

# Myths About Common Core Standards

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## How To Separate The Fact From The Fiction

It's a national crisis: students graduating from high school unprepared to either succeed in college or in successfully landing a job. Currently, every state has their own quality standards for achievement, resulting in large variations in proficiency.

The Common Core State Standards are a new set of rigorous academic standards developed by participating state educators for greater student growth and success. Grounded in research and evidence, they specify K–12 expectations for college and career readiness to assure all high school graduates are ready to succeed in their careers and lives. Educators in every participating state have agreed to adopt common guidelines. With no mandated curriculum, it's up to individual states, districts, schools, and teachers to develop the curricula necessary to elevate student knowledge. This provides a great degree of freedom to teach in ways that meet the needs of students. Existing curricula will need to be replaced with new plans, aligned to the new standards. All standard tests will need to be replaced, as well.

With such sweeping change can come sweeping confusion. The following will help to dispel the many myths associated with the Common Core State Standards and give you just what you need: the facts.

### **MYTH #1: Adopting common standards will bring all states' standards down to the lowest common denominator.**

**Fact:** The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are designed to prepare 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 CCSS were informed by the best in the country, the highest international standards, and evidence and expertise about educational outcomes.

### **MYTH #2: The CCSS 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 used in drafting the standards, including the international data consulted in the benchmarking process.

### **MYTH #3: The CCSS only include skills and do not address the importance of content knowledge.**

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

In English-language arts, the CCSS require certain critical content for all students. Appropriately, the remaining crucial decisions about what content should be taught are left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the CCSS require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In Mathematics, the CCSS lay a solid foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, and decimals. The CCSS 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.

### **MYTH #4: The CCSS are just vague descriptions of skills; they don't include a reading list or any other similar reference to content.**

**Fact:** The CCSS do include sample texts that demonstrate the level of text complexity appropriate for the grade level and compatible with learning demands. 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.

### **MYTH #5: 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 overwhelming 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 #6: The CCSS don't have enough emphasis on fiction/literature.**

**Fact:** The CCSS 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.

### **MYTH #7: 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 issue 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. 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.

## MYTH #8: No teachers were involved in writing the CCSS.

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.

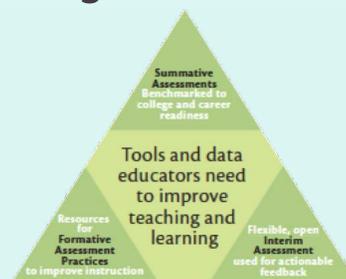
## MYTH #9: The Standards are not research or evidence based.

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.

## MYTH #10: These CCSS amount to a national curriculum for our schools, telling teachers what to teach.

**Fact:** The CCSS 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. 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.

## Teaching To the Test Will Be a Thing of the Past



As states, districts, and schools begin to implement the common core standards, other issues need consideration. This ongoing implementation process provides school leaders with various opportunities to help further shape the standards, and the policies and resources that support them at both the state and local levels.

The newer, higher standards will require schools and communities to better and more comprehensively support student learning if students are to meet these enhanced expectations. Equally critical to the success of the common core, classroom teachers must be fully equipped to elevate the standards from mere words to tangible improvements in learning. Indeed, the new standards are more advanced and require students to learn more specific content knowledge as well as demonstrate a deeper applied understanding of their learning. As such, prospective and veteran teachers will have to reconsider how best to teach students the standards and determine their comprehension. Educators will need targeted professional development to help them understand the standards, develop new lesson plans, deliver effective instruction, and utilize assessments that are aligned with them.

The Common Core State Standards require higher levels of rigor in ELA and math learning than ever before. States, districts, and schools who do not start early to develop new core-aligned curricula, provide teacher instruction, pre-test students, and take advantage of the rich resources available to them, will likely be in for an unpleasant surprise when end-of-year testing rolls around.