



Common Core State Standards | The Conservative Case

BACKGROUND

Education in America: A System in Crisis

For decades, teachers unions and the entrenched education establishment have ruled America's education system, resisting needed reforms in favor of the status quo and trillions upon trillions in futile government spending. As a result, American students are falling further and further behind their peers in countries across the world as they languish in classrooms with mediocre standards and lax accountability.

Common Core State Standards: A State-Driven Victory for Bold Education Reform

To combat our nation's falling competitiveness, states and bold education reformers teamed to establish Common Core State Standards. They are rigorous, streamlined and more relevant for post-high school, real world application. Common Core standards will challenge students to read, write and solve math problems at greater capacity, raise the bar for all students and result in a more valuable education. The standards are benchmarked to high international standards to guarantee that American students are prepared to succeed in the 21st century global economy.

Trust but Verify: Without Meaningful, Proven Results, Education Spending is Ineffective

Just as setting standards is necessary to provide educators a roadmap on what material they need to teach, student assessments are vital to measure whether or not students are learning it. Without measuring student progress it is impossible to determine if a high quality education is being delivered in our classrooms. Currently, federal law requires student testing. However, given that standards and tests vary drastically state to state, it is fruitless to try to make accurate comparisons between them. Common Core solves this issue by serving as a common denominator that will enable a transparent examination of student achievement and progress across the country.

Setting the Record Straight: The Truth About Common Core State Standards

- **Created by the States for the States:**
 - Common Core State Standards are **not** nationalized standards or curriculum or a national mandate. The development of these standards involved governors and education commissioners from 48 states and were designed by a diverse group of teachers, experts, parents and school administrators.
 - States voluntarily choose whether or not to adopt the standards and – unlike Medicaid – retain full authority for implementation, preventing the possibility of a federal takeover. State leaders, accountable to their constituents, can withdraw their states from the standards at anytime.

(more)



- **Paving the Way for Less Federal Regulation and Intervention:**
 - Common Core paves the way for *less* regulation of schools – not more. Common Core will provide more transparency on the quality of our schools and arm local and state leaders with the information needed to make decisions for their classrooms and students.
 - Since there are currently no common standards or accountability assessments across states, it is difficult for policymakers to identify best practices. This unfortunately drives Washington bureaucrats to develop program after program teamed with new funding streams, rules and regulations because no one is sure what policies are actually working.
 - Given the transparent, school-level performance data that allows for true comparisons across state lines, the burden will be on federal bureaucrats and overzealous Members of Congress to prove why:
 - A parent is not qualified to decide where to send their child.
 - A principal is not qualified to make decisions about human capital.
 - A superintendent must spend his or her days talking to lawyers and accountants rather than parents and principals.
 - Common Core sets voluntary, streamlined constructs for English and Math academic standards, not endless and confusing bureaucratic regulations and mandates. Common Core standards for Mathematics are fully detailed in an easily digestible 90 pages, while English Language Arts standards are explained in just 66 pages. Compare that to the 2,700 pages – reaching more than seven feet, three inches in the air when stacked together – comprising the original ObamaCare legislation.

- **Preserving Freedom for Local Governments, School Districts, Teachers and Parents:**
 - Common Core State Standards define what students need to know; they do **not** define what teachers should teach or how students should learn. That decision is left to each state.
 - Common Core does **not** dictate what texts teachers will use for curriculum. Local teachers, principals, superintendents and school boards will continue to make important decisions about curriculum and how their school systems are operated.
 - Contrary to purported myths about Common Core, these standards encompass **only** English Language Arts and Mathematics, focusing on improving needed critical thinking and analytic skills.
 - The standards do **not** cover other subjects, including Science, Social Studies, Civics and Sociology. State and local officials will continue to make important curriculum decisions when it comes to teaching History or specific issues such as Evolution and Intelligent Design, in line with what is right for their students and communities.
 - Common Core standards are rigorous, clear and straightforward enough to lend themselves easily to voluntary adoption by charter schools, private and faith-based schools and home schools.

(more)



- **Saving Taxpayer Dollars:**
 - Because every state's standards are currently different, the test and textbook publishers have the upper hand and currently drive the market when it comes to pricing and available products. Common Core will put the customers – states and districts – back in charge and allow them access to better products, more vendors and a more diverse marketplace, ultimately holding the potential to drive down costs for taxpayers.
 - An individual's level of education is a leading indicator of his or her future level of dependence on taxpayer-funded government aid and even the likeliness of ending up in costly incarceration. Improving the quality of education delivered in American classrooms through Common Core's higher standards holds the potential to lessen the next generation's reliance on our ever-expanding entitlement and corrections programs.

- **Fueling a Higher Quality Education System Through Rigor and Innovation:**
 - While some states have high standards in place, many do not. Common Core State Standards raise the bar across the board, resulting in a more rigorous education for students, a higher return on taxpayers' investment and, ultimately, a more qualified workforce for America's employers.
 - A common set of voluntary, high standards for states allows for innovation to occur: new digital content and lesson plans can be shared between teachers, schools or states in our highly mobile, interconnected society.
 - In the same way that smart phones have created a baseline for technology applications that can improve lives, common standards can likewise open the door to innovation by breaking down barriers.

- **Securing America's Economic Future:**
 - The future of America will be determined by the strength of our economy, an economy where success will be predicated on a highly educated workforce prepared to create and foster the industries and technologies of tomorrow. Without a higher quality school system that provides a rigorous education for students, our nation's status as a global leader and beacon of prosperity will be increasingly in jeopardy.
 - Common Core State Standards will ensure our nation's academic requirements are aligned to the expectations of higher education institutions and the needs of employers competing in the global economy, laying the foundation for securing our economic future.

- **Backed by Strong Conservative Leaders Across America:**
 - From conservative leaders like former Governors Jeb Bush and Mitch Daniels, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal and New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez; the vast majority of current Republican governors and Republican chief state school officers; hundreds of Republican state legislative and countless conservative local officials and grassroots leaders, Common Core enjoys tremendous support from the conservative community.
 - Conservative concerns about Common Core State Standards have generally stemmed from widespread misinformation about the initiative.