



LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING

Iowa Department of Education

The Iowa Core

→ What is it?

The Iowa Core is about helping all students — from pre-kindergarteners to high school seniors — improve their academic achievement in the classroom. But it is also about helping prepare every student to live, learn, work, and succeed in the 21st century.

The Iowa Core is an innovative, comprehensive student-based approach to education that supports high expectations for students. It engages them in more relevant learning experiences and helps them attain deeper knowledge through problem-solving and inquiry. With the Iowa Core, instruction focuses on challenging students and providing assessments that provide feedback to tailor instruction and maximize the potential of each and every learner.

The Iowa Core — together with the state core content standards — provides rigorous expectations for all students and gives teachers the tools to change teaching and learning in this state. It also means Iowa will be ready to incorporate national standards because the Iowa Core provides explicit guidance to reach high expectations.

The impact of the Iowa Core goes beyond the classroom. When fully implemented, communities and schools will work more closely together. The Iowa Core will improve teaching and learning by bringing together educators, parents, and community members to strive toward a common goal of increasing student achievement.

The Iowa Core identifies essential concepts and skills in literacy, math, science, social studies, and 21st century learning skills (civic literacy, financial literacy, technology literacy, health literacy, and employability skills) that all Iowa students must know by the time they graduate from high school.

What the Iowa Core *IS NOT*...

- An initiative to make all Iowa schools teach the same lesson plans on the same days, or use the same textbooks.
- An effort to subvert the creative contributions of Iowa's talented teaching professionals.
- A program that will divert money from other education needs.

To help teachers implement the Iowa Core, the Iowa Department of Education and area education agencies (AEAs) are working together to offer assistance to school districts. This assistance is required because implementation of the Iowa Core is not a simple check list; it fundamentally addresses the content taught, the instruction of the content, and types of assessment.

Therefore, the Iowa Core not only describes what students must master, but it helps teachers determine effective instruction through statewide and AEA-level professional development opportunities.

What the Iowa Core *IS*...

- Helping all students achieve in the areas of literacy, math, science, social studies, and 21st century skills.
- Preparing students to live, learn, work and succeed.
- Bringing together schools and communities to increase student achievement.
- Meeting the expectations set by Iowa's rigorous and relevant educational standards.
- Providing strong support to students and teachers as national standards are integrated in the Iowa Core.



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→ How will this initiative help Iowa students?

The Iowa Core works to ensure that students will have a deep understanding of the essential concepts and skills in the key areas of literacy, math, science, and social studies, as well as in civic literacy, financial literacy, technology literacy, health literacy, and employability skills that are critical to being prepared for the 21st century.

By focusing on *what* is being taught as well as *how* to teach, the Iowa Core provides high expectations for quality student work. It moves students beyond just knowing content to deeper thinking, understanding, problem solving, and inquiry.

These are the teaching methods that are used in countries that are outpacing the United States.

The Iowa Core enhances student engagement by involving students in interesting, relevant learning experiences that are motivating and lead to positive outcomes. Students will leave school equipped to succeed regardless of their postsecondary plans.

→ How did it come about?

The foundation for the Iowa Core began with Senate File 245 (May 2005) and Senate File 588 (May 2007), which established the voluntary Model Core Curriculum in kindergarten through grade 12 in the areas of literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and 21st century skills.

In 2008, the legislature proposed that the Model Core Curriculum be fully implemented by all Iowa schools — public and accredited nonpublic. The Governor signed Senate File 2216 into law May 1, 2008, which requires the full implementation in high schools by 2012-2013 and in kindergarten through eighth (K-8) grade by 2014-2015.

→ Where does this initiative currently stand?

Full implementation of the Iowa Core is an extensive multi-year process that takes place in three stages:

- **2008-2009:** Leadership Development
- **2009-2013:** Planning and Implementation
- **2014-2015 and Beyond:** Full Implementation

Implementation plans are required for each Iowa high school by July 1, 2010, and for all K-8 schools across the state by July 1, 2012.

The Iowa Department of Education is currently working with all AEAs to support the roll-out of the Iowa Core with local school districts and accredited nonpublic schools.

A major current focus is professional development, as opportunities are being designed to promote quality teaching with high student expectations. Funds provided by the legislature in 2009 have established a network of individuals who provide ongoing support and professional development to schools.



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In the future, new assessments will be developed that are aligned with the Iowa Core, providing schools, teachers, and parents with better tools to follow the progress of students.

Of the \$1,980,000 allocated by the Iowa General Assembly in support of the Iowa Core, \$1.2 million has been distributed to the AEAs to support 16.5 full-time equivalent positions and associated expenses for professional development and training. The AEAs are also contributing staff time and resources beyond these funds to accommodate local school needs and development efforts. The remaining \$780,000 is committed to the continued development of the Iowa Core through the development of processes and tools needed to support school implementation as well as the preparation of unique professional development materials.

→ Where can I get more information?

Please visit the Iowa Department of Education website at www.iowa.gov/educate, and click on “Iowa Core Curriculum” in the left-hand side of the homepage. Additional information also follows this brief.