



Arizona Common Core Standards – Myths vs. Facts

Myth: The Arizona Common Core Standards are national standards.

Fact: The standards were developed through a state-led initiative spearheaded by governors and state school chiefs. The federal government was not involved in the development of the standards.

Myth: The standards are federally mandated.

Fact: The standards are not federally mandated. Arizona, along with 45 other states, voluntarily adopted the standards.

Myth: The Common Core shifts control of education from local school boards to the federal government.

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

Myth: Common Core will impede the work of charter schools.

Fact: Charter schools in Arizona generally support Common Core because they can keep their unique missions.

Myth: Arizona is locked into the Common Core and cannot make changes to the standards.

Fact: Arizona is committed to staying the course and supporting the implementation of the Common Core. However, the State Board of Education can make changes to academic standards at any time. Good standards shouldn't change too often, but over time should evolve based on what is learned from research, from educators in the field, and from student assessments.

Myth: The Common Core won't prepare students for college and career.

Fact: The Standards reflect the real-world expectations of what is necessary for students to succeed in higher education and the workforce, including critical-thinking, problem solving, and effective communication skills. To this end, the standards were developed using evidence that 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, among other data. Together with highly trained, well-supported teachers, the Standards will better prepare Arizona students for college and career.

Myth: The Common Core is not internationally benchmarked.

Fact: The Standards draw from the best existing standards in the country and are benchmarked to the top performing nations around the world, ensuring that our students are well prepared to compete with their peers abroad for the jobs of the future.

Myth: Arizona's old standards are better than the Common Core Standards.

Fact: The Standards have been well-received and are regarded by most commentators – across the political spectrum – as an improvement on the state standards they replace. For example, in a recent analysis, the Fordham Institute found that the Common Core is an improvement over the Arizona's past standards.

Myth: The Common Core Standards are a curriculum that tells teachers what to teach.

Fact: 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.

Myth: Implementing the Common Core will not require any big changes in teaching or learning.

Fact: The Common Core will require new methods of teaching that lead students to become critical thinkers and problem solvers with higher levels of subject mastery. Arizona teachers will need additional training and time to adopt more innovative instructional methods and deepen their content knowledge.

Myth: The Common Core does not have enough emphasis on fiction and literature.

Fact: While there is a shift towards including informational text in the standards, literature is included. 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 math standard does not address algebra until high school.

Fact: There is a great deal of algebra in the 8th grade standards and a strong focus on the prerequisites for algebra in the elementary grades. 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.

Myth: Common Core was developed quickly and with little public comment.

Fact: The standards were developed by a thoughtful and transparent process led by the National Governors Association and Council for Chief State School Officers. The process relied on teachers, experts from across the country (including Arizonans), and feedback from key stakeholders and the general public. NGA and CCSSO received nearly 10,000 comments in response to the draft standards, which were incorporated into the standards.

Myth: Arizonans were not involved in the creation of the standards.

Fact: Experts from Arizona were involved in the development of the standards. One example includes Dr. William McCallum, the University Distinguished Professor of Mathematics and Head of the Department of Mathematics at the University of Arizona, who was one of the lead writers of the math standard. Sarah Baird, the 2009 Arizona Teacher of the Year, served on the Common Core State Standards Validation Committee. Arizona teachers, superintendents, staff from the Arizona Department of Education, and others were also involved in reviewing and providing input to the standards.