# NAACP Common Core Standards Toolkit

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Rationale

The NAACP National Education Program strives to ensure that all students have access to an equal and high-quality public education by eliminating education-related racial and ethnic disparities in our public schools.

Through advocacy training, policy development and guidance, building collaborative networks, and direct action, the National Education program works to assure an equitable start for all Americans.

For more information on the NAACP National Education Program, go to http://www.naacp.org/programs/entry/education-programs.

The NAACP Common Core State Standards Toolkit is intended to be a resource of information for NAACP units on Common Core Standards. The toolkit contains general background information, the NAACP’s resolution supporting Common Core Standards, a NAACP powerpoint on Common Core Standards, publications, sample letters, and other valuable information units need to understand and monitor the Common Core implementation process.

What are Common Core State Standards?

Common Core State Standards refers to a state-led effort to define the knowledge and skills students need to graduate from high school ready to successfully enter college or a career-training program.

The standards were developed through a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), in collaboration with their members, and teachers, school administrators, and education experts.
Why is it important?

The standards are meant to help address the problem of low expectations. The standards are designed to promote equity by ensuring all students, no matter where they live, are well prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to collaborate and compete with their peers in the U.S. and abroad.

Things NAACP Unit Education Committees Should Do

Consider the following kinds of activities:

- Hold a meeting or forum on Common Core State Standards
  - Include a discussion of Common Core State Standards implementation as part of another meeting.
- Use the sample letters to the editor in the Appendices to this toolkit to help write your own Letter to the Editor about Common Core.
  - Letters to the editor can react to unbalanced news stories, negative editorials, unfavorable letters from other readers, or be used to compliment favorable news articles. Don’t forget to include your name, NAACP title, and unit/branch in your letter.
- Contact your local school district to and learn more about the implementation of Common Core in your local school district (see sample letter in Appendices).
- Contact your state education agency to learn more about the implementation of Common Core in your state (see sample letter in Appendices).
- Communicate with parents and students to learn their experiences with Common Core.
• Become a partner at national, state, and local levels in providing outreach and education about the implementation of the standards in a manner that builds on the Association’s civic engagement work and commitment to a quality, free public education for all students.
• Become a partner at every stage of implementing common standards to ensure that the standards lead to increased opportunities and better outcomes for all students.
2013 Common Core State Standards Resolution

WHEREAS, the NAACP has always fought for strong, integrated public schools; and

WHEREAS, the NAACP reaffirms all its prior resolutions supporting a high quality, free public education for all children; and

WHEREAS, the Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort that establishes a single set of clear educational standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts and mathematics that states voluntarily adopt; and

WHEREAS, the standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to enter credit-bearing entry courses in two or four year college programs or enter the workforce; and

WHEREAS, the standards drafters’ worked to make the standards clear and concise to ensure that parents, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of the expectations in reading, writing, speaking and listening, language and mathematics in school; and

WHEREAS, the standards are designed to promote equity by ensuring all students, no matter where they live, are well prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to collaborate and compete with their peers in the U. S. and abroad; and,

WHEREAS, unlike previous state standards, which were unique to every state in the country, the Common Core State Standards enable collaboration between states on a range of tools and policies, including: the development of textbooks, digital media, and other teaching materials aligned with the standards; the development and implementation of common comprehensive assessment systems to measure student performance annually that will replace existing state testing systems; and changes needed to help support educators and schools in teaching to the new standards; and

WHEREAS, the Common Core State Standards were written by building on the best and highest state standards in existence in the U.S., examining the expectations of other high performing countries around the world, and a careful study of the research and literature available on what students need to know and be able to do to be successful in college and careers; and

WHEREAS, States that adopted the Common Core State Standards are currently collaborating to develop common assessments that will be aligned with the standards and replace existing end-of-year state assessments, and these assessments are scheduled to be available in the 2014-2015 school year; and

WHEREAS, high quality common standards could ensure that all students have access to high-quality educational content, supports, and opportunities that research demonstrates are essential to ensure post-secondary success; and
WHEREAS, high quality common standards could allow parents and caregivers to more effectively assess their children’s progress and compare their children’s education with the education of children in other communities, states and nations; and

WHEREAS, high-quality common standards could free up resources to create high-quality and rich assessments that can accurately and reliably measure the progress of every student; and,

WHEREAS, with the adoption of common standards in 45 states, the District of Columbia, 4 territories and the Department of Defense Education Activity, a plan must be developed to hold states accountable for meeting the unique needs of students of color; and

WHEREAS, needs vary throughout the country. Local culture and history often dictate new and different areas of study necessary for success in those regions. Standards should leave room for curriculum customization as needed, but make sure all students are held to the same high expectations; and

WHEREAS, alignment with assessments and instruction, professional development for teachers and adequate student support systems are necessary. If standards are the cornerstone around which schools are redesigned, to help students reach higher standards, these corresponding elements must be included; and

WHEREAS, states must be held accountable for making sure that a set of common standards are the starting point and not the “end” for effective education of students.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the NAACP must become a partner at every stage of implementing common standards to ensure that the standards lead to increased opportunities and better outcomes for all students; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NAACP must become a partner at the national, state and local levels in providing outreach and education about the implementation of the standards in a manner that builds on the Association’s civic engagement work and commitment to a quality, free public education for all students; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the NAACP support Standard Core Curriculum and Assessment measures that take into consideration all students' ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds in delivering education services.
Common Core State Standards

BACKGROUND
As of June 2012, 45 states, three territories and the District of Columbia, serving over 80 percent of the nation’s K-12 student population, have adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)—a set of consistent state standards for proficiency in English-language arts and mathematics for grades K-12.

The standards were developed through a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), in collaboration with their members, and teachers, school administrators, and education experts. The CCSS establish clear and consistent goals for learning that will prepare our children for college and the workforce. They define the knowledge and skills students should have mastered during their K-12 education so that they graduate from high school ready to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce.

The Common Core State Standards are:
• Aligned with college and workforce training expectations;
• Rigorous in content and the application of knowledge through higher-order skills;
• Built on strengths and lessons of previous state standards;
• Informed by standards in other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our economy and society; and
• Evidence-based, clear, understandable, and consistent.

