



## Top Common Core Myths and Facts

The Common Core State Standards establish a consistent understanding of what children need to know and be able to do in English Language Arts and Mathematics in each grade, K-12 to be ready for the challenges ahead. The standards are the result of a state-led initiative to provide students with robust, relevant, real-world learning experiences that are the foundation for success in college and careers.

Since the creation of these standards, there has been miscommunication and confusion over what the Common Core Standards do and how they are being implemented in districts and schools.

We have prepared a list of the 8 common myths surrounding the Common Core Standards and facts to dispel those myths.

### Myth #1: The Common Core is a federal takeover of education.

**Fact:** The Common Core State Standards were developed collaboratively by teachers, administrators, and elected officials from across the United States through a transparent, publicly inclusive process that was originated, not by the federal government, but by a bipartisan group of governors<sup>1</sup> (the National Governors Association) and state school officers<sup>2</sup> (the Council of Chief State School Officers). Forty-five states independently and voluntarily chose to adopt Common Core. Connecticut's State Board of Education voted to adopt the Common Core State Standards in 2010.<sup>3</sup> Connecticut chose to include the adoption of the Common Core in its request for a waiver from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Without this waiver, many more schools in Connecticut would be considered underperforming, putting additional stress on our public education system.<sup>4</sup>

The standards have not been federally imposed on the states. In fact, Texas, Virginia, Alaska, and Nebraska chose to set their own standards, and Minnesota chose to adopt only the Common Core reading standards. These states will still receive the same amount of federal aid<sup>5</sup> that they would have received had they adopted Common Core. Any state that opts out of Common Core today or in the future will not lose any future federal education funding. Furthermore, 90% of education funding<sup>6</sup> comes from state and local sources.

## **Myth #2: The Common Core is unconstitutional.**

**Fact:** The Common Core State Standards are not unconstitutional. As the name suggests, the Common Core State Standards are first and foremost *state* standards. Each state voluntarily adopted the standards and has the freedom to edit and modify the standards to meet the particular needs and outcomes of their individual state. In Connecticut each school district is required to adopt its own curriculum that is aligned with the standards. This means that local districts, not state or federal officials, make decisions about what content is taught and how it's taught.

## **Myth #3: Teachers do not support the Common Core.**

**Fact:** Across the country and here in Connecticut, the majority of teachers support the Common Core State Standards. A recent Harrison Group survey<sup>7</sup> of 279 Connecticut teachers found that “nearly three in four (73 percent) English language arts, science, and/or social studies teachers in Connecticut are enthusiastic about the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in their classroom.” These results are consistent with national findings that—although they anticipate that Common Core implementation will be difficult—teachers generally agree that it will make a positive difference for most students.<sup>8</sup>

## **Myth #4: The Common Core State Standards are too hard for our students.**

**Fact:** Today, standardized tests across the country are holding students to different and inconsistent standards. Our kids need greater consistency of expectations if they are going to be ready to compete in our increasingly mobile and global society. The Common Core State Standards raise expectations for all students to the same high level, and studies<sup>9</sup> have shown students will achieve at higher levels when higher expectations are set for them.<sup>10</sup> The reality is that the lower education standards we had set for our students prior to Common Core have not prepared them for college or careers. Today, 1 in 5 freshmen<sup>11</sup> need to take remediation courses before being allowed to enroll in regular college courses. The Common Core standards are internationally benchmarked and will enable U.S. students to better compete in the global marketplace.<sup>12</sup>

## **Myth #5: Standardized testing is bad for students and bad for the education system.**

**Fact:** Standardized tests certainly are not the only way that students learning should be measured. However, standardized tests are one important method by which school systems can determine the extent to which children know and are able to do what is expected of them. The

Common Core standards, and the tests aligned with those standards, emphasize critical thinking and analytical skills, as opposed to rote learning. They allow students and teachers to dive deeply into content and are designed to avoid low-level instruction and test-based learning. The new tests provide an important, independent, objective measure that tells us how each of our kids are doing, every year. If a child falls behind, assessments can provide information that teachers and principals can use to make adjustments in instruction and curriculum in order to better meet students' learning needs.

Standardized test results help drive improvements to our education system at large. Assessment information helps focus and drive critical conversations<sup>13</sup> about the effectiveness of curriculum, pedagogy, and state and district policies. We need to constantly evaluate our system of education so that we can keep all kids on the path to success.

### **Myth #6: Common Core leads to over-testing of our children.**

**Fact:** The standardized tests that are aligned to the Common Core are not additional testing of students, but rather will replace the current state standardized test. Studies have shown that very little instructional time is spent on preparing and taking tests, approximately 1.3 –1.7%<sup>14</sup>.

### **Myth #7: Common Core is the brainchild of corporations in order to privatize education.**

**Fact:** The Common Core State Standards were developed by state governors and education chiefs, and were written by educators and education experts. They are supported by the business community<sup>15</sup> because business leaders understand the value of having children learn the critical skills they need for 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs. Common Core standards emphasize analytical thinking, enabling students to be more competitive in the international workforce.

### **Myth #8: Common Core State Standards dictate what texts teachers will use for instructions.**

**Fact:** The Common Core State Standards define what students in each grade need to know and be able to do; they do not define what teachers should teach or how students should learn. In other words, although the standards do establish expectations of content mastery and skills, they do not tell teachers that they must teach them in a specific way. The standards preserve what the American Federation of Teachers calls the “freedom for curriculum choice,”<sup>16</sup> as local teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards continue to make decisions about curriculum and how their school systems operate.

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- <sup>3</sup> CT State Board of Education. (2010). February Meeting Minutes. Retrieved on March 10, 2014 from [http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/board/minutes2010/Minutes\\_SBE\\_020310.PDF](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/board/minutes2010/Minutes_SBE_020310.PDF)
- <sup>4</sup> CT Department of Education. (2012). Connecticut ESEA Flexibility Request. Retrieved on March 10, 2014 from [http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/nclb/waiver/esea\\_flexibility\\_request\\_052412.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/nclb/waiver/esea_flexibility_request_052412.pdf)
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- <sup>7</sup> Scholastic (2014). Common Core State Standards Preview: Connecticut. Retrieved on Feb. 19, 2014 from <http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources/2013preview/state-connecticut.htm>
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