

College and Career Readiness: Resource Guide for the Workforce System

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INTRODUCTION

As the nation slowly recovers from the economic recession of 2007, the emphasis of a growing economy will be on skilled jobs, both as replacement jobs and as newly developed jobs. Most of these jobs will require postsecondary education or training. Postsecondary education has become the base threshold requirement for a middle class or above family income. The increased earning power conferred by postsecondary education and training is both tangible and lucrative over a worker's lifetime. The movement toward high school and adult college and career readiness standards reflects these economic realities. In addition, significant changes have occurred in the content and delivery of both high school education and basic skills education for out-of-school older youth and adults.

Audience and Purpose

This Resource Guide was developed to provide current information and resources about the general topic of college and career ready (CCR) standards to individuals employed within the national workforce system. The topic is directly related to the concept of high school equivalency (HSE) and a companion document titled *High School Equivalency: Resource Guide for the Workforce System* has been developed to complement this CCR Guide. The new HSE options now available to out-of-school individuals are based on CCR academic standards.

Individuals within workforce-focused organizations/agencies who serve clients who have not attained a high school diploma and/or clients who are in need of postsecondary knowledge and skills should understand basic concepts associated with CCR standards and the content standard initiative/movement. Additionally, individuals who have job functions related to the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) need basic information about college and career readiness in order to address the needs of WIOA-eligible clients who do not have high school diplomas and are in need of postsecondary training and skills. Other stakeholders in the national workforce system or in partnership with that system—including adult education providers, postsecondary counselors and staff, community-based organization staff, etc.—may also find the information and resources in this CCR Guide useful.

The Guide represents an inventory of key documents within the CCR issue/topic that are widely accepted and used. As a general CCR resource, it is not inclusive of the many closely related issues and content areas such as work readiness and employability skills or other related resources such as work readiness credentials and career pathway models.

Guide Structure

The Guide features four topical sections. With the exception of the *CCR Background Information* section, each section follows a similar structure. That is, each section presents information and searchable resources followed by a text box of Workforce System Implications and concluding with a set of Need-to-Know questions. Workforce system implications discuss possible ways in which the section topic and information may impact programs/staff within the national workforce system. These implications are expanded in the Need-to-Know discussion using a checklist format of leading questions. Questions are divided into those for *state level* workforce system staff and stakeholders and those for *local level* workforce system staff and stakeholders. Because the answers to these questions typically are

different from state to state, the answers to them are too varied to describe in this document. However, the questions provide a recommended format for discussion and represent useful state and local information to share between systems and stakeholders.

Using This Document

The Resource Guide may be used in a variety of ways including but not limited to:

- ✓ Enhance an individual’s general or specific knowledge of CCR
- ✓ Provide a content structure for professional development about CCR
- ✓ Provide a content structure for cross-system CCR discussion

Additionally, the Guide may be tailored to your specific needs and sections of information could be abstracted for certain uses such as planning, report preparation, collaboration and partner discussions. Although the Guide does not provide state-specific CCR descriptions, it includes links to state agency websites that describe that state’s approach to CCR standards for out-of-school individuals.

Key Terms and Acronyms

AEFLA – Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II of the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act)

CCR – College and Career Readiness

Common Core – Common Core State Standards. Developed in 2009 by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Common Core is a set of academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy. They are learning goals that outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade.

HSE – High School Equivalency

USED-OCTAE – U. S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education

USDOL-ETA – U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration

WIOA – Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

A. GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Content Standards – K-12 and Adult

College and career readiness standards are linked broadly to the [content standards movement](#) in education and are a direct product of the 2009 K-12 initiative known as the [Common Core State Standards](#), also called the Common Core. The Common Core is a set of academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy. Simply put, they are learning goals that outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade. Aligned standards provide the foundation to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment and better prepare students for college and the workplace. They also communicate core learning goals to teachers, parents, and students.

