



# COMMON Standards, COMMON Assessments

*Standards, assessment and data updates from the Department of Public Instruction*

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**M**any new education initiatives are taking off across the country and right here in Wisconsin. It was just last June that Wisconsin adopted the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts.

In conjunction with the Common Core State Standards, Wisconsin is also involved with a consortium of states developing an assessment by the 2014-15 school year that will be used to measure how students stack up against the Common Core State Standards.

In the meantime, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and other state public education groups are working with educators and school leaders across the state to transition from the old Wisconsin Model Academic Standards to the Common Core State Standards.

## Developing the Assessment

With most states signed on to the Common Core State Standards, the next step is developing an assessment system to test students against these new standards. Wisconsin is one of the states leading the work to develop a new assessment.

Wisconsin is a governing state within the 30-state SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SMARTER). This consortium was formed in response to the Race to the Top assessment grant competition to develop an innovative assessment system aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

Both Wisconsin and the SMARTER consortium are committed to ensuring that assessment and instruction embody the Common Core State Standards and that all students, regardless of disability, language or subgroup status, have the opportunity to learn valuable content and to show what they know and can do in a variety of ways.

The SMARTER consortium is building a rigorous, balanced assessment system that will include multiple ways for students to demonstrate



## STARTING THE TRANSITION

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) continues its partnership with districts and the CESA Statewide Network to continue the transition to the Common Core State Standards. DPI recently released a new standards guidance document which includes important information about standards implementation here in Wisconsin. This standards guidance work is buoyed by six Guiding Principles for Teaching and Learning:

- 1 Every student has the right to learn.
- 2 Instruction must be rigorous and relevant.
- 3 Purposeful assessment drives instruction and affects learning.
- 4 Learning is a collaborative responsibility.
- 5 Students bring strengths and experiences to learning.
- 6 Responsible environments engage learners.

The Guidance Document is accompanied by a plethora of resources to guide implementation in classrooms, schools and districts. These resources are available on DPI's standards homepage: [dpi.wi.gov/standards/index.html](http://dpi.wi.gov/standards/index.html). □

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learning on the Common Core State Standards, including computer adaptive items — which means that items will vary in difficulty depending on how a student performs on previous items — technology enhanced items, and performance tasks.

The system will include an end-of-year summative assessment to be administered in grades 3-8 and 11, as well as benchmark assessments teachers may use throughout the year to receive rapid results on student learning. The consortium will also build an online digital library through which educators will be able to access high-quality resources to inform and improve classroom instruction. These resources will include formative strategies and tools classroom teachers may use to gather real-time feedback on student learning.

“We are transforming our assessment system to align with the

Common Core State Standards and help ensure we are preparing students to be college ready, and we will have state-level data and reporting systems that will provide important data to teachers, parents, and students to help drive instruction,” State Superintendent Tony Evers said.

### District Transitions

The summative assessment will be ready for administration in the 2014-15 school year. Until then, the DPI will continue to administer the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE) as well as the Wisconsin Alternate Assessment for Students with Disabilities (WAA-SwD).

The DPI urges districts to begin their transition to the Common Core State Standards because any systematic and sustained effort to understand the Common Core State Standards; align local curriculum and

instruction; and engage educators in deep analysis will return positive results on the WKCE, WAA-SwD, as well as the future SMARTER Balanced Assessment System.

Wisconsin quickly adopted the Common Core State Standards, in part, because they represent an enhancement to our academic standards, not a dramatic departure. However, the Common Core Standards in English language arts and mathematics do demand more rigor. As such, the DPI encourages districts and schools to begin the process of understanding the Common Core, and identifying ways to transition to these rigorous, robust standards.

Many schools, districts and CESAs have begun planning their transition work. For more information about standards implementation in Wisconsin: <http://dpi.wi.gov/standards/index.html>.

## Common Core vs WI Model Academic Standards



**Here's a look at a comparison** of two standards from the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards and the Common Core State Standards. As you can see, the Common Core State Standards are more specific and fill in where there may have been holes in the past.

GRADE	WI MODEL ACADEMIC STANDARD Reading Informational Text (1998 to June 2010)	COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS Reading Informational Text (June 2010 and Beyond)
6th	None	Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.
8th	Evaluate the themes and main ideas of a work considering its audience and purpose.	Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

## A “SMARTER” System for Educators

At the core of the SMARTER assessment system is the deep involvement of educators to develop formative strategies, test items, scoring rubrics and evaluating performance events.

