

**WASHINGTON STATE
WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
MEETING NO. 174
NOVEMBER 14, 2013**

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Washington is moving to new standards and assessments to determine if K-12 students are college and career ready. Washington is one of 45 states and the District of Columbia voluntarily adopting the Common Core State Standards of college and career readiness. Washington is also moving to a new student assessment system, known as Smarter Balanced Assessments, to measure whether students are meeting the Common Core State Standards.

This tab includes a background paper prepared by Board staff, describing a brief history of the development of the standards, the key positive aspects, and the limitations of the standards and assessment. A resolution supporting the Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessments and a letter sharing the Board's position are also included.

Board Action Requested: Adoption of the Recommended Motion.

RECOMMENDED MOTION

WHEREAS, the Common Core State Standards were developed by the nation's governors and education commissioners through their representative organizations, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, with input from teachers, parents, school administrators and faculty from across the country; and

WHEREAS, the Common Core State Standards establish clear, internationally benchmarked educational standards and learning objectives for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts and mathematics that states may voluntarily adopt; and

WHEREAS, the Common Core Standards are anchored in the goal of ensuring all students graduate from high school prepared to enter credit bearing entry courses in two or four year college programs or to enter the workforce, and reflect a portion of the knowledge and skills most valued by employers and higher education; and

WHEREAS, the Common Core State Standards are a critical component to a full range of educational and instructional opportunities that must be supplemented by continued technical skill attainment, practical work readiness skill development, and comprehensive career guidance and counseling; and

WHEREAS, the Common Core State Standards are clear and concise to ensure that parents, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of the expectations in reading, writing, speaking and listening, language and mathematics in school; and

WHEREAS, forty-five states, including Washington, as well as the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted the Common Core State Standards; and

WHEREAS, State Superintendent Randy Dorn, after thorough legislative review, formally adopted the Common Core State Standards on July 20, 2011 making Washington the 44th state to formally adopt the Common Core State Standards; and

WHEREAS, Washington plays a key leadership and fiscal role in the development of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, a state led consortium developing assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board supports the full adoption and implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

Common Core State Standards

Washington has adopted the Common Core State Standards. Full implementation of the standards will occur in the 2014 – 2015 school year. The Smarter Balanced Assessment will evaluate student mastery of these standards beginning in the 2014 – 2015 school year. The Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessments are components of the national standards-based education reform movement that seeks greater academic rigor. By aligning education standards across states' K-12 systems, advocates believe the Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessments will empower states, educators, students and parents to have better information on performance. An economy of scale will also lead to cost savings in professional development and curriculum. In addition, the newly established standards and assessments include both theoretical knowledge and its practical application, particularly in terms of critical thinking and problem solving.

The states have led the creation and adoption of the Common Core State Standards, which stem from a national initiative by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The initiative began with a Memorandum of Understanding signed in May of 2009 by 48 states and two territories. Currently 45 states and Washington, D.C. have adopted the Common Core State Standards.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) provisionally adopted the Common Core State Standards on July 19, 2010. Formal adoption occurred, after full legislative review, on July 20, 2011 – making Washington the 44th state to do so.

To provide input on the development of the Common Core, OSPI convened a workgroup of almost 100 educators and experts with previous involvement in standards development. Workgroup members included teachers, postsecondary educators (four-year and career and technical colleges), civil rights groups, those with expertise with English language learners and students with disabilities, among others. The standards also underwent a public comment period.

States have the ability to add up to 15 percent of content to the nationally developed Common Core. The 15 percent cap is in place to ensure fidelity to the standards nationwide.

There is much alignment between the Common Core State Standards and Washington's predecessor content standards. Third party evaluations of standards alignment reveal that there is 86 percent alignment between the predecessor Reading, Writing, and Communications Grade Level Expectations and the Common Core English Language Arts Standards and 85 percent alignment between the predecessor Washington State Mathematics Standards and the Common Core Mathematics Standards.

The Common Core State Standards represent a shift from the previous standards in greater requirements to synthesize and evaluate multiple information resources, think critically about the content, work collaboratively across teams, and access and understand technical writing and documents more common in today's workforce.

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is a state-led consortium developing assessments aligned to the Common Core standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

Smarter Balanced Assessments is one of two multi-state consortia awarded funding from the U.S. Department of Education in 2010 to develop an assessment system aligned to Common Core State Standards by the 2014-2015 school year. Currently, 25 states are associated with Smarter Balanced Assessments. By creating a high-quality assessment system, Smarter Balanced believes teachers and schools can improve instruction and help students succeed—regardless of disability, language, or subgroup. Smarter Balanced Assessments members include experienced educators, researchers, state and local policymakers, and community groups.

