



Common Core Standards

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Background

Adoption of Core Curriculum

Under OCGA §20-2-140, the State Board of Education is required to adopt a uniformly sequenced core curriculum for grades kindergarten through twelfth (K-12). This uniform core curriculum must be the basis for the curriculum of each local unit, who may expand and enrich the curriculum, as it deems necessary and appropriate. At least once every four years, the state board, through a task force broadly representative of education interest and the concerned public, must review the adopted competencies and uniform curriculum.¹ Based on consideration of the task force findings and recommendations, the state board will make changes to the curriculum based on the best interest of the state and its citizens.

On July 8, 2010, the State Board of Education adopted the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS), with letters of support provided by the University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia. The CCGPS are based on the Common Core State Standards and were adopted in English-Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. Adoption of a “robust curriculum” was a requirement of the Race to the Top application process and Georgia chose to adopt the Common Core State Standards to meet this requirement. Implementation of the new standards in Georgia schools began during the 2012-2013 school year with the rollout of the English-Language Arts standards in grades K-12.

Creation of the Common Core Standards

The Common Core Standards (CCS) were created through a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors’ Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers with the assistance of Achieve, ACT, and the College Board. At the time of the Common Core initiative, the NGA Center for Best Practices was co-chaired by Georgia’s Governor, Sonny Perdue and was instrumental in the development of the standards. Teachers, school administrators, and experts collaborated on the initiative to bring together the best available evidence and highest state standards across the country as the basis for the final product.

¹ OCGA §20-2-141

The federal government was not involved in the development of the standards, and individual states chose whether, or not, to adopt them.

Georgia Performance Standards

The Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) standards, which were adopted as the state's first prescribed curriculum, were adopted in 1985 as part of the Quality Basic Education Act. The original QCC did not undergo any revisions until 1996-1997, when minor changes were made to all content areas. An audit by Phi Delta Kappa released in January 2002, concluded that the state's QCC was an ineffective and unreasonable set of standards that were not adequate to align Georgia students to meet national standards. In 2005, Georgia began developing and implementing the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) curriculum. Teacher teams, state and national experts, and consultants developed the new GPS standards after examining the standards of high-performing states and countries. Similar to Common Core, GPS is a standards-based curriculum and would be the utilized curriculum for the state if Georgia decided to opt out of Common Core. According to the Georgia Department of Education (DOE), the standards selected by Common Core overlap significantly with the Georgia Performance Standards; specifically, about 90 percent of the GPS standards for math overlap with the Common Core standards.

Executive Order

On May 15, 2013, Governor Nathan Deal issued an Executive Order reiterating that no education standards will be imposed on Georgia by the federal government and that all decisions regarding curriculum and instruction in Georgia will be made at the local level. The implementation of CCSS does not currently contradict this order.

Costs of Common Core

Testing

Federal Race to the Top grants were awarded to five state-led and state-governed consortia to facilitate the development of the new assessments. Georgia is one of the 18 governing members of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) Consortium. The 22 members of PARCC are collaborating to develop a common comprehensive set of K-12 assessments in English-language arts and math within a framework that will better prepare students for college and career after high school, with the governing members casting decision-making votes on test design and policy. Alternatively, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is also a 24 member state-governed initiative working to develop a new comprehensive assessment system. Almost every adopting state is a member of one of the two comprehensive assessment consortia.² North Dakota is serving as advisory members in both consortia.³ The other three consortia include the Dynamic Learning Maps Assessment Consortium (DLM) and the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC), which are developing an alternative assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The third consortium is the English Language Proficiency Assessment Consortium, which is developing an assessment for English-language learners. In addition to PARCC,

² Alabama, Minnesota, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, and Virginia are the only states not currently participating in a testing consortium.

³ Participating and advisory members may participate in the discussions of each consortium but only governing members may vote.

Georgia is a member of the NCSC. The CCSS-aligned assessments created by each consortium will be available for implementation during the 2014-2015 school year.

Curriculum Development

For FY2013, the budget for curriculum development was appropriated at \$1.14 million in state general funds. This is a decrease in appropriations from \$1.27 million in FY2012 (see Table 1). According to DOE, this cost is expected to stay the same if Georgia stopped implementing Common Core, as the State would have to revert to implementing the Georgia Performance Standards curriculum, which was never fully implemented.

