Common Core State Standards & Iowa Fact Sheet

Iowa Department of Education

What is a standard?

Every parent has expectations of what his or her child should or should not do. We expect them to look both ways before crossing the street or to not throw sand at the playground.

What about the classroom? What do we expect them to learn in school?

This is exactly what a standard is—*an expectation of what a student should know and be able to do.*

Standards provide a roadmap for teachers, parents, and students.

Standards:

- **Do not tell teachers *how* to teach.**
- **Lay out the knowledge and skills students should have so that teachers can build the best lessons and environments for their classrooms.**
- **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. To truly be effective, they must be accompanied by quality instruction and authentic assessments.

Does Iowa have standards?

Yes. Iowa has had standards since 2007 in reading, math, and science. The standards are in place to, in part, meet No Child Left Behind requirements.

Iowa also has the Iowa Core.

Signed into law in 2008, Iowa Core makes our roadmap more robust. The Iowa Core adds detail to the state's standards by specifically identifying essential skills and concepts for kindergarten through 12th grade students in literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and 21st century skills.

The Iowa Core was originally called a curriculum, but is not a set of courses or specific classroom materials like a traditional curriculum. It identifies the skills Iowa students must have and the concepts they must know in the areas listed above. In addition, it provides guidance and support for teaching and learning in Iowa classrooms. All Iowa school districts and accredited nonpublic schools are required to implement the Iowa Core by 2014-2015.

What are the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative was a voluntary state-led effort to develop a common set of standards for what students in our nation should know and be able to do.

The standards cover the areas of English language arts and mathematics for grades K-12.

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), led the effort to develop the standards. The federal government was not involved in the development of the standards.

They were released by CCSSO and the NGA Center on June 2, 2010.

The standards are:

- Aligned with expectations for college and career success;
- Built upon strengths and lessons of current state standards and standards of top performing nations;
- Informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- Evidence- and research-based.

For more information on the Common Core State Standards, please visit http://www.corestandards.org.

What was Iowa's role in the initiative?

Iowa was an early supporter of the idea to develop a set of voluntary common standards across the states.

A total of 48 states, including Iowa, signed a memorandum of understanding to participate in the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

In May 2009, then-Iowa Department of Education Director Judy Jeffrey wrote a letter stating that both she and Governor Chet Culver supported the work to provide a set of common core standards.

In the letter, Jeffrey stated, "This is not about one state competing with another, but a nation that must compete with the world."

During the winter of 2010, writers of the Common Core State Standards came to Iowa to review our work on the Iowa Core and to gather input on initial drafts of the Common Core.

The Iowa Department of Education staff reviewed the Common Core State Standards to see how they compare to the Iowa Core, which Iowa schools are currently working on implementing. See article at left for more information on the Iowa Core. See the next page for more information on Iowa's alignment study.

On July 29, 2010, the State Board of Education unanimously adopted the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics as part of the Iowa Core.

What does this mean for Iowa?

The State Board of Education voted 6-0 on July 29, 2010, to adopt the Common Core State Standards as part of the Iowa Core. With this vote, the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics replace the literacy and mathematics sections of the Iowa Core.

The Common Core State Standards does not replace our state mandated content standards for No Child Left Behind accountability, but becomes part of the Iowa Core, which all schools must implement by 2014.

With the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, the state will now revise the English language arts and mathematics sections of the Iowa Core. A final version of these sections will include all of the Common Core standards, plus additional identified skills and concepts.

States are allowed to include up to 15 percent additional items to the Common Core State Standards. Iowa is looking to make these additions to enhance the already strong alignment with the Iowa Core. These additions will be identified and brought to the State Board of Education in September for review and approval.

The alignment study results show a high level of similarity between the Iowa Core and the Common Core State Standards .

After this point, districts will have one set of expectations they can work from to begin the alignment process to their local curriculum. The Iowa Department of Education recommends school districts and nonpublic schools wait to begin the alignment process until after September, when the final version of the English language arts and mathematics sections of the Iowa Core will be complete.

Common Core State Standards and Iowa Core: How they compare.

The Iowa Department of Education conducted a formal alignment study—or comparison—for both literacy and mathematics in July and the department presented its findings at the board's July 29 meeting.

The alignment process was developed by Achieve, an independent, bipartisan, non-profit education reform organization based in Washington, D.C., to examine the alignment of the Iowa Core with the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics.

The panels that conducted the study consisted of representatives from the department, Iowa's area education agencies (AEAs), local districts, state education organizations, and independent consultants.

