



# MUCH ADO

## *The Cost and Chaos of Repealing Common Core – Vol. 2*

An in-depth look at the states who have attempted to revise college and career ready standards – and how New York State stacks up

**NOVEMBER 2017**

A report from

**HIGH ACHIEVEMENT NEW YORK**



## Introduction

In September 2017, the New York State Board of Regents adopted the Next Generation Learning Standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math – the result of rigorous two-year process to review and improve the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).<sup>1</sup> The process included multiple revisions developed using collaborative input from a review committee comprised of 130 teachers, administrators, parents, higher education experts, and two open comment periods that yielded feedback from thousands of members of the public.<sup>2</sup> This open and transparent process was among the most comprehensive plans to revise Common Core in the United States, with the longest implementation period. This report compares Common Core review among the states that use the standards, highlights how revision processes are necessary, and concludes that high standards around the US have also been enhanced from thoughtful community input into revisions, but not the repeal, of Common Core standards.

## The Common Core State Standards

Common Core was first implemented to ensure that students across the country receive a rigorous and high-quality education that prepares them for college and careers of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, while teachers and parents have a clear understanding of the goals and expectations set for each school grade. Critics of the standards became vocal in citing drawbacks in the newly developed standards and their “rushed” roll-outs and began advocating for a complete repeal - with New York State becoming the nation’s hotspot for this debate. While the State Education Department began a process to review and improve the standards and their aligned tests, the chaos around the roll-out had damaged the Common Core brand name.

**The New York Next Generation Learning Standards in ELA and Math made smart changes to Common Core while retaining its structure and high expectations for NY students.**

Last year, a statewide poll from HANY showed 55 percent of a New York sample supported “repealing Common Core.” When the same question was rephrased to read “repealing higher standards,” opposition falls to 35 percent with 65 percent supporting the standards. In a similar survey from Education Next, a similar methodology showed a positive swing from 53 to 69 percent supporting the standards when dropping “Common Core” from the question<sup>3</sup>. The survey findings indicate that much of the debate stemmed from a naming issue. The public supports standards that help measure progress and prepare children for future success, and that is why improving and keeping high standards in schools remains critical for all states.

## Much Ado: 2017 Update

In early 2016, HANY released “[Much Ado: The Cost and Chaos of Replacing Common Core](#),” a report that outlined the costs and challenges of states that attempted to repeal or replace Common Core, as well as the real extent to which changes to the standards were made. The report primarily focused on Indiana and Oklahoma, two states that had contentious, complex, chaotic, and ultimately very expensive processes to fully repeal and replace the standards. It also outlined a few of the tweaks made by other states, including South Carolina’s repeal and replacement process that ended with a set of standards that was approximately 90% the same as Common Core.

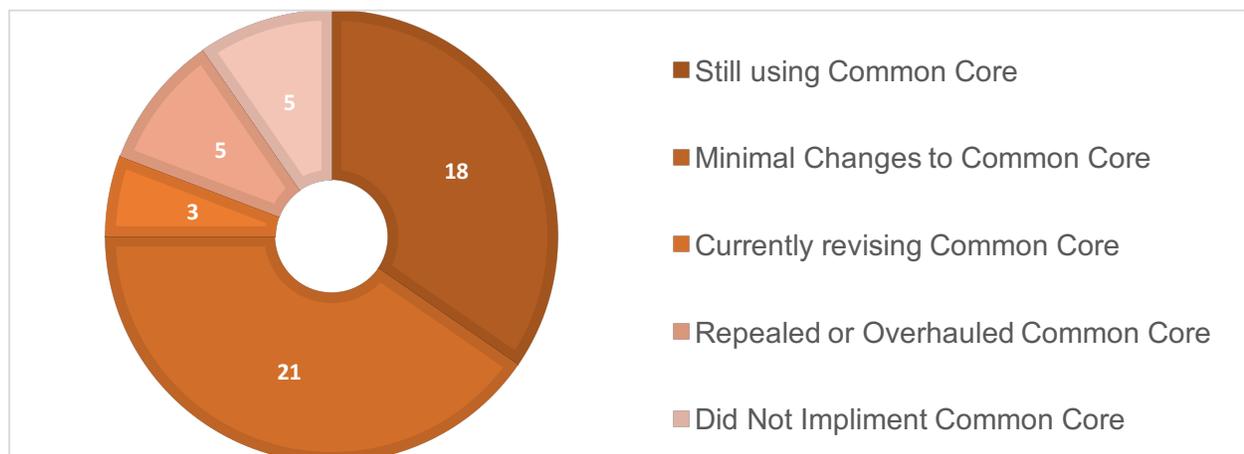
**Around the US, 41 of the 45 states and DC that fully implemented the Common Core State Standards in ELA and Math continue to use them or use standards that closely resemble Common Core.**