While the collaborative creation of the CCSS and widespread state adoption are truly significant milestones in American education, the potential of the CCSS to raise expectations and improve outcomes for all students cannot be fully realized without actions to support effective implementation in districts, schools, and classrooms at scale. States are individually responsible for implementing the standards in whatever way best suits their unique population of students and educational and political context, but the CCSS enable states, if they so choose, to work together. States can pool their collective expertise to create the highest possible quality tools and resources to help local educators improve the teaching and learning of their students. Currently, states are tirelessly working to:

• Engage students, parents, teachers, administrators, business leaders and policymakers in the implementation process to build a strong enough coalition to bring about the needed changes and maintain the high standards;
• Improve teachers’ and leaders’ effectiveness through changes to standards, preparation programs, licensure, evaluation systems, and professional development;
• Lead transitions in state assessments and accountability policy; and
• Reallocate resources to fund the implementation work.
KEY MESSAGES

Current performance of U.S. students is not strong enough to keep up with the changing economy – far too many individuals lack the education to get a livable wage job and far too many well-paying jobs will go unfilled.

Between 34 percent and 40 percent of 4th and 8th grade students scored proficient or advanced on the reading and mathematics exam of the Nation’s Report Card, the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

On international comparisons, U.S. 15-year olds were statistically significantly outscored by students in 7, 18 and 13 of the 34 other OECD countries in reading, math and science, respectively. In absolute score, U.S. 15 year olds ranked 14th, 25th and 17th in reading, math and science, respectively, out of the 34 OECD countries.

Based on current high school dropout rates and estimates on the education requirement for jobs in the changing economy, there is a growing gap between skill levels demanded for emerging jobs and the number of people with the skills to fill those jobs. Researchers project that by the end of this decade more than 60 percent of the jobs in the U.S. economy will require some postsecondary education.

State-led effort to develop and implement the Common Core State Standards

The standards were adopted by 45 states, the District of Columbia and three territories, and were developed through a state-led initiative spearheaded by governors and school chiefs.

Common Core State Standards are as, or more, rigorous than 48 states’ prior standards – tied to preparing students to be ready for success in college or career training

Based on a review by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, only two states and D.C. had English-language arts that were “clearly superior” and no state or D.C. had mathematics standards that were “clearly superior” to the Common Core State Standards.

The Common Core State Standards define what all students need to know and be able to do upon graduating high school to be well-prepared for continuing their education – either in college or in a workforce training program. Based on a nationally representative survey of postsecondary faculty, when asked if the standards as a whole were sufficiently challenging to prepare students for their classes, nearly 96 percent of respondents said they were.

Local Decision-Making on Implementation

The standards establish what students need to learn, but do not tell states, districts, or teachers how to teach. States and/or local districts will continue to have the responsibility to adopt curriculum and text books. Teachers will continue to create and select lesson plans and tailor instruction to the unique needs of the students in their school and classroom.
Implementation decisions will remain local. Teachers, as well as district and school leaders, will determine how the standards are to be taught and will establish the curriculum, just as they currently do.

There is still work to be done to make sure that the promise of the Common Core State Standards turns into success for students. State and local leaders have the opportunity to change policies and programs based on their assessment of how best to improve the achievement of the students in their states.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

By what criteria were the standards developed?
The standards were developed according to the following criteria, set by states through governors and school chiefs:
- Alignment with expectations for college and career success;
- Clarity, so educators and parents know what they need to do to help students learn;
- Inclusivity of both content and the application of knowledge through higher-order skills;
- Grounded in strengths and lessons of existing state standards;
- Evidence and research–based;
- Benchmarked to top performing nations across the world; and
- Realistic for effective use in the classroom.

How are educational standards determined?
Each state has its own process for developing, adopting, and implementing standards. As a result, past academic expectations of students have varied widely from state to state. The Common Core State Standards have now established the same rigorous expectations for a majority of students in this country; however, each state remains fully in control of its own standards and all related decisions.

Did the federal government play a role in developing these standards?
No, the federal government was not involved in the development of the standards. This has always been, and continues to be, a state-led and driven initiative. Upon completion of the standards, states voluntarily adopted and are currently implementing the standards on an individual basis. These standards are in no way federally mandated.

Who is in charge of implementing the standards?
The standards are being implemented by each state individually through the collaboration of various state specific groups, including the state education agency, local school districts, institutions of higher education, and individual educators. The standards do not tell principals how to run their schools, and they do not tell teachers how to teach. While states are voluntarily coming together on certain implementation-related efforts, including efforts to reduce the costs of assessments while improving the quality, each state is independently and solely responsible for putting the standards into practice.

Is the federal government playing a role in implementation?
No. The federal government is not implementing the standards. However, the federal government is supporting states that have adopted the standards and have voluntarily come together by providing funding to two state-led coalitions working on the development of assessments and curriculum resources.
SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR[1] IN SUPPORT OF STATE COMMON CORE STANDARDS

[insert Date]

[insert Name of Editor]
[insert Name of Newspaper]
[insert Address]

Dear Editor:

There is some confusion in the public about Common Core State Standards. For instance, some concerned citizens across the country have made misstatements about how Common Core State Standards were created by the federal government and are being imposed on states. That is not accurate. The federal government was not involved in the development of the standards. This has always been, and continues to be, a state-led and driven initiative. Upon completion of the standards, states voluntarily adopted and are currently implementing the standards on an individual basis. These standards are in no way federally mandated. Indeed, some states have opted out.

While the federal government is not implementing the standards, the federal government is supporting states that have adopted the standards and that have voluntarily come together by providing funding to two state-led coalitions working on the development of assessments and curriculum resources.

As for rigor, Common Core State Standards are as, or more, rigorous than 48 states’ prior standards and are tied to preparing students to be ready for success in college or career training.

High-quality common standards could ensure that all students have access to high-quality educational content, supports and opportunities that research demonstrates are essential to ensure success after high school. And that’s a goal we should all support.

Sincerely,
SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR[2] IN SUPPORT OF STATE COMMON CORE STANDARDS

[insert Date]

[insert Name of Editor]
[insert Name of Newspaper]
[insert Address]

Dear Editor:

I write in support of State Common Core Standards which a majority of states have adopted. The standards are designed to promote equity by ensuring all students, no matter where they live, are well prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to collaborate and compete with their peers in the U.S. and abroad.

I also encourage state and local school officials to implement them in a manner that leads to increased opportunities and better outcomes for all students. Thus, for example, alignment of the standards with assessments and instruction, professional development for teachers and adequate student support systems is essential.

Based on current high school dropout rates and estimates on the education requirement for jobs in the changing economy, there is a growing gap between skill levels demanded for emerging jobs and the number of people with the skills to fill these jobs. Researchers project that by the end of this decade more than 60 percent of the jobs in the U.S. economy will require some postsecondary education.

There is still work to be done to make sure that the promise of the Common Core State Standards turns into success for students. State and local leaders have the opportunity to change policies and programs based on their assessment of how best to improve the achievement of the students in their states.

