

Concerns about the Common Core State Standards

WHAT SOUTH CAROLINIANS SHOULD KNOW

Concern: CCSS strips control of student learning from schools and districts in favor of a one-size-fits-all approach.

Schools and districts continue to have flexibility and control over the curriculum in schools and classrooms. Standards are not curriculum. Standards are learning standards, academic standards -- goals for what students should know by a certain age. Assessments measure mastery of those standards. Curriculum, on the other hand, is what teachers teach to help students meet those standards. Curriculum is generally chosen at the district or even the school level, and in many cases individual teachers actually decide on classroom content and teaching methods. In fact, the high school standards are not written for specific courses, leaving states like South Carolina deciding course content across the disciplines.

Concern: The new standards are experimenting on our children.

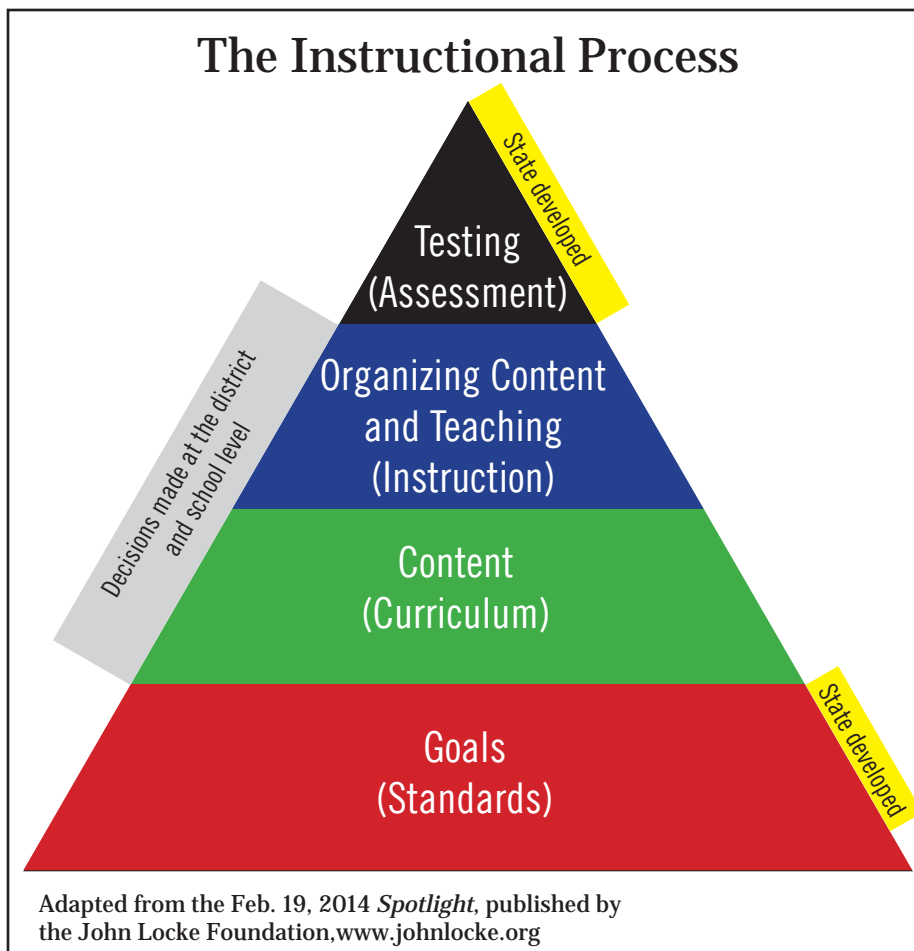
The Common Core State Standards were based upon the most advanced thinking about preparing students for college and careers. National and international best practices data were used in the drafting of the standards. Furthermore, the state of Kentucky has already implemented Common Core State Standards and assessed students on the new standards for three school years. There is currently no movement in the state of Kentucky to stop implementation of the standards.

Concern: Individual student data that is personal in nature is shared with others outside a school.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. Within that law, there are two

instances an educational agency or institution may disclose personally identifiable information from an education record of a student without a parent's consent:

1. If the disclosure is to other school officials, including teachers, within the agency or institution whom the agency or institution has determined to have legitimate educational interests.
2. A contractor, consultant, volunteer, or other party to whom an agency or institution has outsourced institutional services or functions may be considered a school official provided that the outside party "performs an institutional service or function for which the agency or institution would otherwise use employees; is under the direct control of the agency or institution with respect to the use and maintenance of education records; and is subject to the requirements of FERPA governing the use and re-disclosure of personally identifiable information from education records.



South Carolina, like many states, is working to develop a longitudinal data system that collects student demographics and assessment data from the time students enter school until the time they enter the workforce. Collecting and reporting these unidentifiable data is important for accountability purposes and for a proper evaluation of programs and systems. These systems help us determine if we are serving students properly and allowing them to achieve success once they enter the workforce. No state system should release any information that can identify individual students.

Concern: CCSS don't value creativity and independent thinking and encourage bullying.