In contrast to full repeals, twenty states, including New York, have undergone standards revision processes. This new report outlines whether these new changes are relatively minor or more substantial and examines how New York’s recently outlined implementation process compares to others. Colorado and Kentucky are currently in the midst of their review processes and are not examined in detail here, as there is still much uncertainty regarding their outcomes.

**State Breakdown**

Status of Common Core State Standards	States (Abbreviations)
Still use Common Core or changed the Common Core name without a review process	CT, DE, DC, HI, IL, ME, MD, MI, MN (ELA only), MT, NV, NH, NM, OR, RI, VT, WA, WI, WY
Have completed the revision process with minimal changes	AL, CA, FL, GA, IA, ID, LA, MA, MS, NJ, NY, NC, ND, OH, PA, SD, TN, UT, WV
Completed the revision process with substantial changes	AR, MO
Currently undergoing a standards revision process	CO, KS, KY
Repealed the Common Core State Standards but new standards very similar to Common Core	AZ, SC
Fully repealed the Common Core State Standards	IN, OK
Never adopted the Common Core State Standards	AK, MN (Math only), NE, TX, VA

**By the Numbers**



## Summaries of Common Core State Review Processes

**ARIZONA (AZ)** After technically repealing the standards in the state legislature, Arizona embarked on a year-and-a-half-long revision process taking into account more than 10,000 public comments from educators and parents. A working group of educators met at least six times to revise standards. Parents can still provide feedback on the Arizona Education Department's website after implementation. The final product is very similar to Common Core in key ways.<sup>4,5</sup>

- “This is a huge step. It’s like the Olympics,” said Board of Education President Reginald Ballantyne before the board unanimously approved the draft standards.
- “We basically took them apart and made them so they were better, easier to use,” said Gina Bahlman, who coaches teachers in the Mayer School District near Prescott and helped revise the standards.

**ARKANSAS (AR)** Eight-month-long revision process taking into account more than 4,000 public survey comments. 170 educators participating in the process, and 15 public meetings were livestreamed.<sup>6</sup> The standards were significantly changed from the original Common Core documents.<sup>7</sup>

**FLORIDA (FL)** Six-month-long review process with input taken from public meetings, online survey, and a designated FDOE email address created for individuals to send comments.<sup>8</sup>

**GEORGIA (GA)** Approximately six-month-long review process resulting in revised standards based on a formal review and evaluation process, as directed by an executive order from Governor Nathan Deal. That process included several survey opportunities, along with legislative and State Board of Education listening sessions. A working committee representing Georgia public school teachers, post-secondary staff, parents, and instructional leaders made revisions to standards with less than 90 percent approval based on public feedback and recommendations from survey results.

### Key Findings

**The New York Next Generation Learning Standards in ELA and math made smart changes to Common Core while retaining its structure and high expectations for NY students.**

- Around the US, 41 of the 45 states and DC that fully implemented the Common Core State Standards in ELA and math continue to use them or use standards that closely resemble Common Core.
- 21 states have started review processes of the Common Core State Standards, but only Missouri and Arkansas have had considerable overhauls. Standards in the other 19 states remain very similar to Common Core, leaving a strong majority of standards and the anchor standards intact.
- Of the states who have completed a standards review process, New York’s is the longest and most comprehensive and has the longest known implementation timeline.
- The costs of reviewing the standards has varied widely around the nation, but the most costly revision processes have come from states that made the most changes to the standards.
- Evaluations of the initial revised standards indicate that the majority of the revised NY standards had either a minimal or no change in their content.

The ELA and Mathematics Advisory Committees then reviewed the recommended changes and provided additional suggestions based on public feedback. These revisions were then posted for a 60-day public comment period.<sup>9</sup>

- The Georgia Chamber of Commerce also weighed in: “The proposed revisions to the Mathematics and English Language Arts standards are relatively minor, do not weaken the existing standards, and indeed represent an improvement to the existing standards. Most importantly, these standards were developed by a team of experts who reside in Georgia and have experience with instruction with Georgia K-12 students and teachers.”

