

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS SYMPOSIUM

On October 30, 2013, the Arizona State Legislature hosted a Common Core State Standards Symposium. This symposium featured four panelists: John Huppenthal, Arizona Superintendent of Public Schools, Jonathan Butcher, the Goldwater Institute, Dr. Sandra Stotsky, University of Arkansas, and Jared Taylor, the Heritage Academy. The panel, which was made of up three opponents and one supporter of common core state standards, discussed and debated the standards, the standards validity and effectiveness, the education system in Arizona, and the need for new state standards. Copied below is a fact check from the symposium that evaluates the information given by the panelists. The original hearing can be view [here](#).

FACT CHECK

Statement: Members of the standards’ validation committees did not have sufficient expertise in content areas.

Response: The validation committee included numerous content experts in English and mathematics representing K-12 and higher education, in addition to Dr. Sandra Stotsky. Below is a list of these experts, including a teacher from Arizona:

- Sarah Baird—Mathematics Specialist/Teacher K-5, Teacher of the Year for Arizona 2009, Kyrene Elementary School District, Tempe, Ariz.
- Arthur Applebee—Distinguished Professor of Education and Director of the Center on English Learning & Achievement at the University at Albany—State University of New York
- Kristin Buckstad Hamilton—Nationally Board Certified Teacher, Battlefield Senior High School, National Education Association
- Alfinio Flores—Hollowell Professor of Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematical Sciences and School of Education at the University of Delaware’s College of Education & Public Policy. Alfinio was a Professor for Mathematics Education at ASU prior to his Delaware position.
- Feng-Jui Hsieh—Associate Professor in the Mathematics Department at the National Taiwan Normal University
- MaryAnn Jordan—Teacher, New York City Dept. of Education, American Federation of Teachers
- Jeremy Kilpatrick—Regents Professor of Mathematics Education at the University of Georgia
- R. James Milgram—Emeritus Professor at Stanford University’s Department of Mathematics
- Dr. Sandra Stotsky—Endowed Chair in Teacher Quality at the University of Arkansas’s Department of Education Reform and Chair of the Sadlier Mathematics Advisory Board
- Kenji Hakuta – Lee L. Jacks Professor of Education at Stanford University’s School of Education and co-chair of Understanding Language, an initiative that focuses attention on the role of language in subject-area learning.
- David Pearson – Professor and Dean of the Graduate School of Education at the University of California – Berkeley; current faculty member in the programs in Language and Literacy and Human Development.
- Dorothy Strickland – Distinguished Research Fellow at the National Institute for Early Education Research and the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Chair in Education at Rutgers University; former classroom teacher, reading consultant and learning disabilities specialist and past president of both the International Reading Association and its Reading Hall of Fame.

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- Lauren Resnick, Distinguished University Professor, Psychology and Cognitive Science, Learning Sciences and Education Policy, University of Pittsburgh, is an internationally known scholar in the cognitive science of learning and instruction whose research involves the learning and teaching of literacy, math, and science
- William Schmidt, University Distinguished Professor, Michigan State University, Co-Director of the Promoting Rigorous Outcomes in Math and Science Education Project. He has provided recommendations for internationally competitive K-12 math standards for Minnesota and participated in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study
- Catherine Snow, Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education, An international expert on literacy instruction, Snow has chaired several major committees on literacy, has studied low-income students, and has written about bilingualism and its relation to language-policy issues
- Christopher Steinhauser, Superintendent of Schools, Long Beach Unified School District, possesses extensive knowledge about California's ELA standards and their implementation across a very large school district. During his previous tenure as deputy superintendent, students in all major racial and ethnic groups throughout the district made unprecedented gains on rigorous state tests

Source: "Reaching Higher: The Common Core State Standards Validation Committee."

http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CommonCoreReport_6.10.pdf.

Statement: There was little opportunity for public comment from parents and teachers in the development of the standards.

