



Common Core State Standards Q&A

Missouri's Learning Standards are updated regularly so that students graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills they need for success in college, other postsecondary training and careers. The Missouri Learning Standards include the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts and mathematics. For additional information about the Missouri Learning Standards and the Common Core State Standards, visit dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/Common_Core.html.

The Standards

What are the Common Core State Standards?

The Missouri Learning Standards include the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which are a set of high-quality academic expectations in English-language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The CCSS define both the knowledge and skills all students should master by the end of each grade level to be on track for success in college and a career. They were created through a state-led initiative and have been adopted by more than 40 states, including Missouri. The CCSS have enhanced Missouri's state standards.

The Missouri State Board of Education adopted the CCSS in 2010. Most schools have already begun transitioning to the standards, which are set to be fully implemented in Missouri during the 2014-15 school year.

Where can I find the Common Core State Standards?

You can find and read the Common Core State Standards at www.corestandards.org.

Why did Missouri adopt the Common Core State Standards?

Missouri regularly updates its learning standards so that students graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills they need for success in college and careers. Leaders in work force development and in postsecondary education have voiced the need to better prepare students for postsecondary success. Future generations of students will face a job market requiring higher levels of knowledge and skills. Students increasingly need education beyond high school at a four-year college, community college, vocational technical school or other type of postsecondary training program.

Currently, nearly one-third of students entering college in Missouri are required to take remedial classes before they are able to enroll in college-level courses. Students pay tuition but do not receive college credit for remedial classes. This increases higher education costs for families and students and adds to the amount of time required to obtain a degree.

The Common Core State Standards are a common sense first step toward ensuring that students obtain the best possible education no matter where they live. With clear academic expectations for each grade level, teachers, parents, and students can work together toward shared goals. The standards draw from the best existing standards in the country and are benchmarked to top-performing nations around the world,

ensuring that students are well-prepared to compete not only with their peers at home, but also with students around the world, maintaining America's competitive edge.

What are the benefits of the Common Core State Standards?

With consistent standards, states have the option to pool their collective expertise and resources in order to reduce costs for each individual state and bring the most well-informed, creative thinking to various efforts around the standards. For example, states can work together to:

- Make expectations for students as clear as possible to parents, teachers, and the general public.
- Encourage the development of resources for educators aligned to the standards.
- Implement high-quality, locally-developed curriculum that best enable teachers to help all students reach the standards.
- Develop and implement comprehensive assessment systems to measure student performance based on the standards and replace existing testing systems that often are inconsistent, burdensome, and confusing.
- Evaluate and advocate for policy changes needed to help students and educators meet the standards.

What grade levels are included in the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards are for grades K-12. Research from the early childhood and higher education communities also were considered in the development of the standards.

Do the Common Core State Standards include standards for science, social studies or other subjects?

No. The Common Core State Standards are for English language arts and mathematics. They do not include standards for science, social studies or any other subjects.

Why are the Common Core State Standards for just English-language arts and mathematics?

English-language arts and mathematics were the subjects chosen for the Common Core State Standards because they teach skills upon which students build skill sets in other subject areas. The English-language arts standards address literacy across disciplines, including science, social studies and technical subjects.

Do the Common Core State Standards incorporate both content and skills?

Yes, both content and skills are important and have been incorporated in the Common Core State Standards. One of the criteria by which the standards have been evaluated is whether or not they include rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving and communications.

How will the Common Core State Standards impact gifted children, children with special needs and English-language learners?

The Common Core State Standards create consistent, high expectations for all students and provide a greater opportunity for states to share experiences and best practices that can lead to an improved ability to best serve special populations. As with Missouri's current learning standards, school districts will establish curriculum at the local level to meet the state's learning standards, including the CCSS. Educators will develop lesson plans that reflect the curriculum and provide for the educational needs of all students, including those receiving gifted and special education services. The CCSS include information on the application of the standards for English-language learners and students with disabilities. Alternate assessments are being developed for students with the most severe cognitive disabilities, as are English-language proficiency assessments for English-language learners; both are aligned to the CCSS.

The CCSS do not encompass everything that could or should be taught, and educators are free to go above and beyond the standards for gifted students as well as make modifications for special education students.

Why do the Common Core State Standards emphasize non-fiction? What are the new nonfiction requirements?

Twenty-first century readers need opportunities to explore, analyze and closely read a range of texts that represent all modes and a variety of genres. The Common Core State Standards call for 50 percent of all reading throughout the school day, including reading in science, social studies, and other classes at the elementary school level, to be nonfiction. Currently, students in elementary school read 20 to 30 percent nonfiction. The CCSS emphasize building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction and informational texts in addition to literature. Students read a balance of informational and literary texts. It is not a question of one or the other. The standards offer guidance; the “what” *and* the “how” are still up to teachers.

