

### **MYTH: The Common Core initiative is an effort to nationalize curriculum.**

**FACT:** The Common Core State Standards initiative was launched by the governors of participating states and the chief education leaders in those states. The standards were not developed by, or mandated by, the federal government. Rather, they represent the work of educators and researchers from across the states. South Dakota is one of about 45 states that have voluntarily chosen to adopt the standards.

### **MYTH: The Common Core is a federally mandated curriculum.**

**FACT:** The standards are not a curriculum; they are standards. Standards provide the framework for learning expectations in each grade; they do not dictate curriculum. In South Dakota, the state Board of Education is responsible for establishing standards in the various content areas (English language arts, math, etc.). Local school boards, administrators and teachers are responsible for determining how to teach those standards, including selection of instructional materials and instructional practices.

#### EXAMPLE:

One of the standards in 2nd grade math is the following:

#### **Grade 2**

Count within 1,000; skip-count by 5s, 10s, and 100s.

This does not tell educators how to actually teach the standard, but it provides them with a guideline for what students should know and be able to do at that grade level, in order to receive a K-12 education that prepares them for a competitive workforce.

### **MYTH: Students will no longer be reading classic literature.**

**FACT:** Teachers will continue to teach literary classics as they always have. The English language arts standards do not limit reading to non-fiction but suggest a balance between literature and non-fiction texts (for example, the Gettysburg Address), so students can build knowledge and broaden their perspectives. Exposure to informational text is imperative, as the bulk of reading students will do in the workplace is non-fiction text.

### **MYTH: The standards “dumb down” the educational experience for students.**

**FACT:** The way the standards are structured requires students to gain a deeper understanding of key concepts that they will need to build upon in their future studies. Concepts become increasingly complex as the student moves from grade to grade. In addition, students will be asked to apply their knowledge and be able to explain why a solution works.

#### EXAMPLE:

One of the English language arts standards related to Key Ideas and Details plays out as follows:

#### **Grade 3**

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

#### **Grade 4**

Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character’s thoughts, words, or actions).

#### **Grade 5**

Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

**MYTH: The Common Core includes standards for history.**

**FACT:** There are no Common Core standards for history, only for English language arts (ELA) and math. Teachers may choose to use some of the concepts from ELA, such as identifying an author's point of view and questioning that which is presented as fact in a text, as part of their writing assignments in a history class. However, the Common Core standards do not outline what students should know and be able to do in any social studies classes. South Dakota has specific and separate standards for social studies.

**MYTH: Implementing the standards will enable the federal government to track a student's personal data.**

**FACT:** There is no collection of personal student data associated with the Common Core standards. As noted above, standards provide a framework for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level, in order to be prepared for postsecondary and the workforce. Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, students will be assessed on their mastery of the standards, but this is nothing new. South Dakota has been administering the statewide test, called the Dakota STEP, since 2003. As with any data states have related to students, this assessment data is protected through the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA.

**MYTH: States were rushed into adopting the Common Core standards quickly.**

**FACT:** The South Dakota Board of Education adopted the new standards in English language arts and math in November 2010, after holding the required public hearing and seeking public input. The board followed the same practice it uses to adopt any new content standards. In addition, the South Dakota Department of Education, as well as teachers and administrators across the state, had several opportunities to review and provide feedback during the drafting of the standards.

**MYTH: States that didn't adopt the Common Core will not be eligible to receive federal assistance.**

**FACT:** South Dakota did not adopt the shared standards because of any financial carrot. The standards were adopted in order to best prepare South Dakota students for postsecondary and work in the 21st century. The state continues to receive federal assistance for a number of educational programs, including Title I, Title III, special education, and others.