THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

History and Fact Sheet

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
STANDARDS

Education “standards” define expectations for student learning by stating what students should know at the conclusion of a course of study. Standards have been adopted in states for decades and were adopted in all 50 states after No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was passed in 2001.

The move to standards-based education was motivated by the belief that student performance could and should be raised and that specific goals needed to be established to drive improvement. It was also based on the belief that all children should have access to the opportunity to learn the content and skills required for employment and civic participation. Establishing standards offered educators support in developing and sharing curriculum and instructional best practices.

Standards define learning expectations. Standards do not dictate curriculum (e.g., textbooks and reading lists) or prescribe a method of instruction. As states uniformly adopted learning standards, decisions about curriculum and teaching methods have continued to be made by local communities. Typically, standards decisions are made at the state level, curriculum decisions are made by local districts, and instructional decisions are made by local teachers and principals.

STANDARDS ADOPTION AND GOVERNANCE

Tennessee’s State Board of Education is the governing and policy making body for the Tennessee system of public elementary and secondary education. The board coordinates efforts with the state department of education, which implements law and policies established by the General Assembly and the board.

The State Board of Education, made up of Tennessee citizens, is charged with adopting “a curriculum framework for each subject area, grades K-12. These frameworks shall contain the broad goals and objectives which identify the minimum content required at each grade level and for each course. The approved frameworks shall be the basis for planning instructional programs in each local system.”1 The State Board of Education is composed of nine members—one from each of Tennessee’s congressional districts—appointed by the governor for a five-year term.

Tennessee currently has standards for student performance for arts education, computer technology, career guidance, pre-K early childhood, English language arts, English as a Second Language, foreign language, health/PE/wellness, mathematics, reading, science, service learning, and social studies.

To date, most standards have been written by teams of educators in each state on a state-by-state basis.2 The process of standard writing has varied over time and by state.

---


2 There are some examples of state consortia for standards and assessments prior to Common Core State Standards. Since 2005, school students in New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont have defined common standards and assessments in the New England Consortium Assessments Program. Maine joined in 2009. It is a collaborative project of the New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont departments of education, with assistance from the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessments.
Typically, standard setting involves teachers and content-area experts drafting language, referencing other state standards and available resources, with opportunities for public comment. At times, members of the higher education community and employers are involved to attempt to align the expectations for student performance with the demands of the workforce.

**STATE-DRIVEN PUSH TOWARDS COMMON STANDARDS**

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were created through a state-led initiative with roots extending back over a number of years.

At the 1996 National Education Summit, a bipartisan group of governors and business leaders decided to create and lead an organization dedicated to supporting standards-based education reform efforts across the states. To do so, they formed Achieve, an independent, bipartisan, non-profit education reform organization. Governor Bill Haslam is a member of the board of Achieve. Governor Phil Bredesen was formerly a member of the board.

In December 2004, the American Diploma Project released the report, “Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma that Counts.” This report documented that most high school graduates need remedial help in college, most college students never attain a degree, and most employers say high school graduates lack basic skills. The report states, “While students and their parents may still believe that the diploma reflects adequate preparation for the intellectual demands of adult life, in reality it falls far short of this common-sense goal. The diploma has lost value because graduates could not compete successfully beyond high school.” This study also found that “whether planning to enter college or workforce training programs after graduation, high school students need to be educated to a comparable level of readiness in reading and mathematics.” This discussion began the development of the Common Core State Standards.

In 2007, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce gave Tennessee an “F” for “Truth in Advertising” about student proficiency. While large percentages of students were proficient on 2005 state math and reading assessments, much smaller percentages of students were proficient in scores on NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress).

Starting in 2007, Tennessee created the Tennessee Diploma Project to help align Tennessee’s education standards to skills needed to succeed in education and in the workplace. The project was led by the Tennessee Alignment Committee, a panel of state and local government officials, and business, postsecondary and K-12 leaders. Tennessee joined 30 states working to align expectations for students as part of the American Diploma Project Network.

In July 2008, Achieve documented the efforts of multiple states working to set career and college ready standards. The report tracked the “voluntary standard-setting efforts in 16 early-adopter states including Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee and Texas.”

The current Common Core State Standards initiative was launched by the National Governors Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in 2008. In December 2008, Education Week reported that NGA, CCSSO and Achieve released a report urging for Common Core Standards.
In June 2009, Governor Bredesen and Education Commissioner Tim Webb joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

**PURPOSE OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS**

The Common Core State Standards are meant to “provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy.”