**IDAHO (ID)** Idaho did not fully adopt the Common Core State Standards until 2013, and began their revision process just two years later. The Idaho Content Standards, as they are now known, are already fully implemented as of April 2017, as they differed very little in structure or intent from Common Core.<sup>10,11</sup>

**IOWA (IA)** Year-long revision process of ELA standards where a Literacy Standards Review Team sought public feedback through an online survey as well as public forums, which drew more than 5,000 responses. A majority of comments were in favor of Iowa’s current literacy standards. Additionally, two focus groups of teachers who met independently of the review team to discuss the standards said they had done extensive work to implement the literacy standards and would not support significant changes.<sup>12</sup>

- “These are not wholesale revisions, but they are helpful adjustments based on a lot of feedback,” said Iowa Department of Education Director Ryan Wise.

**Of the states who have completed a standards review process, New York’s is the longest and most comprehensive and has the longest known implementation timeline.**

**KANSAS (KS)** Currently undergoing a revision process on the standards in accordance with their usual seven-year standards revision cycle. It is expected that the revised standards will generally still resemble Common Core, as previous attempts to repeal the standards in the state legislature have been thwarted.<sup>13</sup>

- “I think it was mostly widely spread misunderstandings of what it was all about,” Kansas State Board of Education member Ken Willard, a Hutchinson Republican, said about the controversy. “Because if you listened to the criticisms, it was criticizing the sex education standards, things that the Common Core standards required a bunch of controversial readings and all that sort of thing. There really wasn’t anything to that, that I could find.”
- Jim McNiece, a Wichita Republican who has been on the board since 2013, said he thought the criticism of Common Core was overblown. “How many different ways can you say you’re going to have to know how to use a comma?” he asked rhetorically during a phone interview Monday. “But, as you well know, there was an attitude or belief that the federal government was telling us these are the standards we had to have.”

**LOUISIANA (LA)** Nearly year-long professional revision process during the 2015-16 school year with over 100 Louisiana educators, as well as representatives from Louisiana universities, business and industry, and parent groups, participating in the review and development of new standards.<sup>14</sup> The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) convened a steering

committee and three content subcommittees to review and develop the standards. Committee members together spent approximately 9,000 hours developing standards.<sup>15</sup>

- "The new standards maintain high learning expectations in Louisiana and will keep our state's progress moving forward as we prepare our students for college and careers," said Jim Garvey, BESE president. "I want to thank the educators serving on the review committees for their dedication to this important process and congratulate them on the end product — Louisiana-specific standards that meet the unique needs of our students and our state."

**MASSACHUSETTS (MA)** Over a year-long revision process in which educators and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) staff drew from their experience with the existing standards and took into account feedback received through public comment and online survey. During the public comment period, the Department conducted outreach to discuss the proposed revisions and heard from approximately 1,700 educators, parents, students and others. An online public survey was conducted to which there were 997 responses. Department staff held ten public regional meetings, attended by 473 participants, spoke with approximately 60 members of the State Student Advisory Council at its January 2017 meeting, and held four public conference calls with a total of 162 participants.<sup>16</sup>

- "Massachusetts' ability to continually adapt and update our educational standards is an important part of why our students and public schools lead the nation in many categories," Governor Charlie Baker said. "I am confident that the standards adopted today, with collaboration from educators, will continue to help successfully guide our students throughout their Massachusetts education."
- "I am happy to have voted for these revised standards, and I believe they continue Massachusetts' tradition of high expectations for all students," said Education Secretary James Peyser.<sup>17</sup>

**MISSISSIPPI (MS)** Approximately six-month-long review process with standards review committee consisting of 40 teachers, five administrators, six postsecondary faculty, two parents and seven specialists in ELA and mathematics.<sup>18</sup> There was a 90-day public comment period and an intensive committee review of all comments, with results showing over 90 percent approval rate among participants. Close to 1,400 people visited the site, providing 8,521 points of feedback. No one suggested removing a standard.<sup>19</sup>

- Sissy Lynn, 2015 Mississippi Parent of the Year, served on the standards review committee. "From start to finish, the process was open and transparent, and MDE officials clearly explained to the team our goals and challenges," she said. "My hope is that, with these enhanced standards and with additional professional development, we will see a big improvement in test scores and student achievement in the years to come."

**MISSOURI (MO)** Over a year-long revision process during which panels of teachers and parents reviewed Missouri's learning goals and heard from more than 3,600 lawmakers, educators and academic researchers. The proposed changes were lauded by education board members, although the final product was ultimately lacking in a number of key academic areas.<sup>20</sup>

- "Whether they agree or disagree with the outcome, it was a true participatory process," said board member Joe Driskill. "It has produced something that is uniquely Missourian."

