

Myths and Facts about the Idaho Core Standards

Here are common myths you will hear about the new Idaho Core Standards and the facts to dispel them.

Myth: The federal government has required Idaho to adopt Common Core State Standards.

Fact: Idaho voluntarily chose to adopt the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts as Idaho's new Core Standards in these two subject areas. The federal government has never reviewed a state's standards, and they have not reviewed these standards. These standards were the result of a state-led effort. Idaho signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with other states that clearly defines this as a state-led effort. Specifically, the MOA states, "The parties support a state-led effort and not a federal effort to develop a common core of state standards." The state-led effort also is evident in the fact that not every state has adopted these standards. Each state reviewed these standards and made its own decision.

Myth: States must adopt the Common Core State Standards if they accepted federal stimulus funding, Race to the Top grants or received a federal waiver from No Child Left Behind.

Fact: No state is required to adopt the Common Core State Standards. Idaho chose to adopt these new standards because we know how critical it is to raise academic standards for all students. The U.S. Department of Education has tried to incentivize states to raise their academic standards in core subject areas through Race to the Top grants and the federal waivers from No Child Left Behind. To date, Idaho has not received any federal funding to implement these new standards. In addition, states like Virginia received a No Child Left Behind waiver even though they chose not to adopt the Common Core State Standards. No requirement exists. The adoption of standards remains a state-level decision.

Myth: These new standards will teach communism, indoctrinate our children with a leftist agenda and change the way schools teach the history of how 9/11 occurred.

Fact: These are academic standards in mathematics and English language arts. Idaho has not changed the academic standards in science, history, or social studies. These standards have no impact on the way Idaho teachers will teach government, history or political science. The new standards are available online at <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/common/> for your review.

Myth: These standards will dumb down education in Idaho.

Fact: These standards are considerably higher than the previous standards Idaho had in place for mathematics and English language arts. To see evidence of the difference in standards, you can review the comprehensive gap analysis Idaho conducted to compare our previous standards to these new standards on our website at <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/common/>. In addition, Idaho's colleges and universities have told us that students who graduate with mastery in these standards will be prepared for the rigors of postsecondary and the workforce. These standards were developed so they are comparable with any other state in the nation and with the standards of any other country in the world.

Myth: Because Idaho adopted these new standards, it must upload student identifiable data into a national database, including details such as family income, family religious affiliation, and parent's education level and biometric data (iris scans, DNA, and fingerprints) from students.

Fact: These are academic standards that set goals for what each student should know and be able to do by the end of each grade level. When Idaho adopted the Common Core State Standards as Idaho Core Standards in mathematics and English language arts in 2011, the state only adopted these content standards. The state did not adopt any other policies to go along with these standards. These standards are in no way tied to the way data is collected at the state or local level. Idaho implemented a statewide longitudinal data system back in 2009 to streamline data collection processes at the state and local

levels. That was two years before the state chose to adopt these new content standards. Idaho's statewide longitudinal data system is not tied to a national database in any way. Neither the state nor local school districts collect data on things like religious affiliation, nor do we have the technology to collect biometric data on students.

Myth: The federal government has changed FERPA to require the collection of biometric data on students and allow this data to be released publicly.

Fact: FERPA is a federal law that protects the privacy of students in the public education system. This law only contains policies to protect the privacy of students. It does not mandate the collection of any data. The only changes that have been made to the law in recent years reflect changes in technology and data collection to ensure the continued privacy of students. FERPA is available online at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/pdf/ferparegs.pdf>. On page 4, you will see that the law now lists an official definition of a "biometric record." The law only lists this definition in the event that a local school or district is collecting this type of data. In that case, as you can see on page 6, FERPA clearly defines a biometric record as "personally identifiable information" so that, as stated on pages 12-13, no personally identifiable information can be released without the consent of a parent or guardian. This only applies to local school districts or states that collect this type of data. It is a completely local and/or state decision on whether or not to collect this data. In Idaho, we do not collect biometric data on students.

Myth: These new standards will require teachers to teach math in an "untested way."

Fact: These standards are in line with the Idaho Math Initiative that the state implemented in 2008. Research has shown that teachers who have taken the Mathematical Thinking for Instruction course through the Idaho Math Initiative and applied these methods in their classrooms see better student achievement results in mathematics. A primary reason Idaho chose to adopt these new standards is because they aligned well with what we were already doing in our schools. Through these new standards, Idaho students will learn critical thinking and problem-solving skills that we believe are important now and in the future.

Myth: These new standards will de-emphasize literature, like Huckleberry Finn, and historical texts, such as the Gettysburg Address.

Fact: These standards actually emphasize reading and writing skills across all subject areas, not just in English language arts classrooms. Students will continue to read classic literature and other types of fiction in English class. In addition, the standards include literacy standards for history, science and other subject areas to make sure reading and writing are emphasized outside of English class as well. Local school districts still choose the texts that are taught in every classroom, not the state. In this way, the new standards ensure students in public high schools receive a well-rounded education in learning both literary texts as well as informational texts. The business community in Idaho and across the country has told us that students need to be prepared to read, write and analyze informational texts before they graduate from high school. We know this is a critical skill in the workforce and have to make sure Idaho students are prepared to meet it. Here are examples of some of the new standards Idaho has adopted:

- *Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics. (See page 36, Reading Standards for Literature, Grades 6-12)*
- *By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. (See page 36, Reading Standards for Literature, Grades 6-12)*

- *Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic. (See page 61 of the Literacy Standards for other subject areas in grades 6-12)*
- *Distinguish among facts, reasoned judgment based on research findings, and speculation in a text. (See page 62 of the Literacy Standards for other subject areas in grades 6-12)*

Myth: The adoption of these new standards will eliminate school choice options in public education.

Fact: These are academic standards that set goals for what each student should know and be able to do by the end of each grade level. These standards are in no way tied to school choice options. Every public school, including schools of choice, will teach these new standards beginning next school year. Choice within public education is in fact alive and thriving in Idaho. Four new public charter schools are scheduled to open next school year to bring the total number of public charter schools in Idaho to 46. Idaho currently has 23 magnet schools or programs operating in the state along with 10 focus schools or programs. Many districts also offer alternative schools or academies as another choice. These are just a few examples of school choice in public education in Idaho.

Myth: These new standards were developed by private interest groups based in Washington, D.C.

Fact: The new standards were developed by states. Critics point to the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governor’s Association (NGA) as “private interest groups,” but these groups are actually two state-led organizations that were asked by their members – state education chiefs and governors – to facilitate the state-led effort. The members of these organizations include Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna and Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter.

Myth: States are not allowed to change anything in the standards after they adopt them.

Fact: These are Idaho Core Standards, and Idaho is ultimately in control of these standards. Idaho will review these standards every five years just as it reviews standards in other subject areas. Each state has the flexibility to add on to these standards if it sees fit. Idaho, for example, already has passed a resolution to consider adding cursive writing as a standard in the elementary grades. The Idaho State Board of Education will consider that this year. In addition, local school boards have the flexibility to add on to these standards at the local level as well.

Myth: This effort will lead to a national curriculum because standards drive curriculum.

Fact: Nothing in the Common Core State Standards discusses or requires curriculum. In Idaho, the state sets academic standards, or the goals for what each child should know and be able to do by the end of each grade level. The curriculum is set at the local level by locally elected school boards. This process will remain in place under these new standards. Local school districts and public charter schools will determine the best curriculum to help the teachers in their schools teach these new academic standards. Local school districts have asked the state to provide examples of curricular materials that are aligned with the new academic standards, and the state plans to provide examples to meet district requests. However, it remains up to each local school district to select curriculum, not the state or federal government.