

Common Core Standards and Assessments

In the 1970s

- ✓ **A few states developed content standards for basic skills in core content areas (usually English language arts and mathematics)**
- ✓ **Some states developed high school exit exams to define minimum performance standards for high school graduation**
- ✓ **Performance standards varied from state to state**
- ✓ **In states without exit examinations, performance standards often varied from school to school within a single state**
- ✓ **Diploma requirements varied from state to state**

In the 1980s

- ✓ **1983 “Nation at Risk” claimed that the US was slipping in its education achievements compared to other industrial countries.**
- ✓ **Publishers competed for largest markets (Texas & California)**
- ✓ **Textbooks often defined curriculum**
- ✓ **What students were expected to learn & how well students were expected to perform depended on where they lived**
- ✓ **National teaching organizations created voluntary subject-area content standards without performance standards**

In the 1990s

- ✓ **Some states wrote their own content standards**
- ✓ **Some states developed their own assessments to measure the content standards and set their own performance standards**
- ✓ **1992 Early efforts at national standards funded by federal grants to professional subject-area organizations**
- ✓ **State education agencies modified subject area standards, so that resulting state standards continued to vary widely**

In the 2000s

- ✓ **2001 ESEA was reauthorized as “No Child Left Behind”**
- ✓ **Federal law required state standards, assessments, & reporting of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)**
- ✓ **States created their own assessments and set their own performance standards**
- ✓ **States that had not already developed assessments set low performance standards to avoid sanctions**
- ✓ **US Dept. of Education conducted peer reviews and set regulatory limits**
- ✓ **AYP looked like a common measurement system, but state performance standards actually varied widely**

Driving forces

- ✓ **International comparisons (PISA, 2010) show that the US is slipping academically.**
- ✓ **“Today, more than ever, a world-class education is a prerequisite for success. America was once the best educated nation in the world. A generation ago, we led all nations in college completion, but today, 10 countries have passed us.”**

Blueprint for reauthorization of ESEA, (p. 1)

Driving Forces

- ✓ **Krashen and Bracey caution against overly simplistic interpretations saying that the underlying problem is poverty in America.**
- ✓ **When data are examined closely, the US does as well as other developed countries when children of poverty are excluded from the reports.**

National, not Federal

- ✓ **The Common Core Standards are a national initiative, not federal. This means that national organizations have funded and developed these standards and not the federal government.**
- ✓ **Common Core Standards are currently not required for most federal monies.**
- ✓ **However, they are required for those states applying for the Race to the Top grants.**

What are Common Core Standards?

- ✓ **Cooperative effort of the National Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers and endorsed by 41 states.**
 - **Collaborated with teachers, administrators, experts**
 - **Currently written for English Language Arts (ELA) and Math**
- ✓ **Designed to bring alignment, rigor and consistency to student 'proficiency' and to foster improvement in college and career readiness across the nation.**

Example for 7th grade writing:

- ✓ **“Gather relevant information from multiple sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusion of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format of citation.”**
- ✓ **Standard W.7.8 found at <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards/writing-6-12/grade-7/>**

Rigor of CCS compared to states

- ✓ **Fordham Institute found only 3 of 102 comparisons where state standards were more rigorous than Common Core**
- ✓ **“Indeed the Common Core standards are clearer and more rigorous than the ELA and math standards presently used by the vast majority of states.”** - *Fordham Institute report*

Arguments favoring common educational standards

- ✓ **To ensure that all children, no matter where they live in the U.S., are prepared and successful in postsecondary education: school to school and state to state.**
- ✓ **To ensure a greater opportunity to share experiences and best practices both within and across states.**
- ✓ **To help students and parents by setting clear and realistic goals for success.**
- ✓ **To provide a benchmark as a first step to ensuring students will be prepared for success in college and work.**
- ✓ **Help teachers develop better lesson plans/presentations**

Arguments opposing common educational standards

- ✓ **Cost and difficulty of changing the existing curriculum and assessments.**
- ✓ **Sovereignty of state in issues related to education.**
- ✓ **States may be prevented from developing their own far more rigorous standards. (Currently each state can increase the standards by 15%.)**
- ✓ **Standards are more oriented toward college than toward immediate entry into the workforce after high school.**

Many researchers say:

- ✓ **Common Core Standards should be federally mandated ONLY IF they are part of a whole program: high-quality common standards may affect student achievement only in a system in which there are also**
 - **aligned assessments,**
 - **aligned curriculum,**
 - **accountability for educators,**
 - **accountability for students,**
 - **aligned professional development,**
 - **managerial autonomy for school leaders,**
 - **teachers who are drawn from the best and brightest, and so on (Whitehurst)**

Assessments linked to CCS

- ✓ **Two grant-funded (\$330 million dollars) consortia are currently creating assessments based on the Common Core standards.**
- ✓ **Both will enable cross-state comparisons.**
- ✓ **Both plan to track student progress toward the College and Career Readiness standards of the Common Core.**
- ✓ **Both plan to set cut scores to report whether students are ready for college or career work.**

Portfolio assessments

May include:

- ✓ **Essays**
- ✓ **Projects**
- ✓ **Student reflections about how a measure of performance addresses objectives**
- ✓ **Artistic performances, etc.**

They should be evaluated by experts

- ✓ **Some elements may be more subjective**
- ✓ **Expert evaluation of portfolios is more expensive than computer-based scoring**

Should there be a national curriculum?

