

Common Core Facts and Myths

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Fact and Myths About Content and Quality

Myth: Adopting common standards will bring all states' standards down to the lowest common denominator, which means states with high standards, such as Massachusetts, will be taking a step backwards if they adopt the Standards.

Fact: The Standards are designed to build upon the most advanced current thinking about preparing all students for success in college and their careers. This will result in moving even the best state standards to the next level. In fact, since this work began, there has been an explicit agreement that no state would lower its standards. The Standards were informed by the best in the country, the highest international standards, and evidence and expertise about educational outcomes. We need college and career ready standards because even in high-performing states – students are graduating and passing all the required tests and still require remediation in their postsecondary work.

Myth: The Standards are not internationally benchmarked.

Fact: International benchmarking played a significant role in both sets of 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 consulted in the benchmarking process is included in this appendix. More evidence from international sources will be presented together with the final draft.

Myth: The Standards only include skills and do not address the importance of content knowledge.

Fact: The Standards recognize that both content and skills are important.

In English-language arts, 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.

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. The Standards set a rigorous definition of college and career readiness, not by piling topic upon topic, but by

Facts and Myths About Process

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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 the most thoughtful and transparent process of standard setting. This was only made possible by many states working together.

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 English language arts, the Standards build on the firm foundation of the NAEP frameworks in Reading and Writing, which draw on extensive scholarly research and evidence.

In Mathematics, the Standards draw on conclusions from TIMSS and other studies of high-performing countries that the traditional US 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."

Facts and 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.

Myth: The Standards will be implemented through No Child Left Behind (NCLB) - signifying that the federal government will be leading them.

Fact: The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort that is not part of No Child Left Behind and adoption of the Standards is in no way mandatory. States began the work to create clear, consistent standards before the Recovery Act or the Elementary and Secondary Education Act blueprint was released because this work is

being driven by the needs of the states, not the federal government.

The NGA Center and CCSSO are offering support by developing a State Policymaker Guide to Implementation, facilitating opportunities for collaboration among organizations working on implementation, planning the future governance structure of the standards, and convening the publishing community to ensure that high quality materials aligned with the standards are created.

Myth: These Standards amount to a national curriculum for our schools.

Fact: 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.

Myth: The federal government will take over ownership of the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

Fact: The federal government will not govern the Common Core State Standards Initiative. The Initiative was and will remain a state-led effort. NGA and CCSSO are committed to developing a long-term governance structure with leadership from governors, chief state school officers, and other state policymakers.

Facts and Myths About Content and Quality: Math

Myth: The Standards do not prepare or require students to learn Algebra in the 8th grade, as many states' current standards do.

Fact: The Standards do accommodate and prepare students for Algebra I 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 I 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 I course.

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

Fact: The mathematical progressions presented in the common core 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 Common Core State Standards is mathematically coherent and leads to college and career readiness at an internationally competitive level.

Facts and Myths About Content and Quality: English Language Arts

Myth: The standards suggest teaching *Grapes of Wrath* to 2nd 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 common Core reflects the knowledge and skills most valued by employers, higher education, and the business community.”

The Changes in Math and English Language Arts

The CCSS ask teachers and students to dig deeper into the core skills and concepts at each grade level, focusing on the most important topics that student need to know. Teachers will have more time to cover subjects in greater detail and more students master critical skills and develop a deeper understanding of key concepts.

In ELA, students will read more

complex nonfiction and fiction texts. They will learn to create written arguments using evidence from multiple texts and to gather evidence to defend their opinions. In middle and high school, students will apply their literacy skills to mathematics, science, social studies, and technical subjects—learning to read and write well in all subjects.

In mathematics, students will develop

a foundation of mathematical skills and learning from Kindergarten through 12th grade, giving them the building blocks to understand why and how math works in the real-world. Students will still memorize math facts, but they will also be asked to show their understanding by explaining how they solved the problems.

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

Fact: With the Common Core 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 also focusing on reading and writing to build knowledge within their subject areas.

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.

Next Generation Science Standards

Coming to Washington in 2018

Why the Next Generation Science Standards?

It has been 15 years since science standards were revised. Since that time, many advances have occurred in the fields of science and science education, as well as in the innovation-driven economy.

The U.S. has a leaky K–12 STEM talent pipeline, with too few students entering STEM majors and careers at every level—from those with relevant postsecondary certificates to PhD's. We need new science standards that stimulate and build interest in STEM.

We can't successfully prepare students for college, careers and citizenship unless we set the right expectations and goals. While standards alone are no silver bullet, they do provide the necessary foundation for local decisions around curriculum, assessments, and instruction.

Implementing improved K–12 science standards will better prepare high school graduates for the rigors of college and careers. In turn, employers will be able to hire workers with strong science-based skills—including specific content areas but also skills such as critical thinking and inquiry-based problem solving.

What are the Next Generation Science Standards?

The Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) will create K–12 science standards through a collaborative state-led process.

The NGSS will be arranged in a coherent manner across grades and provide all students access to a challenging science education, and be based on the Framework for K–12 Science Education, developed by the National Research Council, the staffing arm of the National Academy of Sciences.

Every NGSS standard has three prongs: content, scientific and engineering practices and cross-cutting concepts. The integration of rigorous content and application reflects how science is practiced in the real world.

How are the NGSS Developed?

The NGSS are being developed in a two-step process in partnership with the National Research Council (NRC), the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and Achieve.

The first step was the development of the Framework for K–12 Science Education by the National Academies of Science that identified the broad ideas and practices in natural sciences and engineering that all students should be familiar with by the time they graduate from high school.

The second step is the development of standards based on the Framework, which will engage science educators and experts from around the country who will serve as writers and will produce drafts of the standards. Achieve is managing this process on behalf of the lead states.

Twenty-six states are lead state partners in the NGSS development effort.

There will be two open comment periods where feedback on the draft standards will be open for public comment. The first will occur late spring 2012 and the second will be in the fall of 2012.

The NGSS are expected to be completed by early 2013. It will then be up to state to determine whether and when to consider adopting the NGSS as their states' science standards.

States working together to develop and implement NGSS standards makes good common sense—it offers opportunities for states to share best practices, leverage economies of scale in the education marketplace, and will ensure all students—in any state and any district that adopts them—gain the knowledge and skills they need for success in college and careers.

The Urgency for Next Generation Science Standards:

In 2007, a Carnegie Corporation of New York/Institute for Advanced Study commission of researchers and public and private leaders concluded that "the nation's capacity to innovate for economic growth and the ability of American workers to thrive in the modern workforce depend on a broad foundation of math and science learning, as do our hopes for preserving a vibrant democracy and the promise of social mobility that lie at the heart of the American dream."

Unfortunately, science and mathematics achievement continues to lag compared to our international competitors, and this lag has already begun to impact the competitiveness of young Americans as well as the competitiveness of the U.S. in the global economy.

For example:

The U.S. ranked 17th in science and 25th in mathematics on the 2009 PISA assessment. Less than 10 percent of U.S. students scored at one of the top two of six performance levels.

More than a third of eighth-graders scored below basic on the 2009 NAEP Science assessment.

U.S. high-tech manufacturing industries continue to have a larger share of global output than any other economy, but the U.S. global share fell from 34% in 1998 to 28% in 2010.

The U.S. share of global high tech exports dropped from 19% to 15% in 2010; at the same time China's share of global high tech goods exports more than tripled, from 6% in 1995 to 22% in 2010, making it the single largest exporting country for high tech