

## Myths vs. Facts

### Common Core English Language Arts

---

#### Myths about Process

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

**Fact:** The common core state standards drafting process relied on teachers and standards experts from across the country. In addition, there were many state experts that 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 research or evidence based.

**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 NAEP frameworks in Reading and Writing, which draw on extensive scholarly research and evidence.

#### Myths about Implementation

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

**Fact:** The best understanding of what works in the classroom comes from the teachers who are in them. That's why these standards will establish *what* students need to learn, but they will not dictate *how* teachers should teach. Instead, schools and teachers will decide how best to help students reach the standards.

**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 State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort that is not part of No Child Left Behind and adoption of the Standards is in no way mandatory. States began the work to create clear, consistent standards before the Recovery Act or 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.

The NGA Center and CCSSO are offering support by developing a State Policymaker Guide to Implementation, facilitating opportunities for collaboration among organizations working on implementation, planning the future governance structure of the standards, and convening the publishing community to ensure that high quality materials aligned with the standards are created.

**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 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.

### Myths about Content and Quality

**Myth:** Adopting common standards will bring all states' standards down to the lowest common denominator, which means states with high standards, such as Massachusetts, will be taking a step backwards if they adopt the *Standards*.

**Fact:** The Standards are designed to build upon the most advanced current thinking about preparing all students for success in college and their careers. 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 and still require remediation in their postsecondary work.

**Myth:** The *Standards* are not internationally benchmarked.

**Fact:** International benchmarking played a significant role in both sets of standards. In fact, the college and career ready standards include an appendix listing the evidence that was consulted in drafting the standards and the international data consulted in the benchmarking process is included in this appendix. More evidence from international sources will be presented together with the final draft.

**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.

In English-language arts, 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. Appropriately, the remaining crucial decisions about what content should be taught are left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the Standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

**Myth:** The standards suggest teaching Grapes of Wrath to 2nd graders.

**Fact:** The ELA Standards suggest Grapes of Wrath as a text that would be appropriate for 9th or 10th grade readers. Evidence shows that the complexity of texts students are reading today does not match what is demanded in college and the workplace, creating a gap between what high school students can do and what they need to be able to do. The Common Core State Standards create a staircase of increasing text complexity, so that students are expected to both develop their skills and apply them to more and more complex texts.

**Myth:** The standards are just vague descriptions of skills; they don't include a reading list or any other similar 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 teachers with the flexibility to make their own decisions about what texts to use - while providing an excellent reference point when selecting their texts.

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

**Fact:** With the Common Core ELA Standards, English teachers will still teach their students literature as well as literary non-fiction. 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 don't have enough emphasis on fiction/literature.

**Fact:** 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. Appropriately, the remaining crucial decisions about what content should be taught are left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

(<http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/myths-vs-facts>)