



Iowa Department of Education

Iowa Core Annual Report

Iowa Department of Education

Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319

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State of Iowa
Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
400 E 14th St
Des Moines IA 50319-0146

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Introduction. The Iowa Core (formerly Iowa Core Curriculum and Model Core Curriculum) is about helping all students, from pre-kindergarteners to high school seniors, improve their academic achievement in the classroom. But it also goes beyond that – it’s about helping prepare every student to live, learn, work, and succeed in the 21st century.

The Iowa Core is an innovative, comprehensive student-based approach to education that supports high expectations for all students. It engages them in more relevant learning experiences and helps them attain deeper knowledge through problem-solving and inquiry. With the Iowa Core, instruction focuses on challenging students and providing assessments that give teachers, students and parents’ feedback to tailor instruction that will maximize the potential of each and every learner.

The impact of the Iowa Core goes beyond the classroom. When fully implemented, communities and schools will be working together. The Iowa Core will improve teaching and learning by bringing together educators, parents, and community members to strive toward a common goal of increasing student achievement.

The Iowa Core identifies standards in literacy and mathematics and essential concepts and skills in science, social studies, and 21st century learning skills (civic literacy, financial literacy, technology literacy, health literacy, and employability skills) that all students must know by the time they graduate from high school.

Based upon the findings of an alignment study and extensive discussion with Iowa experts in literacy and mathematics, the essential concepts and skills of the Iowa Core in literacy and mathematics were replaced with the Common Core National Standards in those content areas with some additional Iowa-specific content. These new standards adopted by the State Board of Education in July 2010, and the additional Iowa specific content were added in December 2010.

To help teachers implement the Iowa Core, the Iowa Department of Education (DE) and Iowa’s area education agencies (AEAs) are working together to offer assistance to school districts. This assistance is required because effective implementation of the Iowa Core is not a simple check list; it fundamentally addresses the content taught, the instruction of the content, and types of assessment.

Therefore, the Iowa Core not only describes what students must master, but it helps teachers determine effective instruction through statewide and AEA-level professional development opportunities.

The vision of the Iowa Core is to ensure the success of each and every student by providing a world-class curriculum. It is designed to improve achievement of all students, preparing them for the world of work and citizenship.

Legislative Foundation. Senate File 245 (May 2005) and Senate File 588 (May 2007) established the voluntary Model Core Curriculum in kindergarten through grade 12 in the areas of literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and 21st century skills. The 2008 legislature proposed that the Iowa Core Curriculum be fully implemented by all Iowa schools — public and accredited nonpublic. The Governor signed Senate File 2216 into law May 1, 2008, which requires the full implementation of the Iowa Core — in high schools by 2012-2013 and in K-8 by 2014-2015. Implementation plans were required for high schools by July 1, 2010, and by K-8 schools by July 1, 2012.

Current Status. The DE is currently working with all AEAs to support the roll-out of the Iowa Core with local schools districts and accredited nonpublic schools. Funds provided by the legislature in 2010 have maintained the Iowa Core Network, which consists of teams from each AEA that provide ongoing support and professional development to schools.

Planning and beginning implementation was the focus of much of the effort during the past year. The Iowa Core Network assisted local education agencies (LEAs) in writing and submitting Implementation Plans and initiating efforts to address the six outcomes of the Iowa Core:

1. School leaders build and sustain system capacity to implement the Iowa Core;
2. Community members and other supporting agencies work together to support the implementation of the Iowa Core;
3. A continuous improvement process to improve teaching and learning is used at the district and school level;
4. District leaders and other educators monitor and use data to increase the degree of alignment of each and every student's enacted curriculum and other relevant educational opportunities to the Iowa Core;
5. Educators engage in professional development focused on implementing Characteristics of Effective Instruction and demonstrate understanding of Essential Concepts and Skill Sets; and
6. Educators implement effective instructional practices to ensure high levels of learning for each and every student.

Implementation Plans. By July 1, 2010, 377 districts/schools were to submit a 9-12 implementation plan to the Department for review. During the month of July all plans were reviewed for compliance. Of the 377 school districts or accredited nonpublic schools that were required to submit plans, 354 submitted plans that met compliance requirements, 9 submitted plans that did not meet requirements, and 14 submitted no plan by the deadline.

