

## Iowa Common Core

What is the Iowa Common Core that I am hearing about? Is the Iowa adopted Common Core rigorous? Why is Iowa using the Common Core? These and other questions are being asked as the Johnston Community School District and all schools and educators in Iowa are working to incorporate the required Iowa Common Core. The following articles provide information taken from the Iowa Department of Education website which provides details about the Iowa Common Core.

The vision for the Iowa Core is to ensure the success of each and every student by providing a world-class curriculum. The Iowa Core is designed to improve achievement of all students, preparing them for the world of work and lifelong learning. It identifies the essential content and instruction of critical content areas that all students must experience.

### ***Iowa Common Core & Effective Instruction***

***\*Iowa Department of Education website*** [www.educate.iowa.gov](http://www.educate.iowa.gov)

**Characteristics of effective instruction** and the professional development initiatives are being developed to help educators create **student-centered classrooms** focused on students and learning rather than teachers and teaching. Iowa teachers are expanding their knowledge of learning and pedagogy as they develop the content of the Iowa Core into **rigorous and relevant** lessons that help them **teach for understanding** and **learner differences**. The Department and educators across Iowa continue to investigate more informative, effective, and authentic **assessment for learning** to guide instruction.

### **Characteristics of Effective Instruction**

#### **Student-Centered Classrooms**

Students are directly involved and invested in the discovery of their own knowledge. Through collaboration and cooperation with others, students engage in experiential learning which is authentic, holistic, and challenging. Students are empowered to use prior knowledge to construct new learning and develop meta cognitive processes to reflect on their thinking.

## **Rigor and Relevance**

Lessons are cognitively demanding and challenge students to apply the essential concepts and skills to real-world, complex and open-ended situations. Content is linked to core concepts or skills and requires authentic work, discipline-specific methods, and applying what is known or being learned to solve complex problems. Involves use of prior knowledge, development of in-depth understanding, and the ability to develop and express ideas and findings through elaborated communication.

## **Teaching for Understanding**

Students engage in a variety of thought-provoking activities such as explaining, finding evidence and examples, generalizing, applying, making analogies, and representing the topic in new ways. Teachers 1) make learning a long-term, thinking-centered process, 2) engage students in assessment for learning processes, 3) support learning with representations and conceptual models, 4) teach for learner differences 5) induct students into the discipline, and 6) teach for transfer (Perkins, 1993).

## ***Iowa Common Core – What are Universal Constructs?***

***\*Iowa Department of Education website [www.educate.iowa.gov](http://www.educate.iowa.gov)***

### **Universal Constructs: Essential for 21st Century Success**

The universal constructs were identified following an analysis of the competencies and habits of mind needed for future successes in careers, college and citizenry. A team of educators and business representatives conducted a literature review of multiple sources including the P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning, the Definition and Selection of Key Competencies by NCREL/Metiri Group, Cross Disciplinary Proficiencies in the American Diploma Project by Achieve, Global Achievement Gap by Tony Wagner, Born Digital by Palfrey and Gasser, and Describing the Habits of Mind by Arthur Costa. The universal constructs apply all aspects of an individual's life and across all curricular areas.

## **Critical Thinking**

Critical thinking is the ability to access and analyze key information to develop solutions to complex problems that may have no clear answer. It incorporates reflective and visionary processes. Critical thinking utilizes abstractions and non-rules based strategies to guide decisions, behaviors and actions. Twenty-first century critical thinking reflects:

- thoughtful questioning that challenges assumptions, promotes higher order thinking, leads to new insights, and validates perceptions
- metacognition that supports reflective practice
- processes that analyze, select, use, and evaluate various approaches to develop solutions
- frame critical issues to develop innovative responses
- analysis and synthesis of multiple sources and points of information
- intentional use of disciplinary frameworks to analyze complex issues and information
- suspension of judgment while collecting evidence to make determinations

## **Complex Communication**

Complex communication is based on the successful sharing of information through multiple means, including visual, digital, verbal, and nonverbal interactions. The message is purposeful, clear and concise leading to an accurate exchange of information and ideas. Twenty-first century complex communication reflects:

- negotiation processes that generate mutually satisfactory solutions
- managing and resolving conflicts
- interacting effectively with people of different cultures
- selection and integration of various communication processes
- integration of appropriate forms of information communication technology
- understanding the interactions among modes of communication
- meaningful and engaging interactions
- focus, energy and passion around the key message
- navigation through nuances of effective communication

## **Creativity**

Creativity incorporates curiosity and innovation to generate new or original thoughts, interpretations, products, works, or techniques. Creativity is nurtured, advanced, and modeled through numerous approaches, including inquiry-based learning, abstract thinking, and student-focused learning. Twenty-first century creativity reflects:

- a disciplined process that includes skill, knowledge, imagination, inspiration and evaluation
- capturing or collecting new ideas for current or future use
- combination of seemingly unrelated ideas into something new
- respectful exchange of ideas
- engagement in formal and informal learning experiences
- divergent thinking
- entrepreneurial thinking that encourages unique thoughts and applications
- a comfort level with open-ended challenges that reflect multiple approaches and results
- reconfiguration of current thought within a new context
- pattern recognition across disciplines resulting in an innovative outcome

## **Collaboration**

Collaboration is working among and across personal and global networks to achieve common goals. It requires cultural competence and personal and civic responsibility in all environments. Collaboration also requires open and flexible approaches to leadership. Twenty-first century collaboration reflects:

- non-hierarchical leadership based on individual skill sets
- respect for a complex process that requires individuals to contribute and participate in meaningful interactions
- the belief that group synergy enhances productivity
- understanding and application of effective group processes to solve problems
- productive group interactions
- respectful disagreement

## **Flexibility and Adaptability**

Flexibility and adaptability include responding and adjusting to situational needs, and changing to meet the challenges of new roles, paradigms and environments. Flexibility and adaptability include the thoughtful balance between an individual's core beliefs and appropriate reaction to change. These dispositions are nurtured through life-long learning and continuous improvement. Twenty-first century flexibility and adaptability reflect:

- engagement in innovation and creativity
- intellectual agility
- embracing change
- expecting and accepting the emotions inherent in change while supporting those involved
- respect for unique qualities of others and self
- purposeful and thoughtful response to disruptions
- acknowledging and responding to dissonance in productive ways
- reflecting on positive and negative outcomes of risk-taking
- proactive and reactive approaches to change
- acknowledging ambiguity inherent in a changing environment

## **Productivity and Accountability**

Productivity is prioritizing, planning, and applying knowledge and skills to make decisions that create quality results in an ever-changing environment. Individuals and teams demonstrate initiative, self-direction, and personal responsibility to add value to the world around them. Individuals demonstrate accountability through efficient time management, appropriate resource allocation, personal integrity, and self-monitoring to meet the demands of productivity. Individuals and teams recognize the interconnectedness of their actions at all levels. Twenty-first century productivity and accountability reflect:

- ability to acquire new learning on one's own
- application of appropriate processes and tools to facilitate task completion
- self-sufficiency as required in a complex environment
- identification of available opportunities
- motivation and commitment to achieve
- assuming leadership roles
- building on prior learning and experience to apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts
- self-confidence and self-respect