



The Common Core State Standards (CCSS)/ Kentucky Core Academic Standards (KCAS) Myth vs. Fact

In 2010, the Kentucky Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as the Kentucky Core Academic Standards (KCAS). The standards were first taught and tested in Kentucky in the 2011-12 school year

Myth: *The federal government developed the standards.*

Fact: The federal government played no role in the development of the standards and does not govern the Common Core State Standards initiative.

Myth: *These new standards were developed by private interest groups based in Washington, D.C.*

Fact: The new standards were developed by states. Critics point to the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA) as “private interest groups,” but these groups are actually two state-led organizations that were asked by their members – state education chiefs and governors – to facilitate the state-led effort. The members of these organizations include Kentucky Commissioner of Education Terry Holliday and Governor Steve Beshear.

Myth: *The CCSS are not research- or evidence-based nor are they internationally benchmarked.*

Fact: The CCSS 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 CCSS build on the firm foundation of the [National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\) frameworks](#) in reading and writing, which draw on extensive scholarly research and evidence. Additionally, the [National Reading Panel Report](#) provided guidance to the CCSS, particularly on the Reading Foundations section.

In mathematics, the CCSS draw on recommendations taken from Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and other studies of high-performing countries that the traditional mathematics curriculum must become substantially more coherent and focused to improve student achievement, addressing the problem of standards that are “a mile wide and an inch deep.”

International benchmarking played a significant role in the development of the standards. In fact, an appendix lists the evidence that was consulted in drafting the standards and the international data consulted in the benchmarking process also is included in the appendix.

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

Fact: The standards drafting process relied on teachers and standards experts from across the country. Kentucky teachers played an important role in the review and release of the standards.

Myth: *The standards amount to a national curriculum for our schools.*

Fact: The standards are not a curriculum. They are a clear set of expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Nothing in the Kentucky Core Academic Standards discusses or requires curriculum. In Kentucky, the state sets academic standards, or the goals for what each child should know and be able to do by the end of each grade level. The curriculum is set at the local level. This process remains in place under these standards. Local school districts determine the best curriculum to help the teachers in their schools meet these academic standards. It remains up to each local school district, not the state or federal government, to select curriculum.

Myth: *The KCAS tell teachers how to teach.*

Fact: The best understanding of what works in the classroom comes from the teachers who are in the classroom. That's why these standards establish what students need to learn, but they do not dictate how teachers should teach. Instead, local schools and teachers decide how best to help students reach the expectations set forth in the Kentucky Core Academic Standards.

Myth: *Implementation of the standards will lead to government collection and sharing of private personal and family information via a national electronic database, including details such as family income, family religious affiliation, and parent's education level and biometric data (iris scans, DNA, and fingerprints) from students.*

Fact: No new data collection is required as part of the standards initiative and these standards are in no way tied to how data is collected at the state or local level. Neither the state nor local school districts collect data on things like religious affiliation, nor do we have the technology to collect biometric data on students.

Student data are highly protected and our efforts around student data systems fully comply with the law by adopting data privacy and security protections that meet the highest industry standards, exceed federal (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act or FERPA) requirements, and are designed to ensure that student data are used only for agreed-upon education purposes and not further disclosed. In no case would data ever be sold to anyone -- ever. The data are owned by the districts, and the Kentucky Department of Education protects it according to federal and state laws.

Myth: *These standards will dumb down education in Kentucky.*

Fact: These standards are considerably more rigorous than the previous standards Kentucky had in place for mathematics and English/language arts. An independent [study](#) by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute gives the Kentucky Core Academic Standards considerably better grades in content, rigor, clarity and specificity than previous standards which it calls "among the worst in the country." In addition, Kentucky's colleges and universities and the business community have told us that students who graduate from high school with mastery in these standards will be prepared for the rigors of postsecondary education

and the workforce. These standards were developed to be comparable with those of any other state in the nation and with the standards of any other country in the world.

