

10 Myths about the Common Core State Standards

1. “The standards tell us what to teach.”

FACT: The Common Core State Standards define what students need to know. How to achieve that is up to teachers, principals, school districts, and states. Teachers will have as much control over how they teach as they ever have.

2. “They amount to a national curriculum.”

FACT: The standards are shared goals, voluntarily adopted. They outline what knowledge and skills will help students succeed. Curricula vary from state to state and district to district.

3. “The standards intrude on student privacy.”

FACT: Long before the Common Core, some states already had data systems allowing educators and parents to measure student achievement and growth; those states remain responsible for students’ private information, whether or not they’ve adopted the Common Core.

4. “The English standards emphasize nonfiction and informational text so much that students will be reading how-to manuals instead of great literature.”

FACT: The standards require students to analyze literature *and* informational texts, with the goal of preparing them for college and work.

5. “Key math concepts are missing or appear in the wrong grade.”

FACT: Moving from 50 state standards to one means some states will be shifting what students learn when. Educators and experts alike have verified that the Common Core progression is mathematically coherent and internationally benchmarked. And now, students who move across state lines can pick up where they left off.

6. “Common Core is a federal takeover.”

FACT: The federal government had no role in developing the standards. They were created by state education chiefs and governors, and voluntarily adopted by states. States, not the federal government, are implementing them.

7. “Teachers weren’t included.”

FACT: Lots of teachers were involved in developing the standards over several years, including hundreds of teachers nationwide who served on state review teams. Many teachers are pleased to report seeing their feedback added verbatim to the final standards.

8. “The standards make inappropriate demands of preschoolers.”

FACT: They were written for grades K–12. Several states added their own guidance for preschool.



ILLUSTRATION BY JAMIES YANG

9. “Common Core accelerates overtesting.”

FACT: The standards say nothing about testing. Some states are falling into the trap of too much assessment—by testing before implementing or rushing to impose high stakes. Others, however, are taking a more sensible approach. Before administering new tests, states must get implementation right.

10. “Rank-and-file teachers don’t support it—and their unions sold them out.”

FACT: At least four national polls, conducted by the AFT, the NEA, *Education Week*, and Scholastic, show that teachers overwhelmingly support the standards, though some haven’t had the time or tools to implement them correctly. Unions support the Common Core because their members do.

—FROM THE AFT’S EDUCATIONAL ISSUES DEPARTMENT

RESOURCES

EXTRA! EXTRA!

With the Common Core State Standards’ emphasis on informational texts, teachers wanting to supplement their lessons with primary sources that will both fascinate and educate students should look to historic newspapers. *Chronicling America*, a free, searchable database of millions of newspaper pages from 1836 to 1922, is available at <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>. Jointly sponsored by the Library of Congress and the National Endowment for the Humanities, the site enables visitors to search the vast archive by subject, by alphabetical order, or by date.

For instance, the “Topics by Subject” page, which is available at www.loc.gov/rr/news/topics/topicsSubject.html, includes the headings American Enterprise, Industrialization, and Development; Arts and Culture; Crimes and Trials of the Century; Natural Wonders, Disasters, and the Environment; Politics, Government, and World Leaders; Public Spirit, Exhibitions, and Celebrations; Science, Technology, and Innovation; Sports and American Pastimes; Struggle for Human Rights and Freedoms; and War. Each newspaper page on the site also links to an “About” page detailing the dates of the newspaper’s publication, the place of publication, and a brief history of the publisher and the newspaper.

THE POWER OF STORY

To help engage students in American literature and history lessons, teachers can turn to a free, colorful online resource full of stories, speeches, songs, videos, and works of art. What So Proudly We Hail, available at www.whatsoproudlywehail.org, was developed by University of Chicago professors Amy and Leon Kass, and is based on an anthology they have published by the same name.

The site includes study guides on such famous Americans as Abigail Adams and Frederick Douglass, and former presidents such as Thomas Jefferson and Bill Clinton. Songs, including “America the Beautiful,” “This Land Is Your Land,” and “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” are also available and are described as crucial parts of American history for “free men and women.” And thanks to a lesson plan on the American calendar, students will learn about the history and purpose of national public holidays like Memorial Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Day and “how their repeated celebration helps unite and identify us as a people.”

According to the site, lesson plans such as “The Meaning of America” will help students understand “American character and American identity in ways that will produce thoughtful and engaged citizens.”