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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### WHY ARE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS IMPORTANT?

New Mexico and 45 other states have adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for public schools, establishing state-of-the-art guidelines for teacher and student competency. Common Core is a radically different approach to learning, teaching and testing that engenders a deeper understanding of critical concepts and the practical application of that knowledge. Developed over many years and benchmarked internationally, these proven methods prepare students to be ready for college and competitive in the job market.

### WHAT ARE EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS?

Standards help teachers ensure their students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful by providing clear goals for student learning.

### WHY DO WE NEED EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS?

We need standards to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. Common standards assure that students consistently receive a high quality education—from school to school and state to state—and provide greater opportunity to share experiences and best practices that improve our ability to serve the needs of students. Standards do not tell teachers *what* they must teach, but they do help teachers understand *how* to build classroom lessons and environments that are appropriate for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. Standards set clear expectations and high standards for teachers, parents, and students that everyone can work toward together.

### HOW WERE EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS DETERMINED IN THE PAST?

Each state and each district within states had its own process for developing, adopting, and implementing standards. As a result, what students were expected to learn varied widely.

### IS NEW MEXICO ADOPTING ALL THE CCSS?

New Mexico adopted all Common Core State Standards in October, 2010.

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**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONT.**

**WHY ARE RIGOROUS NEW STANDARDS NECESSARY?**

The Common Core is a new approach to teaching, learning and testing for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that focuses on giving students deep understanding of the most important concepts in the subjects they are studying so that they can apply those knowledge and skills to other subjects and in the *real world*. Common Core establishes what *all students* must know and be able to do to graduate from high school ready for college or a career.

**HOW DO THE NEW MEXICO COMMON CORE STANDARDS AFFECT LOCAL CONTROL?**

Teachers, principals and superintendents decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers continue to tailor instruction to individual student needs. Superintendents and school boards continue to make decisions about curriculum and how their school systems are operated.

**WHAT IS THE TIMEFRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STANDARDS?**

By 2015, all students will be taking new forms of tests that require them to show that they have the ability to read, write, speak, solve problems, and use technology. These tests will examine many kinds of student work, not just multiple-choice answers. New Mexico will be teaching the Common Core State Standards to students in grades K-3 beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, and to students in grades 4-12 in 2013-2014.

**WERE TEACHERS INVOLVED IN THE CREATION OF THE STANDARDS?**

Teachers have been a critical voice in the development of the standards. The National Education Association (NEA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) all have been instrumental in bringing together teachers to provide specific, constructive feedback on the standards.

**WHAT DOES THIS WORK MEAN FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS?**

Common standards will provide a greater opportunity for states to share experiences and best practices within and across states that can lead to an improved ability to best serve young people with disabilities and English language learners. Additionally, the K-12 English language arts and mathematics standards include information on application of the standards for English language learners and students with disabilities.

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**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONT.**

**DO COMMON STANDARDS LEAD TO DUMBING DOWN EXPECTATIONS ACROSS THE BOARD?**

The Common Core State Standards have been built from the best and highest state standards in the country and benchmarked to international standards. They were developed by experts, with input from educators and parents, so that they would be evidence-based, aligned with college and work expectations, include rigorous content and skills, and be realistic and practical for the classroom.

**WILL MORE STANDARDS MEAN MORE TESTS?**

New Mexico's Standards Based Assessment (SBA) will be created and administered by PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers), a consortium of 24 states, including New Mexico, that has agreed to utilize the same accountability tests. The goal is not to have more tests, but to have smarter tests that better demonstrate what students are learning and provide educators with evidence that will help them raise student achievement.

**THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALLOW PARTICIPATING STATES TO ADOPT AN ADDITIONAL 15% OF THEIR OWN STANDARDS. DID NEW MEXICO CHOOSE TO ADOPT AN ADDITIONAL 15% OF STANDARDS?**

Yes, but only in the area of English Language Arts (ELA) and not for mathematics. New Mexico conducted an alignment study in the early stages of the State's CCSS adoption process to determine gaps between the proposed standards and the current state content standards. As a result, standards in the current state content standards that addressed cultural competence were added to the New Mexico Common Core State Standards. These went into effect on October 29, 2010 as per New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) 6.29.13. Implementation of the additional 15% ELA cultural standards will coincide with the NMCCSS timeline of 2012-2013 for grades K-3 and 2013-2014 for grades 4-12. The additional ELA cultural standards listed in NMAC 6.29.13 are currently being reviewed to eliminate redundancy and ensure that cultural competence is fully addressed. The work is being led by the ELA/Literacy Launch Team at New Mexico State University (NMSU) in collaboration with NMPED. This team includes ELA educators and specialists, with Hispanic and Indian Education representatives. The review process will be completed in spring 2012 and NMAC 6.29.13 will be updated. Training regarding these additional requirements will be included in upcoming professional development opportunities provided to districts by NMPED and its partners. Go to [newmexicocommoncore.org](http://newmexicocommoncore.org), ELL Teacher Info, to learn more about these standards.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONT.**

**IS NEW MEXICO ADOPTING ALL THE CCSS?**

New Mexico adopted both the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts/Literacy and mathematics in October 2010. We will be following a delayed implementation schedule, as described below.

Mandated CCSS Implementation Timeline	Grades	CCSS
2012-2013	K-3	ELA including additional 15% state standards
2012-2013	K-3	Mathematics
2013-2014	4-12	ELA including additional 15% state standards
2013-2014	4-12	Mathematics
2013-2014 <i>IMPORTANT NOTE: Grades 6-12 literacy standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects are not meant to replace content standards in those areas but rather to supplement them and are to be incorporated into the standards for those subjects.</i>	6-12	Literacy Standards in Social Studies, Science & Technical Subjects

**ARE THERE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES AND SCIENCE?**

There currently are not Common Core State Standards for science or social studies. The Next Generation Science Standards are under development and not yet ready for adoption. To learn about the science standards go to <http://www.nextgenscience.org/>

CCSS for English Language Arts contain literacy standards to be implemented in social studies, science, and technical subjects. Just as students must learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas, so too must the standards specify the literacy skills and understandings required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines. Literacy standards for grade 6 and above are predicated on teachers of ELA, history/social studies, science, and technical subjects using their content area expertise to help students meet the particular challenges of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language in their respective fields. It is important to note that the 6–12 literacy standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects are not meant to replace content standards in those areas but rather to supplement them. Learn more about the literacy standards at: <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards>.

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**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONT.**

**HOW WILL COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES BE INVOLVED IN THE TRANSITION TO CCSS?**

Many of New Mexico's higher education institutions are already deeply involved in teacher professional development for CCSS and in rethinking the preparation of teachers for the demands of CCSS. Following is the NMPED Implementation Plan for strengthening the PK-16 continuum by engaging higher education more fully in school improvement:

- Utilizing the Implementing the Common Core State Standards: An Action Agenda for Higher Education published by Achieve, American Council on Education (ACE) and State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO).
- Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) are largely responsible for pre-service and in-service teacher training; therefore, steps will be taken to connect the CCSS to college curriculums including the development of transitional coursework, bridge programs, accelerated learning opportunities, student support, intervention systems and college & career readiness advising.
- New Mexico State University (NMSU) will serve as lead in establishing a network of institutional partners.
- NMPED has partnered with New Mexico State University (NMSU) as a professional development provider through:
  - Mathematically Connected Communities (MC<sup>2</sup>)
  - Leadership Institute for Teachers (LIFT)
  - Scaling Up Mathematics Achievement (SUMA)
  - ELA/Literacy Launch Team