Do the Common Core State Standards instruct teachers to teach using certain methods?

No. The Common Core State Standards documents do not provide instructional strategies or limit instructional strategies. The CCSS do provide illustrations and examples of the content described by a standard but do not establish a preference for a particular strategy. In fact, the opposite is true. Teachers continue to be encouraged to use the many methods, strategies and algorithms available to them as they instruct students.

The Development Process

Who led the effort to establish the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards were created through a state-led initiative with the goal of establishing a single set of clear educational standards for English-language arts and mathematics to be shared among states. The effort was spearheaded by governors and school chiefs through their membership in the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), respectively.

How were the Common Core State Standards created?

Governors and schools chiefs convened a diverse team of teachers, parents, administrators, researchers and experts in the education community to design the Common Core State Standards in order to ensure they reflect the best current thinking in education, the realities of the classroom, and aspirations for our children. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) also provided public comment periods for all stakeholders to submit feedback on the draft standards documents.

To ensure this process was open, inclusive and rigorous, several work groups and committees were formed:

- The Standards Development Work Group was responsible for determining and writing the standards.
- The Feedback Group provided expert input on draft documents, drawing from a wealth of education research.
- The Validation Committee—comprised of independent, national education experts—reviewed the standards to ensure they met the development criteria. Its members were nominated by states and national organizations, and selected by a group of 12 governors and school chiefs who held leadership positions at the NGA Center and CCSSO.

How was Missouri involved in writing the Common Core State Standards? How many Missourians were involved in the process?

The list of the Work Group and Feedback Group members can be found at http://www.nga.org/cms/home/news-room/news-releases/page_2009/col2-content/main-content-list/title_common-core-state-standards-development-work-group-and-feedback-group-announced.html. Two-hundred fifty-seven Missourians provided feedback.

Were teachers involved in the creation of the Common Core State Standards?

Yes, teachers have been a critical voice in the development of the standards to ensure that they are practical in the classroom. The National Education Association (NEA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), among other organizations, have been instrumental in bringing together teachers to provide specific, constructive feedback on the standards.

Did the federal government play a role in developing the Common Core State Standards?

No, the federal government was not involved in the development of the Common Core State Standards. This has always been, and continues to be, a state-led and driven initiative. States voluntarily adopted and are currently implementing the standards on an individual basis. These standards are in no way federally-mandated –rather, they are the standards of more than 45 individual states.

By what criteria were the Common Core State Standards developed?

The Common Core State Standards were developed according to the following criteria, set by states through governors and school chiefs:

- Alignment with expectations for college and career success.
- Clarity, so that educators and parents know what they need to do to help students learn.
- Consistency, so that students are not taught to a lower standard just because of where they live.
- Inclusivity of both content and the application of knowledge through higher-order skills.
- Grounded in the strengths and lessons of existing state standards.
- Benchmarked to top-performing nations across the world.
- Realistic for effective use in the classroom.
- Evidence and research-based.

How are educational standards determined?

Each state has its own process for developing, adopting and implementing standards. As a result, past academic expectations of students have varied widely from state to state. The Common Core State Standards have now established the same rigorous expectations for a majority of students; however, each state remains fully in control of its own standards and all related decisions.

How did Missouri get involved with the Common Core State Standards?

Governor Jay Nixon and Commissioner of Education Chris L. Nicastro, with the approval of the State Board of Education, signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) in 2009 permitting Missouri to work with other states on the **development** of the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics. The MOA document can be found at dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/documents/Common-Core-Standards-MOA.pdf.

After carefully reviewing and gathering public feedback on the final version of the standards, the Missouri State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010.

How were the Common Core State Standards internationally benchmarked?

The Common Core State Standards were benchmarked by looking at the countries that perform well on international tests such as the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) and TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) and states that perform well on the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) tests. The mathematics document specifically sites documents from: Alberta, Canada; Belgium; China; Chinese Taipei; Denmark; England; Finland; Hong Kong; India; Ireland; Japan; Korea; New Zealand; Singapore; Victoria (British Columbia); and existing state documents. The English language arts team consulted numerous international models, including those from Ireland, Finland, New Zealand, Australia (by state), Canada (by province), Singapore, the United Kingdom and others.

Were any pilot studies conducted for the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards build on the best standards from high-performing states and countries throughout the world. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education carefully reviewed the CCSS before adoption. During development, Missouri was one of a few states that received draft documents as they were developed. Members of the Department and select content experts from around the state of Missouri carefully examined the drafts to gauge alignment with the Show-Me Standards and their fit with Missouri's goals for its students. The staff also compared the new standards with existing Missouri standards to ensure that the CCSS would truly be more rigorous for students. This crosswalk can be accessed at dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/Common_Core.html.

