



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
June 1, 2009

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## **FORTY-NINE STATES AND TERRITORIES JOIN COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE**

*NGA Center, CCSSO Convene State-led Process to Develop common English-language  
arts and Mathematics Standards*

**WASHINGTON**— The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) today released the names of the states and territories who have joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative: **Alabama; Arizona; Arkansas; California; Colorado; Connecticut; Delaware; District of Columbia; Florida; Georgia; Hawaii; Idaho; Illinois; Indiana; Iowa; Kansas; Kentucky; Louisiana; Maine; Maryland; Massachusetts; Michigan; Minnesota; Mississippi; Montana; Nebraska; Nevada; New Hampshire; New Jersey; New Mexico; New York; North Carolina; North Dakota; Ohio; Oklahoma; Oregon; Pennsylvania; Puerto Rico; Rhode Island; South Dakota; Tennessee; Utah; Vermont; Virgin Islands; Virginia; Washington; West Virginia; Wisconsin; Wyoming.**

In the twenty-six years since the release of *A Nation at Risk*, states have made great strides in increasing the academic rigor of education standards. Yet, America's children still remain behind other nations in terms of academic achievement and preparedness to succeed.

By signing on to the common core state standards initiative, governors and state commissioners of education across the country are committing to joining a state-led process to develop a common core of state standards in English language arts and mathematics for grades K-12. These standards will be research and evidence-based, internationally benchmarked, aligned with college and work expectations and include rigorous content and skills.

“To maintain America's competitive edge, we need all of our students to be prepared and ready to compete with students from around the world,” said **NGA Vice Chair Vermont Gov. Jim Douglas**. “Common standards that allow us to internationally benchmark our students' performance with other top countries have the potential to bring about a real and meaningful transformation of our education system to the benefit of all Americans.”

“As state school chiefs, we have been discussing and building momentum for state-led, voluntary common standards that are both rigorous and internationally benchmarked for the past two years.,” stated **CCSSO President and Arkansas Commissioner of Education Ken James**. “The broad level of commitment we

have received from states across the nation for this unprecedented effort is both gratifying and exciting. It also clearly illustrates that this is an idea whose time has arrived.”

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is being jointly led by the NGA Center and CCSSO. It builds directly on recent efforts of leading organizations and states that have focused on developing college-and career-ready standards and ensures that these standards can be internationally benchmarked to top-performing countries around the world. The goal is to have a common core of state standards that states can voluntarily adopt. States may choose to include additional standards beyond the common core as long as the common core represents at least 85 percent of the state’s standards in English language arts and mathematics.

“Measuring our students against international benchmarks is an important step,” said **Virginia Gov. Timothy Kaine**. “Today, we live in a world without borders. It not only matters how Virginia students compare to those in surrounding states – it matters how we compete with countries across the world.”

“Only when we agree about what all high school graduates need to be successful will we be able to tackle the most significant challenge ahead of us: transforming instruction for every child,” said **CCSSO President-Elect and Maine Education Commissioner Sue Gendron**. “Common standards will provide educators clarity and direction about what all children need to succeed in college and the workplace and allow states to more readily share best practices that dramatically improve teaching and learning. Our graduates and frankly, the future of our economy, cannot wait any longer for our educational practices to give equal opportunity for success to every student.”

The NGA Center and CCSSO are coordinating the process to develop these standards and have created an expert validation committee to provide an independent review of the common core state standards, as well as the grade-by-grade standards. This committee will be composed of nationally and internationally recognized and trusted education experts who are neutral to – and independent of – the process. The college and career ready standards are expected to be completed in July 2009. The grade-by-grade standards work is expected to be completed in December 2009.

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*Founded in 1908, the National Governors Association (NGA) is the collective voice of the nation’s governors and one of Washington, D.C.’s most respected public policy organizations. Its members are the governors of the 50 states, three territories and two commonwealths. NGA provides governors and their senior staff members with services that range from representing states on Capitol Hill and before the Administration on key federal issues to developing and implementing innovative solutions to public policy challenges through the NGA Center for Best Practices. For more information, visit [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org).*

*The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public. [www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org)*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **[INSERT STATE] JOINS FORTY-NINE STATES AND TERRITORIES IN COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE**

**[INSERT CITY/STATE]**— **[INSERT GOV AND CHIEF NAME]** today joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative, a state-led process to develop common English-language arts and mathematics standards. The Common Core State Standards Initiative will be jointly led by the NGA Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

In addition to **[INSERT STATE]**, the following states and territories have also signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA): **Alabama; Arizona; Arkansas; California; Colorado; Connecticut; Delaware; District of Columbia; Florida; Georgia; Hawaii; Idaho; Illinois; Indiana; Iowa; Kansas; Kentucky; Louisiana; Maine; Maryland; Massachusetts; Michigan; Minnesota; Mississippi; Montana; Nebraska; Nevada; New Hampshire; New Jersey; New Mexico; New York; North Carolina; North Dakota; Ohio; Oklahoma; Oregon; Pennsylvania; Puerto Rico; Rhode Island; South Dakota; Tennessee; Utah; Vermont; Virgin Islands; Virginia; Washington; West Virginia; Wisconsin; Wyoming.**

In the twenty-six years since the release of *A Nation at Risk*, states have made great strides in increasing the academic rigor of education standards. Yet, America's children still remain behind other nations in terms of academic achievement and preparedness to succeed.