These K-12 standards were created in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live. The standards are frequently referred to as “college and career readiness” because they were designed to align with the entry level expectations of colleges, workforce training programs, and employers. As of 2014, 46 states, the District of Columbia, and four territories have voluntarily adopted and are moving forward with the Common Core. The official internet home of the Common Core State Standards is: <http://www.corestandards.org/>.

Two newly designed K-12 assessments, the [PARCC](#) and the [SMARTER Balanced](#) test, have been developed under contracts with the US Department of Education (USED) to measure student success on the Common Core. Testing using these assessments began in the Fall of 2014, however not all assessment options have been developed or field tested. Full implementation of the PARCC and SMARTER Balanced is expected to occur by Fall 2016.

The USED, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, renamed in 2012 as the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE), identified a set of college and career readiness standards for the adult basic education system was in direct alignment with the K-12 Common Core State Standards. This adult-focused set of standards provides a group of manageable and essential college and career readiness (CCR) standards that reflect broad agreement among subject matter experts in adult education about what is desirable for adult students to know to be prepared for college, technical training programs, and employment in the 21st century. The primary link to these adult CCR standards is: <http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/CCRStandardsAdultEd.pdf>.

Workforce System Implications for CCR Standards

Audience for these Implications - Individuals within workforce focused organizations/agencies who serve clients who have not attained a high school diploma and are seeking further education or training should be familiar with the concept and practical application of college and career readiness standards. Also, individuals who have job functions related to the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) need basic information about CCR in order to be able to address the needs of clients who do not have high school diplomas and must be served under WIOA. Under WIOA Section 102 - Unified State Plan (b)(2)(D)(ii)(I), individuals responsible for developing WIOA state plans are mandated to align CCR standards with the state's standards for adult education. Other stakeholders in the national workforce system or in partnership with that system including adult education providers, postsecondary counselors and staff, community based organization staff, etc. may also find the information and resources in this Guide useful.

General Implications - In general, the national workforce system is a universal access system of American Job Centers, also known as one-stop career/service centers, and contracted agents, which provide access to training and employment services for a range of workers or job seekers, including low-income adults, low-income youth, and dislocated workers. Since many clients of the workforce system lack the necessary preparation for further education and employment, having a basic understanding of college and career readiness standards is extremely important for staff within this system in order to assist individuals with the development and pursuit of career, employment, and educational goals.

The standards provide a common framework of content goals that workforce system staff can use to deliver direct services to clients or to refer clients to other services that address and align these CCR content goals. Workforce system staff should understand that the Common Core and the adult college and career readiness standards were developed in part with commonly accepted career and employment competencies and that these standards are in wide use in both the K-12 and the adult education system.

In addition, the workforce system works in collaboration with educational providers, especially at the adult basic and the postsecondary education level. Common dialogue is fostered when all parties have a solid understanding of the adult college and career readiness standards when designing services or discussing an individual client's needs and progress.

Service Delivery - Since many clients of the workforce system lack the necessary preparation for further education and employment, it is important for workforce system staff to know which HSE options are available in their state. Although the GED®, HiSET, and TASC, all are aligned with CCR content standards, it would be helpful for workforce system staff to know which HSE preparation programs focus on the CCR academic standards as well as to incorporate additional CCR instruction and experiences such as study skills, college enrollment and financial aid application assistance, and college placement test preparation into program design or service delivery.

Workforce system staff who operate HSE instructional programs should make certain that these programs and instructional materials focus on a broad range of CCR content, activities and experiences. Please note that a complementary High School Equivalency (HSE) Guide is available on the same website as this CCR Guide.

Partnerships - Since workforce system staff and stakeholders frequently communicate, interact, and partner with adult education providers at the state and local level, it is important to have knowledge about CCR standards, especially if the state is in the process of aligning CCR standards with adult education standards as the new WIOA requires.

