

TO: District Superintendents, School Principals, and Curriculum Directors

FROM: Greg Gallagher, Director, Standards and Achievement
Department of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Update on Forthcoming Adoption of New State Content Standards Based on the
National Common Core State Standards

DATE: April 18, 2011

I write to update you on recent developments regarding the drafting of the state's next generation of academic content standards in English language arts and mathematics, which are based on the national Common Core State Standards. I also wish to inform you of a forthcoming voluntary statewide initiative to aid school districts in updating their district curricula to meet the demands of this forthcoming next generation of state standards.

I. Next Generation of State Standards

In June 2010 the National Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers released the national Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts and mathematics, which were developed through a national collaborative effort (http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/standard/common_core.shtm). Contemporaneous with this release, the Department of Public Instruction issued a gap analysis study, conducted by Midcontinent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), which assessed the variances that exist between the CCSS and the state's current academic content standards (<http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/standard/comparison.shtm>).

From June 2010 to April 2011, statewide committees of content and instructional experts, nominated by their supervisors and peers, reviewed the CCSS, the state's current academic content standards, and the gap analysis study to develop the next generation of state academic content standards in English language arts and mathematics. The Department of Public Instruction requested that these committees prepare the next generation of state content standards and to recommend whether the state should proceed to adopt all or elements of the CCSS within this next standards generation.

On April 5-6, 2011, **the content standards development committees completed their work and voted unanimously that the state adopt the CCSS as the next generation of state content standards.** The committees prepared final draft standards that include the CCSS, including additional definitions, explanations, and commentary that may be useful in making these standards optimally friendly for North Dakota educators. The committees also prepared additional optional standards that local school districts might voluntarily include within their local curricula. Finally, these committees concurred that there existed a substantial need for the state to provide supplementary assistance to local school districts to develop or update their local curricula to meet the increased rigor of the state's new content standards based on the CCSS.

Based on these recommendations, the Department has instructed McREL to prepare the final version of the documents for final review by the State Superintendent. The Department expects that these final versions will be posted in May 2011. **The State Superintendent will review these final versions and is prepared to approve their adoption in May 2011, with an anticipated implementation date of July 1, 2013,** to provide districts sufficient time to

transition into their new curricula and for the state to seamlessly transition into a new assessment system based on these new standards in the 2014-15 school year.

II. Transition Timelines

The Department anticipates a three-year transition into the state's next generation of content standards based on the national CCSS:

- May 2011: **The State Superintendent of Public Instruction will review and is anticipated to adopt the next generation of state content standards in English language arts and mathematics. The State Superintendent may establish an effective implementation date of these new content standards as July 1, 2013**, to allow local school districts sufficient time to prepare for and deploy necessary curricular changes and to provide for a properly aligned state assessment system.
- 2011-12: **The state will proceed to develop a curriculum template model for both English language arts and mathematics that will be made available to all districts for their consideration, amendment, and voluntary adoption.** This model will be developed by representative curriculum leaders and content specialists from across the state under the facilitation of the North Dakota Curriculum Initiative. Curriculum template development work will commence in June 2011.
- 2012-13: **Local school districts will voluntarily review and consider the possible adoption of the curriculum template model as the basis for establishing their own local school curricula** in English language arts and mathematics based on the state's new content standards based on the national CCSS. Local school districts will assume responsibility for the adoption of their preferred curriculum model.
- 2013-14: Effective July 1, 2013 and beginning with the 2013-14 school year, the state will align all assessment policies to the state's new content standards based on the national CCSS for full assessment deployment during 2014-15. In November 2013, the current North Dakota State Assessment will be administered for the final time, based on the previous year's content standards. **The 2013-14 school year marks the full implementation of the state's new content standards based on the CCSS.**
- 2014-15: **The state will initiate its new assessment system, possibly based on the efforts of a multi-state assessment consortium.** The state currently participates in three national assessment consortia, whose assessments will be aligned fully to the CCSS and allow for valid and reliable measures of student achievement within and among participating states. More information on these consortia will be forthcoming in the near future.

