

Fact Sheet

What is the Iowa Core?

A great school system begins with a clear and rigorous set of expectations, or standards, that educators help all students reach. In Iowa, those standards are known as the Iowa Core.

The Iowa Core, our statewide academic standards, describe what students should know and be able to do from kindergarten through 12th grade in math, science, English language arts and social studies. The Iowa Core also sets learning goals for 21st century skills in areas such as financial and technology literacy. The Iowa Core is a set of common expectations, not a curriculum, so decisions about how to help students meet learning goals remain in the hands of local schools and teachers.

For years, every state developed unique academic standards with vastly different expectations for what students needed to know to be ready for college and the workforce.

- Over time, state leaders, colleges and universities, and the business community across the country recognized that many students were graduating from high school unprepared for the demands of college and careers.
- In 2007, education leaders began discussing the idea of working together to develop academic expectations for English language arts and math to ensure all students graduate prepared for the next step.

These clear, consistent standards can provide peace of mind to parents, teachers, and other stakeholders who want students to have the best education possible. The Iowa Core sets appropriate academic expectations for all students, regardless of where they live, and reflect the real-world knowledge and skills students need to graduate from high school prepared for college or to enter the workforce. The implementation process is continuing well beyond the legislatively mandated deadlines, which were the 2012-13 school year for high schools and 2014-15 for kindergarten through eighth grades.

Iowa was the last state to adopt statewide standards in 2008.

- Educators and legislators led this effort to align standards and set consistent expectations for learning in schools across the state.
- Iowa educators identified and wrote the essential concepts and skills that make up the Iowa Core.

What is the Common Core, and how is it related to the Iowa Core?

As Iowa worked to develop and implement the Iowa Core, a consortium of states, led by state education chiefs and governors nationwide, came together to develop common standards for English language arts and math.

This result is the Common Core State Standards, which build on the best state-developed academic standards, as well as the academic standards of top-performing school systems around the world. The Common Core

grew out of a desire to make sure teachers and parents share high expectations for students so they can succeed in our increasingly competitive global marketplace. Most states have adopted the Common Core.

Iowa's State Board of Education voted in 2010 to blend the Iowa Core with the Common Core, through authority vested in the board by the Iowa Legislature. This was an easy decision – the Iowa Core was already similar to the Common Core, but included some higher academic standards. The overarching goal is to ensure all Iowa students are held to higher standards so they're ready for college or career training after high school.

Important Facts:

The Common Core was developed through a state-led, bipartisan effort by governors and state education chiefs through their membership in the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The Common Core was voluntarily adopted by states and is not required by any federal law or initiative. Like the Common Core, the Iowa Core leaves control over curriculum, lesson plans, and textbooks with local districts, schools and teachers, allowing the creativity of teaching professionals to foster learning.

Forty-eight states took part in the development of the Common Core, 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.

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.

Iowa does not receive federal funding to implement new standards and would lose no federal money if the state stopped implementing the Iowa Core.

The Iowa Core gives students, parents, and teachers a clear, common understanding of what knowledge and skills students need to master. 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. Modifications to the standards may be made for special education students based on their individual learning needs.