

MYTHS vs. FACTS

The Common Core State Standards

Myths About Content and Quality: General

Myth: *Adopting common standards will bring all states' standards down to the lowest common denominator, which means states with top education systems, such as Maryland, will be taking a step backwards if they adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).*

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 yet still require remediation upon beginning their postsecondary work.

Myth: *The CCSS are not internationally benchmarked.*

Fact: International benchmarking played a significant role in the development of both the English/language arts (ELA) and mathematics standards. In fact, the CCSS include an appendix listing the evidence that was consulted in drafting the standards and the international data consulted in the benchmarking process is also included in this appendix.

Myth: *The CCSS only include skills and do not address the importance of content knowledge.*

Fact: The CCSS recognize that both content and skills are important.

In ELA, the CCSS require certain critical content for all students, including: classic myths and stories from around the world, America's founding documents, foundational American literature, and Shakespeare. Appropriately, the remaining crucial decisions about what content should be taught are left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

In mathematics, the CCSS lay a solid foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, and decimals. Taken together, these elements support a student's ability to learn and apply more demanding math concepts and procedures. The middle school and high school standards call on students to practice applying mathematical ways of thinking to real world issues and challenges, preparing students to think and reason mathematically. The standards set a rigorous definition of college and career readiness, not by piling topic upon topic, but by demanding that students develop a depth of understanding and ability to apply mathematics to novel situations, as college students and employees do regularly.

Myths About Content and Quality: English/Language Arts

Myth: *The CCSS 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 CCSS create a staircase of increasing text complexity, so that students are expected to both develop their skills and apply them to more and more complex texts.

Myth: *The CCSS are just vague descriptions of skills; they don't include a reading list or any other similar reference to content.*

Fact: The CCSS do include sample texts that demonstrate the level of text complexity appropriate for the grade level and compatible with the learning demands set out in the standards. The exemplars of high quality texts at each grade level provide a rich set of possibilities and have been very well received. This provides teachers with the flexibility to make their own decisions about what texts to use, while providing an excellent reference point when selecting their texts.

Myth: *English teachers will be asked to teach science and social studies reading materials.*

Fact: With the CCSS ELA standards, English teachers will still teach their students literature as well as literary non-fiction. However, because college and career readiness overwhelming focuses on complex texts outside of literature, the CCSS also ensure students are being prepared to read, write, and research across the curriculum, including in history and science. These goals can be achieved by ensuring that teachers in other disciplines are also focusing on reading and writing to build knowledge within their subject areas.

Myth: *These new standards will de-emphasize literature, like Huckleberry Finn, and historical texts, such as the Gettysburg Address.*

Fact: These standards actually emphasize reading and writing skills across all subject areas, not just in ELA classrooms. Students will continue to read classic literature and other types of fiction in English class. In addition, the CCSS include literacy standards for history, science, and technical subjects to make sure reading and writing are emphasized across all the courses. The ability to read, write, and analyze informational texts is a critical skill for success in college the workforce and today's students need to develop these skills throughout their education.

Myths About Content and Quality: Mathematics

Myth: *The CCSS do not prepare or require students to learn algebra in the 8th grade, as many states' current standards do.*

Fact: The CCSS 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.

Myth: *Key mathematics topics are missing or appear in the wrong grade.*

Fact: The mathematical progressions presented in the common core are coherent and based on evidence. Part of the problem with having 50 different sets of state standards is that today different states cover different topics at different grade levels. Coming to consensus guarantees that, from the viewpoint of any given state, topics will move up or down in the grade level sequence. This is unavoidable. What is important to keep in mind is that the progression in the Common Core State Standards is mathematically coherent and leads to college and career readiness at an internationally competitive level.

Myths About the Process

Myth: *No teachers were involved in writing the CCSS.*

Fact: The CCSS 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 because many states worked together to develop the standards. For more information, please visit: corestandards.org

Myth: The CCSS are not research or evidence based.

Fact: The CCSS 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 ELA, the standards build on the firm foundation of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) frameworks in reading and writing, which draw on extensive scholarly research and evidence.

In mathematics, the standards draw on conclusions from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and other studies of high-performing countries, which found that the traditional U.S. mathematics curriculum must become substantially more coherent and focused in order to improve student achievement. These changes would mitigate the problem of a curriculum that is “a mile wide and an inch deep.”

Myths About Implementation**Myth: The CCSS 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: The CCSS is being implemented through No Child Left Behind – signifying that the federal government is leading them.

Fact: The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort that is not part of No Child Left Behind and adoption of the standards is in no way mandatory. States began the work to create clear, consistent standards before the Recovery Act or the Elementary and Secondary Education Act blueprint were released because this work is being driven by the needs of the states, not the federal government.

Myth: These standards amount to a national curriculum for our schools.

Fact: The CCSS 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.

For more information visit:

www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/ccss

www.corestandards.org