

Common Core Myths and Facts

Myths about Content and Quality: General

<p>Myth:</p> <p>Common standards will bring states' standards down to the lowest common denominator.</p>	<p>Fact:</p> <p>At the outset of developing the standards, there was an explicit agreement that no state would lower its standards. College and career ready standards are needed because even in high performing states – students are graduating and passing all the required tests and still require remediation in their postsecondary work. The standards are designed to build upon the most advanced current thinking about preparing all students for success in college and their careers. They were informed by the best in the country, the highest international standards, and evidence and expertise about educational outcomes.</p>
<p>Myth:</p> <p>The standards are not internationally benchmarked.</p>	<p>Fact:</p> <p>International benchmarking played a significant role in both the English-Language Arts (ELA) and Math standards. In fact, the college and career ready standards include an appendix listing the evidence that was consulted in drafting the standards and the international data referenced in the benchmarking process.</p>
<p>Myth:</p> <p>The standards only include skills and do not address the importance of content knowledge.</p>	<p>Fact:</p> <p>The standards recognize that both content and skills are important. In ELA, the standards require certain critical content for all students, including: classic myths and stories from around the world, America's founding documents, foundational American literature, and Shakespeare. Appropriately, the remaining crucial decisions about what content should be taught are left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.</p> <p>In Mathematics, the standards lay a solid foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, and decimals. Taken together, these elements support a student's ability to learn and apply more demanding math concepts and procedures. The middle school and high school standards call on students to practice applying mathematical ways of thinking to real world issues and challenges; they prepare students to think and reason mathematically.</p> <p>In addition, the standards set a rigorous definition of college and career readiness, not by piling topic upon topic, but by demanding that students develop a depth of understanding and ability to apply mathematics to novel situations, as college students and employees regularly do.</p>

Myths about Content and Quality: Mathematics

<p>Myth:</p> <p>The standards do not prepare or require students to learn Algebra in the 8th grade, as many states' current standards do.</p>	<p>Fact:</p> <p>The standards do accommodate and prepare students for Algebra 1 in 8th grade, by including the prerequisites for this course in grades K-7. Students who master the K-7 material will be able to take Algebra 1 in 8th grade. At the same time, grade 8 standards are also included; these include rigorous algebra and will transition students effectively into a full Algebra 1 course. The overarching aim of the standards in mathematics for grades K through 7 is to prepare students to succeed in algebra in grade 8.</p>
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Myths about Content and Quality: Mathematics (cont.)

Myth:

Key math topics are missing or appear in the wrong grade.

Fact:

The mathematical progressions presented in the standards are coherent and based on evidence.

Part of the problem with having 50 different sets of state standards is that today, different states cover different topics at different grade levels. Coming to consensus guarantees that from the viewpoint of any given state, topics will move up or down in the grade level sequence. This is unavoidable. What is important to keep in mind is that the progression in the standards is mathematically coherent and leads to college and career readiness at an internationally competitive level.

In fact, the use of learning progressions in order to outline goals for curriculum and instruction is a practice commonly used in many countries that perform well on international assessments of academic achievement.

Myths about Content and Quality: English Language Arts Literacy

Myth:

The standards suggest teaching “Grapes of Wrath” to second graders.

Fact:

The ELA standards suggest “Grapes of Wrath” as a text that would be appropriate for 9th or 10th grade readers. Evidence shows that the complexity of texts students are reading today does not match what is demanded in college and the workplace, creating a gap between what high school students can do and what they need to be able to do. The Common Core State Standards create a staircase of increasing text complexity, so that students are expected to both develop their skills and apply them to more and more complex texts.

Myth:

The standards are just vague descriptions of skills; they don’t include a reading list or any other similar reference to content.

Fact:

The standards do include sample texts that demonstrate the level of text complexity appropriate for the grade level and compatible with the learning demands set out in the standards. The exemplars of high quality texts at each grade level provide a rich set of possibilities and have been very well received. This provides teachers with the flexibility to make their own decisions about what texts to use – while providing an excellent reference point when selecting their texts. The standards have the potential to provide teachers with far more manageable curriculum goals.

