



Implementing the Iowa Core

Iowa's statewide academic standards, the [Iowa Core](#), were adopted in 2008 to provide students, parents, and teachers with a clear understanding of what students in kindergarten through 12th grade should know and be able to do in five content areas: mathematics, science, literacy, social studies, and 21st century skills.

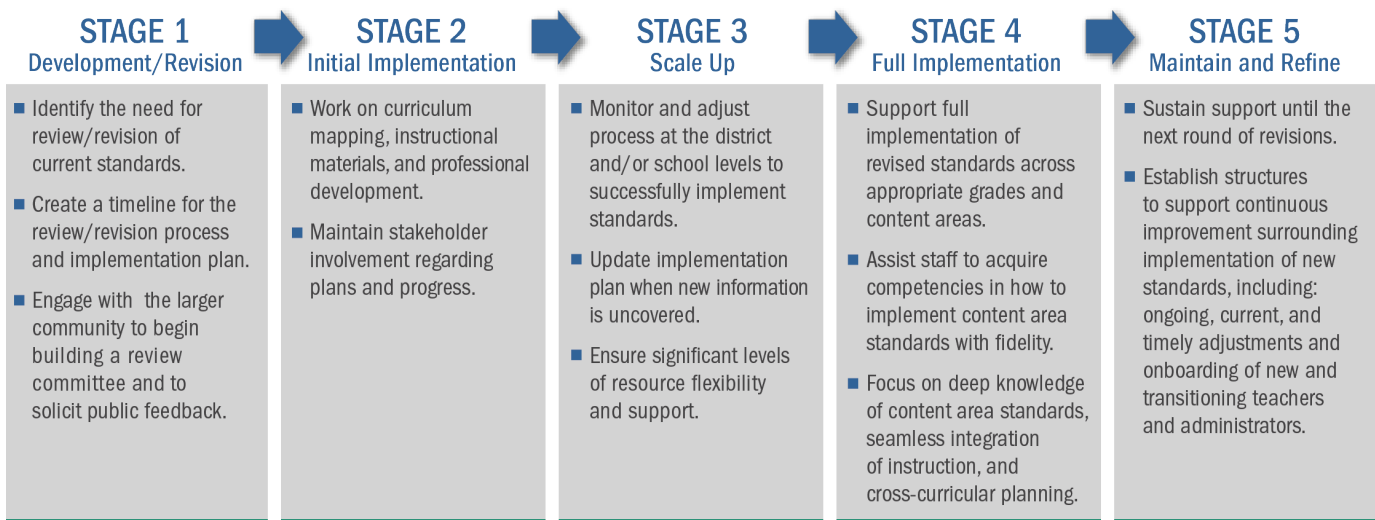
The Iowa Core defines a set of goals and expectations, explaining what students should learn; but it is not a curriculum, and it does not dictate how the content should be taught. It is up to all individual public and accredited nonpublic schools to implement the Core, and over the past few years, the [Iowa Department of Education](#) (IDE) revised and implemented the academic standards for the Hawkeye state. In 2012, IDE asked the [Midwest Comprehensive Center](#) (MWCC), funded by the U.S. Department of Education, to support the revision and implementation process.

Our Work

MWCC worked as a thought partner and technical assistance provider with IDE to support a standards revision process. For the first four years of this partnership, MWCC's technical assistance focused on helping IDE develop common language for standards implementation across the IDE Bureau of Standards and Curriculum and on assisting with strategies and processes to review and revise literacy and social studies standards.

MWCC's technical assistance to the Bureau took many forms, from monthly planning calls and cofacilitation of in-person meetings to sharing research. At the beginning of the partnership, MWCC provided training to the Bureau team to help build a common understanding of implementation science and its application to specific stages of standards implementation. After the training, MWCC staff supported the content areas' revision processes and standards implementation plans.

Standards Revision and Implementation Process



“Each content area is different, and all are in different places along the spectrum,” noted Beth Ratway, Senior Technical Assistance Consultant with MWCC. The [stages of implementation](#) include exploration, installation, initial implementation, scale-up, and full implementation. Starting with examining grade-level standards, the stages move from identifying benchmarks to disseminating information to monitoring progress of the standards rollout.

The state is moving forward with implementation of the Iowa Core, and a leadership team composed of principals, content area teachers, and higher education representatives has been assigned to each content area. The teams offer guidance and support for standards implementation and meet with MWCC as thought partners for planning and assistance and to identify resources from other states that can help support implementation of the standards.

Content Areas



Mathematics. In [mathematics](#), MWCC served as a thought partner on standards implementation. MWCC also supported the design and implementation of professional development aimed at improving teachers' mathematics instructional practice. Currently, the Center works with the Bureau's leadership team as a thought partner, sharing research and resources in a continuing effort to ensure full implementation of the mathematics standards by helping establish structures of support for timely adjustments and onboarding of new teachers and administrators.



Science. In the [science](#) content area, MWCC acted as a thought partner to support teachers with the implementation and to help develop tools and resources to advance the rollout of the [Next Generation Science Standards](#) (NGSS). The Center's efforts included assistance in creating a five-year implementation plan for the standards and outlining state, district, and individual practitioner roles in the process.



Literacy. In the [literacy](#) content area, MWCC provided guidance to IDE in creating a public feedback survey on the current standards and assisted with data analysis. Subsequently, final recommendations for changes to the literacy standards were made. While the standards are currently being implemented, the Center continues to serve as a thought partner in support of full standards implementation.



