

**Introduction to the Common Core State Standards**  
**from**  
**The Council of Chief State School Officers**  
**The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices**

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) are pleased to announce the final Kindergarten-12 Common Core State Standards documents that our organizations have produced on behalf of 48 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia. These English language arts and mathematics standards represent a set of expectations for student knowledge and skills that high school graduates need to master to succeed in college and careers. To develop these standards, CCSSO and the NGA Center worked with representatives from participating states, a wide range of educators, content experts, researchers, national organizations, and community groups. These final standards reflect the invaluable feedback from the general public, teachers, parents, business leaders, states, and content area experts and are informed by the standards of other high performing nations.

College- and career-readiness standards have been incorporated into the K-12 standards, as was promised in the March 10, 2010 draft. The criteria that we used to develop the college- and career-readiness standards, as well as these K-12 standards are:

- **Aligned with college and work expectations;**
- **Include rigorous content *and* application of knowledge through high-order skills;**
- **Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;**
- **Informed by top-performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and,**
- **Evidence and/or research-based.**

The standards development process has incorporated the best practices and research from across the nation and the world. While we have used all available research to shape these documents, we recognize that there is more to be learned about the most essential knowledge for student success. As new research is conducted and we evaluate the implementation of the common core standards, we plan to revise the standards on a set review cycle.

Our organizations would like to thank our advisory group, which provides advice and guidance on this initiative. Additional thanks are also given to the writers of the standards, who devoted countless weekends and late nights to ensuring that the standards meet the high expectations for rigor and clarity.

***In the spring of 2010, the International Center for Leadership in Education examined the Archdiocesan curriculum areas of English/Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies. At that time, the Archdiocesan Curriculum Committees were given recommendations and directives as to the redundant areas found within each of these content areas. From this feedback, the committees began working on reducing the standards and guidelines in preparation for the adoption of the Common Core Standards as they are completed by the CCSSO & NGA Center.***

## Why is this important?

- Currently, every state has its own set of academic standards, meaning public education students in each state are learning to different levels
- All students must be prepared to compete with not only their American peers in the next state, but with students from around the world



## Conclusion

### The promise of standards

These Standards are not intended to be new names for old ways of doing business. They are a call to take the next step. It is time for states to work together to build on lessons learned from two decades of standards based reforms. It is time to recognize that standards are not just promises to our children, but promises we intend to keep.

## Myths v. Facts About the Common Core Standards

### Myths About Content and Quality: General

**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 demanding that students develop a depth of understanding and ability to apply mathematics to novel situations, as college students and employees regularly do.

### **Myths About Content and Quality: English-language arts**

**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 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> 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.

**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 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:** 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 Content and Quality: Math**

**Myth:** The *Standards* do not prepare or require students to learn Algebra in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, as many states’ current standards do.

**Fact:** The *Standards* do accommodate and prepare students for Algebra 1 in 8<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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.

**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.

### **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 the most thoughtful and transparent process of standard setting. This was only made possible by many states working together. For more information, please visit: [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)

**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.”

### **Myths About Implementation**

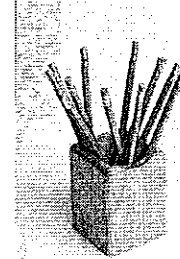
**Myth:** The *Standards* tell teachers what to teach.

**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/Fact**

## What are the Common Core State Standards?

- Aligned with college and work expectations
- Focused and coherent
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards
- Internationally benchmarked so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society
- Based on evidence and research



## Intentional Design Limitations

### What the Standards do NOT define:

- How teachers should teach
- All that can or should be taught
- The nature of advanced work beyond the core
- The interventions needed for students well below grade level
- The full range of support for English language learners and students with special needs
- Everything needed to be college and career ready

## Conclusion

### Standards: Important but insufficient

- To be effective in improving education and getting all students ready for college, workforce training, and life, the Standards must be partnered with a content-rich curriculum and robust assessments, both aligned to the Standards.