The alignment study results showed a *high level of similarity between the Iowa Core to the Common Core State Standards*.

Specifically, the study shows that 88 percent of the skills and concepts addressed in the Iowa Core for mathematics are also covered in the Common Core State Standards. For example, both the Common Core State Standards and the Iowa Core state that high school students must learn concepts of statistics.

In literacy or English language arts, 84 percent of the skills and concepts addressed in the Iowa Core are also covered in the Common Core State Standards. For example, both the Common Core and the Iowa Core address the use of reading strategies—or ways to approach reading that help students comprehend text.

What the alignment study means is the work Iowa school districts are currently doing to implement the Iowa Core will not change significantly with the adoption of the Common Core.

How they compare: Common Core State Standards and Iowa Core

Literacy/English Language Arts—Elementary

Common Core Standard: "With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text."

Iowa Core: "Use comprehension strategies: Ask and answer questions."

Mathematics—High School

Common Core Standard: "Use the rules of probability to compute probabilities of compound events in a uniform probability model."

Iowa Core: "Understand and apply the basic ideas of probability."

The Differences

While the examples above show the similarities that exist between the Iowa Core and the Common Core State Standards in literacy and mathematics, there are some differences. One example is the Iowa Core's use of grade spans versus standards by individual grade level. In short, Iowa uses grade spans to help address individual student learning and progress. In addition, the Iowa Core includes writing on demand, such as on-the-spot writing sample for a job interview or essay questions on a test. The Common Core does not include this skill.

Frequently asked questions about the Common Core and Iowa Core.

Why do we need the Common Core State Standards and the Iowa Core?

We need the Common Core State Standards and the Iowa Core to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. They will help ensure that students are receiving a high quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state. The Common Core State 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.

What does it mean to adopt the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics?

Adoption means that Iowa has taken formal action to make the Common Core State Standards part of the Iowa Core. This will provide a roadmap for school districts to build their local curriculum.

Will Iowa have additional expectations beyond those that are in the Common Core State Standards?

Yes. The Iowa Core covers more areas than the Common Core State Standards. The Common Core State Standards only address English language arts and mathematics. The Iowa Core covers literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and 21st century skills.

Does adoption of the Common Core State Standards mean the end of local control in Iowa education?

No. Standards are only one piece to increasing student achievement. Quality instruction, curriculum, professional development, and assessments are all needed. While aligned with the Common Core State Standards, school district curriculum will be developed locally—to best meet the needs of students sitting in the school classroom. Teachers will still have the ability to choose the appropriate textbooks, reading materials, and learning tools that meet the individual needs of their students.

Why is Iowa adopting the Common Core State Standards as part of the Iowa Core?

From the beginning of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, Iowa supported the effort to help our students compete on a national and international basis. Adopting the Common Core State Standards help us in this effort. In addition, by adopting the Common Core State Standards, Iowa can collaborate with other states to leverage resources not otherwise available to the state. For example, Iowa can join with a group or consortium of states to develop meaningful assessments of student learning.

The Iowa Core is the best fit for the inclusion of the Common Core State Standards because the Iowa Core outlines the skills and concepts that all Iowa students must know by the time they graduate. The Iowa Core provides the details Iowa teachers sought to help them meet the expectations set by the state mandated content standards for No Child Left Behind. The Common Core State Standards support and align with this detail.

How will the Common Core State Standards connect to local school curriculum?

Iowa school districts will need to review their own curriculum to determine if it is aligned with the Iowa Core, which now has the Common Core State Standards included.

Can schools begin looking at how their local curriculum aligns with the Iowa Core, which now includes the Common Core State Standards?

The Iowa Department of Education recommends school districts and nonpublic schools wait to begin the alignment process until after September, when the mathematics and English language arts sections of the Iowa Core will be finalized. After this point, districts will have one set of expectations they can work from to begin the alignment process to their local curriculum.

How will the English language arts and mathematics portions of the Iowa Core change as a result of the Common Core State Standards?

The final version will include all of the Common Core standards, plus additional identified skills and concepts that can be added to the Common Core State Standards. States are allowed to add up to 15 percent additional items to the Common Core. Iowa is looking to add to the Common Core to enhance the strong alignment with the Iowa Core. These additions will be identified and brought to the State Board of Education in September for review and approval.

Will the Common Core State Standards keep local teachers from deciding how to teach?

No. 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 or 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.

Iowa Department of Education

www.iowa.gov/educate

Common Core

www.corestandards.org

Iowa Core

www.corecurriculum.iowa.gov