**NEW JERSEY (NJ)** Approximately eight-month-long review by Standards Review Committee (SRC) to review and submit recommendations for revisions and edits in ELA and mathematics. The SRC members were nominated by professional organizations, colleges and universities,

schools and parent organizations, and business and industry to represent all stakeholders. The committee was asked to manage the process of standards revisions, to review and provide feedback to sub-committees working on the draft revisions, and to submit any recommendations that would impact the implementation of standards. Three sub-committees were formed (K-2, Grades 3-12 ELA and Grades 3-12 mathematics) with a broad representation of educators, ensuring grade level representation, content expertise, geographic representation, and interests of all students.<sup>21</sup> During the revision process, the SRC heard comments from the public via three regional listening tours and three focus groups as well as through an online survey. Additional comments were solicited following the listening tours for those unable to attend the regional sessions.

- "We were not looking to develop a whole new set of standards, but rather to improve upon what we had," Kimberly Harrington, the state's chief academic officer, told the state Board of Education.<sup>22</sup>

***NORTH CAROLINA (NC)*** North Carolina formed a 11-member commission to discuss revisions to Common Core and their process in 2014.<sup>23</sup> After almost three years, the North Carolina Standard Course of Study standards were approved and slated to be implemented over the course of the next year. In general, the standards continued to closely resemble Common Core in form and content.

- "We've not changed the difficulty or lowered the bar on what we expect students to know," said Jennifer Curtis, the state Department of Public Instruction section chief for K-12 mathematics.<sup>24</sup>

***NORTH DAKOTA (ND)*** Nearly a year-long revision process including more than 70 teachers – 38 in the math committee and 33 in the ELA committee – who re-wrote the standards for clarity and focus. Drafts of the standards were made available for two month-long public comment periods. In another layer of review, a panel of eight community leaders, business people and representatives of the general public met twice to review the drafts.

- "One of the things that I do like about the standards re-write is that a coalition of teachers and others from across the state were brought in to review the current standards, to make adjustments to standards, so that they truly do reflect North Dakota standards, written by North Dakota people, for North Dakota students," Superintendent Jeff Schatz said. "I think the process that the Department of Public Instruction put in place was a good one. We feel good about that."<sup>25</sup>

***OHIO (OH)*** Nearly a year-long review process taking into account feedback two public surveys and several education organizations, including both major teachers unions in Ohio, the Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts, and the Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics.<sup>26</sup> The Ohio DOE also asks for public comment on proposed changes. Advisory committees of representatives from several statewide education associations select standards to be updated, based on the survey suggestions. Working groups of teachers with expertise in the various areas then draft proposed changes.<sup>27</sup>

- State testing director Jim Wright said the standards will be reviewed and adjusted regularly, not shelved for years until someone decides to throw them out and start over. "We're making improvements," Wright said. "We're making clarifications. As people use them, they figure out ways to improve them."

***PENNSYLVANIA (PA)*** Pennsylvania quietly modified some standards and renamed their standards the Pennsylvania Core Standards in 2014, and put them into practice during the next

academic year. Governor Tom Corbett called for public hearings on the standards in 2015, but they did not bring about any significant changes to the standards.

- Felice maintains Common Core standards and Pennsylvania core standards are essentially the same, if not identical. "We've had experts look at the [new state] standards who concluded they are the indeed the same or very, very close to the Common Core standards."
- "Ninety percent of the Common Core is still there," said Keever. "It's just now referred to as the PA academic standards."<sup>28</sup>

***SOUTH DAKOTA (SD)*** The South Dakota Department of Education announced a revision of the standards in January 2016, essentially accelerating their usual seven-year revision process by one year<sup>29</sup>. Since that report there have been no new updates on how revised standards compare with the Common Core State Standards.

***TENNESSEE (TN)*** Nearly a two-year-long review process that included two online public reviews, legislative input, and two panels comprised of mostly educators to work through the resulting feedback. The board heard from more than 2,600 Tennesseans, mostly teachers. Overall, 82 percent of the reviews indicated that the revised standards should be kept. And in all, more than 200,000 reviews and comments have been considered in the process.