Professional Development - Professional development is important for staff to gain knowledge about state adult education and local program CCR standards and to learn about the standards and their application. For workforce system staff who work directly with HSE instructional staff, it would be useful to know how CCR standards are integrated into instructional modules or classes as well as where to find CCR aligned materials and assessments. The Need-to-Know checklist included in this guide provides a template for information that may be included in professional development related to CCR.

Policy Issues - Under WIOA, CCR standards must be aligned with adult education standards. In turn, policy must be established to ensure this alignment and to deliver consistent programming that utilizes the aligned CCR content. In addition, professional development policies could be developed for workforce system personnel that require the understanding and application of CCR standards.

Please note: Additional workforce system implications are noted following each section of this Guide.

Nice-to-Know: The Education – Earnings Connection

As reported in the 2010 *Help Wanted* report from the Center on Education and the Workforce, the range in lifetime earnings by educational attainment is greatest between high school dropouts and professional degrees—a significant range of \$1,198,000 to \$4,650,000, or a difference of \$3,452,000.

- ✓ Having a high school degree is worth about \$569,000 more than being a dropout.
- ✓ Having some college but no degree or a postsecondary certificate is worth about \$473,000 more than a high school degree.
- ✓ Having an Associate's degree is worth about \$15,000 more than some college but no degree.
- ✓ Having a Master's degree is worth \$457,000 more than a Bachelor's degree.

B. CATEGORY ONE – ESSENTIAL RESOURCES

B1. The K-12 Common Core Standards

Main web link: <http://www.corestandards.org/>

The official Common Core website is hosted and maintained by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center). It provides parents, educators, policymakers, journalists, and others with easy access to the actual K-12 standards, as well as supporting information and resources. One important feature of the website is an [interactive state map](#) that briefly describes the status of the standards in that state. It also provides a web link that offers much more state-specific detail. In addition, the website hosts a three-minute summary [video](#) about the standards and a set of [frequently asked questions](#) that cover a broad array of important topics and considerations. These K-12 Common Core standards provide the basis for adult appropriate content standards which are described in the following sections of this inventory.

B2. College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education

Main web link: <http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/CCRStandardsAdultEd.pdf>

This report is the result of a nine-month process that examined the [Common Core State Standards](#) (CCSS) from the perspective of adult education. The project was funded by [USED-OCTAE](#) to provide a set of manageable yet significant CCR standards that reflect broad agreement among subject matter experts in adult education about what is desirable for adult students to know in order to be prepared for the rigors of postsecondary education and training.

While adult educators have expressed interest in the Common Core, they have also raised challenges to universally accepting the expansive list of Common Core K–12 standards. Limits on how much time most adult learners can devote to their learning are genuine; many students are interested in just-in-time learning and cannot devote time equal to a K–12 course of study spelled out in the standards. These concerns prompted the interest in establishing a set of adult-appropriate standards.

The CCR Standards for English Language Arts/Literacy are separated into four strands: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. Each strand is headed by a set of CCR Anchor Standards identical across all levels of learning. Each level-specific standard corresponds to the same-numbered CCR anchor standards. The anchor standards provide focus and coherence across the level-specific standards, from the earliest levels of learning through adult secondary education (ASE). The CCR standards for Mathematics have two central parts: the Standards for Mathematical Practice and the Standards for Mathematical Content. They are presented over a range of content domains (e.g. The Number System, Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Functions, Geometry, measurement and Data, and Statistics and Probability) from the earliest levels of learning through ASE. The CCR Standards for Adult Education provide a framework for states to use voluntarily in developing or strengthening their adult education standards with respect to college and career readiness.

Workforce System Implications

As noted in the previous section, having a basic understanding of CCR standards, both the K-12 Common Core and the Adult CCR standards, is extremely important for workforce system staff to assist individuals with the development and pursuit of career and educational goals. The WIOA state plan requirement to describe how the state will align adult CCR standards with the particular K-12 standards (most frequently, the Common Core) will require considerable workforce system input and guidance.