Sincerely,
SAMPLE LETTER TO SCHOOL DISTRICT FROM NAACP UNIT

[insert Date]

[insert Name of Principal]
[insert Address]
[insert city, state, zip]

Dear Mr/Ms [insert name of Principal]:

In a 2013 resolution, the NAACP voted to support implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) so that all students can benefit. To that end, we wanted to reach out to you to learn more about Common Core implementation in your school.

1. What is the current status of CCSS implementation?
2. What are the challenges your school faces in implementing CCSS?
3. Do you have the resources you need to provide the student support services necessary to help students who were performing below grade level under the old standards to catch up to the new standards?
4. Are the CCSS aligned with assessment and instruction?

You may contact me at [insert your email address]. Thank you.

Sincerely,
SAMPLE LETTER TO STATE EDUCATION AGENCY FROM NAACP UNIT

[insert Date]

[insert Name of Head of State Education Agency]
[insert Address]
[insert city, state, zip]

Dear [insert Name of Head of State Education Agency]:

In a 2013 resolution, the NAACP voted to support implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) so that all students can benefit. To that end, we wanted to reach out to you to learn more about Common Core implementation in our state.

1. What is the current status of CCSS implementation?
2. What are the challenges the State faces in implementing CCSS?
3. Do all schools have the resources they need to provide the student support services necessary to help students who were performing below grade level under the old standards to catch up to the new standards?
4. Are the CCSS aligned with assessment and instruction?

You may contact me at [insert your email address]. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Commentary

More than five and a half million of the 30 million young adults in the United States between the ages of 18 and 24 don't have a high school diploma, according to the 2012 U.S. Census. Unfortunately, for many the personal consequences will be negative and long lasting: few good job opportunities and low pay in the short term, and, over the long haul, a rocky path to career success and financial security.

But we all pay the price for sending millions of young adults into the world without even the minimum preparation a high school diploma represents, whether that toll is measured in a lower national economic output, a public support system needed to keep families from further slipping into poverty, or another generation born on society's lowest and least-secure rung. And the difficult truth is that when talent and potential are wasted on this scale, we all bear some responsibility.

That's why the Campaign for High School Equity (of which I am the executive director) and so many other fierce believers in the American dream support the national move toward the Common Core State Standards. Built on the premise of uniformly high expectations and accountability, and now being implemented in nearly all of the states and the District of Columbia, these standards are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to ensure that all students are prepared for college and career, regardless of ZIP code, income, race, or ethnicity.

"These standards are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to ensure that all students are prepared for college and career."

Today's education system is fragmented and inefficient. An 8th grader whose family moves from one state to another in search of better job opportunities may find different academic expectations for 8th graders in her new school. And too many kids learn from experience to equate "education" with rote learning that appears to have little relevance to their lives and dreams. This is especially true for kids from low-income communities and communities of color.

We are approaching the 60th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education, the U.S. Supreme Court decision that ended the shameful "separate but equal" doctrine by declaring unequivocally that the opportunity of an education "is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms." We must continue the fight toward educational equality.
And we can, by embracing the rigorous, grade-appropriate central concepts at the heart of the common-core standards. These concepts will further challenge educators to tailor their teaching to the individual students in their classes and communities, creating a better, more engaging learning environment.

Although the nation's high school graduation rate was at a 20-year high during the 2009-10 academic year, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, the unfortunate truth is that we still had states with graduation rates in the 70 percent and 60 percent ranges for Latino and black students, respectively, and even lower for Native students. According to the NCES, in 2007-08, an estimated 1.7 million students graduated from high school needing remedial courses in basic math and English to prepare them for college-level classes.

That's why we're committed at the Campaign for High School Equity to pressing for the common standards and the supporting curricula, as well as advocating for the teacher training and resources required to close the achievement gap, once and for all.

We welcome the healthy debate that an endeavor this large should spark in a democratic society. But we can't allow narrow special interests, or the politicians beholden to them, to lower educational standards for students already shortchanged by the system. And we will not stand by while common-core opponents spread myths or deliberate falsehoods in order to defeat or delay them.

These standards are not a panacea. We know that translating the common standards into curricula, meaningful teaching, learning, and accountability will take a lot of hard work. This move to more rigorous standards may mean we see lower student test scores for a time as the curricula are implemented for all grade levels. But if we are to make sure every student is college- and career-ready, this work is essential.

The anniversary of the Brown decision provides us with an opportunity to measure our progress in the subsequent decades and to ensure this nation's continued commitment to bring every student to a higher plane of educational expectation and excellence. This is our duty, in our time, yet it is rooted in the same compelling truth that then-attorney Thurgood Marshall voiced when he argued before the U.S. Supreme Court, "There is no way you can repay lost school years."

_Rufina Hernández is the executive director of the Washington-based Campaign for High School Equity._
Appendix H

Source: Huffington Post Education: A Teacher’s Perspective by Casie Jones

Tennessee's Common Core State Standards make sense to me. Yet there has been some confusion about these higher expectations from the classroom to capitol buildings. Several members of the Tennessee legislature have recently taken a stance against the Common Core State Standards, this supposedly "federal" initiative to control education at the state level. But have they really looked at the standards? Have they paused to consider what our students really need?

Tennessee's Common Core State Standards were created as a joint effort between educators, community leaders, and state administrators who recognized the disservice done to our students by giving graduates diplomas without the demonstration that they are fully career- or college-ready. Student achievement data and college retention rates indicate that our students are not prepared for real world learning or the work force, which creates a dilemma for our nation. Tennessee's Common Core State Standards identify the skills needed to be prepared for college or career success and allow for deeper practice of skills as opposed to running through a checklist of knowledge students need just to pass a test. Because I understood the necessity of this change as well as the difficulty, I became a Common Core Coach for Tennessee so that I could help teachers prepare to use new instructional strategies to raise student achievement and maximize the autonomy that the Standards provide for teachers. Classroom teachers like me will supplement our own content and select the best teaching methods for our students.

After using the new methods, I have seen in my own classroom that the Common Core State Standards are effective. My students are all at-risk or below grade level, and these are students who skeptics say would be harmed by raising expectations even higher. However, over the past four months of full implementation of the standards, I have seen students take apart complex documents and hold self-sustained classroom discussions that did not seem possible. For example, I watched my junior and senior class join together and prepare for a student-led class discussion over a historical speech. I was nervous to step out of the conversation and allow them to lead. The results were amazing as the discussion comments and questions were at college level from students who came to me with failing grades. Afterwards, the students approached me about doing these types of discussion more often. I watched this boost of confidence foster a greater desire to achieve more and become more active learners. My classroom walls were full of student-created charts, and one student even said, "I have never been able to see my words posted on the wall like this." They used their own charts to write essays and wanted to do the same process again. The strategies are working.