Table 1. Estimated Appropriations for the Development of CCGPS Curriculum

Fiscal Year	State General Funds
2011	\$1,302,288
2012	\$1,272,232
2013	\$1,144,837
2014	\$3,401,648 ⁴

Training

Training costs for the implementation of the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) are mainly due to the change in the order of when topic areas are taught, such as algebra concepts entering grade levels earlier than in Georgia's previous curriculum. A portion of this training commenced under Georgia's transition to the Georgia Performance Standards. However, training (like curriculum development) is done on a continual basis. If Georgia decided to discontinue Common Core, training would revert back to the GPS training. Currently, training is provided by organizations such as Regional Education Service Agencies (RESA) and Local Education Authorities (LEA, commonly referred to as school districts).

Implications of Discontinuing Common Core

Race to the Top

According to DOE, around \$199.8 million of the \$400 million federal appropriation from Race to the Top has been obligated. If Georgia were to opt out of Race to the Top, the \$199.8 million would have to be paid back to the Federal Government with state or local resources, with the remainder of awarded funds being forfeited. Therefore, monetary funds received from the Federal Government from other grants could not be utilized nor could grants from private entities. Forfeiture of the remaining Race to the Top funding could result in the following:

- Lack comparability of student readiness for college and career as validated by common assessments across multiple states;
- Standards that are inconsistent with other states, which would continue to present hardships for interstate transfer students;
- Diminished resource sharing and opportunities to collaborate within a network of other states;

⁴ The increase in state funds for FY 2014 is due to a transfer of funds for administrative staff from the DOE Central Office. Without the transferred amount, the state funds appropriated for Curriculum Development are \$787,535 in FY 2014.

- Loss of cost advantages attributed to economy of scale related to the purchase of textbooks and other learning resources; and
- Loss of support for sustained professional learning and resource development currently provided by Race to the Top and RESA staff, which included nine state-level English language arts (ELA), math, literacy, and instructional technology staff members, and nineteen RESA ELA professional learning specialists.⁵

ESEA Flexibility Waiver

In February 2012, Georgia became one of the first states to be awarded a waiver by the U.S. Department of Education from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The flexibility waiver required the “adoption of College and Career standards in reading/English language arts and mathematics that are common to a significant number of states.” Georgia’s waiver application met these requirements with the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) by describing the communication, implementation, time line, and professional development reflected in the implementation of the CCGPS.

Abandoning the Common Core could jeopardize Georgia’s ESEA flexibility and the approval of the CCRPI. Loss of this flexibility would return the state to the federal accountability requirements under NCLB.

Common Core in Other States

The process for adopting statewide academic standards varies among the states, but the authority to adopt such standards largely lies with State Boards of Education. In 39 states, including Georgia, and the District of Columbia, the State Board of Education, or a comparable state agency, adopted the CCSS. In three states, the Chief State Education Officer adopted the standards. Five states required some legislative approval or action to adopt the standards, including Kentucky where the General Assembly adopted the CCSS. Of fourteen SREB states to adopt CCSS, Kentucky is the only state that required approval from an entity other than the State Board of Education.

By the end of 2012, 46 states, including Georgia, and the District of Columbia had adopted at least a portion of the Common Core State Standards.⁶ The only states that have not adopted the CCSS are Texas, Virginia, Alaska, and Nebraska.

Since the adoption of CCSS, several states have introduced legislation to delay or prohibit the implementation of such standards in their respective states. Along with Georgia (SB 167) in 2013, these states include Alabama, Kansas, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, and South Dakota. To date, Indiana is the only state to successfully pass such legislation.

In May 2013, the Indiana General Assembly passed HB 1427, which prohibits its state board of education from taking further actions to implement any Common Core State Standards until the board conducts a comprehensive evaluation of the standards. As part of the comprehensive standards

⁵ Currently, no state funds are provided for ELA or mathematics staff at DOE. All staff positions at DOE are federally funded.

⁶ Minnesota adopted only the CCSS in English/Language Arts.

review, an Indiana legislative study committee is directed to study specific issues related to the standards, including a comparison of the CCSS to existing Indiana standards, and the costs to the state or school corporations associated with implementing PARCC or Smarter Balanced assessments. The comprehensive review also must include a thorough fiscal analysis of the cost to fully implement the CCSS and the cost to discontinue their implementation. Until such comprehensive review has been concluded, the state board may not require the use of PARCC or Smarter Balanced assessments.

In August 2012, Utah withdrew as a member in the Smarter Balanced Consortium, opting instead to develop its own assessments. In January 2013, Alabama withdrew as a participating member in both the PARCC and Smarter Balanced Consortium. Despite their withdrawal from the testing consortia, Utah and Alabama continue to implement the common core standards.