The Common Core State Standards value both independent thinking and collaboration, two important skills for the workforce and overall success in life. Students in our postsecondary institutions are very often called upon to complete projects and assignments in groups, so preparing students for this environment in K-12 is smart practice. Healthy disagreement is a good exercise for students and it promotes learning. All students will face it in college and in their careers. School is a wonderful place for students to learn the important life skills of delivering and accepting constructive criticism. It is through our interaction with others that we often learn our own strengths and differences.

Concern: Individuals with a background in early childhood were not involved in the drafting of the Common Core State Standards.

The list of individuals, who served on the writing committee, is located at <http://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/2010COMMONCOREK12TEAM.PDF>. There are a number of early childhood specialists listed. The K-12 Standards Development Teams, charged with writing the standards, were composed of individuals representing multiple stakeholders and a range of expertise and experience in assessment, curriculum design, cognitive development, early childhood, early numeracy, child development, English-language acquisition and elementary, middle, and post-secondary education. The majority of these individuals were not seasoned standard writers or literary scholars; they were selected because they were experts in their chosen fields and could provide constructive input about how to make certain American children graduate from high school ready for college, career pathways, and success in a global economy.

Concern: Teachers will have to spend as much as 70% of their time teaching informational texts as opposed to classical texts.

There is no requirement of time within the standards but a gradual move toward an increasing use of informational texts among all of the subject areas. Extensive research has established the need for college and career ready students to be proficient in reading complex informational texts independently in a variety of content areas. Most of the required reading in college and workforce training programs is informational in structure and challenging in content; postsecondary education programs typically provide students with both a higher volume of such reading than is generally required in K-12 schools and comparatively little scaffolding. Furthermore, research shows that young children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds relate to informational texts far more effectively than traditional fictional texts.

CCSS are not alone in calling for a special emphasis on informational text. The 2009 reading framework of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) requires a high and increasing proportion of informational text on its assessment as students advance through the grades. By the time a student reaches grade 12, they are expected to read 70 percent of informational texts using the NAEP Reading Framework. In K-5, the CCSS followed NAEP's lead in balancing the reading of literature with the reading of informational texts, including texts in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. Teachers of English, for example, are not required to devote 50 percent of reading to informational texts. Rather, 50 percent of student reading across the grade and content areas should be informational.

Concern: CCSS forces teachers to change their teaching methods.

Teachers are not forced to change their methods of teaching; these decisions reside at the school and classroom level. Regarding teaching methods, the "teacher as facilitator" is a change in the delivery of content and is often regarded as a much more effective method for student learning than a traditional lecture format. Ultimately, the intent of these standards is to make students more responsible and accountable for their own learning and teachers have the opportunity to be innovative in their teaching methods.

Concern: Algebra I is removed from the 8th grade standards, removing the rigor.

In South Carolina Algebra I has always been a high school credit. CCSS does not change that fact. Districts will still have the option to allow accelerated middle school students to take Algebra I. The key difference is that the “new” Algebra I and II are much more rigorous in content. In fact, operations and Algebraic thinking are incorporated into the Kindergarten math standards.

Concern: The standards were not state-led and no South Carolinians had input into their approval.

It is true that no South Carolinian worked on the writing of the CCSS. However, Forty-one individuals from South Carolina served on the comparative review panels that evaluated the standards in 2010. (<http://www.eoc.sc.gov/Reports%20%20Publications/Current%20Reports%202008-14/Standards/CCSSReport-FINAL0604.pdf>)

Concern: The standards promote sameness instead of choice and individuality.

Although the standards are common to students in the 45 states that have adopted them, curriculum differs and teachers and students have the freedom and opportunity to go deep, emphasizing problem-solving, analysis, and critical thinking, as well as creativity and teamwork.

Concern: The public had no input into the development of the standards.

The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) received nearly 10,000 comments on the standards during two public comment periods. The draft standards were released first in September 2009 and again in March 2010. The feedback, which came from teachers, parents, school administrators, and other concerned citizens, helped shaped the final version of the standards.

Concern: The standards reflect a federal overreach into state’s rights.

As a list of knowledge and skills that students need to have to be college and career ready, the standards do not violate the responsibility of states to provide public education. The United States Department of Education (USDE) did use the standards as a prerequisite for states applying for Race to the Top grants. The USDE also required that states submitting waivers from the

No Child Left Behind Act to had to have adopted college and career readiness standards. The South Carolina Department of Education was awarded a waiver because the state had adopted Common Core State Standards. And, the USDE did allocate federal funds to two national consortia to develop assessments that align to the Common Core State Standards.

Concern: The standards will impact private schools and home schoolers.

With 45 states adopting the standards, the textbook and curriculum industry will amend its products and services to reflect the Common Core State Standards. And, college admissions tests, the ACT and SAT, have already announced plans to amend their assessments to reflect the new standards. All students, even those who attended public and private schools and who were homeschooled will have to take the new assessments if they want to apply to a two- or four-year college or university.

Concern: CCSS is an unfunded mandate from the federal government.

The development of the standards was not funded by the federal government. The federal government required states applying for the Race to the Top program to adopt Common Core State Standards. However, to apply for a waiver from the No Child Left Behind Act, states had to adopt college and career readiness standards. South Carolina did this when the State Board of Education and the Education Oversight Committee approved the CCSS in 2010.

For more information about the standards, including family-friendly versions of the standards, go online to www.scfriendlystandards.org.



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