Though the standards sound like the next step we should take, there has been much debate and growing skepticism. After testifying twice in support of Common Core before the Tennessee Senate Education Committee, it became clear to me that two words are muddying the waters: common and curriculum. Before making any argument for or against the standards, we must first understand that Tennessee's Common Core State Standards are NOT a federal curriculum. States and school districts determine curriculum, and individual teachers will determine the methods and materials used for instruction. Teachers will even have more autonomy in their classrooms as they teach with more depth and less breadth.
The beauty of the standards are that they are a common set of skills, initially in mathematics and literacy, that all students should have before entering college or the workforce. The standards are less focused on the content knowledge and more on the reading and analytical skills utilized to acquire such knowledge through reading rich texts. Our students need equal opportunities instead of having lower expectations in Tennessee. These standards allow mobile families such as those in the military to know that even though the curriculum and text selection may differ, students are learning the same important skills in every state.

As a parent and classroom teacher, I understand that the standards are not an issue of politics and government control, but instead a necessary improvement of classroom instruction. As a nation, we have diluted education for too long. Individual success stories are present; however, as a unified nation "with liberty and justice for all," we have failed our young people with a lack of consistent and rigorous expectations. The time for excuses and political debates has ceased, and common but not dominating standards will uphold our educational cohesiveness.

I whole-heartedly believe that the success or failure of the standards rests on the teachers, my colleagues, who must take the lead in the collaboration needed to revitalize instruction through the standards. It is a colossal responsibility, but teachers are serious about student achievement, and we accept the mission. What is hindering teacher morale now is the political bantering and late-blooming opposition. The public needs to know that teachers are seeing results already. Arguments must stop and the attention must be placed on professional support for teachers and resources for students. Teachers are already willing to raise expectations for ourselves and the students. Now, we need support so that we can continue to lead.

*Casie Jones is a teacher at the MLK Student Transition Academy in Shelby County, Tennessee, and an alumna of the Teach Plus Teaching Policy Fellowship.*
Myth of the Month: Common Core Is Dumbing Down Education for the College-Bound

Source: Huffington Post, Linda Rosen

Here we go again...

Yet another misleading statement about the Common Core State Standards is making the rounds. Let's analyze this onslaught of misinformation to separate the myths from the facts.

The myth du jour asserts that Common Core will fail to prepare students for college and instead will actually dumb down education. Yes, you read that right; detractors have gone so far as to forecast "dumber" students as a result of these higher standards for achievement.

This specious argument against CCSS falls apart quickly. Careful analysis of the standards verifies that they align with those in the highest-performing countries on international comparisons, and they have received the highest possible rating for content and rigor from the conservative Fordham Institute, a tireless advocate for higher standards.

Let me be specific: in many states, only a small number of students are currently on a trajectory to take Algebra I in eighth grade. Common Core turns that practice on its head by aiming to prepare all students for algebra in eighth grade, which will put many more on a path to college. Common Core also exceeds most states' previous high school standards by assuming that all students will take Algebra 2 at the very least. States have added calculus standards for accelerated math pathways so, if anything, CCSS can help elevate even more students to fast-tracks that will prepare them for college-level math coursework.

CCSS lays the groundwork for students to gain the foundational knowledge that they need to succeed after graduation. What Common Core does not do is return schools to the subpar, inconsistent standards that have helped keep our students far from the top of international rankings in math. Before Common Core, states set the bar on their standards and tests so low that they sold parents and their children a false bill of goods. All too often, students' first clue that they are not ready for college comes after they arrive on campus.

Parents and students are ill-served by the absurd claims that have dominated this conversation for too long. We owe it to them stop perpetuating myths and start taking high standards seriously.

In a new "Myth of the Month" series, Change the Equation CEO Linda Rosen will examine and debunk the misleading claims that are dumbing down the conversation around Common Core State Standards.
Top 10 Common Core Facts (NEA-NAACP)

1) Why do we need new standards? Not every student in the United States has access to a great public school. Not every school is offering its students the rigorous coursework necessary to transition smoothly to postsecondary educational options without remediation. Graduation rates are improving incrementally, but it is clear that gaps that fall along ethnic and racial lines still persist and that the enduring dropout rates cannot persist if this country is going to be globally competitive in the future.

2) Who? States developed the common core state standards (CCSS) together and most voluntarily adopted them. To date, 44 states plus the District of Columbia have adopted the CCSSS.

3) What’s covered? Mathematics and English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA).

4) When? States that chose to adopt the standards began implementing the mathematics and ELA common core standards in the 2013-14 school year.

5) What’s different about these standards? They are designed to be fewer in number, clearer, encompass broad academic goals, and to prepare students for a variety of postsecondary experiences. The CCSS also are more challenging than most of the current state standards and provide clarity and consistency about what is expected of students.

6) Will there be new tests? Yes, states that chose to adopt the standards must use related mathematics and ELA assessments by the 2014-2015 school year.

7) Will these tests be different? Yes, ‘next generation assessments’ are expected to provide better and more timely and useable feedback to students, parents, and educators.

8) Will these standards tell teachers how to teach? No. Teachers still have flexibility to use professional judgment to design instruction for student success.

9) What about students with disabilities and English language learners? The CCSS provide an historic opportunity to improve access to rigorous academic content standards for ALL students. For students with disabilities and English language learners to meet the standards and fully demonstrate their knowledge and skills, their instruction and assessments must incorporate necessary supports and accommodations.

10) What can parents do to support their children? Become their advocates! Work with your child’s teacher to reinforce at-home activities, such as reading more non-fiction and playing math games. Immediately contact your school if you need additional resources for your child or if you think your child needs additional help. Also, urge your political representatives and policymakers to provide adequate resources to schools and communities to ensure that students have the tools and supports required for meeting the demands of the standards.
FACT SHEET: Responding to Glenn Beck’s *Conform*

On May 6, 2014, conservative entertainer Glenn Beck released his latest book, *Conform: Exposing the Truth About Common Core and Public Education*. The overarching theme of the book is federal control and conformity within the U.S. education system. Beck takes issue with a range of education issues, but, as the title suggests, his main contention is with Common Core State Standards. Six of the book’s 27 chapters are dedicated to the issue. Beck’s criticism of Core Standards and the U.S. education system generally fit into three messaging silos:

1. Common Core Standards aren’t adequately rigorous; they exacerbate the “dumbing down” of U.S. education;

2. The Standards will lead to a national curriculum that will ultimately be used to indoctrinate children;

3. The process of drafting and implementing the Standards occurred behind closed doors and lacks transparency.

**Responses:**

1. The Standards are a vast improvement over the status quo in K-12 Education. A rejection of these standards is a de facto embrace of the status quo, and public education in America clearly isn’t adequately serving our kids or our nation. Too many kids are completely unprepared academically for college or career. Only 25% of students who graduate from high school are college-ready in all subject areas; 30% of high school graduates cannot pass the basic military entrance exam. When we expect more of our children through higher academic standards, they achieve more.