Social Studies. The Center worked with the Bureau's [social studies](#) leadership team to create a framework for revising the standards. The entire revision process was cofacilitated with IDE. The work included guiding the writing of the standards with a writing team and facilitating focus groups and town hall meetings for feedback on the draft standards. In addition, MWCC helped develop a survey to gather public feedback and then guided the revisions team in analyzing the data and revising the draft standards. Finally, the Center provided feedback on the implementation plan and continues as a thought partner to support initial implementation of the standards, including building stakeholder understanding and developing resources to assist implementation.



Fine Arts and Computer Science. In addition to its work on the five Iowa Core content areas, MWCC cofacilitated a public review of the state's draft fine arts standards and, in an effort that mirrored its support of the literacy and social studies content areas, trained internal staff on how to analyze the resulting data. The Center also collaborated with the Bureau's computer science team regarding the analysis of public data and revisions to the draft standards. This assistance demonstrates how MWCC built IDE's capacity to use similar processes for the revision and implementation of standards across multiple content areas.

The Results

Today, each of the Iowa Core content areas is at a different stage of development, and MWCC continues to support the Bureau's implementation initiative. The Center has received positive feedback from IDE on this highly collaborative effort, leading IDE to request additional MWCC assistance.

In the summer of 2017, MWCC held a second workshop for Bureau staff that focused on creating guidance for the field, such as outlining common language around the purpose of the standards and their implementation across content areas. Building from the workshop, the Bureau's various content area leadership teams are continuing to promote implementation of the standards using processes developed by MWCC to support Bureau staff. Additionally, the leadership teams are working to identify key indicators for each stage of implementation to inform the initiative going forward.

The Center's assistance relative to implementation of the Iowa Core has been instrumental in building IDE capacity in numerous ways. By leveraging MWCC's technical expertise, for example, IDE's Bureau of Standards and Curriculum developed a customized, state-specific standards implementation process and built a common language and practice for standards revision and rollout. In addition, educators and districts across Iowa receive effective support through the continued work of the leadership teams by having access to clear implementation plans shared by IDE and informed by support of MWCC.

Furthermore, the collaboration has produced two products that could be helpful to other educators implementing statewide academic standards:

- The [College & Career Readiness & Success Center](#) and MWCC developed a [Standards Review and Revisions Toolkit](#) based on their work with Iowa. The Toolkit is housed on [The Center on Standards & Assessment Implementation](#)'s website.
- IDE and MWCC are working to produce outlines of the implementation plans for each content area. Currently, plans for the [science](#) and [social studies](#) standards are available

“ Working with the Midwest Comprehensive Center on creating standards that promote college, career, and civic readiness for Iowa students has been invaluable. They [MWCC staff] are knowledgeable, professional, and brought a wealth of practical and research-based assistance to the process. ”

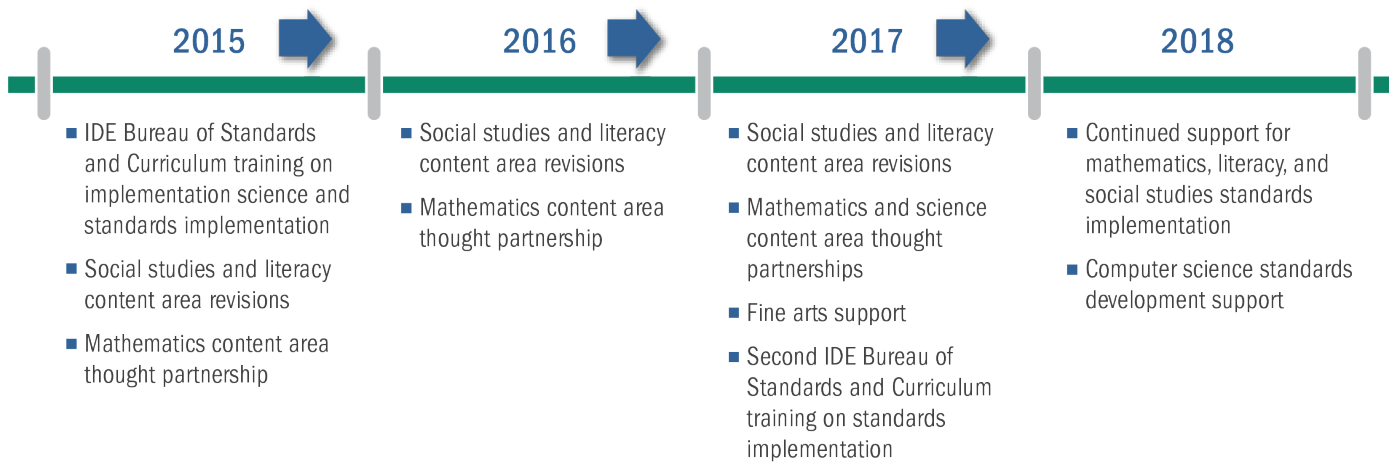
– Stefanie Rosenberg Wager, Social Studies Consultant, Iowa Department of Education

Next Steps

Since the Center started working on the Iowa Core implementation, the Bureau has made substantial progress using common language to develop implementation plans, but more is still to be accomplished. MWCC continues to support IDE's social studies standards implementation and to sustain thought partnerships with the literacy and mathematics leadership teams.

As for next steps, Ratway explained, "The Midwest Comprehensive Center will continue to support the Iowa Department of Education staff and their leadership teams as they work through the stages of standards implementation."

Timeline



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