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Wisconsin schools commit to Common Core State Standards

National education standards aim to equalize knowledge, skills

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To help make sure schoolchildren around the country are learning the same grade-by-grade information necessary for success in college and life after high school, Wisconsin's schools chief Wednesday formally committed the state to adopting a set of national education standards.

The long-awaited Common Core State Standards for English and math, released Wednesday, define the knowledge and skills children should be learning from kindergarten through graduation, a move intended to put the United States on par with other developed countries and to make it easier to compare test scores from state to state.

"These standards are aligned with college and career expectations, will ensure academic consistency throughout the state and across other states that adopt them, and have been benchmarked against international standards for high-performing countries," state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Evers said in a news release Wednesday.

Wisconsin already had [pledged to support](#) the common standards. A draft report released in March solicited public comment on the standards, which were subsequently tweaked before the final document was released Wednesday.

Wisconsin education officials started revising its standards for English and math in 2007, and then continued its work with other states once the Common Core Standards Initiative was announced.

The standards were developed last year when the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers organized math and English experts to work out the details.

More detail for educators

In addition to being benchmarked against what is being taught in other developed countries - most of which have long had national standards for education - the common core standards would provide educators in Wisconsin with more detail about what concepts should be taught in each grade level.

Wisconsin's current standards generally span multiple grades, making it possible for schools to vary when students are taught specific subjects. That can be a problem when students move to a new school or new state.

The new national standards are more specific. For example, according to the [Common Core State Standards for Mathematics](#), fourth-grade students should be able to compare two fractions with different numerators and denominators, either by creating common denominators or "by comparing to a benchmark fraction such as $\frac{1}{2}$."

In high school, students taking statistics should master interpreting linear models and computing probability.

The [Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects](#) say that fifth-graders should be able to "quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says and when drawing inferences from the text."

Agreeing to implement the new national standards is voluntary, as states have a long history of local control over what is taught in schools.

But participation has been strongly encouraged by the federal government. States that applied for Race to the Top Fund money and that adopt the Common Core Standards by Aug. 2 will be looked upon more favorably by application reviewers.

In Wisconsin, Evers said that the process to implement the Common Core State Standards will require some work to get everyone to understand their content, develop curriculum that reflects the standards, and train teachers to develop lesson plans to teach the standards.

The Department of Public Instruction will partner with school districts, universities and education organizations to provide curriculum models and online resources to help with that transition, according to the DPI.

State officials have said in previous interviews that they will revise the state standardized assessments to reflect the new changes.

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