The Standards are superior to existing standards in 39 states in math and 37 states in English. (SOURCE: “The State of State Standards – and the Common Core – in 2010,” The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, July 2010). K-12 academic standards in 33 states are lower than the Common Core State Standards. (SOURCE: “The State of State Standards – and the Common Core – in 2010,” The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, July 2010). Even critics, like James Milgram, admit the Standards are better than 90% of the standards they replaced. (SOURCE: “Can this country survive Common Core’s College Readiness Level?” Milgram and Stotsky, September 2013). The Standards are internationally benchmarked to ensure U.S. students can compete globally in tomorrow’s workforce; the U.S. currently ranks 26 out of 34 OECD countries.

2. Standards are not Curriculum. Standards are clearly defined goals or benchmarks for what knowledge and skills students need in order to achieve success in college or in a career. Local teachers, principals, superintendents and others will continue to make decisions on how state-adopted academic standards will be met. The standards do not come close to encompassing all that schools should be teaching children, nor do they prevent districts from adopting even higher standards as they craft their curricula.
Common Core State Standards are not curriculum; they merely set benchmarks for learning. States voluntarily adopted Common Core State Standards. They retain the ability to improve upon them, as a number of states have done, or even to adopt different standards.

3. Common Core State Standards are the Product of a Deliberative, Inclusive and Open Process. The standards were initiated and driven by the nation’s governors and the top education officials in each state. Draft Standards were produced by a large and diverse group of accomplished teachers, mathematicians, English language arts and literacy professionals, and state education officials. To ensure transparency, the Standards were then further shaped by input from teachers, parents and content experts nationwide.

Experts from 48 states were involved in the process of drafting the Standards. More than 11,000 public comments shaped the draft standards before they were finalized. Forty-five states adopted the Standards in a manner consistent with state law, which generally entrusts either the State Board of Education with that responsibility, or the legislature or state education chief. The federal government played no role in producing the Standards.
The backlash against the Common Core has prompted lawmakers in at least 12 states to get more involved in setting their own K-12 academic standards, injecting politics into a process usually conducted in obscurity by bureaucrats.

In several states, legislators have placed new restrictions on state boards of education, which typically write and update academic standards. In others, lawmakers have opened up the development of standards to greater scrutiny, requiring that proposals receive public vetting.

And in Oklahoma, which has embarked on an extreme makeover of its standards process, lawmakers passed a law that lets them rewrite any standards they don’t like.

Oklahoma lawmakers in May voted to scrap the Common Core State Standards, the national academic standards that were set to take effect in the coming school year, which begins there in two weeks. The legislature sent its state board of education back to the drawing board with directions to write entirely new standards by 2016.

“It’s just completely an overreaction for state legislatures to believe they can develop and manage and implement academic standards,” said Reggie Felton of the National School Boards Association, which represents school boards around the country and opposed the changes in Oklahoma. “They don’t have the technical capacity to do that.”

Politicians shouldn’t set academic standards, Felton said.

“The greater concern is that various organizations, through their own lobbying efforts or simply because they have the right money behind them, will influence these members,” he said.

Academic standards lay out the skills and knowledge that students are expected to learn by the end of each grade. Standards are adopted at the state level, while decisions about curriculum — how to teach and the materials used — are usually made by school districts.

State boards of education, whose members are often appointed but sometimes elected, usually consult educators and subject matter experts as they craft academic standards.

But state Rep. Jason Nelson (R), who co-wrote the new Oklahoma law, said academic standards always have been political, and his legislation makes the process more democratic.

“When you set education standards, you’re saying what children are required to learn through certain lenses,” Nelson said. “It’s obviously going to be political. What’s different with this law is that we’re allowing the voice of the public to be heard.”
To Douglas Reed, an associate professor of government at Georgetown University, the legislative Common Core backlash in the dozen states has a common undercurrent.

“It’s a populist reaction to the Common Core,” Reed said. “Some politicians are tapping into that and grandstanding, but there is a real concern among folks that they were left out of the [decisions to adopt the] Common Core. There’s a real legitimacy argument.”

Wisconsin lawmakers tried to pass a similar bill in April, but efforts stalled after the state’s schools superintendent campaigned against it, calling it “craziness.”

“This bill would hand over what is taught in our schools to partisan politics,” Superintendent Tony Evers wrote in a public plea. “Beyond the Common Core, are we ready for our legislators to debate and legislate academic standards related to evolution, creationism, and climate change when they take up the science standards? What about topics like civil liberties and civil rights, genocide, religious history, and political movements when they take up social studies?”

Nelson swatted away the suggestion that the changes in Oklahoma invite politicians to meddle in classrooms.

“It seems like we all want to get a No. 2 pencil out and write our own set of standards, but the reality is, I don’t think that will happen,” Nelson said. “For one thing, they have to say what’s wrong with the standard and make the argument, and both houses have to pass any changes by a joint resolution, and the governor has to sign it.”

Oklahoma Rep. Ann Coody (R), a former teacher, said the shift in power from the board of education to the state legislature is wrong-headed.

“The vast majority of us are not former educators,” said Coody, a Common Core supporter. “We all think we know how to run education because we went to school. Well, there are definite ways to teach, definite ways to learn, and those who spend their lives learning it and practicing it ought to be the ones we rely on for this.”

The changes in Oklahoma and elsewhere come amid criticism that the public was excluded from the processes that led 45 states and the District of Columbia to adopt the Common Core standards in math and reading by 2010. In most cases, the Common Core was adopted by agreement in each state among the governor, chief state school officer and state board of education.

“Legislators were just totally left out of it when the states first adopted the Common Core, and that was a mistake,” said Kathy Christie of the Education Commission of the States, a nonpartisan organization that monitors state education policy. “And this is the reaction.”

Several states are now taking pains to include the public in the creation of new standards or the modification of the Common Core.
State officials in Oklahoma have suggested a new process in which any Oklahoman can help write academic standards by joining a web of multiple, overlapping committees that is so complex, the state drew a flow chart to describe it.

“One of the chief complaints from parents about the Common Core was that it was an out-of-state process and didn’t include parents and educators from Oklahoma,” Nelson said. “This is the opposite of that. We’re allowing everyone to be part of the process.”

But the state board of education, which includes several members who unsuccessfully sued to block the Common Core repeal law on the grounds that legislators lack the legal power to write academic standards, has criticized the new process as cumbersome.

“It’s like something out of Rube Goldberg,” said Daniel Keating, a member of the state board of education.