By signing this MOA, Governor **[name]** and State Commissioner of Education **[or other title: name]** join their colleagues across the country in committing to joining a state-led process to develop a common core of state standards in English-language arts and mathematics for grades K-12. These standards will be research and evidence-based, internationally benchmarked, aligned with college and work expectations and include rigorous content and skills.

**[INSERT GOVERNOR QUOTE]**

The Common Core State Standards Initiative will build directly on recent efforts of leading organizations and states that have focused on developing college- and career-ready standards and ensure that these standards can be internationally benchmarked to top-performing countries around the world. The goal is to have a common core of state standards that states can voluntarily adopt. States may choose to include additional standards beyond the common core as long as the common core represents at least 85 percent of the state's

standards in English language arts and mathematics. The second phase of this initiative is to ultimately develop common assessments aligned to the core standards developed through the process.

[INSERT COMMISSIONER QUOTE]

The NGA Center and CCSSO will coordinate the process to develop these standards and will create an expert validation committee to provide an independent review of the common core state standards, as well as the grade-by-grade standards. This committee will be composed of nationally and internationally recognized and trusted education experts who are neutral to – and independent of – the process. The college and career ready standards are expected to be completed in July 2009. The grade-by-grade standards work is expected to be completed in December 2009.

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## **CCSSO / NGA Center Common Core State Standards Initiative TALKING POINTS**

- Today we live in a world without borders. To maintain America's competitive edge, we need all of our students to be well prepared and ready to compete with not only their American peers, but with students from around the world.
- Developing a common core of standards that are internationally benchmarked, aligned with work and post-secondary education expectations, and inclusive of the higher order skills students need is critical to this process. The establishment of common standards is a first step toward bringing about real and meaningful transformation of our education system toward the ultimate goal of preparing ALL children for college, work, and success in the global economy.
- Working through the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers, governors and chiefs have united to develop a set of common core standards that are based on research and evidence, are aligned with college and work expectations, include rigorous content and skills, and are internationally benchmarked.
- This effort will begin with the development of K-12 standards in English language arts and mathematics.
- The common core of state standards will enable participating states to:
  1. Articulate to parents, teachers, and the general public expectations for students;
  2. Align textbooks, digital media, and curricula to the internationally benchmarked standards;
  3. Ensure professional development to educators is based on identified need and best practices;
  4. Develop and implement an assessment system to measure student performance against the common core; and
  5. Evaluate policy changes needed to help students and educators meet the common core standards and "end-of-high-school" expectations.
- States will adopt the common core state standards through a process that respects unique state contexts. CCSSO and the NGA Center will ask states to share their adoption timeline and process in early 2010, when the K-12 common core state standards are completed.
- This effort is voluntary for states, and it is fully intended that states adopting the common core may choose to include additional state standards which go beyond the common core. However, states choosing to align their standards to the common core standards agree that the common core will represent at least 85 percent of the state's standards in English language arts and mathematics.

### **Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)**

- Forty-nine states and U.S. territories as of May 29 have signed the MOA – these politically, geographically, and demographically diverse states have committed to a state-led process to develop a common core of standards in English language arts and mathematics for grades K-12.
- This work will build directly on recent efforts of leading national organizations and states which have focused on developing college-and career-ready standards. The purpose of

all students and states and it will draw on educational experts, and research based evidence.

### **COMMON STATE STANDARDS PROCESS**

- CCSSO and NGA have developed a process to ensure the development of the common core state standards is informed, advised, and validated.
  - A National Policy Forum (Forum) composed of signatory national organizations (e.g., the Alliance for Excellent Education, Business Roundtable, National School Boards Association, Council of Great City Schools, Hunt Institute, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Education Association, and others) has been created to share ideas, gather input, and inform the common core initiative. The forum is intended as a means to establish a shared understanding of the scope and elements of a common core; to coordinate the implementation and adoption of the common core; to develop and provide consistent messaging between and among participating organizations; and to build public will and support.
  - A Standards Development Group, composed of education experts is responsible for determining and writing the common core state standards.
  - A Validation Committee composed of independent, national experts will review the process and substance of the common core standards to ensure they are research- and evidence-based and will validate state adoption of the common standards. Members of the validation committee will be selected by governors and chiefs.
- States will have the opportunity to review the standards throughout the entire development process. The standards will also be reviewed by an independent validation group prior to being made available for states to adopt.
- The goal is to release the English language arts and Mathematics college and career readiness standards late this summer. These standards will serve as the anchor for the K-12 grade-by-grade standards which will be developed by the end of the year.

