



**Common Core State Standards Initiative**  
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In spring 2009, the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices announced that forty-seven states and the District of Columbia had signed on to a Common Core State Standards Initiative and that a state-led effort was underway to develop common standards in English and mathematics. The Initiative was tasked with developing a set of college- and career-ready anchor standards and subsequently a set of K-12 standards that are rigorous, internationally benchmarked, aligned with college and career expectations, and research based. The college- and career-ready standards were released in September 2009 and the final draft of K-12 standards are expected to be released in April 2010.

### **Why Common Core State Standards?**

Today, too few students graduate from high school and, among those who do, too few graduate well-prepared for life after high school. Approximately 30% of students do not graduate high school in four years, a rate that grows to nearly 50% for minority and low-income students. Approximately 30% of first-year college students must take remedial courses in English and/or math in order to learn, or relearn, high school level skills before they can even begin taking credit-bearing college courses—all the while paying college tuition. It is clear that in order to prepare our students and equip them with skills they need to succeed, we must set the right expectations and goals and ensure that all students have access to a world-class education.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative grew out of existing state efforts to do just that. For years, states have been working to develop rigorous expectations for all students, align those expectations to the demands of college and careers, and make sure that students graduate from high school with the skills necessary to succeed in college and compete in the world economy. Rather than having 50 different sets of standards, the Common Core State Standards Initiative reflects commonly held expectations of college and employers in math and English and ensures that access to a college- and career-ready education will not be determined by the zip code in which a student lives. The Initiative is bringing attention and urgency to setting the bar at the appropriate level for today's students.

### **Research and evidence base for the Common Core State Standards**

The Common Core State Standards will be “fewer, clearer, and higher” than the typical state standards as well as internationally benchmarked and aligned with college and career expectations. To that end, the development process included the review and consideration of many sources, including research studies, existing standards from the U.S and abroad, and the professional judgment of teachers, content area experts, and college faculty.

### ***International benchmarks***

To ensure that the standards prepare students to be globally competitive, the development teams used a number of sources, including the frameworks for PISA and TIMSS; the International Baccalaureate syllabi; the American Institutes for Research report, *Informing Grades 1-6 Mathematics Standards Development: What Can Be Learned From High-Performing Hong Kong, Korea, and Singapore* and; the A+ Composite found in *A Coherent Curriculum: The Case for Mathematics* by Bill Schmidt, Richard Houang, and Leland Cogan.

In addition, the development teams looked to the standards of a number of individual countries and provinces to inform the content, structure and language of the Common Core State Standards. In *mathematics*, twelve set of standards were selected to help guide the writing of the standards: Belgium, Canada [Alberta], China, Chinese Taipei, England, Finland, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Japan, Korea, and Singapore.<sup>i</sup> In *English language arts*, the writing team looked closely at ten sets of standards from Australia (New South Wales and Victoria), Canada (Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario), England, Finland, Hong Kong, Ireland, and Singapore.<sup>ii</sup>

### ***Postsecondary and workplace expectations***

In addition to looking abroad, the development team also relied on existing state standards and research studies conducted in the U.S. that focus on defining what is meant by college and career readiness. Specifically, the development teams looked to research conducted by Achieve, ACT and the College Board.<sup>iii</sup>

(Note: The above sections provide just a snapshot of the evidence used during the development process. Please visit [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org) to see the full list of research and evidence.)

### ***How was evidence used to inform the development of the Common Core State Standards?***

The international benchmarks and research and the college- and career-ready expectations research were used to guide critical decisions in the following areas:

- *Whether particular content should be included:* One of the principal ways the research and evidence were used in the development process was as a guide when making tough decisions about whether content should be included or excluded.
- *When content should be introduced and how that content should progress:* For example, the progression of topics in the international mathematics standards helped the development team make decisions about when to introduce topics in the Common Core State Standards as well as when to stop focusing on them.
- *Ensuring focus and coherence:* Standards from other countries tend to be very focused, including only what is absolutely necessary.
- *Organizing and formatting the standards:* Certain organizational aspects or characteristics of international standards that promoted clarity and ease of reading and use served as a model for the Common Core State Standards.

- *Determining emphasis on particular topics in standards:* Where emphasis on particular topics was found repeatedly in international standard, this was instructive in determining their importance for inclusion in the Common Core State Standards.

## **The Process and Timeline for Common Core State Standards**

Built into the Common Cores State Standards process are three points of external feedback in addition to the core writing team and extended work teams: the External and State Feedback Group, the Validation Committee, and public review. The External and State Feedback Group, consisting of postsecondary faculty, teachers, state curriculum experts, researchers, and other experts, has provided guidance to the development team throughout the process. The Validation Committee will provide an additional check to ensure the standards are evidence-based. The K-12 standards will be released for public review and comment in March 2010. The final K-12 standards will be released in April 2010. Thirty states have indicated timelines that would allow for adoption within 18 months.

## **Common Core State Standards Benefit Everyone**

The significant promise of the Common Core State Standards Initiative is not just the development of standards but what is possible once a critical mass of states adopt the standards: the ability for states to collectively create and use high-quality common tools such as common assessments, curriculum, instructional materials (i.e. textbooks, software) and professional development programs. These steps are critical for ensuring that this effort is sustainable, transforms our education system, and ultimately benefits students, teachers, parents, and communities.

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<sup>i</sup> Eight of these were high-performers on either TIMSS, PISA or both: Belgium, Canada [Alberta], Chinese Taipei, Finland, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and Singapore. England and Ireland, which have uneven performances on international assessments, were included because of their cultural links to the United States. China and India were included because of their growing global competitiveness.

<sup>ii</sup> Differences in language have a greater impact on the teaching and learning of language arts than of mathematics, so the teams looked primarily at English-speaking countries. All were high-performers on PISA except Singapore, which did not participate, and England, which as in mathematics was selected partly for its cultural links to the United States.

<sup>iii</sup> Research materials included *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma that Counts (Achieve)*<sup>iii</sup>, *The American Diploma Project Workplace Study (Achieve)*, *Ready for College and Ready for Work: Same or Different? (ACT)*; *ACT National Curriculum Survey 2005-06*, *WorkKeys requirements (ACT)*; *A Survey to Evaluate the Alignment of the New SAT® Writing and Critical Reading Sections to Curricula and Instructional Practices (College Board)*; and *AP Course Descriptions in English Language and Composition, English Literature and Composition, European History, and World History (College Board)*.