Common Core State Standards Overview

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Overview

Background

- CCSS is a state-led effort that began in the spring of 2009; the federal government has had no role in the development or implementation of CCSS
- Coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
- Standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts to provide a clear and consistent framework for academic expectations across the U.S.
- Support from wide variety of for profit, nonprofit, and umbrella bodies; drafted and agreed upon by individual states

What are CCSS?

- Set of standards that break down the curriculum for grades K-12 in English Language Arts and Mathematics into clear, distinct units
- Teachers are aligned with what content to teach over the course of the year
- Benchmarks and yearly student evaluations test mastery of CCSS

Why Implement CCSS?

- One consistent set of standards that students across the nation are uniformly taught and expected to master
    - Currently each state has its own process for developing, adopting, and implementing standards
    - Difficult for content providers to achieve scale in current system
- Standards are meant to be clearer; consistent, streamlined expectations for material that will be tested
- Raises academic rigor for all students
    - Incorporates Career and College Readiness expectations to push all students to success

Impact of CCSS

Policy

- States have a choice whether or not to adopt CCSS – 46 states (excluding Texas, Alaska, Nebraska and Virginia) have currently adopted CCSS; adoption through state boards of education or state legislatures
- The federal government has the opportunity to support state adoption through tiered incentives, long-term financial support, professional development, research, and re-aligning federal education laws

Content Providers

- Must rethink content, not just reframe it
- Pearson, McGraw-Hill, and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt are marketing rewritten or revamped textbooks aligned with CCSS

Educators

- Gives smaller players opportunity to break into the market
- Teachers must restructure unit and lesson plans to accommodate new standards
- Students already behind academically may drop further as a result of higher academic standards

Students

- Students are now asked to do more than fill in a multiple choice test
- States will begin assessments aligned to CCSS during the 2014–2015 school year

Assessments

- States can choose their assessments from two consortiums, SMARTER Balanced or Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)
- Assessments will no longer be multiple choice; instead, they will be computer-based and will test a number of skills, including essay-writing and research projects

Arguments Against CCSS

- Expensive to implement
  - Schools and districts: must put infrastructure in place (e.g. computer hardware and connectivity) for state assessment; professional development costs
  - Content provider: must rethink content delivery; currently repackaging existing content, but ultimately will redesign instructional material to align with standards
- Difficult to implement
  - Teachers must rethink lesson plans, reteach concepts according to new standards
  - Given that CCSS are currently only defined for Math and ELA, teachers must balance new standards with legacy standards for other subjects (history, science, art, etc.)
- Standards are flawed
  - People have said that some topics receive skewed attention over others, content sequences are incorrect, English standards do not contain enough literature, etc.
- Failure rates may worsen to a politically-unacceptable level of student failure
  - Standards themselves will not make a difference in student achievement
  - Teachers may be used as scapegoats if standards fail
- National set of standards could lead to nationalized curriculum
  - Impedes local control; states have done and will do better on their own
  - Some fear this is a step closer to the federal government taking over CCSS; making it mandatory rather than voluntary
  - Three commonly referenced reasons people fear federal oversight:
    - Race to the Top contains financial incentives for implementing CCSS as evidence of raising academic standards
    - CCSS is built into NCLB waiver process as evidence of commitment, but is not mandatory
    - Department of Ed gave grants to develop Common Core-aligned assessments

Appendix

What are the Common Core State Standards?

Standards

Standards are divided into two categories:

- College and Career Readiness standards

- K-12 standards

Key Elements

- Consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn

- Knowledge and skills that are robust and relevant to the real world

- Aligned with college and work expectations

- Rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher-order skills

- Informed by top performing countries, such that all students are prepared to succeed in the global economy and society

- Media and technology are integrated throughout the standards

- Evidence-based

What are the Common Core State Standards? (cont.)

English Language Arts (Including Literacy in History / Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects)

- The Standards comprise three main sections:
  - Comprehensive K–5 section
  - 6-12 English-Language Arts
  - 6-12 Literacy in History / Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects
    - For these subjects, the focus is on HOW to teach the content, not WHAT content to teach
- Each grade-specific content strand is organized around four College and Career Readiness anchor standards that are identical from Kindergarten through 12th grade
  - Reading: Key ideas and details, craft and structure, integration of knowledge and ideas, range of reading and level of text complexity
  - Writing: Text types and purposes, production and distribution of writing, research to build and present knowledge, range of writing
  - Speaking and listening: comprehension and collaboration, presentation of knowledge and ideas
  - Language: conventions of standard English, knowledge of language, vocabulary acquisition and use

Mathematics

- Standards draw on conclusions from studies of high-performing countries that indicate the traditional U.S. mathematics curriculum must become substantially more coherent and focused in order to improve student achievement. The current curriculum is perceived to be "a mile wide and an inch deep"
- K-8 related standards are organized together into clusters, which fall under grade-specific domains
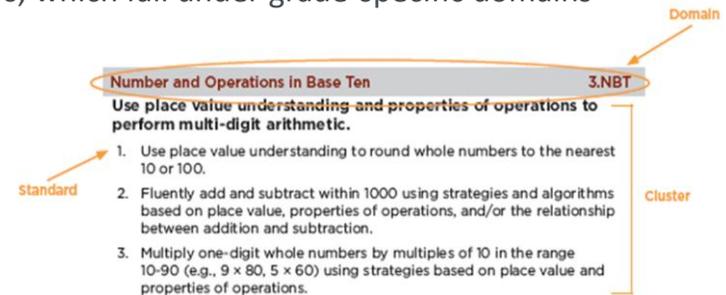
- 9-12 high school standards organized by conceptual categories: Number & Quantity, Algebra, Functions, Modeling, Geometry, Statistics and Probability
- 8 Standards for Mathematical Practice overlay K-12 content standards (i.e., reason abstractly and quantitatively, attend to precision, look for and make use of structure, etc.)

Why Use Common Core Standards?

Preparation
- The standards are college- and career-ready

Competition
- The standards are internationally benchmarked and will help ensure our students are globally competitive

Equity
- Expectations are consistent for all students, regardless of zip code

Clarity
- The standards are focused, coherent, and clear

Collaboration
- The standards create a foundation to work collaboratively across states and districts, pooling resources and expertise, to create curricular tools, professional development, common assessments and other materials

Assessment
- Comprehensive assessment systems to measure student performance standards that will replace the existing state-by-state testing systems.

Sample: College and Career Ready (CCR) Standard for Reading

The College and Career Ready Standards are identical from Kindergarten to 12th grade. Below is an example of how the grade-level content builds each additional year.

Standard 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas

Kindergarten
- With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story

Third Grade
- Describe characters in a story (their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events

Sixth Grade
- Describe how a particular story's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond to or change as the plot moves toward a resolution

Ninth/Tenth
- Analyze how complex characters (those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme

Eleventh/Twelfth
- Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed)