



# Wyoming Department of Education

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## MEMORANDUM NO. 2013-076

**TO:** School District Superintendents  
School Principals  
Curriculum Coordinators

**FROM:** Julie Magee, Unit Leader  
Standards, Learning and Accountability

**DATE:** June 11, 2013

**SUBJECT:** Common Core State Standards FAQ Sheet

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## INFORMATION TO SHARE

The Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) released a list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) and answers about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) today in Cheyenne.

The FAQ sheet is available in both PDF format (attached) as well as on the WDE website at: <http://edu.wyoming.gov/Programs/standards/common-core-state-standards-faq.aspx>.

The 17-question document touches on several topics, including the fundamentals of CCSS, how the CCSS were created, as well as the process used by Wyoming in adopting the CCSS. In each case, the information in the document is specific to the state of Wyoming and its implementation of the standards.

The CCSS are a list of standards anchored in career and college readiness skills which define what students should know and be able to do in mathematics and language arts. The CCSS are internationally benchmarked and based on evidence and research.

The Wyoming State Board of Education voted to adopt the CCSS in 2012 and Governor Matt Mead signed the standards into law in July of 2012. Prior to their adoption, two standards review committees comprised of Wyoming teachers, leaders, parents, and other stakeholders took part in the standards review process for math and language arts.

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Both committees recommended the State Board of Education adopt the CCSS as part of the state content standards for each content area.

The standards were then posted for a 45-day public comment period in which Wyoming citizens could share their opinion regarding the CCSS. Additionally, a team from the WDE hosted public hearings in six locations across the state in Gillette, Casper, Thermopolis, Rock Springs, Mountain View, and Cheyenne. Finally, the WDE hosted a public hearing for the state over the Wyoming Equality Network (WEN) video system.

The WDE hopes this FAQ document will assist educators across the state with answering questions about the Common Core State Standards in Wyoming. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Julie Magee at 307.777.8740 or [julie.magee@wyo.gov](mailto:julie.magee@wyo.gov).

## About the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in Wyoming

### **What are standards?**

Standards define what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade level in any given subject. For example, in math a student should be able to measure and estimate lengths in standard units by the end of 2nd grade.

### **How many content areas are tied to state standards in Wyoming?**

In Wyoming, there are nine content areas and each one has its own set of standards. Those content areas are math, language arts, health, fine & performing arts, foreign language, physical education, social studies, career/vocational education, and science. The most current version of the Wyoming Content Standards can be found here: <http://edu.wyoming.gov/Programs/standards.aspx>

### **Who has authority over Wyoming's standards?**

In Wyoming, the State Board of Education is charged with reviewing and approving the state standards every five years.

### **How often are the content standards reviewed in Wyoming?**

In Wyoming, the state standards are reviewed every five years.

### **Who reviews Wyoming's content standards?**

In Wyoming, a committee comprised of teachers, business members, community members, and parents work together to review and, if necessary, revise the standards for each content area. State Board members and state legislators are invited to attend the work sessions as well. Final approval of the state standards resides with the State Board of Education.

### **Who has authority over implementation of state standards in Wyoming?**

In Wyoming, implementation of the state standards, including curriculum choices and instructional methods, are determined by local school boards, district and building administrators, and teachers.

### **What is curriculum?**

Curriculum refers to the methods and materials used to deliver instruction related to the standards. Text-books, worksheets, lab kits, novels, software programs, and so on are used by teachers to deliver instruction related to a given content area.

## About the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in Wyoming

### **What is differentiated instruction?**

Differentiated instruction occurs when teachers tailor instruction to meet the individual needs of students. In this way, the needs of all students are addressed regardless of skill level or academic ability.

### **Who has authority over curriculum and instruction in Wyoming?**

In Wyoming, decisions related to curriculum and instruction are made by local school boards, district and building administrators, and teachers. Neither state nor federal government has authority to make these kinds of decisions for the school districts.

### **What are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?**

The CCSS are anchored in career and college readiness skills and define what students should know and be able to do in mathematics and language arts. The CCSS are internationally benchmarked and based on evidence and research. Use the links below to find PDF versions of the CCSS for both content areas:

[English Language Arts Standards](#)

[Mathematics Standards](#)

### **Are the CCSS the first step toward nationalizing Wyoming's education?**

No. The CCSS is a state-led effort to give all students the skills and knowledge they need to be college and career ready by the time they graduate from high school. Each state chooses to adopt the standards or not.

