

Wasatch School District Press Release

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Wasatch School District and Utah's Common Core Standards

Wasatch School District began implementation of Utah's Common Core Standards at the beginning of the current school year. This year's Common Core schedule included primarily English Language Arts and some math. Additional math levels will be brought on line next year. Full implementation of the standards will take place over the next several years.

Due to the concerns raised about possible federal control of the state standards in the future, **Utah State Superintendent Larry Shumway** in a letter dated March 5, 2012, informed Arne Duncan, US Secretary of Education, that:

“...I state the (Utah State Board of Education's) right to make changes to, and to add or subtract from, the Utah Core Standards at its discretion.” He went on to assert Utah's “...right to complete control of Utah's learning standards in all areas of our public education curriculum.” He also said, “I assert the Board's right to withdraw from this consortium at any time ... and the Board's right to complete control of all assessments of student achievement in Utah Core Standards.”

U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, responded in a letter dated March 7, 2012 with the following comment:

“I am writing to confirm our full and unqualified agreement with your letter and your understanding of the law regarding State control over K-12 learning standards. Nothing in federal law or in current or proposed policies of the U.S. Department of Education in any way contradicts what is stated in your letter. States have the sole right to set learning standards.”

The common core standards were developed in a state-led effort by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The process used to write the standards ensured they were informed by the best state standards, the experience of teachers, content experts, states and leading thinkers.

Some questions have arisen regarding Utah’s Common Core Standards.

Has Utah adopted federally-mandated standards? Have we given up control of our education standards and curriculum? Is there a centralized group that now controls our standards?

No. In August of 2010, the Utah State Board of Education (State Board) adopted new state core standards in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics.

The Common Core Standards:

- were not developed or mandated by the federal government.
- are not federal or national standards.
- may be withdrawn from adoption or changed by the State Board at any time.
- were not obligatory because of Utah’s Race to the Top application.
- are not under the control or manipulation of special interest groups.

What is a standard?

The Utah Core Standards establish a framework for high quality instruction in reading/language arts and mathematics. They help Utah teachers ensure literacy and numeracy for Utah students by defining the essential knowledge, concepts, and skills to be mastered at each grade level or within critical content areas. They are like a set of building codes. They define what students should know and do to be ready for post high school jobs and schooling.

State standards help us ensure students are measured against a stable target. Utah has had standards for decades. They help us develop and provide high quality curriculum and courses. The new standards are based on rigorous post-secondary and career ready expectations.

Will the Common Core State Standards keep local teachers from deciding what or how to teach?

No. The Common Core State Standards are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents and others will decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms. Local teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards will continue to make decisions about curriculum and how their school systems are operated.

Do the standards mandate how to teach a certain subject?

No. The best understanding of what works in the classroom comes from the teachers who are in them. That's why these standards will establish what students need to learn, but they will not dictate how teachers should teach. Instead, schools and teachers will decide how best to help students

reach the standards. It is important to remember that standards are not practices or curriculum. Standards define what students need to know and be able to do.

To provide more information to the public the school district has placed several documents, including the letters from Superintendent Shumway and Secretary of Education Duncan, on their district web site at www.wasatch.edu. Links are also provided to the standards themselves.