

CTE and Common Core Standards

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What are common core standards?

The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) convened a state-led process to develop college and career readiness and K-12 common core state standards in English language arts and mathematics. Forty-eight states, two territories and the District of Columbia signed onto the Common Core State Standards Initiative, which ensured their state's involvement in the development process but does not require a state to adopt the final version of the Common Core Standards. These standards define the knowledge and skills students should have to be ready to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses and in workforce training programs. Standards in science and social studies are expected in the future.

While states are not required to adopt the standards, those that do will get a preference in their Race to the Top grant applications. States that indicate they will adopt the common standards by August 2, 2010 will get full points, and states that adopt the standards by December 31, 2010 will get partial points.

Both sets of standards were developed with extensive involvement from working and feedback groups, as well as multiple opportunities for public comment. However, there have been some critiques of the development process, including the limited representation of industry on the working and feedback groups. The standards were vetted by an expert validation committee composed of independent nationally and internationally recognized education experts to ensure that the standards are research- and evidence-based. This committee will also validate state adoption of the Common Core Standards.

You can access the college and career ready standards and the K-12 standards on the Common Core State Standards Initiative website at <http://www.corestandards.org/>.

How and when will states adopt the standards?

The final version of the standards is expected late spring/early summer 2010. Once completed, states will have the opportunity to voluntarily adopt the common core standards within three years. States that choose to adopt must adopt 100 percent of the Common Core standards, but may add an additional 15 percent of content to the standards. This will allow states to compensate for areas of disagreement and allows states to add content that they believe is missing from the standards but is important to their state.

How will common standards affect teachers?

Common core standards define *what* knowledge and skills will help students succeed, but teachers, principals and administrators will decide *how* the standards are to be met. The Common Core State Standards Initiative expects to develop additional resources to assist in the implementation of the standards including sample curriculum frameworks, but ultimately these frameworks as well as lesson plans and instructional strategies will need to be tailored by states, districts, schools and/or teachers as appropriate to a state's governance.

Criteria for standards

- Fewer, clearer, and higher
- Aligned with college and work expectations
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards
- Internationally benchmarked, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society
- Based on evidence and research

How to align CTE to the common core?

The college- and career-readiness standards and the K-12 English language arts and mathematic standards define the *academic* knowledge and skills students need to succeed, as defined by the authors, but there are additional standards that individuals must possess if they are to be truly career-ready. For example, employability skills such as team work and time management, as well as the career-specific skills, have not been referenced in the standards. These are skills that individuals must have in order to be successful in the workplace.

If your state, district, school or classroom has made progress in the integration of academic and CTE standards, this will likely need to be re-evaluated if your state adopts the Common Core Standards. Because the Common Core Standards will have new content or be organized in a new way, integrated and aligned instruction will need to be updated. If your state, district, school or classroom does not have any integrated coursework or instruction, the Common Core State Standards present a tremendous opportunity to integrate CTE content and practices with these new standards. Here are a few ways you may consider taking advantage of this opportunity to align or re-align your CTE standards with the Common Core:

- **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** - Students should be allowed to meet academic standards requirements through CTE courses and CTE-focused programs of study.
- **Align learner levels** – While these standards are aimed at making students college and career ready, they must be aligned to the requirements expected of students at the postsecondary and workforce levels.
- **Accelerated learning** - The standards should allow for strategies that give students the opportunity do college-level work, such as dual enrollment and early college high school.
- **Assessments** - Standards should be measured via multiple assessments including performance-based assessments, like those used in CTE

Conversation starters for CTE and the Common Core Standards in your state, district or classroom:

- How do these standards compare to our existing state standards?
- How will this impact integrated or embedded credit?
- Will this help or hinder articulation agreements?
- Can these standards met through embedded CTE courses and programs?
- How will these new standards impact integrated academic and CTE instruction?
- What should the related assessments look like?
- How will instruction change? Will it change *how* instruction is delivered?

Next steps

After the standards are adopted by states, much more work will be needed to ensure that they are successfully implemented. These steps will include the development of curriculum frameworks and aligned assessments, significant professional development, alignment of classroom resources, and continued work on the alignment of secondary exit and postsecondary education entrance requirements.

Additional resources about the Common Core Initiative including fact sheets, details on the development process, copies of presentations, etc. can be found at: www.corestandards.org.

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