

## National Standards: Common Core Standards Initiative, How, When, and What?

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For the nine years since the publication of NCTM's *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics* (PSSM), states have created individual standards, often responding to or incorporating NCTM's ideas, but without any consistent interstate framework or uniformity. This lack of consistency has been a target for commentators and educators across the spectrum. The NCTM itself writes on its webpage, "Uniform or consistent standards across the states would improve curricular coherence, an issue that NCTM addressed in *Curriculum Focal Points for Prekindergarten through Grade 8 Mathematics: A Quest for Coherence*. Appropriately rigorous standards could also increase student learning and achievement." But there has been little national momentum for a common set of standards until this year.

In the spring of 2009, the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) started the Common Core State Standards Initiative to develop a common content focus at each grade level, starting with mathematics and English/language arts. The NGA gives two major reasons for this effort:

1. The lack of state-to-state curricular consistency hurts students' learning, especially as our population becomes increasingly mobile.
2. According to the NGA and other sources, students are leaving high school unready to use mathematics in their careers or take higher mathematics in college.

The Common Core standards initiative has been led by Project Achieve, the NGA's education/curriculum arm, and has partnered with NCTM, ACT, the College Board, and other organizations. Initially, fewer than 20 states signed on, but as of October, all fifty states had agreed, at least in principle, to adopt these standards as 85% of their standards. A first draft of the college and career-readiness standards—what students should know and be able to do on exiting high school—was released in September, and is currently available for comment at <http://www.corestandards.org/> Meanwhile, the project is back-mapping these standards to create a full set of K-12 standards. A full set of standards will be validated by an independent panel in early 2010, and will then be adopted by states.

The Common Core Math standards are divided into the following eleven areas: Mathematical Practice; Number; Quantity; Expressions; Equations; Functions; Modeling; Shape; Coordinates; Probability; and Statistics. Within each area, the standards identify three or four *Core Concepts* that students are expected to understand, and anywhere from three to six *Core Skills* that students are expected to be able to perform. In the electronic version of the document, hyperlinks lead readers to examples and sample tasks.

On November 10<sup>th</sup> Achieve announced the members of the Mathematics Work Group and the Mathematics Feedback Group. The role of the Work group is to complete the draft of the common core standards by grade level for K-12 to be released for review in early 2010. NCTM members are well represented on both the Work Group and the Mathematics Feedback Group. The list of members of each group released on November 10<sup>th</sup>, can be found on the core curriculum website. Most members of these groups are NCTM members, and many have been major contributors to NCTM Standards positions and publications.

In addition, college and career readiness standards, along with the K-12 grade-level standards, will be subject to review by a validation committee before being sent to the governor and chief state school officer in each participating state in spring 2010.

The adoption and implementation of these standards has the potential to increase the worth of a high school diploma, which is an important consideration as the population is becoming more mobile. Student readiness for college is a matter of increasing concern, as more students entering college require remediation in mathematics. (In part, this is because many more students enter college than they did in the past.) Reversing this trend will help to ensure equity in mathematics education. By improving consistency and coherence of the mathematics curriculum from state to state, consistent common standards could also help develop college readiness.

NCTM President Hank Kepner was selected to be part of a small feedback group for the first draft of the standards. He took that opportunity to provide a summary review that consolidated comments from a group of NCTM members. The NGA and CCSSO have involved a larger group at the current stage of development. This group includes the presidents of NCTM, the Mathematical Association of America (MAA), and American Mathematical Society (AMS), who will be asked to provide feedback and responses from their organizations.

ICTM will continue to provide updates on our website. For links to the Common Core Standards site and additional information, please go to the ICTM website: <http://www.ictm.org>