Myth:

English teachers will be asked to teach science and social studies reading materials.

Fact:

With common ELA standards, English teachers will still teach their students literature as well as literary non fiction. However, because college and career readiness overwhelmingly focuses on complex texts outside of literature, these standards also ensure students are being prepared to read, write, and research across the curriculum, including in history and science. These goals can be achieved by ensuring that teachers in other disciplines are focusing on reading and writing to build knowledge within their subject areas.

Myths about Content and Quality: English Language Arts Literacy (cont.)

Myth:

The standards don't have enough emphasis on fiction/literature.

Fact:

The standards require certain critical content for all students, including: classic myths and stories from around the world, America's founding documents, foundational American literature, and Shakespeare. Appropriately, the remaining crucial decisions about what content should be taught are left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Myths about Process

Myth:

No teachers were involved in writing the standards.

Fact:

The common core state standards drafting process relied on teachers and standards experts from across the country. In addition, there were many state experts that came together to create a thoughtful and transparent process of standard setting. The initiative has provided educators, parents, and a wide range of stakeholders and experts the opportunity to provide input.

Myth:

The standards are not research or evidence based.

Fact:

The standards have made careful use of a large and growing body of evidence. The evidence base includes scholarly research; surveys on what skills are required of students entering college and workforce training programs; assessment data identifying college and career ready performance; and comparisons to standards from high performing states and nations.

In ELA, the standards build on the firm foundation of the NAEP frameworks in Reading and Writing, which draw on extensive scholarly research and evidence. For Mathematics, the standards draw on conclusions from TIMSS and other studies of high performing countries that the traditional U.S. mathematics curriculum must become substantially more coherent and focused in order to improve student achievement, addressing the problem of a curriculum that is "a mile wide and an inch deep."

Myths about Implementation

Myth:

The standards tell teachers what to teach.

Fact:

The best understanding of what works in the classroom comes from the teachers who are in them. That's why these standards will establish what students need to learn, but they will not dictate how teachers should teach. Instead, schools and teachers will decide how best to help students reach the standards. They actually give teachers more flexibility and a common, general focus that allows teachers to exercise professional judgment in planning instruction.

Myths about Implementation (cont.)

<p>Myth:</p> <p>The Standards will be implemented through No Child Left Behind (NCLB) - signifying that the federal government will be leading them.</p>	<p>Fact:</p> <p>Common Core State Standards is a voluntary, state led effort that is not part of NCLB. States began the work to create clear, consistent college and career ready standards before their emphasis in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act or release of the U.S. Department of Education’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act Blueprint. Standards are being driven by the needs of the states, not the federal government.</p>
<p>Myth:</p> <p>These standards amount to a national curriculum for our schools.</p>	<p>Fact:</p> <p>The standards are not a curriculum. They are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents and others will decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms. They standards are not mandatory for states, and they were not developed through a top-down approach.</p>
<p>Myth:</p> <p>The federal government will take over ownership of Common Core State Standards.</p>	<p>Fact:</p> <p>The federal government will not govern Common Core State Standards. This initiative was and will remain a state-led effort. States controlled the development of the standards and retain the decision making related to whether to adopt the standards and how to implement them.</p>
<p>Myth:</p> <p>The Standards will lead to a national test.</p>	<p>Fact:</p> <p>The adoption and implementation of the standards is in the hands of the states. The assessments tied to the standards are also in the hands of the states.</p> <p>Although the U.S. Department of Education has funded state consortia for standards assessment systems, Smarter Balanced and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career, the power to develop and use any specific assessment remains in the hands of member states.</p>

Sources:

Common Core Standards Initiative: www.corestandards.org

NEA Policy Brief, “Common Core State Standards: A Tool for Improving Education.” http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/PB30_CommonCoreStandards10.pdf

NEA Background, “Common Core State Standards for College and Career Readiness.”