- ✓ **Various educators have been debating whether national standards and national assessments would be enough to bring about desired improvements.**
- ✓ **Some think that a comprehensive system, including a national curriculum as well as common standards and assessment, is necessary to foster improvement.**
- ✓ **Some think that a national curriculum would bring unnecessary constraints that stifle creativity and innovation.**

Should there be a national curriculum?

YES

- ✓ **A curriculum specifies the topics and methods that students will use to master the standards, and often prescribes the sequence of instruction.**
- ✓ **Content standards describe the knowledge and skills that students should master.**
- ✓ **Performance standards are implemented through assessments that measure how well students have mastered the content standards.**

Should there be a national curriculum?

NO

ESEA prohibits a national curriculum and it is not part of the President Obama Blueprint.

- * The same reading skills can be taught by using many different texts.**
- * High school mathematics courses can be organized in a variety of ways.**

Other Considerations

- **At present, the Common Core includes only literacy standards for science and social studies. It would be difficult to reach consensus on a national curriculum in these subject areas.**
- **Legislators in some states continue to debate the science curriculum, arguing whether creationism should be taught as a scientific theory.**
- **With the exception of U.S. history and the Constitution, there is a lack of consensus about what topics should be taught in the social studies.**

Using Assessment Data

- ✓ **Student scores can be interpreted**
 - **by rank ordering student scores (norm-referenced)**
 - **by reporting whether students meet predetermined standards (criterion-referenced)**
 - **By determining if students have mastered requirement for special grade levels (cut scores)**

Cut Scores

- **Cut scores are set to provide information about whether or not students have mastered pre-specified criteria.**
- **To provide reliable cut scores, a test must include enough test items near any cut point to yield accurate data.**
- **The testing system with multiple cut scores must be more technically sophisticated, and therefore will probably be more expensive, than a testing system with fewer cut scores.**

Normed vs. Criterion Referenced

- ✓ **Normed based – designed to rank individual students in comparison to a sample (which can be an international, national, state, or local sample).**
 - **“Norm-referenced” refers to interpretation of scores for individuals. Norm-referenced scores rank students. It is possible, and not uncommon, to develop district-level norms, which rank only the students within each district without considering the total group.**
- ✓ **Criterion-based – designed to determine how well individual students have mastered objectives**

How extensive should tests be?

- **Overemphasis on accountability may lead to narrowing of the curriculum and inattention to knowledge and skills that are not tested.**
- **Longer, more comprehensive assessments are more likely to provide meaningful and specific feedback for individual students. A test that provides diagnostic information must be much longer than a test that is used only for accountability.**

How Should Tests Be Used?

- **Provide student achievement reports**
- **Accountability**
 - **Teachers**
 - **Schools**

Issues to Consider

- **Is the proposed test designed to support the desired inference?**
- **What will be done about grades and subjects for which there are no appropriate standardized tests?**
- **Have the proposed statistical procedures been shown to produce accurate results?**
- **Can classes with very different demographic characteristics be expected to produce similar student scores, or should factors like poverty rates be considered?**

More issues to consider

- **Should rewards or sanctions apply to the school as a whole or to individual teachers within each school?**
- **What unintended strategies might people employ in order to obtain rewards or avoid sanctions (e.g. encourage dropouts, avoid cheating etc.)**
- **Should poor performance lead to assistance (provision of support) or sanctions (withdrawal of support)?**

Why student scores cannot provide a valid picture of a teacher's performance - Student scores are also affected by

- ✓ Other teachers—both previous teachers and current teachers of other subjects—as well as tutors or instructional specialists (consider collaborative methods such as pull-out, team-teaching, or block scheduling)
- ✓ These factors also include conditions such as
 - Quality of curriculum materials
 - Specialist or tutoring supports
 - Class size and mobility
 - Student attendance
 - Interaction with peers
 - Student readiness for learning (Tying teacher evaluation and sanctions to test score results can discourage teachers from wanting to work in schools with the neediest students.)

Opinion of Experts in 2010

- ✓ **There is broad agreement among statisticians, psychometricians, and economists that student test scores alone are not sufficiently reliable and valid indicators of teacher effectiveness to be used in high-stakes personnel decisions, even when the most sophisticated statistical applications such as value-added modeling are employed.**

Issues to consider about policy decisions in the future

- Is the proposed policy of common core standards and assessment consistent with support of quality public education?
- Has it been tried on a small scale and shown to be fair and effective?
- What unintended consequences could result from following this policy of the common core standards/assessment?
- If test scores are involved, do educational measurement experts agree that the proposed procedures are technically adequate?
- Does a proposed system of rewards or sanctions include enough measures, or should other indicators be included?
- If there are rewards and sanctions, do they apply to districts, schools, or individuals?