

Demystifying the Movement:

Answers to Common Myths about the Common Core State Standards



Claims about Federal Overreach

How are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) a state-led initiative when Washington, D.C.-based groups organized the movement and development of the standards?

- The Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governor's Association (NGA) are two entities that are comprised of elected or appointed officials in the states. They are representative of the electoral process of each state and each member is representative of their respective state's citizenry.
- The CCSSO is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization that provides a network for public officials to collaborate and communicate on education issues.
- The NGA is a bipartisan organization of the nation's governors that promotes state leadership, shares best practices and a collective voice on national policy. NGA meetings are filmed and posted online along with transcripts to ensure transparency from the organization.
- Because of the makeup of the memberships and focus on the organizations (public policy), it is natural for their headquarters to be based in our nation's capital. However, each member works from their respective home state and organization meetings are held annually in cities across the nation.

How are the CCSS state-led when the NGA received funding from outside groups and the federal government to develop and promote the standards?

- The NGA's education programs receive no funding from the federal government. Grants are awarded, as is typical with any organization like a school, for research and other programming. The NGA Center is a nonprofit and operates within the parameters of its status.

Why is the federal government pressuring states through grant money to adopt the CCSS curriculum and overseeing the development of aligned assessments?

- Some states chose to pursue federal funding that was tied to states who adopted the CCSS. However, no state was mandated to adopt the standards to receive the funding. Many states chose not to pursue the federal grant and others have chosen not to adopt the standards.
- It's also important to understand that the CCSS are NOT curriculum. Standards are simply a set of knowledge and skills that a student should master at each grade level. They reflect the "what" a student should know. Curriculum refers to "how" a student will be taught. The CCSS do not require that educators teach with specific materials or methods.
- The federal government does not have a hand in development of the aligned assessments pertaining to CCSS. There are two state consortia responsible for developing Common Core aligned assessments as well as some states that have developed their own assessment programs, such as Kentucky and New York.



Claims about Florida's Implementation

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute rated Florida's current math standards higher than the CCSS and current English standards slightly lower than the CCSS. Why is Florida adopting new standards if they are relatively the same as our current standards?

- State leaders and educators have maintained that the CCSS are the best standards for students. Different institutes and different think-tanks have their own opinions. The CCSS unquestionably require a deeper level of mastery and better prepare our students for college and careers.

Polk County, Florida, schools conducted iris scans on students without parental permission "as part of new Common Core standards." Why would standards require biometric measuring?

- This is absolutely not true. Polk County was piloting a new school bus safety program for students that involved eye scanning, which had nothing to do with the new standards. Permission slips were mistakenly not sent out. The Common Core standards are academic standards and require no use of biometric monitoring or monitoring of any kind. Standards focus on what knowledge and skills students should have at each grade level. For example, one of the third grade reading standards states, "Identify and know the meaning of the most common prefixes."

The federal government is also dictating that charter schools, private schools, and parochial schools adhere to the national Common Core curriculum.

- Florida charter schools are authorized by local school districts and held to the same standards as traditional public schools. Because of this, Florida charter schools will transition to the new academic standards. However, private and parochial schools are not held to the same standards and will continue to have maximum flexibility on how and what they teach their kids. Whether schools of choice have to conform to state accountability policies remains a state, not a federal decision.

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Claims about Quality of the Standards

Dr. James Milgram, a mathematician who served on the CCSS validation committee said students learning under the CCSS would be two years behind international peer by the time they reached eighth grade. How does that make the CCSS better for students?

- Dr. Milgram assisted with writing Florida's current Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. Comparisons show that the CCSS are actually much stronger than the NGSSS standards. Our current standards are vaguer than and not as rigorous as the CCSS.
- There were eight math experts on the Validation Committee, and six endorsed the standards. Dr. Milgram's assertion that the math standards set "low expectations" for students has been refuted by the conservative Fordham Institute study that found the Common Core standards are superior to the math standards in the majority of states across the nation. In total, there were more than 70 math experts on the development and feedback team for the math standards, and 25 of them came from some of the most respected universities in the country.
- Research by William Schmidt, a distinguished professor at Michigan State University, leading expert on international mathematics performance and previous director of the U.S. Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (U.S. TIMSS), found that no state's previous math standards were as close a match (a 90 percent consistency rate) to those of high performing countries as the Common Core. Not even Massachusetts, which is widely viewed as having the highest standards in the nation.

How can we claim that the standards are rigorous when Dr. Sandra Stotsky, a national standards expert, rates the high school standards at a seventh grade level?

