

Just the FACTS:

What are educational standards?

Educational standards help teachers ensure their students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful by providing clear goals for student learning. Standards are not a curriculum. Curriculum (the materials, resources, textbooks, unit plans, lesson plans, etc.) is decided by local school leaders with community input. Curriculum choices of a school are decided by the local school leaders in communities across North Dakota.

What is the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative?

The Common Core State Standards refer only to math and English language arts (ELA) and are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to enter credit-bearing entry-level math and ELA courses in two or four year college programs or enter the workforce. This state-led, voluntary effort established a single set of clear educational standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts and mathematics. These standards are a floor, not a ceiling: Students can be accelerated and schools can offer supplemental learning. Furthermore, the standards can be improved over time in North Dakota if we desire. School districts will also continue to offer the many other traditional courses and supplemental instruction.

Who was involved in the Initiative?

States across the country collaborated with teachers, researchers, and leading experts to design and develop the

Common Core State Standards. Each state independently made the decision to adopt the Common Core State Standards, beginning in 2010. Over 60 North Dakota educators from all areas of the state carefully examined the Common Core State Standards in math and ELA and compared them to the previous state standards. North Dakota educators found that the Common Core was more rigorous and would better prepare our students to continue to compete with other students on a national and international level on multiple measurements.

Why are the standards just for English language arts and math?

English language arts and math were the subjects chosen for the Common Core State Standards because they are areas upon which students build skill sets that are used in other subjects.

These standards offer North Dakota students the opportunity for a rigorous, content-rich, cohesive K–12 education. North Dakota has a tradition of holding our students to high standards and providing an academically rigorous K-12 experience. Our implementation of the Common Core State Standards continues this tradition, preparing students to compete in the global marketplace.

What do the Common Core Standards mean for students?

The standards provide clarity and consistency in what is expected in learning in English and math across the country. These standards provide all students with an equal opportunity for a rigorous education, regardless of where they live. The Common Core will not prevent different levels of achievement among

students, but they will ensure consistent exposure to concepts and learning expectations they experience throughout their K-12 career, even if they move from one state to another.

These standards establish what students need to learn, but they do not dictate how teachers should teach. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to meet the individual needs of students in their classrooms.

Does the federal government play a role?

The Common Core State Standards initiative is a state-led effort. North Dakota received no federal dollars nor federal interference in adoption and implementation of the Common Core.

Will there be tests based on the new standards?

Yes. North Dakota is part of a group of states which developed a common assessment that is aligned to the standards and will replace our existing state assessment. This assessment will be field tested in spring 2014 and fully implemented in April 2015.

Will data collection requirements change with the new standards?

There are no data collection requirements of states adopting the CCSS. Standards define expectations for what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade. Implementing the CCSS does not require data collection. The means of assessing students and the data that results from those assessments are up to the discretion of each state and local school district, and are separate and unique from the CCSS. □