Response: The standards were discussed in public meetings hosted by the State Board of Education on January 25, 2010; February 22, 2010; March 22, 2010; April 26, 2010; May 24, 2010; and June 8, 2010. Each meeting provided an opportunity for public input or comment to the standards. During the Symposium, Superintendent Huppenthal called this effort the most opportunity for public comment and engagement on a standards adoption that he has seen to date.

In addition, the Arizona Department of Education received hundreds of individual pieces of feedback and input on the standards from Arizona educators, content experts, and many others that were provided to the standards writers to include as the standards were created.

Individual schools and districts provided copious amounts of feedback in Arizona. Schools/districts provided feedback on their own through open meetings with teachers and parents and parents in higher education positions. Specialized feedback was given by schools/districts through grade level groups, district leadership groups, instructional/math/ELA coaches, and other facilitated groups.

Source: Arizona State Board of Education meeting minutes. Arizona Department of Education.

Statement: We have no idea if these standards will work or not.

Response: The standards were developed using evidence that includes scholarly research; surveys on what skills are required of students entering college and workforce training programs; and assessment data identifying college and career-ready performance.

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Most importantly, the standards were created using best practices of what works in improving students' college and career readiness from top performing states and countries. The standards writers drew from what works in these states and countries to ensure that the best content would be included in the standards.

The standards have also been put into practice in Arizona classrooms for three school years using a staggered implementation model that began with Kindergarten in 2011, then expanded to other targeted grades last year and to all grades this year. This has given teachers and schools the opportunity to pilot their teaching methods and materials and to modify them as needed as the standards expanded to other grades.

Source: Arizona Department of Education. Achieve. Arizona Public Engagement Task Force.

Statement: These standards shift control away from local schools to the federal government.

Response: Local school boards retain the same level of authority as they had prior to the adoption of the standards.

While some states have laws that give authority over curricular materials in public schools to the state, Arizona has long valued local control to allow communities the discretion of what textbooks, curriculum and other materials to use in their schools. Local school governing boards (district and charter) have the authority to adopt curricula and instructional materials. These materials are required to be adopted in public meetings after a significant public review process, which allows for community involvement and input on what is used in the classroom.

Source: Arizona Department of Education.

Statement: These standards relinquish state autonomy to the federal government.

Response: Arizona's State Board of Education adopted the standards voluntarily in June 2010. The Board chose to adopt the standards in order to raise the bar for Arizona students and further ensure that they are better prepared for college and career. States had, and will always have, the authority to select and voluntarily adopt any standards they so choose.

As a state, Arizona was not mandated or coerced into adopting the standards by the federal government. Let us be clear: The US Department of Education has encouraged states to adopt standards that were college and career ready as a part of Race to the Top grant program and to receive an ESEA waiver. However, they did not require or mandate any set of standards to adopt, including the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards (Common Core). Funding and waiver decisions did not depend on the adoption of the standards.

Source: Arizona State Board of Education. Arizona Department of Education.

Statement: The standards are copyrighted and cannot be changed.

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Response: The Arizona College and Career Ready Standards are Arizona's standards. The State Board of Education voluntarily adopted them and can make changes to the standards at any time. Arizona has in fact already modified the standards; Arizona was one of six states that added content to the standards to ensure they were reflective of the needs of Arizona teachers, parents and students when they were adopted in June 2010.

Source: Arizona Department of Education.

Statement: There was no input or involvement from higher education in the standards development process.

Response: More than 100 content experts and educators from across the nation, including higher education representatives, were integral participants in the development of the standards, as a part of the work teams and feedback groups for the standards. Additionally, hundreds of state team participants from 48 states participated in the standards development process with membership extending from educators to content experts to policy leaders to higher education and business representatives; as well as the thousands of people who participated in the public feedback process.

From an Arizona perspective, Dr. William McCallum, the University Distinguished Professor of Mathematics and Head of the Department of Mathematics at the University of Arizona, was one of the lead writers of the math standards. Dr. McCallum was integral in both representing higher education and the state of Arizona directly as the standards were being created.