Checklist of “Need-To-Know” Information – The checklist below includes recommendations for essential knowledge about CCR standards. The checklist uses a question format and some of the more basic items are answered in the preceding text in this section while other need-to-know information, especially at the local level, may be attained by following the hyperlinks noted in this Guide or by contacting your local adult CCR experts (e.g., adult education providers). The checklist is separated by two levels of workforce system staff – state and local. Many of the checklist items are similar, but the scope of information may vary between the state (broader knowledge) and the local (more specific information) level.

Need-To-Know Checklist for CCR Standards

For **State Level** Workforce System Staff and Stakeholders

- ✓ ***What are your state’s K-12 standards and adult education CCR standards? Are they aligned?***
- ✓ ***As clients are referred to (or served directly by) adult education programming, do those programs use CCR standards for guiding instructional content?***

Rationale: Understanding the origin and basic concepts of the nationally developed K-12 Common Core and your state’s K-12 and adult CCR standards is helpful in designing workforce system activities for individuals who have a postsecondary education goal. Also, knowing which adult education programs in your state align their services with CCR standards is important to the workforce system referral and partnership process.

For **Local Level** Workforce System Staff and Stakeholders

- ✓ ***Why were the K-12 Common Core and the adult CCR standards developed?***
- ✓ ***How do the Adult CCR Standards differ from the Common Core?***
- ✓ ***What are your state’s K-12 standards and adult education CCR standards? Are they aligned?***

- ✓ ***As clients are referred to (or served directly) in your geographic area by adult education programming, do those programs use CCR standards for guiding instructional content?***

Rationale: Same as above.

C. CATEGORY TWO – FREQUENTLY USED RESOURCES

C1. Process Guide for Establishing State Adult Education Content Standards

Main web link: <http://www.adultedcontentstandards.ed.gov/howto.asp>

A Process Guide for Establishing State Adult Education Content Standards presents information gathered through a review of literature and research on content standards; discussions with staff from state offices of adult education; and reviews of state, national, and international standards documents. The information and examples are intended to guide state adult education administrators, content experts, professional development staff, instructors, and curriculum/assessment specialists throughout the process of planning, developing, aligning, reviewing, and implementing standards. The document includes a wide range of suggestions and resources for implementing standards-based education.

The five chapters of the Guide introduce the components of standards-based reform and the implications for adult education. Content standards are voluntary at a national level, so the Guide does not prescribe a single process, nor does it recommend content. However, the Guide can help users make decisions related to adapting, developing, or implementing standards. The Guide includes lessons learned from adult educators and researchers. Each chapter offers practice activities to assist state teams in using the information presented in the text. The appendices provide additional information, a glossary, tools and templates, and references.

C2. Handbook for Sustaining Standards-Based Education in Adult Education

Main web link: <http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/SustainingStandards-BasedEd.pdf>

The purpose of this Sustainability Handbook is to help state leaders generate sustained organizational support for standards-based reforms, so that leaders can develop long-lasting roots for promising reforms and propagate them system-wide. The handbook presents a strategic framework, based on significant research, to assist with the full implementation of effective reforms in adult education programs that may otherwise be resistant to instructional and curricular transformations. The framework identifies four over-lapping and interconnected stages that innovation advocates can progress through in order to achieve long-lasting, standards-based reform. The handbook is organized around the four stages of a sustainability framework and includes completed sustainability materials, for each stage, produced by adult educators in Kentucky and Montana.

C3. The Adult Education Content Standards Warehouse

Main web link: <http://www.adultedcontentstandards.ed.gov/>

The Adult Education Content Standards Warehouse is hosted by the USED-OCTAE for the purpose of providing adult educators with access to professional development materials to support effective implementation of content standards in adult education. The web site features the following components:

