



**Missouri Learning Standards  
& the Common Core State Standards  
Information Packet for Legislators**



## 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 for English language arts and mathematics.*

### The Standards

#### **What are the Common Core State Standards?**

The Missouri Learning Standards include the Common Core State Standards, 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 career. They were created through a state-led initiative and have been adopted by more than forty states, including Missouri. The Common Core State Standards have enhanced our state standards.

The Missouri State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010. Many schools have already begun transitioning to the standards, which are set to be fully implemented in Missouri during the 2014-2015 school year.

#### **Why are the Common Core State Standards important?**

The standards are a common sense first step toward ensuring that children 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.

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.
- Develop and implement high quality 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.



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

The standards simply establish a clear set of goals and expectations that will prepare students with the 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 devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.

### **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.

### **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 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 these 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.

### **What do the standards mean for students with disabilities and English-language learners?**

The 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 young people with disabilities and English-language learners. The standards include information on application of the standards for English-language learners and students with disabilities. Additionally, alternate assessments are being developed for students with the most severe cognitive disabilities, as are English-language proficiency assessments tied to the Common Core for English-language learners.

## **Implementation**

### **What does the Common Core mean for students?**

The Common Core holds 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 kids to stay on track when their families move 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 standards impact teachers?**

Great educators are at the core of a great education. Teachers helped design the 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 for success. The standards do not tell teachers how to teach, but rather the standards establish what students need to know and be able to do. It is up to schools and teachers to decide how to best help students master them. 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 standards?**

The 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 curriculum and instructional material aligned to the standards be developed?**

Yes, there are already state-led efforts under way to develop standards-aligned curriculum and instructional materials. CCSSO has convened a group of states to work together to address systemic approaches to managing the transition to the Common Core. 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 both conserve 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.

### **Is the federal government playing a role in implementation?**

No. The federal government is not funding or implementing the standards.

### **Will the standards be updated?**

Yes, there will be an ongoing state-led development process to continuously improve the standards.

## **The Development Process**

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

The 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 standards created?**

Governors and schools chiefs convened a diverse team of teachers, parents, administrators, researchers, and experts in the education community to design the standards in order to ensure they reflect the best current thinking in education, the realities of the classroom, and aspirations for our children. CCSSO and the 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 working 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.

### **By what criteria were the standards developed?**

The 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 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 has 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.

### **Were teachers involved in the creation of the 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 these standards?**

No, the federal government was not involved in the development of the 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 40 individual states.



## College and Career Readiness - Facts and Figures

College and career readiness has never been more important for Missouri's students. The state is adopting new learning standards to help prepare students for postsecondary education and careers. Too many students graduate from high school unprepared for higher education and have to spend time and money on remedial classes before they can succeed at college-level work. And too many employers express concerns that the work force is coming to them unprepared. More rigorous standards will help more students find success in college, other types of training and the workplace.

In Missouri:

- Eighty percent of skilled jobs require some form of college or training beyond high school, but only 35 percent of Missourians have an associate degree or higher.
- For every 100 high school freshman, only 22 will earn an associate or bachelor's degree by their early 20s.
- Thirty-six percent of high school graduates enrolling in a public college or university must take one or more remedial classes before they can enroll in college-level classes.
- Remediation is estimated to cost the state more than \$90 million each year.
- Students lost \$32 million in lifetime wages because the need for remedial education delayed or prevented them from getting a college degree.
- The average income for a person with a bachelor's degree is \$71,813, compared to \$38,467 for a person with some college and \$33,080 for a person with only a high school diploma.
- In 2010, the average unemployment rate for a person with a bachelor's degree was 2 percent, compared to 13 percent for a high school graduate having no postsecondary education.