In particular, educators across the consortium’s states will participate in the development of professional development, enhancing their assessment literacy while also improving instructional guidance. Through this work, the curriculum-instruction-assessment connections will become more explicit and intentional. These important connections between the Common Core State Standards and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment



## NEW ONLINE REPORTING SYSTEM

*Drawing upon the important connections between standards, instruction and assessment*, the Department of Public Instruction is releasing a new online reporting system this fall.

The new system, called WISEdash — the Wisconsin Information System for Education Dashboard — will provide school and district staff with direct access (through a log-in process) to a variety of data and reports on topics including enrollment and attendance, assessment (including Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam and Wisconsin Alternate Assessment for Students with Disabilities, ACT, and AP results), and student growth percentiles.

The system will grow to include dashboards and reports on even more topics, and will eventually provide public reporting, replacing the current WINSS system. □

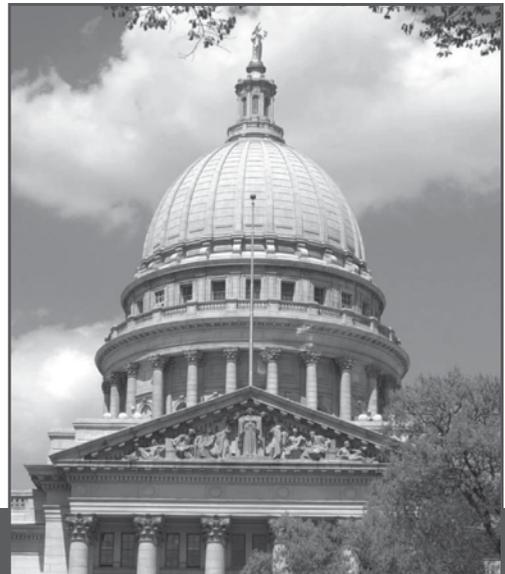


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System will provide clear learning targets for Wisconsin students, teachers and parents.

Since SMARTER was awarded the grant in October 2010, the consortium has developed a master work plan to drive development of the summative assessment; launched a strategy to engage institutions of higher education; hired a communications firm; and released a request for proposals for a Technology Readiness Tool to help states gauge their abilities and needs for conducting statewide computerized testing; and other tasks.

Looking ahead, contract work involving development of test questions for small-scale trials and pilot testing will occur during the spring of 2012. Field-test items will be developed between August 2012 and August 2013. Educators from all the SMARTER member states will be involved in this stage of item development, in which the bulk of items will be developed for the assessment.

### **SMARTER Content Specifications**

In other important news, SMARTER recently released, for public review and comment, content specifications for both English language arts and mathematics.

The content specifications work is led by Linda Darling Hammond, the SMARTER's senior research advisor, and Karin Hess, who is under a contract with the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, in consultation with the lead authors of the Common Core State Standards.

The content specifications include a description of the outcomes we should expect (i.e., "claims") when students are proficient in the knowledge and skills described in the Common Core

Standards, the types of evidence necessary to support those claims, and the score reporting categories the assessment could reliably provide for teachers and students.

In addition, the content specifications for both English language arts and mathematics will have two rounds of review. Final content specifications for English language arts are expected on Oct. 3. Final content specifications for mathematics are expected on Oct. 24. More information about the content specifications — including information about providing public comment — is available on the state of Washington's state superintendent website at [www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Resources.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/Resources.aspx).

The Common Core State Standards and SMARTER Balanced Assessment System are all part of a comprehensive picture of rigorous standards, high-quality instruction, purposeful assessment, and data-informed decisions. This vision is geared toward the most important work we all do: improving educational outcomes for the students of Wisconsin. ■

*Pinsonneault is director of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Office of Educational Accountability.*

## **DO YOU HAVE TO ADOPT THE Common Core Standards?**

**The simple answer is no, you don't.**

However, as mentioned in this article, the Department of Public Instruction greatly encourages transitioning from the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards to the Common Core State Standards so districts can improve student learning and score well on state assessments.

Steve Pophal, assistant principal at D.C. Everest Junior High School, served on the validation committee that reviewed the Common Core State Standards when they were being developed last year. Pophal agrees that school districts don't have to adopt the standards in their districts but that decision may hurt their students.

"For the district not to adopt those standards puts their students in peril," Pophal said.

Overall, Pophal said the Common Core State Standards should improve student learning in Wisconsin. □

"My suspicion is that these standards — for most districts — elevates their academic rigor, and I think most educators would agree that's a good thing."

*— Steve Pophal, assistant principal at D.C. Everest Junior High School*



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