

Common Core State Standards Q&A

Question: *Do the Common Core Standards amount to a national curriculum for our schools?*

Answer: 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 educators 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. Common standards help to ensure that students are receiving a high quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state.

Question: *Will adopting the Common Core Standards bring all states' standards down to the lowest common denominator? Will South Dakota be taking a step backwards if we choose to adopt?*

Answer: The Common Core Standards were designed to build upon the most advanced current thinking about preparing all students for success in college and careers. They include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills. They are evidence-based. They build upon the strengths of the best state standards in the country and are informed by standards in other top-performing countries. Since this work began, there has been an explicit agreement that no state would lower its standards.

A cross-walking exercise indicates that the Common Core Standards align closely with South Dakota's current standards in English language arts. They will be *more rigorous* than the state's current math standards. However, they do align better with the math standards the state was in the process of developing when the Common Core initiative was first announced.

Question: *Will the standards be implemented through No Child Left Behind?*

Answer: The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort that is not part of NCLB, and adoption of the standards is not mandatory. States began the work to create clear, consistent standards before the Recovery Act or the Elementary and Secondary Education Act blueprint were released. The initiative was launched by state leaders through their membership in the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. While certain federal grants may favor common standards, the Common Core Standards are not a federal government initiative.

Question: *If adopted by the board in November, when will the Common Core Standards take effect?*

Answer: The implementation of new standards is a lengthy process. Any time South Dakota adopts new standards, there is time built in for development of test questions aligned to the new standards and for training of teachers. Currently, there is not a test available that aligns to the Common Core, so test development would be required. South Dakota is part of a consortium of 31 states that received a grant to begin development of a state-of-the-art assessment aligned to the Common Core.

The department is preparing an implementation timeline, which includes professional development, to present at the Board of Education's Nov. 29 meeting. If adopted, the department will also prepare an alignment of current standards to the Common Core Standards for districts to use when reviewing curriculum.