By the end of October, all 377 school districts or accredited nonpublic schools were compliant according to the July 1, 2010 definition.

To support each public school district and accredited nonpublic school in strengthening its plan and the implementation of the plan, the Iowa Core Network hosted a series of collaborative peer reviews held regionally across the state. The purpose of the peer review was for each participating school or district to provide and receive feedback on the Iowa Core Implementation Plan. Personnel from at least two schools or districts met and exchanged plans, and through a collaborative process, presented their plan and received feedback from each other. Sixty-eight percent of the public school districts participated in the process and 95 percent of those that participated indicated that they felt the process was helpful.

Professional Development. The Iowa Core Network has continued to meet monthly to develop resources to support districts in professional development to fully implement the Iowa Core. Their efforts have focused on improving the alignment of local curriculum to the essential concepts and skills of the Iowa Core and providing support for professional development to improve teaching based on the five characteristics of effective instruction: teaching for understanding, rigor and relevance, assessment for learning, teaching for learner differences, and student-centered classrooms.

An Iowa Core Statewide Resources moodle site was developed by the Iowa Core Network to serve as a repository of resources for all Iowa educators to use in successfully implementing the Iowa Core. The moodle platform was chosen because it is available to all AEAs and LEAs and has the capacity to grow as more Iowa Core resources are developed. Included on the site are research briefs and literature reviews, professional development protocols, video segments, discussion guides, and organized learning sequences. Information and resources including podcast, video tutorials, online modules, and additional collaborative learning team professional development learning sequences and agendas will continue to be added to the site as they are developed. Many of these resources were developed with the support of the National Staff Development Council, Iowa Public Television, and numerous Iowa K-16 administrators and teachers.

District-based collaborative learning teams consisting of teachers and administrators will use these materials to deepen their understanding of their Iowa Core and to identify ways to improve instruction.

Alignment. An online database, known as the Iowa Curriculum Alignment Toolkit (I-CAT) was created to help teachers and administrators reflect on what their students have an opportunity to learn from the Iowa Core over the course of a school year. The I-CAT was field tested with 861 teachers and administrators across 24 districts during the 2009-10 school year. To date, 1,856 teachers and administrators have used the I-CAT.

All AEAs and urban eight school districts (UENs) were invited to learn how to use and support the I-CAT. Over 60 professionals have received the training necessary to support districts in using this tool.

The 2010-11 school year is dedicated to helping districts collect alignment data and to use it to make decisions that will increase students' opportunities to learn the content of the Iowa Core.

Common Core State Standards. An alignment study was commissioned and completed by the DE in July 2010, to examine the degree of alignment of the Iowa Core (Literacy and Mathematics) to the Common Core State Standards (English/Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics). The alignment study was commissioned to examine the questions below, as well as to help determine what additional concepts and skills Iowa should add to what is established in the Common Core.

The *Achieve* organization (<http://achieve.org/>), an independent, bipartisan, non-profit education reform organization based in Washington, D.C., developed a web-based alignment tool along with support documentation that was used to examine the alignment of the Iowa Core with the Common Core State Standards.

Study Questions

1. What is the degree of alignment between the Iowa Core and the Common Core?
2. What portions of the Common Core are not covered by anything from the Iowa Core?
3. What portions of the Iowa Core are not matched to anything in the Common Core?

Overall, there is a relatively high degree of alignment between the original Iowa Core and the Common Core State Standards. The charts below provide more specific information about the alignment.