## Common Core State Standards

### Myths vs. Reality

Myth	Reality
<b>The federal government created the standards.</b>	The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort launched by state leaders including governors and state commissioners of education from more than 40 states, 2 territories and the District of Columbia, though the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).
<b>The federal government will use the standards to take control of education away from states.</b>	The standards are state led, and states will retain control of adopting and participating in the standards.
<b>The standards tell teachers how to teach.</b>	The standards define what students need to know, but they don't tell teachers how to teach or how students should learn.
<b>The standards dictate curriculum to schools.</b>	There is no required state curriculum in Missouri. Local school districts choose their own curriculum.
<b>The standards are not internationally benchmarked.</b>	International benchmarking was a big part of the development of the standards.
<b>The standards don't have enough emphasis on fiction/literature.</b>	The standards include Shakespeare, America's founding documents, foundational American literature and more. The remaining literature is left up to local districts.  However, college and career readiness focuses on complex texts outside of literature. The standards require more nonfiction reading and writing in other subjects supporting English language arts and literacy in subject areas like science, social studies and history.
<b>The mathematics standards have subjects missing or in the wrong grade.</b>	The mathematical progressions are evidenced based and build upon students' mastery of skills. The progression leads to college and career readiness at an internationally competitive level.







## Missouri Learning Standards and the Common Core State Standards

### What are the Common Core State Standards?

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- The standards establish **consistent** learning goals for all students – regardless of where they live – so that children will stay on track in school when moving from one state to another.
- With a **clear roadmap** of academic expectations, students, parents and teachers can work together toward shared goals.
- The standards are **relevant to the real world**, focusing on the knowledge and skills students will need to succeed in life after high school, in both post-secondary education and a globally competitive workforce.
- A diverse team of teachers, parents, administrators, researchers and content experts developed the Common Core to be **academically rigorous**, attainable for students, and practical for teachers and districts.

### What's Different with The New Standards?

#### Shifts in English Language Arts (ELA)

1. Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction and informational texts in addition to literature
2. Reading and writing grounded in evidence from the text
3. Regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary (words like commit and synthesize)

#### Shifts in Mathematics

1. Focus: 2-4 critical areas focused on deeply in each grade
2. Coherence: Concepts logically connected from one grade to the next and linked to other major topics within the grade
3. Rigor: Fluency with arithmetic, application of knowledge to real world situations, and deep understanding of mathematical concepts

## What Do the Standards Mean for Legislators?

- The need for **remediation** among students entering Missouri's postsecondary institutions unprepared for postsecondary work cost the state an estimated \$90 million a year. The Common Core State Standards will ensure that students graduate high school prepared to succeed in credit-bearing college courses without the need for remediation. Over time, lower remediation rates and higher rates of college completion will save parents, students and the state money.
- The Common Core State Standards will boost Missouri's long-term **economic competitiveness** because students will graduate high school with real-world skills they need to be successful in college and the workforce. Nearly 75 percent of students graduated from Missouri's high schools in 2010; the lost lifetime earnings in Missouri for those who did NOT graduate total \$2.3 billion.
- The Common Core will **cut costs** over time by enabling states to share best practices and streamline efforts in related areas, which otherwise would require a much greater investment in time and resources from each individual state.

## Implementing the Standards in Missouri

Several efforts are underway in Missouri to bring the Common Core into our classrooms.

- Teachers are receiving professional development to assist in making instructional changes.
- Pre-service teachers are receiving instruction in implementing the new standards.
- The Missouri departments of elementary and secondary education and higher education have worked together to ensure K-12 standards and entry-level college standards are in alignment.
- Model curriculum, written by Missouri educators, aligned to the standards is available on DESE's website free for all.

## Additional Resources for Legislators

- Official Common Core State Standards Website: <http://www.corestandards.org/>
- Missouri Core Academic Standards : [http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/Common\\_Core.html](http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/Common_Core.html)
- Common Core Implementation Video Series (CCSSO) :  
[http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Digital\\_Resources/Common\\_Core\\_Implementation\\_Video\\_Series.html](http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Digital_Resources/Common_Core_Implementation_Video_Series.html)
- CCSSO's Common Core Resources:  
[http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/The\\_Common\\_Core\\_State\\_Standards\\_Initiative.html](http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/The_Common_Core_State_Standards_Initiative.html)
- Pathways to Prosperity:  
[http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news\\_events/features/2011/Pathways\\_to\\_Prosperty\\_Feb2011.pdf](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news_events/features/2011/Pathways_to_Prosperty_Feb2011.pdf)
- Department of Higher Education sets criteria for assessing college readiness (news release):  
[http://www.dhe.mo.gov/news/show.php?u=College\\_readiness\\_criteria&yr=2011](http://www.dhe.mo.gov/news/show.php?u=College_readiness_criteria&yr=2011)