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BRIEF



South Dakota's Content Standards Will Bolster Its Future Success

High standards and relevant assessments will help make young South Dakotans workforce-ready, military-eligible and crime-free

What happens in our classrooms today will determine South Dakota's future success. But some signs are troubling: Only 34 percent of South Dakota's 8th graders are proficient in math and 34 percent are proficient in reading.[1] Further, 16 percent of South Dakota high school students do not graduate within four years.[2] If our young people are not well-educated, they will not be ready for college or careers, including careers in the military. There is also a link between inadequate education and crime.[3]

South Dakota's Content Standards and aligned assessments can help ensure that students are receiving a high-quality education, so all students are prepared for success in postsecondary education, the civilian workforce, or the military, if they choose to serve.

> "South Dakota's content standards establish what children need to know at each grade level so that they are ready to achieve success in higher or vocational education, career, military service, or on any productive path that they choose in life."
>
> **Donald Goldhorn**
> Major General, U.S. Army (Retired)



South Dakota needs well-educated youth

By 2020, 65 percent of jobs in South Dakota will require some postsecondary education, yet only 60 percent of South Dakota's working age population currently has this level of education.[4] If this situation persists, our state could face a pressing skills gap in the years to come, with an insufficient number of qualified applicants to fill open jobs. The U.S. military faces a similar problem: Poor educational achievement is one of the biggest reasons why an estimated 73 percent of young South Dakotans are unable to join the military.[5] 16 percent of young South Dakotans do not graduate high school on time and even among those who graduate from high school, 17 percent of those seeking to enlist in the Army cannot join because of low scores on the military's entrance exam for math, literacy and problem solving.[6]

Inadequate education also has implications for crime and law enforcement: Key research shows that long-term changes in wages and employment opportunities among non-college educated men may explain as much as half of property and violent crime rates.[7] And there is no disputing that less educated individuals are more likely to be incarcerated: A national analysis showed that almost 7 in 10 inmates in state prisons failed to graduate from high school, compared to fewer than 3 in 10 of the general population.[8]

High education standards and relevant assessments will help South Dakota develop the well-prepared youth we need

South Dakota's Content Standards and aligned assessments can help ensure that students are receiving a high-quality education, so all students are prepared for success in postsecondary education, the civilian workforce, or the military, if they choose to serve.

The Content Standards establish the skills that children must achieve at each grade level, but they do not tell teachers how to teach, nor do they specify a curriculum; these important decisions remain under local control.[9] The Content Standards were developed by teachers, researchers and

In the second year of SBAC testing, scores increased, statewide, in both English language arts and math, in all but one grade level.



other experts, and adopted by the South Dakota State Board of Education in 2010. They are based on the Common Core State Standards, which were developed and led by the nation's governors and chief state school officers, and have been voluntarily adopted by 42 states.[10] The Content Standards are reviewed regularly for possible revision, and are currently under review.[11] The State Board of Education will vote on revised standards in Spring of 2018.[12]

To have an impact on student outcomes, there must also be accountability. Standards must be accompanied by assessments aligned to the standards, and a system for reporting results so everyone will know how students are really faring across schools, districts, and states and what approaches are delivering the best results. Recognizing this, South Dakota joined the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and started using the SBAC assessment in the 2014-2015 school year.[13]

Since the adoption of the Content Standards and the implementation of the SBAC assessment, there have been reports of student progress in South Dakota schools.[14] In the second year of SBAC testing, scores increased, statewide, in both English language arts and math, in all but one grade level.[15]

Conclusion

South Dakota's Content Standards, along with aligned assessments, are the clearest way to demonstrate our state's commitment to a world-class education and show measurable results.

We will be well-served by staying on this path to preparing the next generation of workforce-ready, military-eligible and crime-free South Dakotans to contribute to the future success of our state.

Endnotes

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7 See, for example:http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/003465302317331919

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11 South Dakota Department of Education (n. d.). Content Standards review. http://doe.sd.gov/contentstandards/review.aspx

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13 South Dakota Department of Education (n. d.). Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. http://doe.sd.gov/octe/SMARTERbalanced.aspx

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15 Raposa, M. (2016, June 20). S. D. students improve on math, reading tests. Argus Leader. http://www.argusleader.com/story/news/education/2016/06/20/sd-students-improve-math-reading-tests/86135890/

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