New Jersey Department of Education

Educational Partnerships

Parent Academy for Student Success (PASS)

Common Core State Standards for Parents and Families: Myths vs. Facts

Successful implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) require parents, educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders to have the facts about what the standards *are* and what they *are not*. The following information addresses common misconceptions about the development, intent, content, and implementation of the standards.

Myth	Fact
Myth: Since the standards are "common" across all states, New Jersey's current high standards for student learning will be lowered. The standards create a "one-size-fits-all" education system in our country.	**Fact**: When the CCSS work began, there was a clear agreement that no state would lower its academic standards. The standards were designed by some of the best educational minds in the country and incorporate the highest international standards, research, evidence, and expertise about educational outcomes. Teachers still have the flexibility and responsibility to customize instruction depending on their students' abilities. In addition, the CCSS make it more likely that if students move to another state, they remain on track to attain all skills and knowledge necessary for a K-12 education.
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 and what teachers should teach. Districts will continue to set curriculum and teachers will continue to create lesson plans that help students reach the standards.
Myth: 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 that will help students succeed in college and their career. Local teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards decide how the standards are to be met for their students. Teachers will continue to create their own lesson plans and tailor their instruction to the individual needs of the students.
Myth: Teachers are left to implement the standards without any support or guidance.	**Fact**: Decisions on how to implement the standards are made at the local level. There are different approaches to providing teachers with the supports they need to help students succeed. NJ teachers will continue to have professional development opportunities and the Department of Education will continue to provide resources to support this work.
Myth: The federal government enforces the standards and it will control their use in schools.	**Fact:** The CCSS were developed by teams of educators and other experts, and were voluntarily adopted by the New Jersey State Board of Education in 2010. Although the federal government has supported states adopting rigorous standards, it has never required the CCSS or any other specific set of standards for states.
Myth: The Common Core State Standards will result in a national database of private student information.	**Fact:** The CCSS do not contain requirements related to data collection. Standards define expectations for what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade. Implementation does not require student data collection.

Myths about Content and Quality: Mathematics

The mathematics standards lay a solid foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, and decimals. 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 expect 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 requiring that students develop a depth of understanding and ability to apply mathematics to novel situations, as college students and employees regularly do.

Myth: The math standards are not connected, do not build on each other, and they do not prepare students for the challenges at each grade level.

- ✓ **Fact:** The mathematical progressions presented in the standards build upon each other. The math standards lead to college and career readiness at an internationally competitive level.

Myth: First-year algebra is the base for all higher-level math classes but the standards do not require students to learn algebra in the 8th grade. This means in high school, they will not get the advanced math they need.

- ✓ **Fact:** Districts can design accelerated courses for students preparing for Algebra I in 8th grade and there is support and guidance within the CCSS for doing so.

Myths about Content and Quality: English Language Arts/Literacy

The English language arts standards require specific critical content for all students, including classic myths and stories from around the world Americas founding documents, American literature, and Shakespeare. One of the over-arching goals of the Common Core State Standards is to improve students' critical and analytical reading skills. Students will be required to read more "informational" texts. The texts are selected by the district, school, and teacher—just as they always have been. In addition to content coverage, the increased focus on information and authentic texts is to prepare students for college and real-world reading and writing requirements. For example, 80 percent of the reading and writing done in the workplace requires workers to read material, analyze the material using critical-thinking skills, and articulately write or verbally respond to the material. The standards require that students learn and apply their new knowledge through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

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

- ✓ **Fact**: The appendices of the standards do include sample texts that demonstrate the level of complexity appropriate for students in each grade level. The samples are aligned with the standards and provide a reference point for teachers when selecting their classroom texts, along with the flexibility to make their own decisions about which texts to use.

Myth: English teachers are expected to teach science and social studies content, and science and social studies teachers are expected to teach reading.

- ✓ **Fact:** English teachers will still teach their students reading through literature and informational texts. However, high school graduates headed straight for the work force and college freshmen need the skills to utilize complex texts outside of literature. Therefore, the standards also ensure that students are being prepared to read, write, speak, listen, and research across the curriculum, including history and science. Literacy skills are taught within the context of the content. The CCSS mandate that by Grade 12, 70 percent of reading assignments across all subjects use informational texts and 30 percent use literary texts. All teachers should be familiar with the standards so students can successfully build their knowledge in all of their subject areas.