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National "College Ready" Standards Proposed

National "College Ready" Standards Proposed

By CityTownInfo.com Staff
September 22, 2009

Education experts convened yesterday to propose what is hoped to become a national standard of math and English skills requirements that high school students must master in order to graduate.

[The Washington Post](#) reports that the proposal, called the Common Core State Standards Initiative and posted at www.corestandards.org, enlisted 48 states and the District of Columbia, with only Texas and Alaska not participating. The group that drafted the proposal included experts affiliated with the organizations that oversee the SAT and ACT college admission exams.

The proposal is merely the first step for the initiative. For the next month, experts will be collecting comments, and they expect to write standards for each grade in 2010.

"Progress in this area has been painfully slow," said Molly Corbett Broad, president of the American Council on Education, who was quoted by [Inside Higher Ed](#), "and it is a very long road from agreeing on standards to fully implementing them and ultimately assessing their effectiveness. But every journey starts with a first important step, and this is the first time we have seen this kind of momentum."

There is no guarantee that states will adopt the final product, and even if it is accepted, its effect on college admissions is still unclear. Jacqueline E. King, assistant vice president for policy analysis at ACE, noted that some colleges may decide to use the core standards as placement tools. Other institutions may adapt course requirements for admissions as a result.

The Obama administration is highly in favor of the initiative. Recently, Education Secretary Arne Duncan agreed to set aside \$350 million for states to develop new tests and other measures tied to the Common Standards initiative.

"The draft college- and career-ready standards that were released today as part of those efforts are an important step forward," Duncan said in a [press release](#), "and it is now in the hands of the public to provide critical feedback to state leadership. There is no work more important than preparing our students to compete and succeed in a global economy, and it is to the credit of these states that this work is getting done."

The 2002 No Child Left Behind law left states with the responsibility of determining what students should learn in reading and math and how they should be tested. But experts argue that having uneven expectations for students makes no sense when the United States trails several countries in Asia and Europe on international exams.

Opponents of the Common Standards initiative, meanwhile, feel that the federal government should not dictate what must be taught. "Advocates of true education reform--rather than repackaging the same failed policies--need to keep in mind a simple truth: Previous efforts to create national standards failed utterly because Americans have extremely varied educational wants and needs," explained Neal McCluskey, associate director of the Center for Educational Freedom at the Cato Institute, who was quoted in the Post. "Efforts to address all of them with one-size-fits-all Beltway diktats will be fruitless at best, and quite harmful at worst."