

# Myths vs. Facts

Successful implementation of the Common Core State Standards requires parents, educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders to have the facts about what the standards are and what they are not. The following myths and facts aim to address common misconceptions about the development, intent, content, and implementation of the standards.

## Myths About Content and Quality: General

**Myth:** Adopting common standards means bringing all states' standards down to the lowest common denominator. This means that states with high standards are actually taking a step backwards by adopting the Common Core.

**Fact:** The standards are designed to build upon the most advanced current thinking about preparing all students for success in college, career, and life. 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 but still need remediation in their postsecondary work.

**Myth:** The Common Core State Standards are not internationally benchmarked.

**Fact:** Standards from top-performing countries played a significant role in the development of the math and English language arts/literacy standards. In fact, the college- and career-ready standards provide an appendix listing the evidence that was consulted in drafting the standards, including the international standards that were consulted in the development process.

**Myth:** 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.

The English language arts 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 made at the state and local levels. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

The mathematics standards 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. They prepare 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 regularly do.

## Myths About Content and Quality: Math

**Myth:** 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 also include rigorous algebra and will transition students effectively into a full Algebra 1 course.

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

**Fact:** The mathematical progressions presented in the Common Core State Standards are coherent and based on evidence.

Part of the problem with having different sets of state standards in mathematics is that different states cover different topics at different grade levels. Coming to a consensus guarantees that, from the viewpoint of any given state, topics will move up or down in the grade level sequence. 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 Content and Quality: English Language Arts/Literacy**

**Myth:** The standards are just vague descriptions of skills and do not include a reading list or any other reference to content.

**Fact:** The standards 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 a reference point for teachers when selecting their texts, along with the flexibility to make their own decisions about what texts to use.

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

**Fact:** With the ELA standards, English teachers will still teach their students literature as well as literary nonfiction. 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.

**Myth:** The standards do not have enough emphasis on fiction/literature.

**Fact:** The Common Core requires 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 made at the state and local levels. The standards require that a portion of what is read in high school should be informational text, yet the bulk of this portion will be accounted for in non-ELA disciplines that do not frequently use fictional texts. This means that stories, drama, poetry, and other literature account for the majority of reading that students will do in their ELA classes. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

## **Myths About Process**

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

**Fact:** The Common Core drafting process relied on teachers and standards experts from across the country. In addition, many state experts came together to create the most thoughtful and transparent process of standard setting. This was only made possible by many states working together.

**Myth:** The standards are not based on research or evidence.

**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 National Assessment of Education 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 that found the traditional U.S. mathematics curriculum needed to 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.”

## Myths About Implementation

**Myth:** The standards tell teachers what to teach.

**Fact:** Teachers know best about what works in the classroom. That is why these standards establish what students need to learn but do not dictate how teachers should teach. Instead, schools and teachers will decide how best to help students reach the standards.

**Myth:** Teachers will be left to implement the standards without any support or guidance.

**Fact:** Decisions on how to implement the standards are made at the state and local levels. As such, states and localities are taking different approaches to implementing the standards and providing their teachers with the supports they need to help students successfully reach the standards. To learn how states are supporting teachers and implementing their new standards, visit the Standards in Your State section for a map linking to the state-specific implementation page.

**Myth:** The standards will be implemented through No Child Left Behind (NCLB), signifying that the federal government will be leading them.

**Fact:** The Common Core is a state-led effort that is not part of No Child Left Behind or any other federal initiative. The federal government played no role in the development of the Common Core. State adoption of the standards is in no way mandatory. States began the work to create clear, consistent standards before the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which provided funding for the Race to the Top grant program. It also began before the Elementary and Secondary Education Act blueprint was released, because this work is being driven by the needs of the states, not the federal government. Learn more about the development process [here](#).

**Myth:** The Common Core State Standards were adopted by states as part of the Race to the Top grant program.

**Fact:** Recognizing the strength of having high standards for all students, the federal government gave competitive advantage to Race to the Top applicants that demonstrated that they had or planned to adopt college- and career-ready standards for all students. The program did not specify the Common Core or prevent states from creating their own, separate college- and career-ready standards. States and territories

voluntarily chose to adopt the Common Core to prepare their students for college, career, and life. Many states that were not chosen for Race to the Top grants continue to implement the Common Core.

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

**Fact:** The Common Core is *not* a curriculum. It is 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.

**Myth:** The federal government will take over ownership of the Common Core State Standards initiative.

**Fact:** The federal government will *not* govern the Common Core State Standards. The Common Core was and will remain a *state-led* effort. The NGA Center and CCSSO are committed to developing a long-term governance structure with leadership from governors, chief state school officers, and other state policymakers to ensure the quality of the Common Core and that teachers and principals have a strong voice in the future of the standards. States and local school districts will drive implementation of the Common Core.

**Myth:** The Common Core State Standards will result in a national database of private student information.

**Fact:** There are no data collection requirements for states adopting the standards. Standards define expectations for what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade. Implementing the Common Core State Standards does not require data collection. The means of assessing students and the use of the data that result from those assessments are up to the discretion of each state and are separate and unique from the Common Core.