## Common Core State Standards Initiative Suggested Op-ed

### A Call for Common Standards

When most of us hear the word “education,” our local schools immediately come to mind. Our first day of kindergarten, the middle school [junior high school] our children attend, the cross-town, rival high school. It’s familiar; we’ve been there. We have friends and family who work in these schools as aids, janitors, teachers, principals, and superintendents. We drive past these schools on our way to work; we walk by them on our way to the neighborhood park. One of the last things that come to mind when most of us think of education is standards—what we expect students to know and be able to do in each grade.

We hope to change that.

The U.S. Constitution gives each individual state control over its public education system, and thanks to the U.S. Constitution, it’s our state’s right to determine and define what each student in each grade level should know and be able to do. This means that each state defines what its standards are, how those standards will be taught by teachers, and how student learning will be assessed.

As a consequence, there are 50 different sets of state standards being taught in classrooms across the United States; a student in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in Texas could be learning something different than a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student in our state. The level to which our 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students are learning could be higher or lower than 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in Massachusetts, Alaska, or right next door in [contiguous state]. We [gov and chief] find this unacceptable. Our colleges, universities, and businesses find this unacceptable as well. We have listened to our teachers, the true classroom experts, and their call for professional development and teaching that goes beyond testing to helping each student learn to the highest possible levels no matter what city or state they are in.

The U.S. economy has changed dramatically since our state education systems were put in place, let alone in the last five years. The skills workers need in this new economy are very different. We’re now competing with businesses and for jobs in other countries, not just at the storefront or factory down the street. We’re in a global economy and our students aren’t prepared to compete with student in the next state for a job, let alone those students in high achieving countries on the other side of the globe.

As the governor and the commissioner of education in [state], we know we are being held accountable for every dollar of the stimulus funds -- and for the education of every student in our state. [State name] has been given the incredible, historical opportunity to make long term, invested changes in our state’s education system. This is what our teachers and students deserve & what our economy is demanding.

We have publicly made a commitment to join with other states across the country in developing and adopting a common core of standards we feel is higher and more clear

than what we currently have—and is internationally benchmarked. We are not alone in this endeavor. More than 49 states and U.S. territories are joining us, and we have the greatest minds and expertise from across the country and around the world supporting us in developing and validating these standards. This work presents a significant opportunity for states to accelerate and drive education reform beyond state and district boundaries to a national level.

We owe this to our students and to our future.

## **SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES to PROMOTE the COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE**

- Issue a press release about the importance of signing on to this initiative and what it means to students in your state. Include quotes from both the Governor and the Chief State School Officer. [Template release included in toolkit]
- Seek placement of an op-ed or guest column in your state newspapers that highlights the initiative and its benefits to your state. The op-ed should be co-authored by the Governor and the Chief State School Officer. [Template op-ed included in toolkit]
- Schedule a media opportunity at a school or company to underline the importance of research and evidence-based, internationally benchmarked standards that are aligned with college and work expectations and include rigorous content and skills.
- Convene a meeting of key business leaders and academics that highlights the initiative and talks about the importance of the state-led process to develop these standards.

## **Common Core State Standards Initiative Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative and why is it important?**

This Common Core State Standards Initiative is a significant and historic opportunity for states to collectively accelerate and drive education reform toward the ultimate goal of all children graduating from high school ready for college, work, and success in the global economy. The initiative will build off of the research and good work states have already done to build and implement high-quality standards. The standards will be research- and evidence-based, aligned with college and work expectations, include rigorous content and skills, and be internationally benchmarked.

Today we live in a world without borders. To maintain America's competitive edge, we need all of our students to be well prepared and ready to compete with not only their American peers, but with students from around the world. These common standards will be a critical first step to bring about real and meaningful transformation of our education system to benefit all students.

States know that standards alone cannot propel the systems change we need. The common core state standards will enable participating states to:

- Articulate to parents, teachers, and the general public expectations for students;
- Align textbooks, digital media, and curricula to the internationally benchmarked standards;
- Ensure professional development for educators is based on identified need and best practices;
- Develop and implement an assessment system to measure student performance against the common core state standards; and
- Evaluate policy changes needed to help students and educators meet the common core state college and career readiness standards.

### **Who is leading the Common Core State Standards Initiative?**

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) have initiated a state-led process of developing and adopting a common core of state standards.

