

# COMMON CORE STANDARDS TALKING POINTS

## **1. Why do we need common standards?**

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 they need is critical to this process.

## **2. Who is developing the standards?**

Working through the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers, governors and chiefs are joining together 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

## **3. What are the common core standards?**

These standards define the knowledge and skills in Mathematics and in Reading/Language Arts that students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs. The standards are:

- **Aligned with college and work expectations;**
- **Clear, understandable and consistent;**
- **Include rigorous content *and* application of knowledge through high-order skills;**
- **Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;**
- **Informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and**
- **Evidence- and research-based.**

## **4. How is adoption of the standards defined? Who adopts them?**

The Utah State Board of Education has the authority to take formal action to adopt the common core. A state must adopt 100% of the common core K-12 standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. If needed, a state may add an additional 15% to the core.

## **5. Have the states had the opportunity to review or suggest changes to the K-12 standards?**

The first draft of the K-12 standards was sent to states in mid-November 2009 for feedback. The standards were revised based on this feedback and sent back for additional feedback in January and February 2010. The standards are now available for a public comment period that will end on April 2.

## **6. Are educators involved in developing the standards?**

Teachers and administrators are part of the validation committee and K-12 development work groups. Also, CCSSO and NGA met and will continue to meet with organizations representing educators, such as the National Education Association (NEA), American Federation of Teachers

(AFT), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) to gain teacher input on the standards.

**7. What is the link between the math standards and STEM education?**

The college- and career-readiness standards document sets an ambitious goal for all students that will prepare them for success in entry-level, credit-bearing academic courses in college and in workforce training programs. At the same time, as a nation we want to ensure that an ever greater number of students graduate from high school ready to pursue STEM in college and careers. To meet this challenge, and to reflect the strong input on this subject received from states, the K-12 standards will indicate what students interested in pursuing a STEM career must study while in high school, while acknowledging that not all students need this material for college readiness.

**8. Has career readiness been a major part of the standards work so far? Has the career and technical education (CTE) community been involved?**

Research and evidence on what is needed for success in careers has been a part of the standards development work. For this initiative, careers are defined as those in the top two tiers of career classifications identified by the Department of Labor. These careers provide sufficient wages and the opportunity for growth. The CTE community has provided feedback on the standards, and CTE organizations are supportive of the initiative, including the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), which is an endorsing partner of the initiative.

**9. Do the standards dictate certain approaches and curricula?**

No. The standards define what to teach not how or with what materials. The common core standards will not favor or prescribe any particular approach or course that students must take. The standards will articulate skills students must have to succeed in college and workforce training programs. The standards are designed to be cross-curricular and allow for courses that appeal to different students' needs and interests while helping them gain the requisite ELA and mathematics skills.

**10. How is the higher education community engaged in the initiative?**

The State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) have been engaged in the initiative through their role on the initiative's advisory group. Many individuals representing higher education are participating in the standards development.

**11. Are there plans to help states collaborate on common assessments?**

The United States Department of Education is sponsoring a grant to develop common assessments based on the standards.