

Guidance Document for Common Core State Standards Initiative

Last Updated July 30, 2010

1. What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a voluntary effort through the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices to develop a common core of standards that are aligned with college and work expectations, include rigorous content and skills, and are internationally benchmarked. The Common Core State Standards Initiative encompasses Common Core State Standards for English language arts, including reading, and mathematics. The intent is that these standards will be aligned to state assessment and classroom practice. Forty-eight states signed a memorandum of understanding to participate in the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

2. Why did Wisconsin join this national initiative?

Wisconsin is committed to ensuring that every child graduates from high school prepared for work, post-secondary education, and success in the global economy and society. The Wisconsin Model Academic Standards developed in the mid-1990's drew substantially from the best-thinking at the time, relying on the work that was done by many of the national professional organizations. Since that time, change has occurred at both the state and national levels. No longer can states afford fifty, individual development processes for standards outlining what students should know and be able to do. While education remains a state responsibility, it is a national priority to ensure our economic security. Further, the children we serve are far more mobile, thus calling for a national consistency. Finally, our students need to be prepared for both careers and post-secondary education; consequently, standards that are benchmarked to the highest levels both nationally and internationally serve as a foundation for that preparation.

3. Who participated in the development of the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards were developed by teams of educators and administrators. Three of the organizations that participated in the development of the Common Core State Standards were: Achieve, ACT, and the College Board. Some of the organizations that participated in review of the standards included the National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, International Reading Association, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and the National Council of Teachers of English.

4. How was input provided to the development of the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards initiative was led by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices on behalf of the states and territories that signed the Memorandum of Understanding for this project.

State education agencies provided input several times during the development of the standards. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction reviewed each draft and sent specific comments as feedback. When CCSSO and NGA released a public draft on March 10, the Department of Public Instruction made the draft available on its website and notified key education stakeholders, encouraging their review and comment on the draft. The public comment period ended April 2. Wisconsin citizens, including parents, educators, and representatives from education organizations submitted comments through the Common Core State Standards website.

5. What does it mean to adopt the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics?

Adoption means that Wisconsin has taken formal action to make the Common Core State Standards the policy document on which curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the state is based. In Wisconsin, the State Superintendent has the authority to adopt standards. When the Common Core State Standards were finalized on June 2, State Superintendent Tony Evers adopted these standards.

6. Will Wisconsin have additional English language arts and mathematics standards beyond those that are in the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards provide an important focus for student learning, allowing valid district to district and state to state comparisons and a common yardstick for assessments. Rather than adding additional standards, Wisconsin's development of model curriculum and sample units of instruction will help shape the implementation of the standards.

7. How will the Common Core State Standards connect to curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

The Common Core State Standards are posted on the Department of Public Instruction's website. Consistent with our commitment to provide local districts with leadership and technical assistance around curriculum, instruction, and assessment, Wisconsin will develop a curriculum framework aligned to the Common Core State Standards. This framework will help districts as they review their curriculum to determine alignment with the Common Core State Standards. State assessment also will be aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Local districts will want to begin to move toward implementing the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics to improve student achievement and prepare students to transition from the current WKCE to the new statewide assessment.

As part of the continuing work around the Common Core State Standards, the Department of Public Instruction is partnering with other states in multi-state consortia that will create common assessments for use as summative and benchmark assessments. Through these partnerships and the Common Core State Standards, the Department of Public Instruction will have the capability and capacity to develop high quality assessments in a cost-effective way and that are useful to connect standards with classroom instruction.

8. What does the Common Core State Standards Initiative mean for students with disabilities and for English language learners?

In the development of these standards, the inclusion of all types of learners was a priority. Chosen language was intended to be open and accessible to different learners. Educators may require additional supports and resources to help all students meet these expectations. How these standards are taught is important in reaching all students. For students with disabilities to meet high standards, their instruction must incorporate supports and accommodations such as instructional supports for learning based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning, instructional accommodations and/or assistive technology devices and services to ensure access to the general curriculum and the standards.

9. How will this impact the school and district accountability system in Wisconsin?

Accountability will not end, nor do we want it to end. Schools, districts, and communities as well as the Department of Public Instruction need to know how our students are performing, that they are on track for graduation from high school, and prepared to succeed in post-secondary education and the workforce. Over the years, various organizations have ranked individual states on their standards, assessments, proficiency standards, and other elements of accountability. As we move toward common standards and to common assessments, student achievement and progress will be transparent and comparable.

10. What is the timeline for transition to a Common Core State Standards-based state assessment for Wisconsin?

The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (commonly known as No Child Left Behind) requires that each state administer exams for reading and mathematics in each of grades 3-8 and once in high school, plus science once in elementary, middle, and senior high school grades. The Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE) meets these requirements and adds additional assessment in English language arts and social studies. In response to the Race to the Top assessment grant application, Wisconsin became a governing state within the 30-state consortium called the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). If funded, the SBAC will develop a next generation assessment system aligned to the Common Core standards. The guiding principles of SBAC mirror the recommendations of Wisconsin's Next Generation Assessment Task Force report (www.dpi.wi.gov/oea/ngatf.html). The development of this assessment will likely occur from 2010 through 2014 and is anticipated to be in place in the 2014-15 school year at the earliest. Piloting and field testing of the summative assessment will occur prior to the projected implementation in 2014-15. The WKCE will be administered in the Fall 2010 and will continue to fulfill federal assessment and accountability requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB). The state is exploring all possible options for the interim to facilitate a smooth transition to the new assessment system in 2014-15.

11. What resources will be available to help districts implement Common Core State Standards?

Prior to the emergence of the national Common Core State Standards Initiative, the Department of Public Instruction recognized the need to revise and update Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards. As a result, English language arts and mathematics teams were convened and charged with the responsibility of revision. Good work was done through collaboration with Achieve's American Diploma Project and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, two national organizations. The emergence of the Common Core State Standards, however, shifted the focus from states individually developing standards to states collaboratively developing standards. Now that the collaboratively-developed Common Core State Standards are finalized and adopted as Wisconsin's standards, the Department of Public Instruction will engage educators in the design of a curriculum framework and illustrative units of instruction incorporating elements of the previous work. These resources and examples of standards-based curriculum and assessments will be posted at the department's website and will provide direction for implementation.

12. What does the section "Literacy Standards for History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Standards" mean?

The section titled "Literacy Standards for History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Standards" is part of the English language arts standards. The message is clear, however, that literacy is the responsibility of all teachers, with all teachers teaching students how to apply the literacy skills needed to comprehend the content and demonstrate their understanding of the respective subject. This message is reinforced by the creation of these explicit standards for grades 6-12, while for grades K-5 comparable standards are integrated into the K-5 reading standards. This section provides a framework for a focused, system-wide approach to literacy so that students face the same coordinated expectations around reading and writing in social studies, science, and technical subject areas.

13. Will the academic standards in other subject areas be revised? If so, what is the schedule for revision?

Given that most of the academic standards were developed in the late 1990's along with the many curricular changes that have emerged, it is time for revision. Wisconsin's participation in the Common Core State Standards Initiative is the first step. Conversations are underway at the national level to expand the Common Core State Standards to include science and social studies. Work has begun at the state level to revise the standards in physical education. We are currently finalizing a schedule for revision of the other content areas with academic standards. Updates will continue to be available at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/standards>.

14. How are other resources and appendices accessed?

Wisconsin's adopted Common Core State Standards are available at the Department's website: <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/standards>. The appendices from the English language arts and mathematics standards will be provided as well as links to other resources as they become available.