Even some critics of the Common Core think Oklahoma’s new method is too inclusive.

“We’ve swung the pendulum all the way in the other direction to make sure we’ve talked to everyone and their dog,” said Jenni White, president of Restore Oklahoma Public Education, an anti-Common Core lobbying group that fought the standards and helped write the new law. “I do think if you have too many cooks in the kitchen, you end up with a conglomeration that may not be too good to eat.”

Indiana and South Carolina officials also have repealed the Common Core, which was scheduled to be fully enacted with the school year that starts soon.

Critics in those Republican-controlled states argued that signing onto Common Core national standards meant losing state control over public education and that the standards amounted to federal overreach.

The federal government has no official role in the Common Core. It originated as a bipartisan effort by a group of governors and state education officials as a way to inject some consistency into academic standards, which have long varied wildly across states. The creation of the Common Core was largely funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Obama administration does support the Common Core and gave $360 million to groups of states that are writing new Common Core tests. It also used Race to the Top, its competitive grant program, as an inducement, saying that states adopting “college and career ready” standards had a better chance of winning federal dollars under the program. Most states understood that phrase to mean the Common Core.

In Oklahoma, where all 77 counties voted against Obama in 2012, any hint of support from the Obama administration was enough to energize opposition.

“It’s time to end the federal tyranny and say, ‘We want Oklahoma education for Oklahoma students,’ ” state Rep. Gus Blackwell (R) argued on the floor of the legislature.
According to Daniel Thatcher, an analyst at the National Conference of State Legislatures who has been tracking the issue, 12 states passed 14 laws since 2013 that change the way state academic standards are adopted. In most cases, the laws add the number of people who must review and approve of new academic standards, he said.

In Missouri, for instance, instead of repealing the Common Core, the legislature passed a law that requires the state board of education to create “work groups” to review the standards and report findings to the speaker of the House and the Senate president.

In North Carolina, a new law creates a panel including appointees of the governor and legislative leaders to review the Common Core standards and report to the legislature.

And in Utah, lawmakers now require the state board of education to publicize potential standards on its Web site, invite public comment and hold three public hearings in different regions of the state.
The U.S. Department of Education is on the verge of releasing the first draft of new guidance on the peer-review process for standards and tests, a document that could exert a powerful influence on how states set academic expectations.

Little known outside the assessment world, the process is wonky and technical. But it is an important tool for the federal agency in reviewing—and shaping—states' academic standards and testing systems.

The draft of updated guidance, expected this month, arrives as most states are trying out or designing new tests to reflect the Common Core State Standards. The testing industry, which crafts those assessments, and state testing directors, who oversee their administration to millions of students, have been waiting anxiously for any sign that the Education Department will change the criteria used to evaluate their systems.

"We're in this huge transition to a whole new system of tests, and this is one of the only leverage points the department has on what those assessment systems look like," said Anne Hyslop, who has been monitoring the peer-review process as a policy analyst with the New America Foundation, a Washington think tank.

Many in the assessment world are worried, though, because few, if any, of the prominent figures in the field have been asked to help shape the upcoming draft.

At meetings with state schools chiefs and assessment leaders this summer, Education Department officials tried to assuage those worries by repeating that the draft is only a "straw man," intended to prompt input from the field. Once reaction is gathered from experts and the public, the document will be revised and a final version released in early 2015.

**Valid and Reliable**

States have been undergoing peer review of their standards and assessments since the late 1990s because of requirements in the two most recent incarnations of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act: the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 and the No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law in 2002. **Among other criteria, states must show** that their tests are aligned with their standards and are valid and reliable for their intended purposes.

The Education Department under President Barack Obama has articulated a vision of testing that goes beyond such provisions, however. The department suspended the peer-review process in December 2012, telling states in a letter that the criteria needed updating in light of assessment capabilities the agency articulated in its Race to the Top assessment competition, which funded two state consortia to

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Source: Education Week, August 6, 2014
U.S. Reviews of Standards, Tests Enter New Phase, by Catherine Gewertz
design tests for the common standards, and in its No Child Left Behind waiver program, which imposed conditions on states in exchange for exemption from certain tenets of that law.

To be part of those projects, states had to have tests that show how well students are progressing toward college and career readiness, measure skills that previously were hard to measure, and produce data that can be used to judge the effectiveness of teachers, principals, and schools. Just how the department will reshape the criteria to reflect those ideas is a subject of intense interest in key corners of the K-12 world.

There has been talk of including other matters in the criteria as well. Federal education officials have been urged to consider requiring states to show that their tests have appropriate security measures. Internally, department officials have discussed whether to require states' tests to assess writing, a pivotal skill in the common standards, which are now in effect in more than 40 states. Many states' current assessments don't probe students' writing skills.

One federal Education Department official told Education Week that a central idea in developing new criteria is ensuring that states' tests reflect a "depth of knowledge" that might well require "going beyond a multiple-choice answer structure." The department hopes to move the peer-review process "away from minutiae" to "bigger-picture validity that is predictive of college and career readiness," said the official.

Difficult Terrain

Even before the new draft criteria are issued, however, the Education Department is in a politically tricky position because of the controversies that have flared in some states around the common core.

Opponents have argued that the common standards and tests represent a federal intrusion into local education decisions because the department funded the two main testing consortia—the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, or PARCC, and Smarter Balanced—and offered incentives for states to adopt the standards. Such opposition has led some states to back out of the projects.

"The department is between a rock and a hard place" in setting the peer-review criteria, said a former department official who, like most of the experts interviewed by Education Week for this article, agreed to speak only on condition of anonymity to avoid alienating colleagues.

"If they don't take this responsibility seriously, they realize it could all devolve again into where we were with NCLB, with 50 states, 50 different goal posts, and 50 different ideas of what assessment should look like," the former official said. "On the other hand, by wading in at all, even though it's their legal responsibility to do so, the department once again becomes the lightning rod for claims of federal overreach."

That landscape means reaction to new peer-review criteria in high-level state offices could be very different from what it might have been five years ago.
"States have been going through this process for a long time, but the temperature has been turned way up now," said Andy Smarick, a partner at Bellwether Education Partners, a nonprofit Washington consulting firm. "I wouldn't be surprised if most governors, and many state chiefs, especially new ones, won't understand that this has a long legacy. Many will come to this for the first time, and how many will be upset that the feds are involved in this?"

Opinion on the value of the peer-review process is mixed, since a number of problems have hobbled it in the past. Some wonder whether years of reviewing has done anything to improve standards or assessments.

Michael J. Petrilli, the president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a Washington research and advocacy group, noted that while some states have been respected for high standards and good-quality tests, others have had weak ones.