Implementation

What do the Common Core State Standards mean for students?

The Common Core State Standards hold students to rigorous, yet attainable, academic benchmarks designed to ensure college and career readiness. The standards also provide important clarity for students—and their parents and teachers—about the knowledge and skills they should be learning at every step in their academic careers. Furthermore, consistent standards will allow students to stay on track when their family moves between states, rather than entering a new school behind or ahead of their peers, as was often the case when standards varied from state to state.

How will the Common Core State Standards reduce the need for remedial classes in college?

The Common Core State Standards are key to the state's initiative to become one of the top 10 states in education by 2020. The standards are more rigorous and are designed to better prepare students for college, other postsecondary training and a career.

In the fall of 2009, the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) staff compared the Higher Education Curriculum Alignment Initiative entry-level competencies in mathematics and English language arts to the draft standards of the CCSS to assess the extent of alignment between the two sets of standards. The MDHE also asked content experts in both mathematics and English language arts to do a similar analysis. Both the MDHE and the content experts concluded that there were no significant gaps in alignment between the Curriculum Alignment Initiative competencies and the CCSS.

Higher standards alone do not guarantee increased student achievement. Missouri students also need highly qualified educators, early childhood support and strong parental involvement to reach their goals.

How will the Common Core State Standards impact teachers?

Great educators are at the core of a great education. Teachers helped design the Common Core State Standards to ensure that they reflect the realities of the classroom and provide the clarity and consistency teachers need to make sure their students stay on track and are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need for success. The standards do not tell teachers how to teach, but rather establish what students need to learn. It is up to schools and teachers to decide how to best help students reach the standards.

Additionally, the standards will:

- Help colleges and professional development programs better prepare teachers.
- Establish a foundation for educators to work collaboratively with their peers to develop and share resources, expertise, curriculum tools and professional development.
- Allow states to develop and provide better assessments that accurately measure whether students have learned what was taught.
- Guide educators toward curriculum and teaching strategies that will give students a deep understanding of the subjects and skills they need to learn.

Who is in charge of implementing the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards are being implemented by each state individually through the collaboration of various groups including state education agencies, local education authorities, institutes of higher education, state educator associations and individual school leaders. The standards do not tell principals how to run their schools, and they do not tell teachers how to teach, nor do they mandate or include any accompanying assessments, curriculum or instructional materials. While states are voluntarily coming together on certain implementation-related efforts, each state is independently and solely responsible for putting the standards into practice.

Will local teachers be able to decide what and how to teach with the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards simply establish a clear set of goals and expectations that will prepare students with knowledge and skills to help them succeed. It is up to local teachers, principals, superintendents and others to decide how the standards will be reached. Teachers will continue to develop lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.

Will curriculum and instructional material aligned to the Common Core State Standards be developed?

Yes, there are already state-led efforts underway to develop standards-aligned curriculum and instructional materials. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has convened a group of states to work together to address systemic approaches to managing the transition to the Common Core State Standards. It is specifically designed to help states implement the standards, allowing them to share best practices and work together on identifying and disseminating specific tools for states to use. By collaborating, states can conserve both money and resources and make sure that top talent from across the country has a seat at the table to create the highest quality products. Whether Missouri school districts decide to use these tools is still a local decision.

When will the Common Core State Standards be fully implemented?

The Common Core State Standards are set to be fully implemented by the 2014-15 school year. Missouri school districts will have had five years of revising curriculum and training educators by the time the standards are fully implemented.

How will we know if students are meeting the Common Core State Standards?

Just as students currently take tests through the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) to determine if they are meeting Missouri's current learning standards, students will continue to take tests near the end of the school year to determine if they are meeting the Common Core State Standards.

How do standards impact teacher evaluations?

Standards are goals for student learning, and teachers are the guides to helping students reach those goals. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has identified seven essential principles and created a state model for educator evaluations, which are used to guide the local educator evaluation process. Evidence of student learning – using state standards in all subjects as a guide – is a part of that process, along with multiple other measures for evaluating effective teaching.

Is the federal government playing a role in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards?

No. The federal government is not implementing the Common Core State Standards.

Will the Common Core State Standards be updated?

Yes, there will be an ongoing state-led development process to continuously improve the Common Core State Standards.

Will the Common Core State Standards require schools to purchase specific text books and other teaching materials?

No. School districts will continue to select the text books they use for instruction. Schools will determine their curriculum and instructional materials as they have done in the past.