This proposed implementation timeline allows the state and local school districts to proceed with efforts to create a meaningful curriculum and assessment system that is aligned to the state's new academic content standards and that meets the various provisions of state and federal law. The Department will provide additional information regarding each of these development phases in the near future.

III. North Dakota Curriculum Initiative establishes a statewide effort to develop a curriculum template, based on the state's new academic content standards

The North Dakota Curriculum Initiative (NDCI), a statewide curriculum and professional development program administered through the North Dakota State University and funded through state Title IIA funds, **is preparing to advance a statewide program using K-12 content and curriculum specialists from across the state to develop a common curriculum template.** This curriculum template is to be made available **free-of-charge** to assist all local school districts **to implement successfully a voluntary curriculum, based on the state's new content standards.** This NDCI effort is designed to meet recent observations among educators, including the statewide standards development committee and other teachers and administrators, to provide for an effective and efficient means of developing curriculum models without unnecessary duplication of effort across the state's 180 school districts.

This effort to develop a common curriculum template, based on the new state academic content standards, will optimize development activities, shorten development cycles, increase cost effectiveness, improve collaboration among educators and districts, and hopefully produce better products than might otherwise be accomplished by a single school district. **This effort could produce a variety of deliverables for both English language arts and mathematics at all grade levels,** including a common curriculum guide, a master pace guide, detailed standards precursor and post-cursor skill markers, commentary regarding the unpacking of individual standards to better interpret their implied meaning, detailed instructional materials, unit-level organizational aids, identification of problematic content and instructional standards with supporting remediation measures, detailed audio-visual professional development supports, student and parent aids, among other products. This curriculum template development effort will also benefit from the various similar contributions of states involved in similar activities nationwide. This potentially represents a truly expansive, collaborative effort among educators across the nation, especially those states that participate in the various multi-state assessment consortia.

Any deliverables produced through this effort will be made available to all school districts for their voluntary adoption, amendment, or rejection in the subsequent rollout of their respective curricula. There exists **no expectation or mandate** that these curriculum template materials be adopted by local school districts.

The cost of this curriculum template development activity will be assumed by the Department of Public Instruction, using state Title IIA and VI funds, for certain prescribed levels of work, through a direct grant to the North Dakota State University's NDCI. If the development work of this curriculum template effort requires additional financial resources beyond its prescribed levels, the NDCI may initiate contacts with school districts to solicit voluntary contributions to the effort, including the restrictive, voluntary adoption of costs for select committee members' costs or other in-kind, locally determined contributions.

Under no conditions will any curriculum template development costs be affixed to or payment be required by local school districts. Any local school district contributions will be strictly voluntary.

This curriculum template development work will involve approximately 90 educators, including K-12 and university personnel, working in the two primary subject areas. Additionally, separate

review and validation committees of educators will provide critical analysis of the primary committees' work. The NDCI will employ the full benefit of its advisory committee of K-12 educators to help guide the effort, including the creation of several specialist advisory subcommittees that will include larger school district curriculum directors, Regional Education Association coordinators, Small Organized School representatives, and University System curriculum specialists. In the near future, the DPI and the NDCI will provide additional information through joint communications that may require your attention. Shortly, you will be approached to make nominations for advisory committee and drafting committee assignments for the various elements of the effort. We also welcome any questions and comments you might have regarding any aspect of this work. The actual curriculum template development work will begin in June 2011 and run throughout the 2011-12 school year. The membership of the development and advisory committees will be established during April – May 2011.

Thank you for the positive contributions you as educational leaders have provided throughout the development phases of the state's new academic content standards, based on the CCSS. Your helpful suggestions have helped to guide the development of this curriculum template proposal. **We have every expectation that this work will produce meaningful results, which will aid all local school districts to advance your critically important educational mission.** I am available to address any questions you might have regarding this work (328-1838 or ggallagher@nd.gov).

Thank you for your consideration and attention to this matter. I look forward to providing additional information in the near future.