"There doesn't seem to be any evidence that [peer review] has helped improve assessments in the past," he said. "It's been a waste of time."

Even some policy experts who were central to developing the process acknowledge that long-standing legal restrictions limit its usefulness. Because federal laws bar the Education Department from controlling the content taught in schools, peer reviewers can't pass judgment on the quality of states' standards. That part of the review is little more than a "check-box exercise" of compliance, said Michael Cohen, who helped develop the process as the department's assistant secretary for elementary and secondary education under President Bill Clinton.

"Not all the [states'] standards were great, but the federal criteria were that tests had to be aligned to standards," said Mr. Cohen, who is now the president of Achieve, a Washington group that advocates higher standards and helped develop the common core.

**A Frequent Complaint**

Peer reviewers don't examine states' actual standards or tests. Instead, they examine evidence—typically, multiple boxes of it—of whether those standards and assessments meet specific requirements of federal law. To evaluate whether a state's standards are "challenging," for instance, peer reviewers might look at documentation of the steps a state took to create rigorous standards.

Still, Mr. Cohen and others said, peer review has tremendous value because it makes states focus more intently on aligning tests to standards and on documenting their tests' technical quality.

A frequent complaint about peer review is inconsistency in findings from state to state.

Michael Hock, the assessment director in Vermont, recently told attendees at the Council of Chief State School Officers' annual assessment conference that states in the New England Common Assessment Program all used the same test, but got differing evaluations of that test from peer-review teams.
States' experience going through peer review depended a lot on which set of peer reviewers, and which Education Department staff members, they were assigned to work with, said William J. Erpenbach, who served as a peer reviewer under three presidential administrations and has advised many states as they prepare their materials for submission.

Experts say the process has been undermined, too, by weakness on the key question of "validity"—whether tests are designed appropriately for the way states want to use them. They cited both inadequate proof of validity by states, and insufficient demands by reviewers for stronger evidence.

"They never really attended to validity," a senior-level source in the assessment industry said of the reviews.

To complicate the situation further, federal education officials' concept of validity has evolved to emphasize predictive ability, experts say. It's not enough anymore for a state to show that a test is a valid indicator of a middle school student's math skills; it must show that the test is a good predictor of whether that student is "on track" to be college-ready in a few more years.

The field also increasingly seeks "more sophisticated" evidence of validity, said Ellen Forte, who served as a department peer reviewer and now advises states on their assessment systems as the president, CEO, and chief scientist at edCount, a Washington consulting firm.

"Now [the field is] working at a much finer grain size, going deep into the domain and its skills," said Ms. Forte. She isn't convinced, she added, that the peer-review process demands the kinds of evidence that form "the backbone of validity."

Similarly, peer reviews have often sought to determine a test's alignment to standards based on whether most of the standards are found in the assessment items. That's a lower level of alignment than federal officials seem to be seeking now when they describe high-quality assessments as measuring deeper, more nuanced levels of student achievement, experts say.

"[Peer review] has looked at alignment only on a superficial level," said the senior-level assessment source. "Now, defining what alignment means will be big deal. If a test doesn't reflect the intended depth of knowledge of the standards, it will be found wanting."

Alignment in Question

Several people interviewed for this story said that if the new criteria don't require states' tests to reflect the writing skills in the common core, such as citing evidence from text to support an argument, the federal government will, in effect, be allowing states to use tests that aren't aligned to those standards.

"If kids aren't writing and drawing evidence from text, then a test on its face isn't aligned" to the common core, Mr. Cohen of Achieve said. "You don't need an elaborate set of criteria to figure that out."
Some educators question the value of peer review in part because states rarely experience penalties when their tests fall short of full approval. And many do fall short: At one point in 2002, only 19 states' systems met federal criteria. Between 2010 and 2012, 15 to 20 states' systems had not obtained even conditional approval.

And while some states have had to submit to compliance agreements, few have ever paid the ultimate penalty for unapproved standards or tests: forgoing a portion of their federal Title I administrative funds.

**Need For Expertise**

In addition to concerns about a lack of outside input in developing the forthcoming criteria, many in the assessment field are worried that the Education Department currently lacks the right kinds of expertise to craft good criteria for assessments. Key staff members with backgrounds in measurement or large-scale assessment, such as Carlos Martinez and Sue Rigney, who oversaw peer review in recent years, have retired or changed jobs within the department.

"The department is now in a place where it's far less capable" of designing the right criteria and supporting states in building good testing systems, said Ms. Forte, the edCount executive.

Department officials did not respond to a request for comment on that question of capacity, or on concerns in the field as it undertakes revisions of the peer-review process.

Many state and testing-industry officials who were interviewed for this story said they'd like to see the peer-review process evolve into an ongoing relationship of technical support. They'd also like to see it become more open and collaborative.

During some periods of peer review, state officials have been allowed to speak directly with their reviewers. But during other periods, no face-to-face communication was permitted. States simply received decision letters from the federal department.

Mr. Erpenbach said that when he was allowed to sit down and talk with state officials during the process, he was often able to resolve many issues.

Some in the assessment world have worried privately that the Education Department's new criteria might set forth requirements that only its own grantees—PARCC and Smarter Balanced—could meet. That would pose big problems, since nearly half the states plan to use other tests in 2014-15.

"It's really important in this process that we stay open to other solutions that could meet the criteria," said Chris Minnich, the executive director of the CCSSO, which co-led the common-standards initiative.
COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

WHAT ARE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS?

Common Core State Standards refers to a state-led effort to define the knowledge and skills students need to graduate from high school ready to successfully enter college or a career-training program.
STATE-LED STANDARDS

On June 2, 2010, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers released the Common Core State Standards for K-12 English language arts/literacy (reading) and mathematics.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ARE INTENDED TO BE:

- Aligned with college and career expectations for English/Language Arts and math
- 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
- Research and evidence-based
ASSESSMENTS

Sophisticated assessments are an important part of teaching and learning, but pre-Common Core assessments are not sufficiently aligned to the CCSS with regard to focus and rigor.

ASSESSMENTS

To complement the development of the CCSS, most states are working together to create new, high-quality assessments through two consortia—the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC).
ASSESSMENTS

When the CCSS-aligned assessments are fully launched, the percentage of students reported to be proficient is expected to decrease from existing rates because of the higher expectations.

ACCOUNTABILITY

For states that require students to pass a test to advance to 4th grade or to graduate, the change in reported performance could have a major, negative impact.
ACCOUNTABILITY

Additionally, decisions about retaining and promoting teachers, as well as school management, will be influenced, at least in part, by student test scores.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF STATES

Part of what the States implementing Common Core must assure is the alignment of standards with assessment and instruction, professional development for teachers and adequate student support systems.
STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Providing adequate student support will in some instances require “catch-up” education services, especially for students who are already below grade level under the pre-Common Core standards.

STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Some of those after-school services are already perhaps being provided under NCLB.
SUPERINTENDENTS SEE VALUE IN COMMON CORE

About 2/3 of district superintendents surveyed by Gallop and Ed Week said Common Core State Standards will improve the quality of education in their communities.

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT COMMON CORE

Some critics claim Common Core standards will “dumb down” education in the U.S.
COMMON MYTHS ABOUT COMMON CORE

In the vast majority of states, Common Core replaced less rigorous standards.

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT COMMON CORE

Common core expects every student to learn at least Algebra 2.
COMMON MYTHS ABOUT COMMON CORE

A study by Change the Equation and the Center for Public Education at the National School Boards Association found that only 11 U.S. states have graduation requirements that rise to Common Core’s expectations.

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT COMMON CORE

Common Core assumes that every student will, at the very least, take math in each year of high school and master most of the content typically taught in Algebra 2 courses.
COMMON MYTHS ABOUT COMMON CORE

• Some critics of Common Core argue that the standards prevent students from taking algebra in eight grade or calculus in high school.

• Nothing could be farther from the truth.

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT COMMON CORE

Another argument is that Common Core standards aim to prepare students for community college, but not for four-year college. Not true.
COMMON MYTHS ABOUT COMMON CORE

- Another common criticism of Common Core is that the standards are being imposed by the federal government. Not true.

- States came together, developed the standards and most voluntarily adopted them.

COMMON CORE TEACHER TRAINING

According to Ed Week, TN launched the most comprehensive common core standards training in the country, both in the number of teachers trained and the amount of money spent.
SOME STATES HAVE DROPPED OUT OF COMMON CORE

- Oklahoma’s Governor Mary Fallin signed a bill in June requiring new standards.
- South Carolina’s Governor Nikki Haley signed a similar bill in late May.
- Indiana adopted new standards in April.

SOME STATES HAVE DROPPED OUT OF COMMON CORE

While the Louisiana State Superintendent, State School Board and State Legislature support Common Core and aligned tests, the Governor wants to replace Common Core and aligned tests from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers.
NAACP 2013 RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the NAACP must become a partner at every stage of implementing common standards to ensure that the standards lead to increased opportunities and better outcomes for all students; and

NAACP 2013 RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NAACP must become a partner at the national, state and local levels in providing outreach and education about the implementation of the standards in a manner that builds on the Association’s civic engagement work and commitment to a quality, free public education for all students; and
NAACP 2013 RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the NAACP supports Standard Core Curriculum and Assessment measures that take into consideration all students ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds in delivering education services.

ACTIONS NAACP UNITS CAN TAKE

• Write letters to the editor in support of Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

• Hold meetings or forums in which CCSS is discussed
ACTIONS NAACP UNITS CAN TAKE

Write letters to school officials asking how the implementation of Common Core is going.
National Public Radio (NPR), All Things Considered
Debunking Common Myths About The Common Core, by Eric Westervelt and Cory Turner

Many people don't realize it's a set of standards, not a curriculum. NPR's Eric Westervelt talks with education reporter Cory Turner about other misconceptions about the Common Core standards.

ERIC WESTERVELT, HOST: I'm joined now by my colleague on the NPR Ed Team, Cory Turner. He's done most of our Common Core reporting, and he edited this postcard series. Cory, thanks for coming in.

CORY TURNER, BYLINE: Thanks for having me, Eric.

WESTERVELT: Cory, the Common Core standards aren't that new but there's a lot of misconceptions out there about them. What are the big ones for you?

TURNER: I'll start out with uniformity. It's in the name. It's totally understandable that people hear Common Core and assume that what's happening in one classroom is happening in every classroom. But what people don't realize is that the Core are standards, they're not curriculum. They don't come with lesson plans or textbooks. Teachers are large doing this themselves as they always have. So just because - let's say a fifth-grade teacher in Louisville, like we just heard, decides Minecraft is a great way to get his kids using grids. Well, that doesn't mean that teachers everywhere else are doing the exact same thing.

WESTERVELT: Another criticism we hear across the political spectrum, Cory, is that the Common Core has created an ever more toxic testing environment. That kids are simply taking tests, you know, all the time now. I mean, do they have a point?

TURNER: Yeah, you know. Lots of folks who don't follow education, don't realize that this requirement, that states test kids once a year. That started more than a decade ago with No Child Left Behind enacted in 2002 under President George W. Bush. And No Child is still the law of the land. Schools do it so they can get federal Title I dollars and again because the Common Core are standards. States realizing under No Child Left Behind, they had to still test their kids, they needed to make new tests that are aligned to the Core. But the idea is -and this is generally what we expect to see next year, is all of these new that are aligned to the Core will simply replace all of the old state tests. So technically no additional tests for the Common Core.

WESTERVELT: So it's built on the testing regimes started under No Child Left Behind, but it doesn't necessarily mean an increase in testing, correct?
TURNER: For the most part, yes. Next year - again kids should not be taking extra tests. But I do have to say, there have been real growing pains this year. I recently spoke with a mother in Montgomery County, Maryland who was really angry about her daughter's algebra final. What happened is - and I'm going to try to keep this simple. This past year was the first year that the county's algebra curriculum was aligned to the Common Core and so was the algebra final exam that the district wrote, again aligned to the Common Core, OK. But at the same time - because they haven't phased completely in the Common Core, kids in the district were still required to take the old Maryland State end of year test. And what happened is teachers realized about three weeks before the end of the year that there were a lot of math concepts on this big state test that aren't in the Core. And so teachers started cramming in these concepts, trying to teach the kid what they need to do well on this test. And ultimately, what happened is when the kids came around to take that Common Core Algebra final, they bombed it. Eighty-two percent failure rate among high school kids in the district. It was so bad that the district actually applied a 15-point curve and had to delay report cards.

WESTERVELT: Wow. Eighty-two percent of high schoolers failed. I mean, doesn't that underscore how, sort of chaotic and hard implementation of these standards will be?

TURNER: I think it is, at least to a certain extent, it's hard to know where else this may have happened or may be happening. But let's face it, adopting new standards and implementing new standards, it's a really tough thing, especially when you find yourself straddling two worlds, old state tests that you still have to administer and new Common Core tests that you're phasing in. It's hard to know if we'll be hearing the same stories next year. We'll just have to see.

WESTERVELT: Cory Turner of the NPR Ed Team. Thank you for coming in.

TURNER: Thanks, Eric.
For more information on the NAACP National Education Program, go to http://www.naaccp.org/programs/entry/education-programs.