Washington serves as the fiscal agent for the consortium and reviews applications and awards grants to participant states and districts. As both a Governing State and fiscal agent for federal grant money, Washington plays a key role in the development of Smarter Balanced assessments. Governing States (of which there are 21) are fully committed to the Smarter Balanced approach and have a vote in policy decisions. Alternatively, Advisory States may participate in workgroups and provide guidance for the development of the assessment system. Federal grants are available to participating members of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium to support the implementation of Smarter Balanced Assessments.

In 2013-2014, current tests will remain. Students in grades 3-8 will take the Measurements of Student Progress (MSP) and 10th grade students will take the High School Proficiency Exam and End-of-Course exams for federal and state accountability, and as graduation requirements. The new Smarter Balanced Assessment tests will replace the math, reading and writing portions of the MSP in 2014-2015.

Career Readiness

From the perspective of the Workforce Board an important question is whether or not the Common Core Standards cover the skills required to be career ready. Achieve, an independent research firm that provides technical assistance, research and development, and communication tools and resources addressing education reform at the state and national level, recently commissioned a study of this question. Achieve found that while most career ready skills are covered by the Common Core State Standards, the standards do not cover all the skills required to be career ready. The skills not covered include: vocational specific skills, career planning and job search skills, leadership skills including staff management and mentoring, workplace dress and behavior, workplace health and safety, knowledge of business organizations, and customer and staff conflict management. While the Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessments represent progress, supplemental measures and assessments are necessary to fully understand a student's career readiness.

Opposition to the Common Core State Standards

While the Common Core State Standards are widely accepted among the states, there remain concerns with their use and implementation. Opponents are apprehensive regarding the origin of the standards with the perception that the standards are part of a federal mandate, eroding states local control over education. However, the standards were spear headed by governors and chief state school officers and underwent an extensive review by parents and educators across the nation. Opponents are also concerned that the standards, while collectively developed, have not been field tested to determine the impact they may have on students and educators. This may result in unnecessarily high failure rates for students as they transition to the new standards and

assessments. This underscores the importance of careful planning and implementation of the standards as well as cut-off scores for the Smarter Balanced Assessments and phasing in the requirements and expectations.

More information:

Common Core State Standards

<http://www.corestandards.org/>

Smarter Balanced Assessments

<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/>

DATE

The Honorable Kathy Haigh
Washington State Representative
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Representative Kathy Haigh,

This letter is in response to your inquiry regarding the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board's position on the Common Core State Standards. The Workforce Board is supportive of the standards and the Smarter Balanced Assessment that evaluates student mastery of these standards. The Workforce Board suggests referring to the standards as "Washington's standards." In addition to the standards and assessments, overall student success is dependent on additional career readiness preparation for all students and adequate professional development for teachers and administrators during implementation of the standards.

The Common Core State Standards were developed through a grassroots campaign led by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, with input from teachers, parents, school administrators and faculty from across the country. The standards establish clear, consistent, and internationally benchmarked learning objectives for students in kindergarten through 12th grade in English Language Arts and Mathematics. (States may also elect to add an additional 15 percent of content to the standards to fit their individual needs and objectives.)

Currently, 45 states, including Washington, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity Division have voluntarily adopted the standards. Two years ago the Washington state Legislature reviewed the standards and state Superintendent of Public Instruction, Randy Dorn, formally adopted them.

The standards ensure that all students' graduate high school prepared to enter a variety of postsecondary options: two- or four-year college programs, short-term technical training or certificate programs, or the workforce. However, to ensure all of Washington students are successful, the standards must be accompanied by technical skill attainment, practical work readiness skill development, and comprehensive career guidance and counseling, areas not fully addressed by the standards alone.

In addition, the Smarter Balanced Assessment will enable us to know how well students perform compared to their peers in other states. Our state plays a leadership and fiscal role in the development of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, one of two state-led collaborations developing assessments aligned to the standards. These assessments will better evaluate a student's ability to think critically, discern and synthesize several points of view, and better understand complex technical documents common in today's workforce. Together, the standards and the assessment will greatly improve our state's ability to assess students' skills in applying academic knowledge.

It is for these reasons that Washington's Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board supports our state's full adoption and implementation of the Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessment

Respectfully,

Cindy Zehnder