- [Guide for Establishing Standards](#) – Includes downloadable files that present a process for developing and deploying a fully integrated, standards-based education system to improve curriculum/instruction and increase learner outcomes. Each chapter provides information and examples gathered from research, reviews of standards, and interviews with adult education staff and standards experts.
- [Standards-in-Action](#) – Includes training materials designed to provide adult educators at all levels with the support they need to take their state standards off the shelf and put them to use for students. Standards-in-Action (SIA) is organized into four instructional units that address four priority areas of standards-based reform: (1) Understanding the Standards We Teach; (2) Translating Standards into Curriculum; (3) Focus on Assignments; and (4) Observing Standards-in-Action. Three SIA videos supplement the SIA print materials.
- [Implementing CCR Standards in Adult Education Initiative](#) – Addresses how adult education programs can best integrate CCR standards into their instructional services. Includes the CCR Standards Project which provides CCR standards-based professional development materials made for adult educators.
- [CCR Standards Discussion](#) – A community of practice for adult education practitioners, community colleges, career and technical training organizations, business and industry, and others to explore policies, practices, and issues in using standards to prepare adults for college and careers.

C4. Equipped for the Future (EFF) Content Standards

Main web link: http://eff.cls.utk.edu/fundamentals/eff_standards.htm and [Equipped for the Future \(EFF\) Teaching/Learning Toolkit](#)

Equipped for the Future (EFF) began as a National Institute for Literacy effort to improve the quality and results of the adult literacy, basic skills, and lifelong learning systems in the United States. Like other education improvement initiatives focused on accountability issues, EFF is a standards-based reform initiative. Keeping a focus clearly on what adults need literacy for, EFF identified 16 core skills that supported effective performance in the home, community, and workplace. The 16 EFF Content Standards define the knowledge and skills adults need in order to successfully carry out their roles as parents and family members, citizens and community members, and workers. Many local adult education programs are using these EFF standards part of their content delivery.

The [Equipped for the Future \(EFF\) Teaching/Learning Toolkit](#) for Standards-Based Instruction provides practitioners with resources to use the EFF Content Standards and Teaching/Learning Cycle in adult education settings.

C5. Commercial and Product Focused Web Resources

The following websites are offered and maintained by adult education vendors. They offer insights into how their instructional and testing products relate to college and career readiness standards.

Contemporary/McGraw-Hill Education: http://www.commoncoresolutions.com/adult_education.php

Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System – CASAS: <http://www.casas.org/product-overviews/curriculum-management-instruction/CCCS>

ACT – College and Career Readiness Standards: <http://www.act.org/standard>

SAT - College and Career Readiness Standards: <http://satbenchmark.collegeboard.org>

Workforce System Implications

This category of frequently used CCR resources has direct implications for workforce system staff and stakeholders that are or will be working on standards alignment issues as required under WIOA. Also, for workforce system personnel that have a role in implementing educational training or postsecondary preparation, these resources may be helpful.

Need-To-Know Checklist for Frequently Used CCR Resources

For **State Level** Workforce System Staff and Stakeholders (if involved in CCR development, implementation, or alignment)

- ✓ ***What resources would be helpful if you are involved in work to align this state's K-12 standards with the state's adult CCR standards?***

Rationale: The resources noted in this section of the Guide may be used by educational and workforce systems that are charged with aligning the state's K-12 standards with the state's adult CCR standards (as required for unified state plan development under WIOA).

- ✓ ***What agency or office is responsible for the development and implementation of adult education CCR standards in your state?***

Rationale: Knowing the agency and/or individuals responsible for adult education CCR standards is necessary for collaboration, partnership, and for up-to-date information on this topic.

For **Local Level** Workforce System Staff and Stakeholders (if involved in CCR development, implementation, or alignment)

- ✓ ***What resources might be of assistance if you are involved in work to align this state's K-12 standards with the state's adult CCR standards?***

Rationale: The resources noted in this section of the Guide may be used by educational and workforce systems that are charged with aligning the state's K-12 standards with the state's adult CCR standards (as required for unified state plan development under WIOA). The input and participation of local level workforce system staff on the development of the state's unified state plan would be helpful to ensure a more credible and practical state plan.