- "The Common Core standards were our starting point, but the revisions we have made our significant, and significant enough that we consider them new standards," said Sara Heyburn, the board's executive director. "The formatting is different. We've dropped standards, we've added standards, we've made changes to existing standards."<sup>30</sup>
- "Tennessee's new Academic Standards for math and ELA are comprehensive, rigorous and a step forward for Tennessee students," said Fielding Rolston, State Board of Education chairman, in a news release. "We are very grateful to all of the parents, teachers, and leaders who took part in the public review process to help create these new standards."<sup>31</sup>

***UTAH (UT)*** A year-long review process involving parents, educators and representatives from higher education, among other diverse groups. The public also provided input, and the modest changes to the secondary math standards adopted are reflective of considerable stakeholder feedback.<sup>32</sup>

***WEST VIRGINIA (WV)*** A six-month-long review process involving teachers, parents, representatives from higher education, and business/community stakeholders gave the opportunity to address concerns directly and took into account 251,000 comments on both ELA and Math.<sup>33</sup> Supported by West Virginia and Marshall Universities, teams of teachers used the 2015 Academic Spotlight feedback to create a new set of ELA and Math standards called the West Virginia College- and Career-Readiness Standards (WVCCR).

## How the New York Process Compares

New York can be counted among states like Massachusetts, Arizona, and Georgia for having one of the most comprehensive Common Core State Standards revision processes. New York State is unique in that its review and revision process incorporated careful consideration of all stakeholder feedback which resulted in a two-year process, longer than any other state. In comparison, states like West Virginia, Mississippi, and Florida had standards revision processes

that were only six months long. The new New York State English Language Arts and Mathematics standards, now called the Next Generation Learning Standards, have been revised through a collaborative effort of teachers, parents, and other stakeholders across the entire state.

More than 10,500 teachers, parents and other stakeholders responded to a preliminary survey conducted in 2015 by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) about the current standards and provided over 750,000 pieces of feedback. Our research indicates that this was the most feedback from a public survey of the 18 states that underwent a revision process. In 2015, a task force formed by Governor Cuomo undertook an exhaustive review of the Common Core standards in New York and developed a report outlining a series of recommendations.<sup>34</sup>

In an extensive standards revision process similar to Massachusetts, the NYSED convened review committees, comprised of more than 130 educators and parents from across the state, to review and revise the ELA and Math standards. Compared to New York, other states had fewer people directly involved in the revision process. Throughout the revision process, committee members worked together during numerous in-person meetings in Albany and participated in numerous conference calls and online meetings to help develop recommended changes to the standards. To help facilitate the work, NYSED formed leadership teams which included representatives from the New York State United Teachers, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), the New York City Department of Education, and NYSED.

**After review by committees and experts, the NYSED released the draft standards for a public comment period – receiving and taking into account 4,100 comments from across the state.**

In September 2016, NYSED released the new draft learning standards for public comment. This set of standards received more than 4,100 comments. The committees met through a series of all-day, in-person meetings and web meetings between December 2016 and April 2017 and reviewed every learning standard, making any necessary modifications based on professional expertise, as well as input gathered from public comment and child development experts. The revised New York ELA and math standards were made possible through the careful consideration of feedback from New York parents, educators, and other stakeholders at every step of the standards revision process.

## How the Next Generation Learning Standards Compare to Common Core

A review of the final draft of the standards revealed that the bulk of the Common Core standards remained either unchanged or not significantly changed. This is especially true of the math standards where a count of the initial draft of the standards indicated that around 75% of the standards had either no change or very minor changes and less than 5% were either eliminated or added. There were minimal changes after that initial draft, and the math standards in grades 3 through 8 were almost completely untouched. The early grades saw some alterations to be more developmentally aware of the student, while significant redistribution of the standards in Algebra I and Algebra II and better clarification of the Plus standards in the high school grades accounted for most the changes in those levels.

There was greater variation in the ELA standards, although the anchor standards and most of the subject headers remained intact, meaning the structure and much of the rigor of the standards of Common Core was retained. The alterations to the ELA standards were more evenly distributed throughout the standards, with some changes, such as a reemphasis on fiction texts, spanning all grade levels. Major changes to the ELA standards after the initial revised draft included the addition of text complexity back into the standards, and further alterations to the pre-K through 2 standards to make them more developmentally appropriate.