Figure 1. Questions 1 and 2 – English/Language Arts

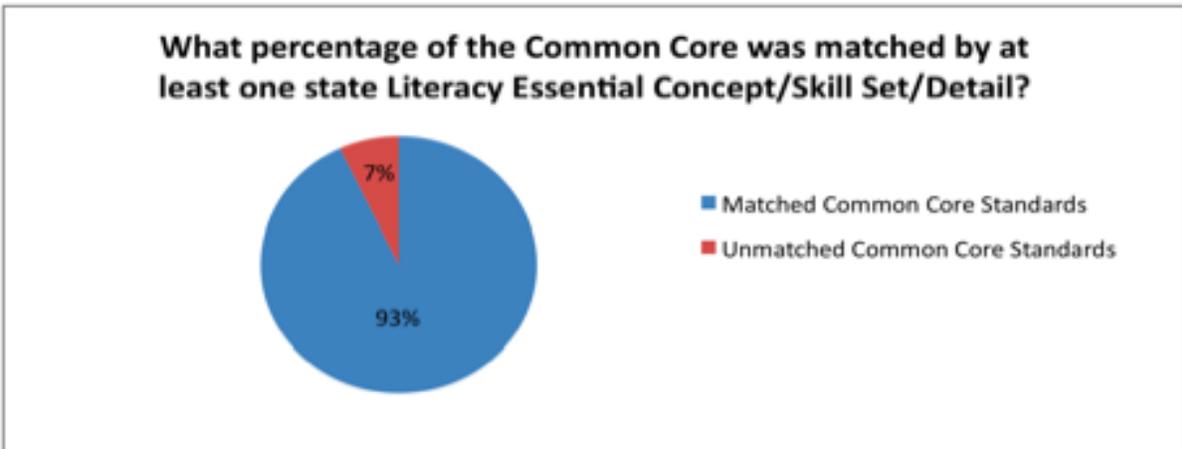


Figure 2. Questions 1 and 3 – English/Language Arts

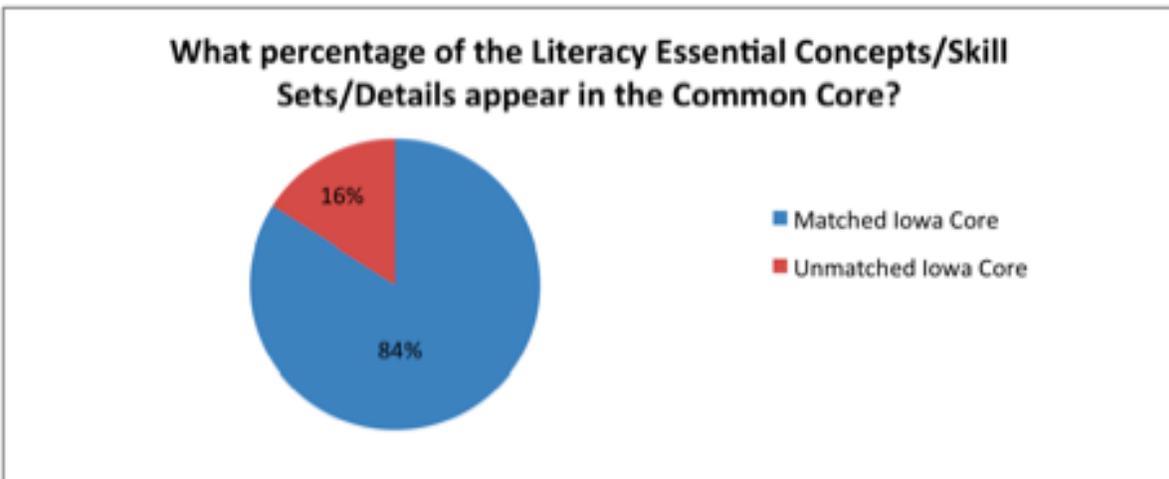


Figure 3. Questions 1 and 2 – Mathematics

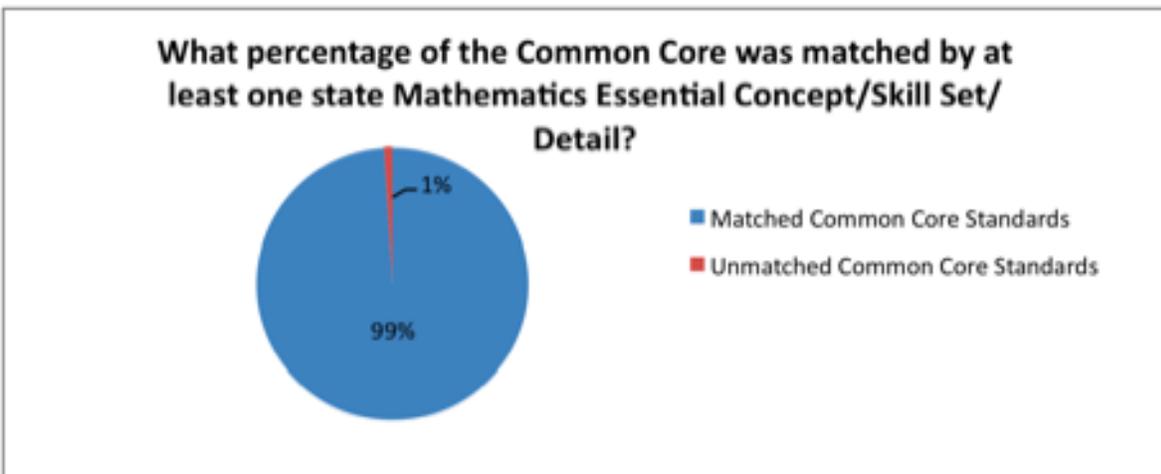
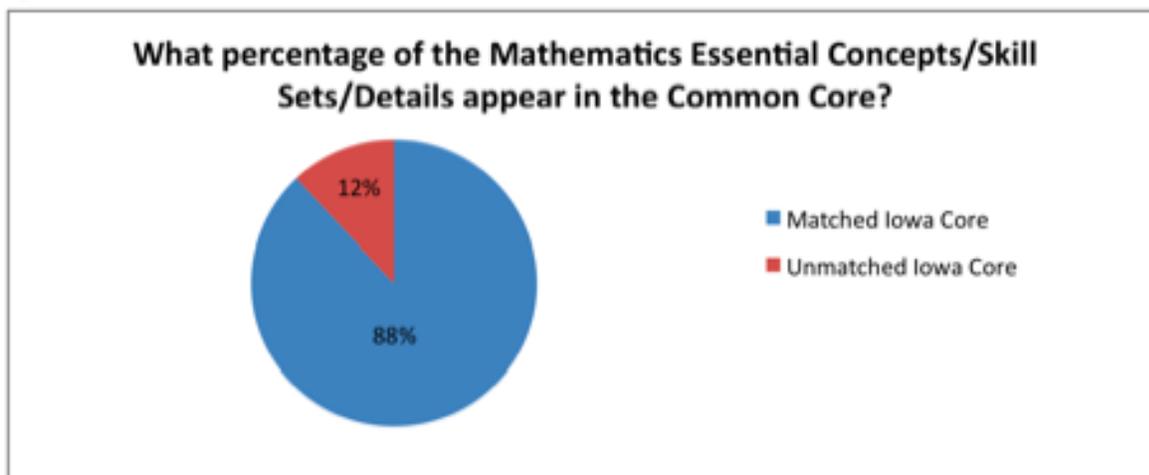


Figure 4. Questions 1 and 3 – Mathematics



Based upon the findings of this study and extensive discussion with Iowa experts in literacy and mathematics, the essential concepts and skills of the Iowa Core in literacy and mathematics were replaced with the Common Core National Standards in those content areas with some additional Iowa-specific content. The revised standards can be accessed at http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=674&Itemid=1249.

Student Benefit. The Iowa Core works to ensure that students will have a deep understanding of the critical disciplinary content and procedures in the key areas of literacy, mathematics, science, social studies as well as the areas of civic literacy, financial literacy, technology literacy, health literacy, and employability skills, which are critical to being prepared for the 21st century.

By focusing on what is being taught as well as how to teach, the Iowa Core provides high expectations for quality student work. It moves students beyond just knowing content to deeper thinking, understanding, problem solving, and inquiry. The Iowa Core enhances student engagement by involving students in interesting, relevant learning experiences that are motivating and lead to positive outcomes. Students will leave school equipped to succeed regardless of their postsecondary plans.

For more information, please visit http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=674&Itemid=1249.