### **Are the creation and implementation of the Common Core State Standards a way to enact a national curriculum for all schools?**

No. The Common Core State Standards are not a curriculum. In Wyoming, local school boards, district and building administrators, as well as teachers decide what curriculum to utilize in an effort to prepare students to meet the standards.

### **Who created the CCSS?**

To develop these standards, Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and National Governor's Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices, worked with representatives from participating states, a wide-range of educators, content experts, researchers, national organizations, and community groups. Furthermore, these standards reflect the feedback from the general public, teachers, parents, business leaders, states, and content-area experts and are informed by the standards of other high performing nations.

## About the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in Wyoming

### **Did the federal government pay for the development of the CCSS?**

No. The development of the CCSS was paid for by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

### **What was the process to adopt the CCSS in Wyoming?**

Two standards committees comprised of Wyoming teachers, leaders, parents, as well as representatives from higher education and the business community took part in the standards revision process for the content areas of mathematics and language arts. During the standards review process, each committee read the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for mathematics and language arts and voted to recommend the adoption of these standards. The committees each included a rationale for their recommendation and presented their proposed standards document to the Wyoming State Board of Education in 2011. The standards were then posted for a 45-day public comment period in which Wyoming citizens could share their opinion regarding the CCSS. Additionally, a team from the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) hosted public hearings in six locations across the state: Gillette, Casper, Thermopolis, Rock Springs, Mountain View, and Cheyenne. Finally, the WDE hosted a public hearing for the state over the Wyoming Equality Network (WEN) video system.

After reviewing the public comments, the State Board of Education (SBE) voted to approve the CCSS for mathematics and language arts. They were subsequently sent to the governor for his review; he signed them into law on July 2012.

### **Which content areas are part of the CCSS?**

The CCSS outline standards for mathematics and language arts. In the language arts standards, reading and writing is included across all content areas.

### **Did the federal government require states, including Wyoming, to adopt the CCSS?**

No. The federal government had no part in the development of the CCSS. It was a state-led effort, and each state can choose to adopt the CCSS or not. In Wyoming, the standards review committees for math and language arts reviewed the CCSS. A rationale for each committee's decision to adopt the CCSS can be found here:

- **MATH:** <http://edu.wyoming.gov/sf-docs/standards/final-2012-math-standards.pdf>
- **LANGUAGE ARTS:** <http://edu.wyoming.gov/sf-docs/standards/final-2012-ela-standards.pdf>

## About the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in Wyoming

### **Are there new student-level data collection requirements related to the CCSS?**

No. The adoption and implementation of the CCSS (or any standards) do not require any new data collection.

### **Do the CCSS replace most or all literature with non-fiction texts in language arts?**

No. The CCSS for language arts recommends students in the elementary grades read 50% literary text and 50% informational text. The emphasis on rich non-fiction and informational texts increases as a student progresses through their academic career. By 12th grade, a student is encouraged to read 30% literary text and 70% informational text. This increase represents the amount of reading covered in all content areas, not just language arts. Because the language arts classroom focuses on literature (stories, drama, and poetry) as well as literary non-fiction, a great deal of informational reading in grades 6-12 will take place in other classes such as science, social studies, math, and elective courses.

### **Do the CCSS require students to take more tests?**

No. All federal requirements regarding state assessment remain the same. Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), states are to test students annually in grades 3 - 8 and once in high school in reading/language arts and mathematics. Science must be tested once in each grade span, elementary/middle/high school.

### **What is the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)?**

SBAC is one of two major consortia developing assessments of the CCSS in literacy and mathematics. SBAC is a state-led consortium with 26 state/territory members, including Wyoming.

### **If Wyoming decides to replace current assessments with SBAC, will students taking the SBAC tests spend more time in testing?**

Students taking the SBAC tests will spend less time testing than they do now with the Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students (PAWS) and Student Assessment of Writing Skills (SAWS).

### **Will the SBAC assessments cost the state more money?**

No. Because Wyoming will be able to take advantage of the economies of scale with a consortium-based test, SBAC per student pricing is expected to cost far less than half of the current cost of PAWS and SAWS.