As part of this process, they have convened a National Policy Forum composed of signatory national organizations (e.g., the Alliance for Excellent Education, Business Roundtable, National School Boards Association, Council of Great City Schools, Hunt Institute, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Education Association, and others) to share ideas, gather input, and inform the common core state standards initiative.

### **How will states adopt the common core state standards?**

States will adopt the common core state standards through a process that respects unique state contexts. CCSSO and the NGA Center will ask states to share their adoption timeline and process in early 2010, when the K-12 common core state standards are completed. A validation committee will verify that states have accurately adopted the common core state standards.

## **Frequently asked Questions about the Common Core State Standards Process**

### **What will make this process different from other efforts to create common standards?**

Both the timing of this initiative as well as the process give it a high probability for success. There is a growing belief among state leaders, education leaders, and business leaders that differences in state standards, in an era of increasing student mobility and global competition, no longer make sense.

This process is different since it is a state-led, vs a federal effort, and has the support of several major national organizations, including CCSSO, the NGA Center, the Alliance for Excellent Education, the National Education Association, the Hunt Institute, and the Business Roundtable, and involves participation of leading standards developers from Achieve, ACT, and the College Board.

States have been the leaders of standards-based reform efforts. The proposed adoption process respects and takes into consideration unique state contexts and encourages states to adopt the common core state standards.

### **Are these national standards?**

No. This initiative is driven by collective state action and states will voluntarily adopt the standards based on the timelines and context in their state.

### **By what criteria will the standards be judged? Who or what entity sets such criteria?**

The standards will be judged based on research and evidence that they meet the following criteria:

- Aligned with college and work expectations
- Inclusive of rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills
- Internationally benchmarked

Criteria have been set by states, through their national organizations CCSSO and the NGA Center.

### **Why are the common core state standards just in English-language arts and math? Are there plans to develop common standards in other areas in the future?**

English-language arts and math were the first subjects chosen for the common core state standards since states have the longest history of standards in these areas, they are the core of our current national accountability system, and they provide the greatest areas of leverage.

Once the English language arts and math standards are developed, states plan to develop a common core of standards in science and potentially additional subject areas. The emphasis now is on getting the English language arts and math standards right.

### **What grades will be covered in the common core state standards?**

The English-language arts and math standards will be K-12 standards. This will not cover pre-k, but the common core state standards will be informed by research from the early childhood community.

**Who or what entity determines the common core state standards?**

CCSSO and NGA Center are responsible for the development and cross-state adoption process.

- A Standards Development Group, composed of standards experts is responsible for determining and writing the common core state standards.
- A Validation Committee composed of independent, national experts will review the process and substance of the common core state standards to ensure they are research- and evidence-based and will validate state adoption of the common standards. Members of the validation committee will be selected by governors and chiefs.

**How will we be sure that the standards are based on evidence and not on individual beliefs about what is important?**

The validation group of independent, national experts will review the process and substance of the common core state standards delineated by the standards development group to ensure they are research- and evidence-based.

**What process will be employed to manage the challenges from special interest groups that will push for their content or skills to be in the common core state standards?**

It is the responsibility of the validation group as well as the standards development group to ensure relevant research and evidence are considered.

**Will these standards incorporate both content and skills?**

Both content and skills are important and will be incorporated in the common core state standards. One of the criteria by which the standards will be determined is whether or not they are inclusive of rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills.

**Will the Common Core State Standards be updated?**

Yes. There will be an ongoing state-led development process that can support continuous improvement of this first version of the common core state standards based on research and evidence-based learning.

**Will there be common assessments based on the common core state standards?**

States know that standards alone cannot propel the systems change we need. Assessments aligned with the common core state standards will play an important role in making sure the standards are embedded in our education system. Some states will voluntarily come together to develop new innovative, common assessments.

**What is the appropriate role of the federal government in this initiative?**

The federal government can:

- Support this effort through a range of tiered incentives, such as providing states with greater flexibility in the use of existing federal funds, supporting a revised state accountability structure, and offering financial support for states to effectively implement the standards as through the Race to the Top Fund authorized in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.
- Provide additional long-term financial support for the development of common assessments, teacher and principal professional development, other related common core state standards supports, and a research agenda that can help continually improve the common core state standards over time.
- Revise and align existing federal education laws with the lessons learned from states' international benchmarking efforts and from federal research.

**What is the timeline for the common core state standards initiative?**

Key dates in the project are identified below. July, 2009 – draft of common core state standards for college and career readiness English-language arts and mathematics completed and publicly released by standards development committee.

- December, 2009 – K-12 common core state standards in English-language arts and mathematics completed and publicly released.
- Early 2010, states submit timeline and process for adoption of common core state standards in English-language arts and mathematics.