

What are the Iowa Core standards?

- The Iowa Core standards are statewide expectations for what students should know and be able to do in English language arts, math, science, social studies and 21st century skills, such as financial and civic literacy.
- The goal of the standards is to make sure students are prepared for college or career training after high school.
- The standards establish what students need to learn, but not how they should be taught. Local schools and educators continue to set and oversee decisions about classroom instruction.

How is the Iowa Core different from the Common Core?

- Iowa legislators passed the Iowa Core into law in 2008. The standards set learning goals from kindergarten through 12th grade in math, English/language arts, science, social studies, and 21st century skills.
- While Iowa worked to implement the standards, governors and state education chiefs from across the country came together to develop common standards for English language arts and math. These standards, known as the Common Core, stem from the desire to make sure teachers and parents share high expectations for students that prepare them to succeed in our increasingly competitive global marketplace.
- Most states have adopted the Common Core. In Iowa, the State Board of Education adopted the Common Core as part of the Iowa Core.
- In Iowa, our statewide standards continue to be known as the Iowa Core.

Why did Iowa adopt the Common Core?

- Iowans deserve the peace of mind that students are getting the best education possible.
- Iowa was the last state to adopt rigorous statewide standards. While Iowa's student achievement has not slipped, other states have improved at a faster rate.
- The State Board of Education's decision to adopt the Common Core was ultimately eased by the similarity between the Common Core and the Iowa Core in English language arts and math.

Why is the Iowa Core important?

- These standards provide students, parents, and teachers with a clear, common understanding of what knowledge and skills should be mastered at every grade level. This allows them to work together toward shared goals.
- The standards emphasize complex, real-world skills rather than basic skills or rote memorization. This is critical in a knowledge-driven economy that demands problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking both in careers and in personal decisions.
- The Iowa Core standards incorporate the best of state standards in the United States and are internationally benchmarked to the world's top-performing nations.

Do teachers support the Iowa Core?

- Some of our best teachers in Iowa, including the 2014 Iowa Teacher of the Year, are passionate supporters of the Iowa Core because they know our standards take learning to a deeper level by emphasizing higher-level thinking, such as analysis and critical thinking. They also understand successful implementation of the standards requires the expertise of teaching professionals.

How much local control do educators and parents have on the Iowa Core standards? Can school districts change the standards?

- Districts and schools control how the standards are taught, by whom, and in what courses. Parents have opportunities for ongoing input into state and local academic standards. Schools cannot change the Iowa Core standards, but they can add to them.

Can school districts opt out of the Iowa Core?

- The Iowa Core is the law. Choosing not to put the standards into practice would endanger a school district's state accreditation status.

Do teachers have control of their classrooms under the Iowa Core?

- Yes. The standards do not prescribe teaching or lesson plans, nor do they define the curriculum that educators use.
- The standards set rigorous expectations for what students should know and be able to do at every grade level, but local schools and educators decide how to help students meet those expectations.

Who has control of our standards in Iowa?

- Iowans have control over our statewide standards. The Iowa Core has been vetted and customized by Iowans and for Iowa.

Is this leading to a national curriculum?

- No. Standards are not a curriculum, but a set of clear, shared goals and expectations for students. Each Iowa school district decides what curriculum to use to deliver the Iowa Core, and Iowa teachers will continue to develop the lessons used in their classrooms.

How does the Iowa Core affect teaching and learning? Are there adjustments or exemptions for special education students?

- Each Iowa school district decides what curriculum to use to deliver the Iowa Core, and Iowa teachers design and develop the lessons used in their classrooms to meet each student's learning style and ability. Modifications to the Iowa Core may be made for special education students based on their individual learning needs.

How was the Common Core developed?

- The Common Core standards were developed by a coalition of states led by governors and state school chiefs through their membership in the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Forty-eight states took part, drawing on the expertise of content specialists, teachers, school administrators and parents. The process was open for public comment, and more than 10,000 comments were received. In Iowa, the standards were discussed and adopted by the State Board of Education at public meetings in 2010.

Will the Iowa Core lead to the sharing of massive amounts of personal student and teacher data?

- The Iowa Core will not lead to the sharing of massive amounts of personal student data. The Iowa Department of Education only collects student information as required by state and/or federal law. Students are not identified by name, and student-level data are not shared with the federal government. This practice is reinforced by the Governor's executive order, which stipulates that "only aggregate student data shall be provided to the federal government to comply with federal laws."

Is the Iowa Core tied to federal money?

- The standards were created for voluntary adoption by states. Iowa received no federal funding to implement the Common Core as part of the Iowa Core and would lose no federal money if the state stopped using the Common Core.

How will Iowa afford to train educators to transition to the new standards? And how will new assessments that measure whether students have reached the standards be funded?

- The Iowa Core had to be in place in high schools in 2012-13, and must be in place in grades K-8 by 2014-15. There have been state appropriations of about \$8 million annually since 2008 to help school districts absorb professional development costs.
- Iowa is exploring options for a new statewide assessment. The Legislature opened the door to a possible new statewide assessment when it created a state task force in 2013 to study the state's assessment needs and to provide recommendations, which are expected by January 2015.
- The cost of any new assessments in the future may be higher because the assessments would be better and more comprehensive than what we have now. The tests would be more closely aligned with the Iowa Core; they would give teachers more information about the strengths and weaknesses of their students; and the tests would measure learning beyond memorization and recall of facts, by instead having students apply what they know to complex situations.

How do the Iowa Core standards determine what is appropriate reading material at each grade level? How do you address concerns by parents?

- No one at the state level is prescribing reading lists for schools. There is no required Iowa Core reading list, and schools have always had, and will continue to have, local control over text selection to meet the Iowa Core standards, just as they have control over the books in their school libraries. We encourage parents with concerns to contact their local schools for information about which texts are being used to meet the Iowa Core standards.