The motivation behind the development of the standards was to:

- Provide clear expectations aligned to the expectations of college and careers;
- Promote consistency by ensuring all students, no matter where they live, are well prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to collaborate and compete with their peers in the United States and abroad; and
- Enable collaboration between states on a range of tools and policies, including:
  - the development of textbooks, digital media, and other teaching materials; and
  - the development and implementation of common comprehensive assessment systems to measure student performance annually that will replace existing state testing systems.

**EXAMPLES OF COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS**

2nd Grade Math

*CCSS.Math.Content.2.NBT.A.2* Count within 1000; skip-count by 5s, 10s, and 100s.

6th Grade Math

*CCSS.Math.Content.6.G.A.1* Find the area of right triangles, other triangles, special quadrilaterals, and polygons by composing into rectangles or decomposing into triangles and other shapes; apply these techniques in the context of solving real-world and mathematical problems.

4th Grade Reading

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.2* Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

9th and 10th Grade Writing

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7* Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

The Common Core State Standards emphasize:

- Basic skills in math, reading and writing (including math without calculators and a focus on basic reading skills in early grades)
- Critical thinking and problem solving skills
The Common Core State Standards focus on math, reading, and writing. Compared to current standards, Common Core State Standards focus on deeper mastery of less content each year. Rather than a “mile-wide, inch-deep” curriculum, leading to superficial coverage of topics, the Common Core State Standards focus on the core skills required for success in college and career. The Common Core State Standards do not prescribe a particular curriculum or textbook, or prevent a particular course of study. Local school districts maintain the ability to purchase curricular materials and create their own course materials. The standards establish the skills that students should know and form the basis for the assessments given at the end of the year.

THE WRITING OF THE STANDARDS

The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) coordinated the process to develop the Common Core State Standards.

- July 2009: NGA and CCSSO announced work groups and released a draft of college and career ready standards for public comment for educators, administrators, and community and parent organizations.
- September 2009: The Validation Committee was announced—a 25 member committee of leading educators charged with providing independent, expert validations of the process.
- March 2010: The first public draft of the Common Core State Standards was released for public feedback.
- June 2010: The final version of the Common Core State Standards was released to the public.
- June 2010: Validation Committee published its final report stating, “Unlike past standards setting efforts, the Common Core State Standards are based on best practices in national and international education, as well as research and input from numerous sources.”

The standards were developed with attention to the following criteria:

- Alignment with expectations for college and career success
- Clarity
- Consistency across all states
- Inclusion of content and the application of knowledge through higher-order skills
- Improvement upon current state standards and demands of top-performing nations

TENNESSEE INVOLVEMENT IN PROVIDING FEEDBACK

During development of the Common Core State Standards, Tennessee was represented in the feedback groups for both the English language arts and math standards by the content experts at the Tennessee Department of Education. This group of nationwide experts was charged with providing feedback on the content and presentation of the standards. There was also a period for public comment before the standards were finalized. Dozens of comments from Tennessee teachers and parents were included in the revision process.
STATUS OF STATE INVOLVEMENT

As of January 2013, 48 states and the District of Columbia were members of the Common Core State Standards Initiative. Texas and Alaska are not members of the initiative. Nebraska and Virginia are members but have decided not to adopt the standards. Minnesota has adopted the English language arts standards but not the math standards.

TENNESSEE’S ADOPTION OF COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

In Tennessee, the decision to adopt Common Core State Standards was made by the governor and the State Board of Education. On July 30, 2010, Common Core State Standards adoption was passed unanimously by the State Board of Education.

The Tennessee legislature, all 136 local education agencies and local boards of education committed to the implementation of College and Career Ready Standards through the Race to the Top Application and Grant Award (see Appendix A for a full list of the parties that signed this commitment and dates signed).

IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

School districts in Tennessee have phased in use of the Common Core State Standards for math and English language arts over the past two years. District introduction of the standards has varied with some districts opting to fully implement in certain grades and other school districts waiting until assessments aligned to the standards begin. During the 2011-12 school year, most school districts began using Common Core State Standards for students in grades K-2. During the 2012-13 school year, school districts used the Common Core State Standards in math in grades 3-8, and about half of Tennessee school districts participated in a pilot program to begin using the standards in English language arts and literacy.

