

From Common Core to Iowa Core Webcast Transcript

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My name is Rita Martens and I am the Department of Education's lead consultant for the Iowa Core. In this presentation I will describe the process that the Department went through in integrating the National Common Core State Standards into the Iowa Core. This is the first of a series of planned webcasts orienting teachers and administrators to the new Iowa Core in literacy and mathematics.

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As you probably already know, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) developed the Common Core State Standards. These English-language arts and mathematics standards for grades K-12 were developed in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders including content experts, states, teachers, school administrators and parents. The standards establish clear and consistent goals for learning that will prepare America's children for success in college and work.

The standards are informed by the highest, most effective models from states across the country and countries around the world, and provide teachers and parents with a common understanding of what students are expected to learn. Consistent standards will provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live.

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These standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs. The standards:

- Are aligned with college and work expectations;
- Are clear, understandable and consistent;
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards; Are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- Are evidence-based.

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Although there were some significant differences between the Iowa Core and the Common Core – grade level expectations vs. grade span expectations, for example, – there was one important similarity: neither is a curriculum, but rather a set of shared goals and expectations for knowledge and skills to help students succeed.

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As a member of the Council of Chief State School Officers, our former director Judy Jeffrey signed on to the Common Core effort, indicated Iowa's support for developing a common set of standards that all states would use to ensure the post-secondary success of their students. Director Jeffrey, along with many others, saw these Common Core State Standards as a critical step in advancing nationwide educational reform.

This effort began in 2008 and throughout the process, Iowa Department of Education leadership had the opportunity to review drafts and offer suggestions for improvement. In December 2009, Common Core writers came to Iowa to meet with the DE to review the Iowa Core in literacy and math and to share the work on the Common Core.

During the spring of 2010 the Iowa State Board of Education began studying these standards with an eye toward their possible adoption.

Acting director Kevin Fangman also commissioned an alignment study between the Iowa Core essential concepts and skills in literacy and mathematics and the Common Core standards.

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This study, supported by Brad Niebling, who is an Iowa expert in curriculum alignment, was done by teams of Iowa literacy and mathematics experts. The comparison provided the answers to three critical questions:

- What was the degree of alignment between the Iowa Core and the Common Core?
- What portions of the Common Core were not included in the Iowa Core?
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The study found that that 93 percent of what was included in the Common Core was also included in the Iowa Core in the content area of English/language arts. This meant that for schools that had already begun to revise their curriculum to align with the essential concepts and skills of the Iowa Core in literacy, there was only seven percent new content they now needed to now consider.

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There were more of the essential concepts and skills from the Iowa Core that were not included in the Common Core. This was largely due to the fact that the Common Core in literacy does not include a viewing strand as did the Iowa Core.

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The match between Common Core standards and the Iowa Core was closer in mathematics. Only one percent of the Common Core Standards was not matched by at least one of the Iowa Core essential concepts and skills.

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Also, there were a few essential concepts and skills in mathematics that weren't included in the Common Core.

The findings clearly illustrated that there was a high degree of similarity between the Iowa Core and the Common Core. This information was important to the State Board as they considered whether Iowa could adopt the Common Core Standards.

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According to the sponsoring organizations (National Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers), in order for a state to adopt the Common Core standards, it had to adopt the standards word-for-word. The introduction, appendices, and other content were optional. States were also given the option of adding up to 15 percent additional content. What constituted the 15 percent would be up to the state's discretion, and the each state would be responsible for assessing its additional content. States were also cautioned that they were responsible for not "overloading the system".

Iowa used the results of the alignment study to identify the additional content to add to the national standards. So the Common Core standards with some carefully selected additions have become the new Iowa Core standards in literacy and mathematics.

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These new Iowa standards can be found at the Iowa Core website: www.corecurriculum.iowa.gov.

If you scroll down the page, you'll find two Word documents. One is the new literacy standards for grades K-12 and the other is the K-12 mathematics standards.

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As you scroll through these documents, you'll find the new grade or grade-span-specific content with the Iowa-specific content indicated with an IA designation. Here is an example.

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Because the Common Core was integrated into the Iowa Core, we are following the legislated deadlines for full implementation. So the new standards must be integrated into the content for all students in grades 9-12 in mathematics and literacy by July 1, 2012 and for students in kindergarten through grade 8 by 2014-2015.

The Department and the Area Education Agencies are collaborating to provide districts and schools with the support they need to make the transition to the new standards.

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If you have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me. My contact information is listed here.

The Department understands and appreciates the hard work educators will put into implementing these new standards and thanks you for your time in listening to this presentation.