like measurement units within a given measurement system and solve problems involving time.

5.MD.2. (L)

Represent and interpret data.

CCSS Standard 5.MD.2.—> Alaska Standard 5.MD.3.

5.MD.4 (L)

Geometric measurement: understand concepts of volume and relate volume to multiplication and to addition.

CCSS Standard 5.MD.3.—> Alaska Standard 5.MD.5.

CCSS Standard 5.MD.4.—> Alaska Standard 5.MD.6.

CCSS Standard 5.MD.5.—> Alaska Standard 5.MD.7.

Seventh Grade Coding Differences

The Number System 7.NS

Apply and extend previous understandings of operations with fractions to add, subtract, multiply, and divide rational numbers.

7.NS.2.e. Convert between equivalent fractions, decimals, or percents.

Note

As shown in this document, the difference between the CCSS and the Alaska Standards in ELA and Math are primarily additions for clarity, Alaskan context, and standards that Alaskan teachers value.

Independent studies have also been done to compare the equivalency of the Alaska Standards to the CCSS. If you are interested in receiving a copy of these reports, or other resources regarding the Alaska Standards in ELA and Math, please contact the content specialists at the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development.

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium fact sheet

Talking Points: Fact vs. Fiction About Smarter Balanced Assessments

As states move toward the implementation of the Smarter Balanced Assessment System in the 2014-15 school year, teachers, students, parents, and the general public are learning more about the advantages of next-generation assessments. However, growing interest in Smarter Balanced can also lead to misunderstandings and occasional distortion of facts. The following talking points provide information to correct common misperceptions about the assessments.

Fiction: These tests represent a new federal intrusion into education.

Fact: For decades, Congress has required assessments of student learning for accountability under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, known as the “No Child Left Behind Act,” enacted during the Bush administration, expanded those federal testing requirements to include state testing of every student in language arts and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school. In 2010, the federal government funded the State of Washington to act on behalf of a consortium of states to develop new, next-generation assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. While federal funding currently supports the research and development work of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, all policy decisions about the structure and content of the assessments are made by the member states based on input from stakeholders across the country. At the conclusion of the federal grant in September 2014, Smarter Balanced will become an operational assessment system supported by its member states. The Consortium does not plan to seek additional funds from the U.S. Department of Education.

Fiction: Nothing is known about these new tests.

Fact: Smarter Balanced aims for complete transparency. All of the key documents describing the assessment (content specifications, item specifications, item writing training materials, test blueprints, accommodations framework, achievement level descriptors, technology specifications, etc.) are available to the public on the [Smarter Balanced website](#). Practice tests also are available to the general public on the Smarter Balanced website for each tested grade (3 through 8 and 11) and both subject areas (English language arts/literacy and mathematics).

Fiction: The cost of these tests is unknown.

Fact: Smarter Balanced has released cost estimates for its assessments that include expenses for ongoing research and development of the assessment system, as well as test administration and scoring. The end-of-year summative assessment alone is estimated to cost \$22.50 per student. The full suite of summative, interim, and formative assessments is estimated to cost \$27.30 per student. These costs are less than the amount that two-thirds of the Consortium’s member states currently pay. These costs are estimates because a sizable portion of the cost is for test administration and scoring services that will not be provided by Smarter Balanced; states will either provide these services directly or procure them from vendors in the private sector.

Fiction: These new assessments are untested.

Fact: Smarter Balanced has incrementally tested the content of the assessment and the technology that will support the assessment. Smarter Balanced has already completed:

Talking Points: Fact vs. Fiction About Smarter Balanced Assessments

- **Cognitive Labs:** Individual students provided feedback to test developers about their experience with the innovative test questions, accommodations for students with special needs, and the testing software.
- **Small-scale Trials:** Promising types of questions and software features were further tried out with hundreds of students.
- **Pilot Test:** Students at about 5,000 schools across the Consortium responded to a preliminary pool of test questions and performance tasks.

In spring 2014, the Consortium will conduct its Field Test to present the entire pool of Smarter Balanced items to students across member states. The Field Test is expected to involve students in about 15 to 20 percent of Consortium schools, and will gather the information necessary for final evaluation of item quality.

Fiction: These tests will result in the collection of intrusive and inappropriate data on children.

Fact: States will make all policy decisions with regard to the collection, storage, and use of student assessment data. Smarter Balanced will adhere to all federal and state privacy laws, including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The Consortium will not share identifiable student-level data with the federal government. The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation amending the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Education Reform Sciences Act of 2002, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) all prohibit the creation of a federal database with students' personally identifiable information.

Fiction: These tests will require advanced technology that schools don't have and can't afford.

Fact: The Smarter Balanced assessment is being designed to work with the computing resources in schools today. The assessments can be offered on very old operating systems and require only the minimum processors and memory required to run the operating system itself (for example, the summative assessment can be delivered using computers with 233 MHz processors and 128 MB RAM that run Windows XP). Likewise, the file size for individual assessment items will be very small to minimize the network bandwidth necessary to deliver the assessment online. A 600-student middle school could test its students using only one 30-computer lab. To assist states that have not yet made the transition to online testing, the Consortium also will offer a paper-and-pencil option for the first three years of operational testing.

Fiction: These assessments will result in standardization of teaching and learning.

Fact: A founding principle of Smarter Balanced is that teachers and students need high-quality data, tools, and resources to support improvements in student learning. Smarter Balanced isn't just an end-of-year accountability test. It is an assessment system that features flexible, non-secure interim assessments to be offered at teachers' and schools' discretion throughout the school year and a digital library of formative assessment tools, practices, and professional development resources built by teachers, for teachers to improve the quality of information collected through the daily classroom activities of assignments, quizzes, and observation of student work. The end-of-year tests will help schools evaluate how well their students performed by comparing their aggregate data with aggregate data from other schools across the nation. The end-of-year assessments also will empower students and parents by providing them with a clear indication of how well their children are progressing toward mastering the academic knowledge and skills necessary for college and career readiness.