



# The University of North Carolina

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Members, Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs

FROM: Alan Mabe

DATE: August 2, 2010

SUBJECT: Common Core Standards for K-12

**Background:** Historically each state has established its curriculum for K-12 instruction. The U.S. Department of Education has made adoption of national Common Core standards a requirement for the participation in Race to the Top. The NC State Board of Education adopted the Common Core standards on June 2, 2010. Standards for mathematics and English language arts have been developed and are currently being reviewed. The State Board of Education is expected to implement the Common Core standards for mathematics and English language arts in 2012-13.

**Jurisdictional Authority:** The Governor has asked each educational sector to support North Carolina's adoption of the Common Core standards.

**Issues Involved:** State standards vary and are of different degrees of rigor. This would be a set of standards that reflect the best thinking on what is expected of a high school graduate. It would have the added benefit that as students or teachers move from state to state they would find the same expectation. Each state, compatible with the Common Core, can add additional material and standards up to 15% of the curriculum.

**Recommended Action:** It is recommended that the Committee approve the recommendation regarding Board support of the State Board of Education's adoption of the Common Core standards.

## **Common Core State Standards Initiative**

### *Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics*

#### Background

On June 2, 2010, North Carolina adopted the Common Core State Standards in K-12 Mathematics and K-12 English Language Arts released by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. With the adoption of these state-led education standards, North Carolina is in the first group of states to embrace clear and consistent goals for learning to prepare children for success in college and work.

#### Statement of Endorsement

Governor Perdue has requested that all education sectors endorse the Common Core Standards. Accordingly, UNC General Administration is seeking recommendation from the Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs for the UNC Board of Governors' endorsement and support for the NC State Board of Education adoption of the Common Core State Standards for North Carolina.

#### What Are the Common Core Standards?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts, to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce.

The standards are informed by the highest, most effective models from states across the country and countries around the world, and provide teachers and parents with a common understanding of what students are expected to learn. Consistent standards will provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live.

These standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs. The standards:

- Are aligned with college and work expectations;
- Are clear, understandable and consistent;
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- Are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- Are evidence-based.

### Why are the Common Core Standards for just English Language Arts and Mathematics?

English Language Arts and mathematics are the first subjects chosen for the common core standards because these two subjects are skills, upon which students build skill sets in other subject areas. They are also the subjects most frequently assessed for accountability purposes.

Of course, other subject areas are critical to young people's education and their success in college and careers. Once the English Language Arts and mathematics standards are developed, CCSSO and NGA Center, on behalf of the states, plan to develop a common core of standards in science and potentially additional subject areas.

### Key Points with the K-12 English Language Arts Common Core Standards

The English Language Arts standards cover reading, writing, speaking and listening, language, and media and technology. These standards advance:

- Text complexity
- Balance of literature and informational texts
- Direct link to college and work readiness
- Literacy standards for science and social studies
- Clear vertical progressions across grades

### Key Points with the K-12 Mathematics Common Core Standards

The mathematics standards cover foundational concepts, procedures and applications at the elementary, middle grades, and high school levels. These standards advance:

- Overall problem-solving and communication emphasized in the mathematics standards.
- Mathematics standards focus in early grades on number (arithmetic and operations) to build a solid foundation in mathematics.
- Middle school standards for mathematics are robust and provide a coherent and rich preparation for high school mathematics.
- High school standards for mathematics focuses on having students practice applying mathematical ways of thinking to real world issues and challenges; they prepare students to think and reason mathematically.
- Mathematics standards are paced across the grades more evenly.