



Doc H's Blog

**Kentucky Education Commissioner
Terry Holliday**



August 30, 2013

Top 10 things you need to know about the Common Core

In the next few weeks, parents will receive information about the performance of their school system, school, and student. Areas that will be reported include proficiency rates on state assessments in English/ language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Also, the reports will include information on achievement gaps, college/career-readiness, and high school graduation rates. Individual student reports will show parents how well their student is progressing toward the college/career-ready standard and how the student compares with other students in the school, district, state, and national levels.

These reports are built on the requirements from Senate Bill 1 (2009), the far-reaching education legislation that the General Assembly passed unanimously. The legislation required development of new standards that were more rigorous, fewer, and deeper. Also, there were requirements for the development of new assessments based on the standards and a new accountability system using the new assessments. To make certain the system was balanced, Senate Bill 1 also included program reviews in the arts and humanities, practical living, and writing.

Since the basis of Senate Bill 1 was the requirement for new academic standards that would ensure more of our Kentucky graduates are ready for college/career and to be competitive in today's global market, I thought readers might be interested in more information about the standards that Kentucky adopted and implemented.

Kentucky educators have logged hundreds of thousands of hours over the past three years translating the standards into learning targets, aligning curriculum, professional learning on how to implement the standards, and developing assessments, lesson plans and interventions to help students meet the standards.

These standards were based on the work of educators in 48 states and many partners in higher education. These standards were originally called the Common Core State Standards. In Kentucky, our educators interpreted the standards so they are easily understood and developed the Kentucky Core Academic Standards.

Here are the top 10 things readers need to know about the Common Core/Kentucky Core Academic Standards:

1. Common Core is working!

Since implementation of the Common Core (Kentucky Core Academic Standards), we've seen improved college/career-readiness rates, improved graduation rates, lower remediation costs and more successful transitions to college and career.

2. Common Core leaves Kentucky in control of its standards.

Kentucky educators and the public provided input into the development of the standards so we, as a state, helped determine what they cover. Kentucky's constitution calls for the state to establish a system of common schools, and common standards, as adopted by the Kentucky Board of Education under its authority, provide an equal opportunity for all students in the state to get a quality education.

3. Common Core empowers local school districts and teachers.

They get to decide how the standards should be taught and develop the curriculum and resources that work best for their students while ensuring students learn the content and develop the skills they need for success.

4. Common Core standards are more challenging.

In the past, many other states intentionally adopted lower standards in order to appear more successful under No Child Left Behind, cheating students of the level of preparation they deserved. Although Kentucky was NOT one of those states, the new standards are more rigorous than Kentucky's previous standards and on par with what are taught in leading countries around the world.

5. Common Core is great for students.

It promotes creative and critical thinking over rote memorization, and prepares students with the collaboration, creativity and communication skills that the workplace demands. By developing students' ability to think, reason and problem solve, they can internalize their knowledge and apply it to various situations rather than just regurgitate it for a test. It prepares students for success at every grade level and after graduation from high school. Students who graduate college- and career-ready are more apt to complete college or postsecondary training and land higher paying jobs.

6. Common Core is great for teachers.

The standards are clear, focused and easy for teachers and students to understand. In addition, common standards encourage teachers to collaborate, develop and share lessons, resources and what works in the classroom. This allows teachers to more easily individualize instruction to meet student needs and frees them up to create new, innovative, and more effective ways to actively engage students in the learning process.

7. Common Core is great for parents.

Because it is aligned with college- and career-expectations, students are better prepared for the demands they face after high school. College costs are reduced because there is less need for costly, remedial, non-credit bearing courses. Students are better prepared for success and are more likely to earn a college degree and/or get a job paying a living wage.

8. Common Core is great for business and will move Kentucky forward.

It equips students, our future workforce, with the skills that the workplace demands. A better prepared, more highly skilled workforce attracts new business to the state and allows current businesses to hire employees that are ready to work rather than having to spend money on extensive training or leaving jobs unfilled.

9. Common Core is great for taxpayers.

By working with other states, Kentucky was able to develop and implement new college- and career-ready standards mandated by the Kentucky General Assembly and Senate Bill 1 (2009) at a much lower cost than doing this solely on our own.

Plus, students who graduate from high school ready for college/career are more likely to be employed, pay taxes and have a positive impact on the state's economy; they are less likely to be dependent on state-supported unemployment, welfare and health care benefits or end up in the prison system. This will have a positive impact on our long-term economy.

10. Abandoning the Common Core will be extremely costly to Kentucky taxpayers and have a negative impact on educators and student outcomes.

Since Senate Bill 1 (2009) requires new standards, we estimate it would take a minimum of \$35 million to develop, train teachers, and implement replacement standards in English/language arts and mathematics. Teachers would react very negatively to having to replace standards again just when they are getting used to the new standards.

Terry Holliday, Ph.D.
Education Commissioner