In addition to national content teams, Arizona convened state content teams that also included higher education representatives. These Arizona teams provided important feedback to the national team and many of the Arizona suggested changes were incorporated into final documents.

Source: Arizona Department of Education. Achieve.

Statement: The standards are low quality.

Response: The Fordham Institute conducted an evaluation of Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards against its prior standards. They found that the College and Career Ready Standards were stronger than and an improvement over Arizona's previous standards in English and math.

Additionally, the standards were created using best practices from high performing states and nations. The quality of their content was confirmed by a national validation committee that included content experts, K-12 and higher education representatives. The committee found the standards are:

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- Reflective of the core knowledge and skills in ELA and mathematics that students need to be college- and career-ready;
- Appropriate in terms of their level of clarity and specificity;
- Comparable to the expectations of other leading nations;
- Informed by available research or evidence;
- The result of processes that reflect best practices for standards development;
- A solid starting point for adoption of cross-state standards; and
- A sound basis for eventual development of standards-based assessments.

Source: Thomas B. Fordham Institute. <http://www.edexcellence.net/publications/the-state-of-state-of-standards-and-the-common-core-in-2010.html> Achieve.

Statement: There is too much focus on writing in the standards. More focus is needed on reading.

Response: It is without question that both writing and reading are essential to student success. Arizona’s College and Career Ready Standards include both reading and writing, and ask students to write about what they read across academic disciplines, including science, social studies and technical subjects. The standards do not minimize reading. In fact, there is almost double the amount of standards for reading as there are for writing.

At all grade levels, reading and writing standards are present. There is a separate set of standards for both reading informational text and reading literature at every grade level, in addition to foundational reading standards in grades K-5. Writing standards are present in every grade level as well, with foundational writing skills included as part of the Language strand at early grades. There are also both reading and writing standards specifically designed for teachers of content areas outside of English Language Arts at the 6-12 grade levels. Arizona’s College and Career Ready Standards recognize the relationship between reading and writing and balance standards appropriately to meet demands.

Source: Arizona Department of Education.

Statement: The standards focus too much on informational texts and don’t include opportunities for students to read literature and fiction.

Response: While there is a shift towards including informational text in the standards, literature is included and emphasized. The English language arts standards focus on building a foundation for college and career readiness and stress the need for students to read widely and deeply from a broad range of high-quality and increasingly challenging literary and informational texts. The 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. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students

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systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines across the curriculum through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

The standards for Reading Literature and Reading Informational text demand students participate in close, attentive reading to enable their understanding and enjoyment of complex works of literature. This has always been and remains the English teacher's job. The background and historical importance of the literary canon the local school district chooses to implement through their curriculum will be taught along with the standards allowing students to read and understand these works for themselves.

The standards do NOT require English teachers in 6-12 to teach informational text 50% of the time. This percentage refers to the K-5 classroom where teachers should be using complex text to build content knowledge. In addition to reading narrative fiction about an historical event in 4th grade, the teacher should also be including non-fiction/informational text about the same event so students can build their content-area knowledge. Building knowledge through content rich non-fiction plays an essential role in literacy and in the Standards. While English teachers in 6-12 must address the skills necessary to read non-fiction text closely, the main focus of reading in high school remains literature based.

Source: Arizona Department of Education. Achieve.

Statement: The math standards do not address algebra until high school.

Response: There is a great deal of algebra in the 8th grade math standards and a strong focus on the prerequisites for algebra in the elementary grades. Foundational standards for success in Algebraic concepts begin in 7th grade. If a student is ready to move on to algebra in 8th grade or before, the decision will be made with the student's parents, teacher and school district as has always been. It is important to know that the standards represent the expectations a student should meet at certain points in their educational journey. The standards represent the floor, not the ceiling and schools can provide the opportunity, along with parents, to ensure that students who are ready to achieve beyond the content at their grade level, who wish to pursue careers in STEM fields, and who will need higher levels of math in high school will have the opportunity to do so.

