



Iowa Department of Education

Iowa Core Annual Report

Iowa Department of Education

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Des Moines, IA 50319

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State of Iowa
Department of Education
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Des Moines IA 50319-0146

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Introduction. One central component of a great school system is a clear set of expectations, or standards, that educators help all students reach. In Iowa, that effort is known as the Iowa Core.

The Iowa Core represents our statewide academic standards, which describe what students should know and be able to do in math, science, English language arts, and social studies. The Iowa Core also addresses 21st Century Skills such as financial and technology literacy.

These state standards provide Iowa students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders with a clear, common understanding of what students are expected to learn at every grade level, regardless of where they live.

The standards establish what Iowa students need to learn, but not how to teach. Local schools and teachers continue to create lesson plans and tailor instruction to fit the needs of their students.

Legislative Foundation. Senate File 245 (May 2005) and Senate File 588 (May 2007) established the voluntary Model Core Curriculum in kindergarten through grade 12 in the areas of literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and 21st century skills. The 2008 legislature proposed that the Iowa Core Curriculum be fully implemented by all Iowa schools — public and accredited nonpublic. The governor signed Senate File 2216 into law May 1, 2008, which requires the full implementation of the Iowa Core — in high schools by 2012-2013, and in K-8 by 2014-2015. Implementation plans were required for high schools by July 1, 2010, and by K-8 schools by July 1, 2012.

Current Status. The Iowa Department of Education (DE) is currently working with all area education agencies (AEAs) to support the roll-out of the Iowa Core with local schools districts and accredited nonpublic schools. Funds provided by the legislature in 2012 have maintained the Iowa Core Network, which consists of teams from each AEA that provide ongoing support and professional development to schools.

Improved implementation was the focus of effort during the past year. The Iowa Core Network assisted local education agencies (LEAs) in initiating and sustaining efforts to address the six outcomes of the Iowa Core:

1. School leaders build and sustain system capacity to implement the Iowa Core.
2. Community members and other supporting agencies work together to support the implementation of the Iowa Core.
3. A continuous improvement process to improve teaching and learning is used at the district and school level.
4. District leaders and other educators monitor and use data to increase the degree of alignment of each and every student's enacted curriculum and other relevant educational opportunities to the Iowa Core.
5. Educators engage in professional development focused on improving instruction and deepening educators' knowledge of the standards and essential concepts and skills of the Iowa Core.
6. Educators implement effective instructional practices to ensure high levels of learning for each and every student.

Professional Development. The Iowa Core Network has continued to meet monthly to develop resources to support districts in professional development to fully implement the Iowa Core. Their efforts have focused on assisting districts and schools with integrating their Iowa Core

Plan into the Consolidated Plan application. The network has also assisted schools in improving the alignment of local curriculum to the Iowa Core standards. An additional area of learning for the network has been cognitive complexity. Research has shown that students who experience cognitively challenging work in schools demonstrate higher academic achievement (Newmann, F. M., King, M. B., & Carmichael, D. L., 2007.)

An Iowa Core Statewide Resources moodle site, developed by the Iowa Core Network, serves as a repository of resources for all Iowa educators to use in successfully implementing the Iowa Core. Included on the site are research briefs and literature reviews, professional development protocols, video segments, discussion guides, and organized learning sequences. Information and resources including podcast, video tutorials, online modules, and additional collaborative learning team professional development learning sequences and agendas will continue to be added to the site as they are developed. Many of these resources were developed with the support of the National Staff Development Council, Iowa Public Television, and numerous Iowa K-16 administrators and teachers.

District-based collaborative learning teams consisting of teachers and administrators are using these materials to deepen their understanding of their Iowa Core and to identify ways to improve instruction.

Statewide Assessment. The DE has tasked a Comprehensive Balanced Assessment System Advisory Committee to provide advice and recommendations to the DE and the State Board of Education on policy and practice issues related to current and future assessment systems in Iowa. One focus of the committee is to recommend a suite of assessments aligned to the Iowa Core and allowing for enhanced information for all stakeholders.

To assist in developing assessments aligned to the English/language arts and mathematics standards of the Iowa Core, the DE has joined three assessment consortia. The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is developing a system of valid, reliable, and fair next-generation assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts/literacy (ELA/literacy) and mathematics for grades 3-8 and high school. It will be fully operational in 2014-15. Iowa serves as one of 21 governing states for the consortium. The Smarter Balanced Assessment system—which includes both summative assessments for accountability purposes, optional interim assessments for instructional use, and formative resources for implementing the Common Core—will use computer adaptive testing, technology enhanced items, and online accommodations to the greatest extent possible to provide meaningful feedback and actionable data educators can use to help students succeed. Smarter Balanced Assessments will go beyond multiple-choice questions to include extended response and performance tasks allowing students to demonstrate critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. Sample assessment items and performance tasks are available at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks/>.

The English Language Proficiency Assessments 21 (ELPA21) is being developed by a consortium of 12 states. The consortium is developing new English language proficiency standards and assessments to support English language learners engaged in the content of the Iowa Core. These new assessments will assess reading, writing, speaking, and listening around content standards from English language arts, mathematics, and science. The assessments will be for grades K-12 and will be operational in the 2015 -16 school year.

The integration of the CCSS into the Iowa Core requires Iowa to develop a new Iowa Alternate Assessment aligned to the Iowa Core. To accomplish this, Iowa joined [Dynamic Learning Maps](#) (DLM), a 14-state member consortium. The DLM assessment consortium is guided by the core belief that all students should have access to challenging grade-level content, which is reflected in the Common Core Essential Elements. The essential elements are specific statements of the content and skills that are linked to the CCSS grade level specific expectations for students with significant cognitive disabilities. The Iowa Core Essential Elements are scheduled to be released late this spring.

Content Leadership Teams: The DE is also collaborating with the AEAs in delivering a series of professional development opportunities called “Investigating the Iowa Core: Mathematics and Literacy” and “Deeper Investigations: Literacy and Mathematics”. The purpose for the investigations is to teach administrators and teachers how to navigate the standards documents, learning the structure and content, and developing a deeper understanding of the changes in instruction and content these new standards require. Training of these professional development modules is being delivered throughout the state to teams of teachers and administrators. Each AEA is responsible for delivery at the local level. For educators who are unable to attend a face-to-face investigation or for educators who may be new to the districts, these professional development opportunities are also available as online modules. These content leadership teams are also involved in developing new professional learning opportunities for teachers to deepen their understanding of the standards and support improved instruction in these content areas.

Analyzing the Standards: StandardsInsight

The DE has teamed with the Mid-Iowa School Improvement Consortium (MISIC) to gain the rights for all school districts and accredited nonpublic schools in Iowa to have access to StandardsInsight, a tool that has “unpacked” the content and skills of Iowa Core State Standards. Three webinars are available at <http://misiciowa.org/StandardsInsight.html>. One webinar provides information to district and school administrators on how to access the tool, another assists teachers in the use of the StandardsInsight tool, and a third suggests uses for the tool. This website also includes a document called *An Educator’s Guide to StandardsInsight*.