Myth: *The KCAS only include skills and do not address the importance of content knowledge.*

Fact: The standards recognize that both content knowledge and skills are important.

The standards set a rigorous definition of college and career readiness, not by piling topic upon topic, but by demanding that students develop a depth of understanding and ability to apply this knowledge to new situations, as college students and employees regularly do.

In addition to English/language arts and mathematics, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in other disciplines through more reading, writing, speaking, and listening than ever before. The literacy standards assist in teaching deeper and richer content knowledge in all subjects. These standards acknowledge the important role of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language in developing and communicating content knowledge in ways that deepen understanding. For example, the writing necessary for a science lab report is very different than the writing necessary to craft a historical essay with support, or a business letter to a prospective employer. Students need to learn the reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills most relevant to communicating and understanding in each content area, which will lead to better mastery of content across the curriculum.

Myth: *The Kentucky Core Academic Standards prevent teachers from teaching fiction/literature. The standards ask English teachers to teach other subject-area texts.*

Fact: The standards require certain critical content for all students, including: classic fables and stories from around the world, America's Founding Documents, American literature, and Shakespeare. The standards contain no required reading list for teachers. The standards do provide guidance for teachers, schools, and districts in making decisions about what texts to use. To meet this goal, the standards include excerpted sample texts ([Appendix B](#)) that demonstrate the level of text complexity appropriate for grade bands. Teachers, schools, and districts understand the learning demands set out

in the standards, examine the exemplars for text complexity, and make decisions about what texts will best meet the needs of students.

In Kentucky, all reading lists and other content decisions are made at the local level. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Much of the reading done in high school, college and the workforce is of informational text. The Kentucky Core Academic Standards call for students to read increasing amounts of informational text as they move toward college and career readiness. This increased amount of nonfiction reading happens through reading in all subject areas, including science, social studies, history, and technical subjects to gain critical content knowledge. Fiction/literature remains a critical component of English/language arts classes.

The business community in Kentucky and across the country has told us that students need to be prepared to read, write and analyze informational texts before they graduate from high school. We know this is a critical skill in the workforce and have to make sure Kentucky students are prepared to meet it.

Myth: *The Kentucky Core Academic Standards for mathematics do not require students to learn basic math facts.*

Fact: In mathematics, the standards lay a solid foundation in the four operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of whole numbers, fractions, and decimals and specify grade levels by which students are expected to be fluent with basic facts. Taken together, these elements support a student's ability to learn and apply more demanding mathematics concepts and procedures. The middle school and high school standards call on students to practice applying mathematical thinking to real world issues and challenges; they prepare students to think and reason mathematically.

In addition, the standards set a rigorous standard for a richer acquisition of mathematical content by asking students to apply the mathematics at a deeper level and gain a conceptual understanding of mathematics while at the same time attaining speed and fluency with mathematics facts and algorithms (solve for x).

Myth: *Key mathematics topics are missing or appear in the wrong grade.*

Fact: The mathematical progressions presented in the Kentucky Core Academic Standards are coherent and evidence-based. Part of the problem with having 50 different sets of state standards is that different states cover different topics at different grade levels. Coming to consensus guarantees that, from the viewpoint of any given state, topics will move up or down in the grade level sequence. This is unavoidable. What is important to keep in mind is that the progression in the Kentucky Core Academic Standards is mathematically coherent and leads to college and career readiness at an internationally competitive level.

Myth: *The Kentucky Core Academic Standards for mathematics do not prepare or require students to learn Algebra in the 8th grade, as many states' current standards do.*

Fact: The K-7 standards build a strong foundation through which students are actively engaged in learning and understanding the prerequisite skills for a successful transition to higher levels of mathematics. Students who have completed 7th grade and mastered mathematics content and skills throughout the 7th grade will be well prepared for algebra in grade 8. At the same time, grade 8 standards are also included; these include rigorous algebra and will transition students effectively into a full Algebra I course.

Together, the middle school standards are robust and provide a coherent and rich preparation for high school mathematics.