## What Comes Next

New York's implementation timeline, as outlined by NYSED, is at least as long as any other state:

- September 2017: Adoption of Next Generation Learning Standards
- 2017-18 School Year: New two-day assessment measuring current standards; professional development on Next Generation Learning Standards
- 2018-19 School Year: Two-day assessment measuring current standards; professional development on Next Generation Learning Standards
- 2019-20 School Year: Two-day assessment measuring current standards; professional development on Next Generation Learning Standards
- September 2020: Full Implementation of the Next Generation Learning Standards
- Spring 2021: New assessments measuring Next Generation Learning Standards

Some states, such as Massachusetts and Louisiana, have implemented revised standards in only a year's time, while others, such as Arizona and Tennessee, have taken a more deliberate approach similar to that of New York. Considering the blowback NYSED received to their rushed timeline for implementing the CCSS, their draft timeline is reasonable, even to the most change-averse. No states we researched took longer than three years to implement their new standards, showing that New York's desire to be a deliberate and inclusive as possible is reinforced by comparisons to other states.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> US News: [New York Tweaks, Renames Common Core Learning Standards](#)
- <sup>2</sup> New York State Education Department: [Timeline: English Language Arts and Math Learning Standards Review Process](#)
- <sup>3</sup> EducationNext: [Results from the 2017 Education Next Poll](#)
- <sup>4</sup> KJZZ 91.5: [Arizona Board Of Education Replaces Common Core State Standards](#)
- <sup>5</sup> KJZZ 91.5: [Arizona Proposes Draft Math, English Language Arts Standards For K-12](#)
- <sup>6</sup> Arkansas Department of Education: [Arkansas Standards Review of Mathematics and ELA](#)
- <sup>7</sup> Arkansas Public School Resource Center: [Common Core State Standards & PARCC Resources](#)
- <sup>8</sup> Florida Department of Education: [Florida Standards](#)
- <sup>9</sup> Atlanta Tribune: [Changes to Georgia's Common Care State Standards](#)
- <sup>10</sup> State Education Department of Idaho: [Idaho Content Standards](#)
- <sup>11</sup> East Idaho News: [Schools chief Sherri Ybarra launches re-election campaign](#)
- <sup>12</sup> Iowa Department of Education: [State Board of Education Adopts Minimal Revisions to Literacy Standards](#)
- <sup>13</sup> Lawrence Journal World: [Common Core Standards Will Soon be a Thing of the Past in Kansas](#)
- <sup>14</sup> Louisiana Believes: [Louisiana Student Standards Review](#)
- <sup>15</sup> Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education: [BESE Approves Louisiana Student Standards, Adopts 2016-17 Education Funding Formula](#)
- <sup>16</sup> Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: [Proposed Revisions of Curriculum Frameworks for English Language Arts and Literacy and Mathematics – Recommendation for Adoption](#)
- <sup>17</sup> Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: [Massachusetts Adopts Revised English Language Arts and Math Standards](#)
- <sup>18</sup> Mississippi Department of Education: [Mississippi Teachers Evaluated and Approved Majority of State's Learning Standards](#)
- <sup>19</sup> Mississippi Department of Education: [SBE Approves Final Revisions to Mississippi's English, Math Standards](#)
- <sup>20</sup> St. Louis Post-Dispatch: [Missouri education officials replace Common Core standards](#)
- <sup>21</sup> New Jersey Department of Education: [Standards Revision](#)
- <sup>22</sup> NJ.com: [N.J. could keep nearly 85 percent of Common Core standards](#)
- <sup>23</sup> NPR: [North Carolina Rethinks the Common Core](#)
- <sup>24</sup> The News Observer: [Elementary and Middle School Math Set to Change](#)
- <sup>25</sup> Inforum: [ND standards to replace Common Core score high marks with Fargo officials](#)
- <sup>26</sup> Cleveland: [How Ohio is adjusting the Common Core for Ohio classrooms](#)
- <sup>27</sup> Ohio Department of Education: [Ohio's Learning Standards](#)
- <sup>28</sup> WFMZ: [The Quarrel Over Common Core: A Pennsylvania Primer](#)
- <sup>29</sup> Argus Leader: [Common Core Under Review Next Summer](#)
- <sup>30</sup> Chalkbeat: [At long last, phase-out of Common Core is official in Tennessee](#)
- <sup>31</sup> Tennessean: [Tennessee Phases out Common Core](#)
- <sup>32</sup> The Salt Lake Tribune: [The Utah Core Curriculum is Working and Should not be Abandoned](#)
- <sup>33</sup> West Virginia Department of Education: [West Virginia College- and Career-Readiness Standards](#)
- <sup>34</sup> New York State Governor: [New York Common Core Task Force Final Report](#)