- Dr. Stotsky served on the Massachusetts Board of Education, which was involved in the development of the in the Common Core State Standards. While some may disagree, many more experts from across higher education (including but not limited to Harvard, UC Berkley, University of Florida) local municipalities, state departments of education and local educators all developed and vetted the CCSS. They are more rigorous and more relevant to student learning than Florida's old academic standards.

Some CCSS architects define college readiness as being prepared for a non-selective community college. How do the standards compare to selective colleges and universities?

- College readiness is marked by a student's ability to be successful in first-year postsecondary courses without the need of remediation. Through research and input from several top universities (including Harvard), the CCSS reflect the levels of knowledge needed for success for any type of postsecondary institution.
- According to a 2011 ACT study, the three-quarters of students who do achieve a high school diploma are not ready for college coursework and often need remedial classes at both the university and community college levels.
- According to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, a global leader since their founding in 1943, the Common Core State Standards were developed to equip students who meet these standards to enroll in a two or four-year institution without needing remediation.

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Suggested readings include a sales talk for government health care (such as Obamacare) and global warming propaganda (including a push for Agenda 21). Some of the fiction suggested is worthless and even pornographic, presumably chosen to reflect contemporary life. Another suggested reading favorably describes Fidel Castro and his associates without any indication they are tyrants, Communists and mass murderers. Why do the standards require these materials?

- None of this is true. There is no mention of Obamacare, Fidel Castro, global warming, or Agenda 21 in the Common Core State Standards. The Common Core State Standards Initiative website does provide a list of example texts for teachers, but they are not required. None of the above topics are included in those materials. All curriculum and instructional practices are decided at the local level by teachers, administrators and school boards.
- Common Core State Standards simply require greater analysis, critical thinking and reading comprehension than most states expect of their students. In fact, the standards place a greater emphasis on the reading of more complex, original texts such as President Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" or Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail," creating a greater understanding of more rigorous material – exactly what is expected in accelerated high school courses, such as Advanced Placement courses, at the college level and in the workforce.

The readings assigned in the Common Core English standards are 50 percent informational texts, instead of great American and English literature and classics. Why are we teaching our children to read informational texts instead of literature?

- Common Core State Standards continue to provide a heavy focus – at least 50 percent – on the reading and comprehension of great American and English literature classics, such as *The Grapes of Wrath*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Pride and Prejudice*.
- Students will be required to read more informational texts, which means reading original works, but which texts are read is left up to the teacher.
- Examples of informational texts are: Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, President Ronald Reagan's "Address to Students at Moscow State University," and "The Declaration of Independence." Other examples of informational texts are maps, charts, graphs, and info-graphics.
- The increased focus on information and original texts is to prepare students for college and real world reading and writing requirements. For example, 80 percent of the reading and writing done in the workplace requires individuals to read material, analyze the material using critical thinking skills and articulately write or verbally respond to the material.



Claims about Data Mining

Common Core means government agencies will gather and store all sorts of private information on every schoolchild into a longitudinal database from birth through all levels of schooling, plus giving government the right to share and exchange this nosy information with other government and private agencies, thus negating the federal law that now prohibits that. This type of surveillance and control of individuals is the mark of a totalitarian government. How can we allow this to happen?

- The federal government does not have access to the student-level information housed in state data systems. Common Core is not a mechanism for federal data collection, nor does state implementation of Common Core and its related assessments require any data collection beyond the aggregate data authorized by No Child Left Behind.
- Florida's transition to the Common Core State Standards and aligned assessments will not change the type of student information the Florida Department of Education collects. The student information collected when a student is assessed will be the same as is currently collected and used. This information includes the students' name, birth date, gender, race/ethnicity, and grade level.
- The FDOE does not collect or maintain information on students' religion, political party affiliation, biometric information, etc. that some have listed as possible areas of concern. The FDOE does not plan to collect this information as it is irrelevant to students' education.
- As part of broader education reform efforts, states have already adopted data systems that allow educators and parents to measure the progress of student achievement and growth from year to year. This is not a result of Common Core standards, but rather a more than decade long bipartisan effort to ensure students are learning a year's worth of knowledge in a year's time and that the taxpayers are seeing a return on their enormous investment in education.

What student data information is collected by the Florida Department of Education and who can access that information?

- The FDOE collects individual staff and student information for K-12 public education through a series of surveys scheduled during the fiscal year. The data includes race, ethnicity, date of birth, language, country of birth and all information is securely stored with limited access granted only to those who assist schools and districts with data processing.
- All information FDOE reports to the federal government or the public is aggregated to ensure the privacy of individual students. Florida does not report individual student record information to the federal government, and the federal government indicates it has no plans to require student level reporting of information in the future.