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has developed model curriculum based on the Common Core State Standards that school districts may use. The curriculum is available free of charge to local school districts to adopt or adapt to their needs or to use as an instructional resource.

How will the Common Core State Standards impact private and parochial schools and families that home school their children?

The Common Core State Standards have been adopted by the State Board of Education for all public schools, including charter schools, in Missouri. Private and parochial schools or families that are home schooling are not required to follow the CCSS. However, some private schools have announced plans to voluntarily adopt the CCSS.

Will the ACT/SAT tests reflect the Common Core State Standards?

Yes. Both ACT and the SAT have announced that these tests will become aligned with the Common Core State Standards to accurately reflect student college preparedness.

Assessment

Who will develop the assessment tests for the Common Core State Standards?

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium—a group of 25 states, including Missouri—is developing the assessments for the Common Core State Standards. The assessments were pilot tested from February through May by schools across the country, including more than 360 schools in Missouri. Practice tests are now available and will allow teachers, parents and students to try out the new online Smarter Balanced assessment system. Sample test questions may be accessed here: <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/pilot-test/>.

How did Missouri get involved in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium to develop assessments based on the Common Core State Standards?

Governor Jay Nixon and Commissioner of Education Chris L. Nicastro, with the approval of the State Board of Education, signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in 2010 permitting Missouri to participate as a governing state in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. That MOU can be viewed at dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/documents/SBAC.pdf.

Will the Smarter Balanced Assessment tests replace the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) tests?

Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, the Smarter Balanced Assessment tests in English language arts and mathematics are set to become a part of the Missouri Assessment Program and will replace the grade-level testing for English language arts and mathematics. Missouri Assessment Program testing will continue in other subject areas.

How will the Smarter Balanced assessments effect school accreditation?

Results from the Smarter Balanced assessments for English language arts and mathematics will be part of the state's school accreditation process just as the MAP scores have been in the past.

Data Collection

Has the adoption of the Common Core State Standards changed the data reporting requirements for school districts in Missouri?

No. The adoption of the Common Core State Standards has not increased the data reporting requirements for school districts. Missouri school districts have been collecting and reporting data to the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education since 1989. These data are used for education accreditation and accountability purposes and related federal program purposes. Federal programs that require the collection of data are: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA - Special Education); Federal Title Programs; School Food Services; Migrant Education Programs; and Carl Perkins Career Technical Education.

What data are collected by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and why are they collected?

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education collects information from schools through its comprehensive data system. A list of data collected by the Department can be found at dese.mo.gov/MOSIS/documents/StudentDataCollected_20130503.pdf.

The information is collected by the Department to comply with Missouri laws, federal program standards and Missouri school improvement accountability requirements. No information - with the exception of migrant education - is reported to the U.S. Department of Education at the individual student level. Student information reported to the U.S. Department of Education is done only at the aggregate (school and district) level and is not personally identifiable.

How are data collected by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education protected? Who maintains the database?

Data are reported by local school districts to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Department maintains the Missouri School Information System (MOSIS). Data transmitted to the Department by school districts are protected by the confidentiality provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g). The privacy act prohibits the disclosure of personally identifiable student information without parental consent or unless authorized by federal law. This includes transmission of data to the federal government.

Can parents or schools opt out of data collection?

No. Data collection is an important tool in education. Data have been collected in Missouri since 1989. Data collection provides information that school districts need to determine student achievement levels, and it helps educators make decisions necessary to improve instruction and student learning. The information is used by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to determine how well schools in Missouri are performing and identify schools that need improvement. The data are also used to help determine the accreditation of school districts and provide information to the public about how schools are performing.

Does the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education or the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium retain control over data retrieval and dissemination?

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education retains control over the data collected from assessments.

Did the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium sign an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education to send Missouri data to the federal government?

No. There is no agreement between the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and the U.S. Department of Education for data sharing. Missouri retains control over test results in the same way test results are handled with current assessment vendors.

Funding

How is Missouri funding the implementation of the Common Core State Standards?

Missouri is using existing resources to implement the Common Core State Standards. During the past three years, local school districts have been providing information about the CCSS to educators during professional development trainings and have been using existing resources to update their curriculum and align it with the standards.

Educators throughout the state have been working with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop a model curriculum for districts to adapt or adopt as locally determined.

What will it cost local school districts to conduct the Smarter Balanced assessment tests?

Because the tests are computer-based, schools will need adequate computer technology and bandwidth available to conduct the assessments. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium have been working with school districts to determine if their current technology is adequate to conduct the testing. Once needs are assessed, the Department will lay out a plan for bringing instructional technology into the 21st century for all students. All students deserve access to the Internet and technologies to help them achieve their goals for education and a career.