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National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc)

CTE and the Common Core Standards - May 2011

What are the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) is an effort promoted by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to lead states in developing and implementing a common set of robust standards.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS)ⁱ are a single set of English-language arts and mathematics standards designed to ensure that all students graduate high school prepared to enter college or the workforce. The standards clearly define the knowledge and skills students need to thrive in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses and in workforce training programs.ⁱⁱ

The standards were developed through feedback groups and with input from the public, and vetted by an expert validation committee to ensure that they are research- and evidence-based. The same committee also validates state adoption of the standards. While states were not required to adopt the standards, doing so gave them a preference in their 2010 Race to the Top grant applications.

Forty-four states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands have formally adopted the CCSS. Participating states must adopt 100 percent of the CCSS but may add up to 15 percent more content to the standards. This will allow states to compensate for areas of disagreement and to add missing content if necessary.

The common standards can be accessed at: <http://www.corestandards.org/>

How will CTE be aligned to the Common Core State Standards?

Though the CCSS provide a thoughtful framework for academic coursework, they do not fully address the critical “career” component that is essential to every student’s education. The standards do not reference employability skills that all students need to be thoroughly prepared for further education and careers, nor do they integrate career-specific skills. Therefore, to provide students with a more comprehensive education, schools must integrate or align technical standards with the CCSS.

States choosing to implement the CCSS will likely need to make adjustments to ensure that their curriculum is aligned with the CCSS. The new standards provide a tremendous opportunity to integrate CTE content and practices through:

- **Programs of Study:** Integrated academic and CTE curricula offered through comprehensive programs of study give students the opportunity to learn, retain and apply core academic content more effectively.
- **Embedded Credit:** Allow students to meet academic standards requirements through CTE courses and CTE-focused programs of study.
- **Align Learner Levels:** Align standards to the requirements expected of students at the postsecondary and workforce levels to provide a seamless transition for students.
- **Accelerated Learning:** Provide opportunities for students to do college-level work through dual enrollment or early college high school.

Will the Common Core State Standards affect postsecondary institutions?

Yes. The CCSS are designed to prepare students for college and careers. The CCSSI defines college and career readiness as the ability “to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce-training [programs](#).”ⁱⁱⁱ Developing partnerships between secondary and postsecondary institutions is critical to the preparation of college- and career-ready students. Postsecondary institutions will know what students entering their programs should know and be able to do prior to entering college or a workforce training program. More consistent student preparation through CCSS may also reduce the need for remedial course offerings at postsecondary institutions.

How will the Common Core State Standards affect teachers?

CCSS provide goals for what knowledge and skills will help students succeed, but teachers, principals and administrators will decide how to meet the [standards](#).^{iv} Educators and administrators will continue to make decisions about their districts and curriculum, and teachers will still develop lesson plans and adjust instruction to meet students’ needs. The standards will guide teachers toward effective teaching strategies to aid in students’ preparation for college and careers. Additionally, CCSS will help colleges to prepare teachers more consistently and provide more targeted professional [development](#).^v

How will the Common Core State Standards be assessed?

Now that most states have formally adopted the CCSS, new assessment systems aligned with the standards are being developed using federal funding. The common assessments aim to provide feedback to support effective teaching practices; to compare data across schools, districts and states; and to prepare students for college and careers.

In September of 2010, the U.S. Department of Education awarded Race to the Top grants to two consortia of states to develop new assessments aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Each consortium may be awarded up to \$160 million from October 2010 through September 2014. Ideally, administration of the new assessments will result in stronger learning by providing ongoing feedback of instruction and learning.

The [Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers](#) (PARCC), a coalition of 25 states, is developing assessments to test students’ ability to analyze complex text, conduct research, and speak and listen effectively. PARCC does not require a summative assessment at the end of the year; rather, the coalition will administer a series of assessments throughout the school year. An average of all assessment scores will result in one final accountability [score](#).^{vi}

The [SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium](#) (SBAC) is comprised of 29 states. SBAC is developing computer adaptive technology that will adjust test question difficulty based on a student’s previous response. SBAC will provide student data throughout the year to help guide instruction and interventions, professional development, and students’ college and career readiness. The consortia will conduct one assessment at the end of each school year for accountability reporting but will also use interim assessments to measure students’ academic progress throughout the school [year](#).^{vii}

When will implementation of the Common Core State Standards begin?

The standards will go into effect in participating states at the start of the 2014-2015 school year. States belonging to an assessment consortium will use their group’s assessments for federal accountability purposes beginning in the same year.

Next Steps

The idea of a common core curriculum is being considered by some groups and is strongly opposed by others. Some critics argue that there is no evidence that a national curriculum would lead to higher student achievement, or that the CCSS are an inadequate base for building a national curriculum. Some proponents state that a common curriculum would tie together the country’s education system, allow comparisons of education systems between states, and provide a clear vision of what all students should learn and be able to do.

Standards in science and social studies are also expected in the future. Additionally, a Common Career Technical Core (CCTC) is being developed to align and support Career Technical Education (CTE) standards alongside the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics and English-language [arts](#).^{viii ix}

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- i Common Core State Standards Initiative, In the States, available at: <http://www.corestandards.org/in-the-states>
 - ii Common Core State Standards Initiative, About the Standards, available at: <http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards>
 - iii Common Core State Standards Initiative, FAQ, available at: <http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CoreFAQ.pdf>
 - iv <http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CoreFAQ.pdf>
 - v <http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CoreFAQ.pdf>
 - vi Florida Department of Education, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, available at: <http://www.fldoe.org/parcc/>
 - vii WestEd, SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium, available at: <http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/pj/582>
 - viii The Albert Shanker Institute, A Call for Common Content, available at: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/01/06/15common.h30.html?kn=WNXFzgJNow2ZXpWkxH2SkAXIACG1Zc6qH9TY&cmp=clp-sb-ascd>
 - ix Thomas B. Fordham Institute, <http://www.educationgadfly.net/flypaper/2011/05/fordham-responds-to-the-common-core-counter-manifesto/>