

Sample Talking points for Administrators

The following are suggested talking points for superintendents, principals or other school administrators if they are presenting at a parent night or community meeting and discussing the new Idaho Core Standards. Please review and revise to meet the needs of your individual district or community.

Why I support the new Idaho Core Standards: We need to raise our academic standards in mathematics and English language arts. Just look at the statistics. Our students do well in grades K-12, and we have a high graduation rate. Unfortunately, despite these successes, far too few Idaho students go on to postsecondary – just 46%. Only 34% of Idahoans have a postsecondary degree or certificate. This doesn't just mean four-year colleges and universities. This includes community college and professional-technical. **(Add local school district statistics here.)** We know that 60% of the careers today require some form of education after high school – a degree or certificate. This will only grow in the future. No matter where a student lives or the career they choose, they must go on to some form of postsecondary education in order to succeed in life after high school. Let's give them the skills and knowledge they need before they graduate from high school.

Higher standards are the foundation: We have worked at the local level to expand learning opportunities for our students. With our limited resources, we have made strategic investments in our children: expanding technology in the classroom, recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers, and offering programs that are critical to learning. **(This is statewide information. Please localize this information on what programs and investments you have put in place at the local level.)** Yet, at the end of the day, these investments will all be for naught if we do not have higher standards in place. If we do not raise our academic standards, our students can go to school with the best technology, the most highly effective teachers, and access the best educational opportunities, yet they will still walk across that stage senior year and graduate unprepared for college or the workforce. We have to do better as a state and as a local school district. This is the right path.

Why common standards? Idaho has had academic standards in place for every subject area since the late 1990s. This is how the state sets the goals for what each child should know and be able to do by the end of each grade level. The state standards are actually the minimum standards for our district. We can then choose to add on to these standards if we want. Idaho decided to work with other states to make sure that as we raise our standards, we make sure our standards are comparable with every other state in the nation and any other country in the world. This way, when students take a test at the end of the year, we will know how Idaho students are doing compared to their counterparts in a neighboring district and a neighboring state. That's critical if we are going to move our education system forward. As a local school district, we still have local control. We can still add on to the standards if we want to, and we as a district will still choose the curriculum we use to teach these standards in the classroom. **(Describe here how your local school district or charter school has added on to state standards in the past and the process you go through to adopt curriculum. Explain the process you plan to go through in the coming year to adopt curriculum and how parents and other citizens can be involved in this process.)**

How were these standards adopted? The state used a very transparent process. They used the same process the state uses every time it approves new academic standards. All content standards are set in Idaho Administrative Code, also known as "rules." Administrative Code is set by the Idaho State Board of Education and approved by the House and Senate Education Committees of the Idaho Legislature. The content standards for every subject area are up for review before the Idaho State Board of Education

every five years. The Idaho State Department of Education works with teachers, parents and others to review the content standards in each subject area when it is up for review and see if any changes should be made. If changes are made, these changes go before the State Board of Education for approval. The State Board of Education holds a 21-day public comment period and then votes on them in an open, public meeting. The rules then go before the House and Senate Education Committees the following legislative session for review, discussion and a vote. Idaho followed this same process in adopting the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts as Idaho's new Core Standards in these subject areas.

- The Idaho State Department of Education brought in Idaho teachers to review these new, more rigorous standards in mathematics and English language arts. A comprehensive [gap analysis](#) showed a strong correlation between Common Core State Standards and current Idaho state standards with a 70 percent match, but the Common Core State Standards were higher and deeper than previous standards.
- Idaho's colleges and universities also weighed in, telling us that students will be ready for postsecondary education if they master these standards. We also asked the business community in Idaho to take a look at these standards during the review process.
- The Department held regional public meetings across the state to gather input from educators, parents and Idaho citizens at three different times during 2010.
- The Idaho State Board of Education held an open public comment period in 2010.
- In 2010, based on all of this input and feedback, the State Board of Education chose to adopt these standards as Idaho's new content standards in mathematics and English language arts.
- The House and Senate Education Committees of the Idaho Legislature gave final approval to adopt these standards as Idaho's new standards in January 2011.

(Please add any information on comments your district provided throughout this process or regional meetings you attended.)

What about all the criticism I am hearing regarding Common Core, that it is a federal takeover and that it will invade the privacy of my child? In adopting these standards as Idaho Core Standards, Idaho only adopted content standards in mathematics and English language arts. Idaho did not change any policies regarding data collection, curriculum adoption or anything else. Anything you hear about changes to the way we are collecting data or federal money the state has collected are myths that continue to be perpetuated. The standards are clearly posted on the Department's website. If it's not stated in the standards, it's not something the state has agreed to or will be implementing. (It is recommended you have a copy of the standards available via web or hard copy in case individuals have questions about what is directly in the standards.)

What can I expect to see in the classroom?

Here is a look at how the standards will change in English Language Arts and Literacy:

- First, students will read challenging texts in every class. They will continue to read classic literature, stories, and poems in English class, but they also will be challenged with studying and analyzing non-fiction texts in all subject areas as well. As a result, students will be prepared to read, analyze and write about all types of texts at a higher level, whether they are fiction or non-fiction, when they graduate from high school.

- Second, your child will be asked to use evidence from the text when writing papers or making oral presentations. In all classes, the standards will require students to not only read the text but dig into it to support their arguments or research. As a result, students will be better prepared to support their arguments and decisions with evidence, not just opinion, whether they are in college or the workforce.
- Third, you will see an increased focus on vocabulary across all grade levels. As a result, students will continue to learn new vocabulary words as they progress through school as well as the correct context in which to use them. This is more important than ever in the 21st Century as students live and work in the digital age and encounter new words and terms constantly.

(Please localize this information, if necessary.)

Here is a look at how the standards will change in Mathematics:

- First, students will work more deeply in fewer topics. In each grade level, your child's teacher will cover fewer concepts than in the past but go into much more depth on each concept. This makes sure every student gains a full understanding before moving on to the next concept. As a result, your child will gain a full and foundational understanding of mathematics before moving on to the next grade level.
- Second, your child will understand why math works and be asked to talk about and prove their understanding. Students will no longer just memorize formulas but will learn why a particular formula exists. As a result, students will learn critical foundational concepts and problem-solving skills in the early grades so they are prepared for higher levels of math, such as algebra, once they reach the middle grades.
- Third, your child will be asked to use math in real-world situations. Students will not just memorize formulas or methods but will learn strategies for solving problems they could encounter in life. As a result, students will gain critical thinking and problem-solving skills while in school that they can apply in postsecondary education and the workforce.

(Please localize this information, if necessary.)

How will this affect my child's test scores? These standards are new, and they are higher. As a result, it will take time for students to master these new standards. Students will first be measured against these new standards in the Spring of 2015. That year, we expect that the number of students performing at grade level proficiency will drop compared to what it has been in years past. It will likely drop by one-third or more. This is what other states have seen. This isn't because Idaho students woke up one day and weren't as smart as they were the day before. It is because we are holding them to a higher standard, and that's a good thing.