

Standards for Student Learning in Adventist Schools

Standards in education are a statement of what students should know (content knowledge) and be able to do (applicable skills) upon completing a course of study. Standards state in clear, concise terms what students are expected to learn. Standards identify the students' learning destination, but much more is required to complete the educational journey. As goals for student learning, standards inform the development of curriculum, the implementation of instruction, and assessment for learning.

Just as standards for student learning do not describe in full the students' learning journey, they also do not alone give meaning to student learning. The big ideas and essential questions of life are developed from many sources. Beyond the classroom, family and significant others in a young person's life influence the student's personal beliefs and values. A personal worldview is formed by students when they integrate the knowledge learned at school and from other sources into a coherent understanding of the learner's world. A worldview also gives the learner a vision for how to use the skills acquired to participate in their community and improve themselves. Ultimately, a meaningful, productive life depends on a student's core beliefs and values from an emerging worldview equipping them to assess the authenticity and relevance of their learning, and to intelligently utilize the knowledge and skills learned.

In Adventist schools across the North American Division, standards for student learning have been developed and adopted that reflect the Adventist worldview across the subjects, PreK-12. The Adventist worldview accepts the Bible as the standard by which everything else is measured. Four key concepts emerge from a biblical worldview. These can be used as a lens for curriculum development, as well as informing the essential questions and big ideas of any content area. The four components of a biblical worldview are:

- Creation—What is God's intention?
- Fall—How has God's purpose been distorted?
- Redemption—How does God help us to respond?
- Re-creation—How can we be restored in the image of God?

In addition, as Adventist education standards are developed, educational research, professional subject area organizations, state standards, and Common Core State Standards have been referenced. The resulting standards inform students, parents, teachers, administrators, board members, and others that Adventist education meets or exceeds expectations for student learning, PreK-12.

Adventist education, though, has always been about "something better," something more than meeting baseline expectations for student learning. Adventist standards for student learning facilitate the integral nature of the faith and learning relationship, and address the big ideas and essential questions of life from a biblical perspective. Adventist education continues to add something of eternal value to the curriculum, to instruction, and to assessment that impacts student learning. The Adventist worldview will always serve as the lens through which teaching and learning transpire in the Adventist classroom.

Q & A Regarding the Common Core State Standards

Q: **WHAT** are the Common Core State Standards?

A: Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have been developed to provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn across the country in the content areas of Mathematics and English Language Arts. These statements of students' learning goals were designed to be relevant to the real world in the 21st century, reflecting the core knowledge and skills that young people need for success in college and careers. While building on the standards that had been developed over the years in many states, the CCSS differ from past standards in their focus on rigor, depth of learning, and common expectations for all students.

Q: **WHO/WHEN** created the Common Core State Standards?

A: The development of the CCSS was a state-led collaboration sponsored in 2009 by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The goal was to establish "common" educational standards, K-12, for Mathematics and English Language Arts. The work was accomplished by teams of teachers, educational leaders from various levels, researchers, and professors of education.

Q: **WHERE** have the Common Core State Standards been adopted?

A: The collaboration among states was voluntary with 44 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia participating in the development of CCSS. Adopting the CCSS in each state was also intended to be voluntary. The participation in adoption was greatly increased when the US Department of Education under a newly elected administration made the adoption of CCSS a prerequisite to additional federal funding (stimulus money) during tough economic times in 2009 and beyond. To date, a total of 45 states have adopted the standards.

Q: **WHY** has concern been raised about the Common Core State Standards?

A: Much of the concern raised about Common Core State Standards can be summarized as a concern about who influences and/or controls the development of the standards for student learning. There has been intense scrutiny of what has been deemed "common" or "core" for student learning across the country. As a result, many states that have adopted the CCSS are revising them to some degree to meet the needs of their students. Concern has also been raised over how CCSS will impact the curriculum and instruction. In the wake of this concern, curriculum experts have emphasized the relationship between standards and curriculum by noting that standards are the outcomes not the curriculum (resources, materials, content, or processes used in an educational program to meet the standards). The standards serve to focus the learning, but the curriculum adds meaning and context to student learning.

Q: **HOW** has Adventist education responded to the Common Core State Standards?

A: When revising the Mathematics or English Language Arts Standards, NAD curriculum committees have carefully examined the CCSS, along with other resources, to see if there are any conflicts with Adventist beliefs and values as well as determine whether the standards meet the needs of Adventist students. The resulting Adventist standards are then utilized to inform the development or identification of meaningful curriculum for Adventist classrooms. The Adventist worldview will always serve as the lens through which teaching and learning inspire our students to grow in wisdom and stature in the Adventist classroom.