

NEWS

Connecticut Department of Education

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Commissioner



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State Board of Education Adopts New Academic Standards for Connecticut Schools

(HARTFORD, CONN.) The Connecticut State Board of Education today adopted new national academic standards in English language arts and mathematics that will establish what Connecticut's public school students will know and be able to do as they progress through Grades K - 12.

With the unanimous vote of the Board, Connecticut will join 47 other states that have agreed to adopt the standards, known as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), in order to raise achievement levels and provide uniformity in school curricula and instruction among the States.

The national standards project was initiated by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Participation is voluntary.

"Connecticut's standards are already high compared with many states. However, the National Standards Project provides an opportunity for all states to raise the bar, refocus instruction and to ensure that students are prepared to compete with students from throughout the world," said State Education Commissioner Mark K. McQuillan.

A review and comparison of standards shows that the new national standards are very similar to Connecticut's. Approximately 80 percent of the Common Core Standards match the Connecticut English language arts standards and 92 percent of the Common Core Standards match the Connecticut mathematics standards.

Two hundred (200) CCSS in English language arts and 40 CCSS in mathematics are not currently included in Connecticut's current standards- mostly affecting the high school level. Once adopted, the 240 standards will be new for Connecticut. Of the matched English language arts and mathematics standards, 68 percent were rated as "Excellent" or "Good." Additional analyses of grade-level similarities and differences between CCSS and Connecticut standards were conducted. Results of these analyses will be used to inform the development of curriculum resources and teacher training.

How This Will Affect Connecticut Schools

Connecticut is a "local control" state which grants to local and regional boards of education the authority to set curriculum standards and the instructional programs in their schools.

The newly adopted national standards will provide direction to local curriculum committees as they develop grade-by-grade and course level expectations and as they engage in secondary school reform as required by P.A. 10-111.

This new law, passed in May 2010, requires a number of changes to the high school graduation requirements beginning with the class of 2018.

The new standards will also be reflected in the next generation Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMT) which will be introduced in 2014-15.

About the Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were designed to meet specific criteria. Standards were designed to be of fewer, clearer and higher-level than what most states have; to be aligned with college and work expectations; to include rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher order thinking skills; to build upon the strengths and lessons of current state standards; to be internationally benchmarked so that all students will be prepared to succeed in our global economy; and to be based on evidence and research.

The standards were developed through an intensive process of national review and feedback at multiple levels. The initial college and career readiness standards were developed during the summer of 2009. After completion of these standards, a series of K-12 learning progressions occurred, including multiple rounds of feedback from states, teachers and validation committees. Multiple drafts of the CCSS were provided to states and the general public for feedback. Suggested improvements were processed by the developers and were incorporated into the final CCSS publication issued on June 2, 2010.

The English language arts standards require that students systematically develop knowledge of literature and in other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking and listening across the content areas. The standards progress across the K-12 continuum. Students are expected to develop reading comprehension skills and to apply them to increasingly complex texts. The K-12 standards require reading in literature and discipline-specific content areas. There are specific reading recommendations, including classic myths, stories from around the world, America's founding documents and foundational American literature.

The mathematics standards are designed to focus on developing students' understanding of mathematical concepts and acquisition of fundamental reasoning habits, in addition to fluency with skills. In grades K-5, students gain a foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions and decimals. In the middle grades, students build upon this foundation through hands-on learning in geometry, algebra, probability and statistics. The high school standards require students to apply mathematical ways of thinking to real-world issues and challenges and emphasize the use of mathematical modeling.

Adoption of Standards Improves Race to the Top Application Status

The U.S. Department of Education has announced that it will give additional credit to applications for funds under the federal Race to the Top grant program to those states that adopt the Common Core State Standards. So far, 21 states including Connecticut have adopted the standards and an additional 17 have indicated they will adopt them by the end of the year. Connecticut has requested \$175 million under the grant program.