We should be very careful when placing STEM as only a career option for students who take higher mathematics in high school. The standards are for "all" students, STEM careers can be for "all" students, and not "all" students have identified a distinct career pathway in high school.

The focus and coherence of the standards for Algebra begin in the earliest grades through Algebraic thinking. The Algebra standards culminate and become formalized once the 8th grade standards are completed.

The progression of Algebra standards culminates in a formal Algebra course. This course does not necessarily have to take place in high school. See Mathematics Appendix A pages 3-4. A "compacted" approach to middle school math could include 3 years in 2 through combining 7th grade, 8th grade and Algebra 1.

[http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSI_Mathematics_Appendix_A.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_Mathematics_Appendix_A.pdf)

Source: Arizona Department of Education.

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Statement: The level of rigor in the standards is too low and will not help students get into competitive colleges.

Response: The standards are intended to define expectations for all students. They define college readiness as ready to enter and succeed in entry-level credit bearing courses in broad access institutions (typically College Algebra or Statistics). Preparing all students for this is the floor set by the standards, not the ceiling.

The standards reflect the literacy skills students must have to do the work in credit-bearing courses in broad access colleges – standards that more than a quarter of those who enroll in college today cannot meet. Preparing students to read complex texts and to draw evidence from them to make coherent, evidence-based arguments are skills in short supply for entering students in many selective colleges.

Students need to be flexible in their thinking and problem solving skills, such that after high school students can choose academics or a career without worry of remedial/developmental courses as a necessity. The rigor present in the math standards is a balance between conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, as well as application. This provides learning experiences that produce flexible thinkers and problem solvers ready for college or career choices that any student may make.

Source: Arizona Department of Education. Achieve.

Statement: The new test will be twice the cost of AIMS.

Response: Given that Arizona has revised its academic standards, it needs to replace the AIMS test, which is now outdated. In the 2014-2015 school year, Arizona will begin rolling out new assessments that will be aligned to the new standards. The new assessments will be used to gauge how well students are mastering the standards and, ultimately, how ready they are to succeed in college and career.

The Arizona State Board of Education is currently in the process of reviewing assessment options through a Request for Information process and will select an assessment through a competitive RFP process in mid-2014.

An assessment will be selected that is cost-effective, aligned with Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards, and that best suits our students' needs. The assessment will provide valid, understandable and widely accepted indication of readiness for college and/or advanced career training without need for remediation. The new tests will be more complex and higher quality because they will assess students' critical thinking and analytical skills. They will likely be computer-based and will rely on both technology and a human component to score the assessments. This accounts for an increase in cost. The estimated costs for the new assessment is in line with what many states already pay for their current assessments. It's also an effective return on our investment. The cost of the assessment is a small investment for the state to ensure that students are effectively learning what they are being taught.

Source: Arizona State Board of Education. Arizona Public Engagement Task Force.

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Statement: The standards and new test will lead to unnecessary data collection by the federal government.

Response: The federal government is prohibited by law from collecting any personally identifiable data (e.g., name, place and date of birth, SSN, or any other information that could be used to distinguish an individual's identity) about individual students. This means that the federal government does not collect data about individual students or have access to data about individual students that states collect. There is no additional data that will be collected by a new assessment.

The data collected under the College and Career Ready Standards and the new assessment is same as what is already being collected with the AIMS assessment.

Source: Arizona Department of Education. Data Quality Campaign.

Statement: The standards are a curriculum that tells teachers what to teach.

Response: The standards are not a curriculum. Rather, they are a set of goals that outline what students should be able to know and do in each grade in English and math. Decisions about how to teach the standards (e.g. curriculum, tools, materials and textbooks) are left to local decision-makers who know their students best.

Source: Arizona Public Engagement Task Force.

Statement: Schools that object to the standards can opt out of the standards.

Response: The Arizona State Board of Education has the authority to adopt standards, while local governing boards have the authority to adopt curricula and instructional materials. All Arizona school governing boards in district and charter schools are required to implement the standards and a new assessment, once it has been selected.

Source: Arizona Department of Education.