The Tennessee Department of Education has provided no-cost training to support teachers in deepening understanding of the expectations of the standards. These trainings have been peer-led, with teachers learning from and working with other teachers from their communities and regions. In spring 2012, 200 Tennessee math teachers were selected and trained to serve as Core Coaches and lead summer training for other teachers in their region. They received eight days of professional development prior to leading the trainings over the summer. In July 2012, 13,000 Tennessee educators participated in a math training on the Common Core State Standards. In January 2013, the department selected 700 new Tennessee Core Coaches who started training in March. As of April, 25,000 Tennessee educators have enrolled in the optional trainings offered for summer 2013.

In addition to teacher training, the department has offered optional courses for principals and school leaders similarly structured in a peer-led learning process. More than 2,500 school and district administrators enrolled in a four-day course spanning January to May, 2013. The content of this course was co-created by the 90 Tennessee school and district leaders selected as Leadership Coaches, blended with the content of teacher training.

The Tennessee Department of Education has also provided optional instructional resources. One of the greatest potential values of the Common Core State Standards is the opportunity to learn from each other to support student success. The Tennessee Department of Education has sought to share high-quality resources from within Tennessee and across states using Common Core State Standards, for use at the local districts’ discretion. Additionally, the Expect More Achieve More coalition, which includes...
a broad range of education stakeholder organizations and business and community leaders, provides support and coordination for Tennessee schools.

**ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT**

Per legislation passed by the General Assembly in 2014, the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) assessments, including the End of Course assessments, will continue to be used as the state’s assessments for math and reading/language arts in grades 3-8, as well as in high school End of Course subjects. The department will issue a request for proposals for assessments in math and reading/language arts for the 2015-16 school year through a competitive bidding process. The design of the 2014-15 Achievement and End of Course exams will mirror the design of the tests in the 2013-14 school year.

In the 2014-15 school year, the TCAP science assessments will continue, and the new social studies TCAP assessment will be field tested.

**CURRICULUM**

According to Tennessee Code 49-6-2207, adoption of textbooks is governed strictly by local boards: “The local boards of education are authorized and required to adopt textbooks to be used in the public schools of their school districts, from the list of textbooks listed for adoption by the commission, the adoption to be for a period of no less than three years, but not exceeding the period agreed to in the state contract approved by the commissioner.”

The Textbook Commission is composed of ten members, nine of whom are appointed by the governor. The specific composition of the textbook commission is governed by Tennessee Code 49-6-2201. It is the duty of the commission to prepare a list of standard editions of textbook for approval by the state board of education for use in the public schools of the state.

**INSTRUCTION**

Daily instruction of student learning is managed by the local teacher and school administrator at a school level. With district support in the form of curriculum, teachers are charged with the instruction of children in the subject, and teachers work with families in their community to determine the best course of instruction for individual children.
APPENDIX A

• January 12, 2010: First to the Top bill filed (SB7005)
  ◦ January 13, 2010: Senate Education Committee recommends bill to pass with amendments and refers the bill to Senate Finance, Ways and Means Committee (12 ayes, 1 present and not voting)
  ◦ January 15, 2010: First to the Top bill signed by Speakers of both House and Senate
  ◦ Passed House: 83 ayes, 8 nays, 1 present and not voting
  ◦ Passed Senate: 29 ayes, 3 nays

• January 16, 2010: First to the Top bill signed by Governor Bredesen

• January 18, 2010: Race to the Top application submitted to U.S. Department of Education
  ◦ Signed by:
    - Governor Phil Bredesen
    - Education Commissioner Tim Webb
    - State Board of Education Chair Fielding Rolston
    - 136 school district superintendents and 4 state special schools representatives
    - 136 presidents of the local school board
    - 115 (93%) local teachers’ union leaders

  ◦ 125 letters of support submitted by stakeholders, including:
    - Tennessee Education Association (January 16, 2010)
    - Principals’ Study Council (January 8, 2010)
    - Supervisors’ Study Council (January 11, 2010)
    - Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents (December 17, 2009)
    - Tennessee School Boards Association (December 16, 2009)
    - General Assembly leadership (January 15, 2010)
    - State’s Congressional delegation (January 11, 2010)
    - All candidates for 2010 gubernatorial election (January 18, 2010)
    - State charter school association (December 18, 2009)
    - Tennessee SCORE (January 14, 2010)
    - Tennessee Chamber of Commerce (January 15, 2010)
    - Tennessee Business Roundtable (December 18, 2009)
    - Civil rights organizations: NAACP (December 16, 2009)
    - Parents’ groups: Tennessee PTA (December 2009)
    - Tennessee Higher Education Commission (December 16, 2009)