- ✓ ***What agency or office is responsible for the development and implementation of adult education CCR standards in your state or in your local area?***

Rationale: Knowing the agency and/or individuals responsible for adult education CCR standards is necessary for collaboration, partnership, and for up-to-date information on this topic.

D. CATEGORY THREE – STATE AND LOCAL RESOURCE

D1. State-Specific CCR Standards Resources

Prior to the development of the K-12 Common Core and the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education, most state adult education programs were actively involved in the content standards movement and had established sets of standards for local program use. These sets of content standards varied significantly from state to state and often did not include college and career readiness concepts.

Although state adult education agencies have discretion over their standards content, most have embraced the CCR concept and have either developed or are developing new CCR standards for local program guidance and implementation. The 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, a significant funding source for state adult education programs, does specify that the development of “curriculum frameworks and rigorous content standards” is an allowable use of WIOA state leadership funds. Workforce system personnel are encouraged to learn more about their state’s approach to adult CCR standards by contacting their state or local adult education agency or provider. A master list of state adult education directors is available at: http://www.naepdc.org/members/members_home.html

D2. The P-20 and Data Quality Initiatives

Main web link for P-20 Initiatives: <http://www.achieve.org/P-20-data-systems>

Main web link for the Data Quality Campaign: <http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org>

A [P-20](#) (Pre-school through age 20) initiative is underway in most states. These initiatives connect the various levels of educational systems in the state to work collaboratively around issues of student progress, achievement, and transition. One common feature of the P-20 work in states is to collect, coordinate, and use K-12 and postsecondary data to track and improve the readiness of graduates to succeed in college and the workplace. The alignment of secondary content standards with college and career readiness standards is another major goal of P-20 efforts.

A [Data Quality Initiative](#) associated with P-20 goals is active in all 50 states. By securely connecting data about how students move from K–12 into postsecondary and careers, leaders gain the best understanding of college and career readiness in their states, districts, and schools. Currently, [44 states](#) can see how their students move between K–12 and postsecondary education, but only 19 can see how those students move into the workforce. In addition, 16 states have taken additional steps to improve the quality of their work in this area to create broad, transparent, and useful linkages between K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions.

Workforce System Implications

Workforce system personnel should be cognizant of whether or not their state has established adult education content standards, and if so, whether or not they aligned to the state's K-12 standards. As required under WIOA, states must align these two sets of standards and describe that alignment in the unified state plan – see WIOA Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(ii)(I). With regard to the P-20 and the Data Quality Initiatives, key workforce system personnel should be represented as collaborators with these efforts.

Need-To-Know Checklist for State Content Standards and Initiatives

For **State Level** Workforce System Staff and Stakeholders

- ✓ ***Does your state have adult education content standards that are being implemented in adult education programming? If not, where is the state in their development?***
- ✓ ***Who is representing the workforce system on your state's P-20 initiative or council? Should you be involved?***
- ✓ ***How far along is your state with the implementation of their Data Quality Initiative? Are there appropriate connections to the state workforce system data?***

Rationale: Understanding your state's adult education content standards is helpful in designing workforce system activities for individuals who have a postsecondary education goal. Knowing whether or not your state has a P-20 Initiative and/or a Data Quality Initiative is important for purposes of workforce system collaboration with these statewide efforts.

For **Local Level** Workforce System Staff and Stakeholders

- ✓ ***Does your state have adult education content standards that are being implemented in adult education programming in your local area? If not, should you have a role in facilitating this implementation?***
- ✓ ***What is happening in your state in regards to a P-20 initiative or a Data Quality initiative? How will this impact your local area or programs?***

Rationale: Understanding your state's adult education content standards is helpful in designing workforce system activities for individuals who have a postsecondary education goal. Knowing whether or not your state has a P-20 Initiative and/or a Data Quality Initiative is important for purposes of workforce system collaboration with these statewide efforts. Involvement of local workforce system personnel on P-20 or Data Quality councils provides the group with a local/regional and practical perspective.