Myths about the Content and Quality of Common Core

Myth #1: 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 #2: 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.

Content and Quality of the Common Core Math Standards

Myth #3: The Standards do not prepare or require students to learn Algebra in the 8th grade, as many states’ current standards do.

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

Content and Quality of the Common Core English-language arts Standards

Myth #4: 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 9th or 10th 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 #5: English teachers will be asked to teach science and social studies reading materials.

Fact: With the Common Core ELA Standards, English teachers will still teach their students literature as well as literary non-fiction. However, because college and career readiness overwhelmingly 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.

Myths about the Common Core Process

Myth #6: 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.

Myth #7: 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.”

Common Core Implementation Myths

Myth #8: 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 #9: These Standards amount to a national curriculum for our schools.

Fact: The Standards are not a curriculum. They are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents and others will decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.

Adopted from the official Common Core State Standards website: corestandards.org