



Achieve

All students should graduate from high school
ready for **college, careers and citizenship**

Perspective Newsletter

October 2014

Commentary

The Common Standards Movement was State-Driven

Achieve President Mike Cohen was asked to present testimony to the Georgia House Study Committee on the Role of Federal Government in Education on October 21, 2014. His testimony highlighted the fact that although the federal government has historically played a role in major education initiatives, it did not play a role in the development of the Common Core State Standards; states remain in control of their own policies, standards, curricula, and assessments. Below is an excerpt from his testimony.

"State leaders chose to address common weaknesses collaboratively rather than 50 different times through the development of Common Core State Standards. Over the past decade, these weaknesses became increasingly evident to state education policymakers, educators, and the public. They saw mounting evidence that many states were simply setting expectations that are too low. In many states, undemanding standards and tests have been contributed to poor preparation for the 21st century economy, and resulted in limited options for many high school graduates, high remediation rates, and declining education performance compared with other countries with whom we compete. Addressing these weaknesses one state at a time would be costly, inefficient, and unnecessary,

particularly when the expectations of the knowledge based economy and a diverse and mobile population affect all states.

"Evidence that states could address these problems by working together came in part from the work of the 35 states in the American Diploma Project Network, launched by Achieve at a 2005 National Education Summit. Governors, business and state K-12 and postsecondary leaders in each of these states, including Georgia, committed to align their high school literacy and math standards, assessments, and graduation requirements with the academic demands of college and careers in their states.

"States started their work by forming teams of teachers, curriculum specialists, postsecondary faculty, and employers to reviewing their current mathematics and English Language Arts standards in the context of national and state-specific research on college- and career-ready skills. Achieve supported these state teams by convening state teams and providing them with technical assistance, research, facilitation support, and opportunities to share common challenges and solutions in aligning their standards.

"In 2008, Achieve released a study of 16 ADP Network states that had revised their state high school math and literacy standards to be aligned with the demands of postsecondary education and career training programs. The study found that, in contrast to the wide differences in state standards reported previously, there was a common core of math and literacy standards across these states. Disciplining the development of standards by focusing on the evidence about the knowledge and skills student must have to succeed in the real world led to quite similar standards across the states, because the real world demands do not vary significantly from state to state. The ability to read complex texts, make coherent

and logical arguments based on evidence, solve novel problems, have a strong grasp of basic mathematical skills and quantitative reasoning skills are universally required.

"Further, states had demonstrated the feasibility of a collaborative and state-led approach to developing common standards, without any federal involvement.

"In 2008, an advisory group co-chaired by Gov. Sonny Perdue comprised of educators, governors, and business leaders convened by the National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and Achieve recommended that states work together to benchmark their academic standards to those of high performing countries, and use the results to inform the development of common state standards."

Cohen's full testimony can be found here: [Link](#)

News



EQIP Update

Achieve announced this week that 50 lessons and units rated *Exemplar* or *Exemplar if Improved* are now publicly available to educators nation-wide.

The *Exemplar* rating indicates that a lesson or unit is well-aligned with the Common Core and ready for immediate use in classrooms; lessons or units rated *Exemplar if Improved* are aligned and require some improvement in one or more dimensions of the rubric. These materials reflect all grade bands (K-5, 6-8, 9-12) in both mathematics and English language arts/literacy. [More...](#)

Don't let politics block the Common Core

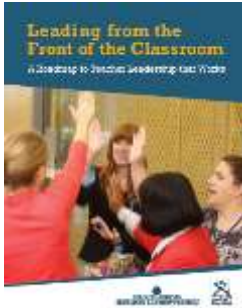
The Common Core State Standards were created with the intention of increasing college and career readiness for all students in the United States. Too often, politics and rhetoric drown out the standards' true purpose. These voices supporting higher standards argue that we need to keep politics out of the implementation of the Common Core so that all students can have the opportunities for educational excellence that they deserve. [More...](#)

Local Districts Require More Exams

Maureen Downey writes in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* that a new report by the Center for American Progress echoes the findings of early studies that most of the testing in U.S. schools is generated at the district level, not at the state or federal level. [More...](#)

New Resources

A Roadmap for Teacher Leadership



A new paper from the Aspen Institute and Leading Educators, [*Leading from the Front of the Classroom: A Roadmap for Teacher Leadership that Works*](#), provides practical guidance for designing effective teacher leadership opportunities. The paper gives grounded lessons from leading systems and a practical framework for designing and implementing teacher leadership effectively. It is a useful resource to district and state leaders who want to leverage teacher leadership to improve student achievement.

Headed to College



MDRC, a nonprofit, nonpartisan education and social policy research firm, published [*Headed to College: The Effects of New York City's Small High Schools of Choice on Postsecondary Enrollment*](#). Using college enrollment and degree attainment data from the National Student Clearinghouse, this policy brief provides evidence that the positive academic effects of attending an Small schools of choice (SSC) continue beyond high school. Findings indicate that attending an SSC in high school substantially increases students' enrollment and persistence in postsecondary education - a finding that holds true for students of a wide range of abilities.

Research on Common Core State Standards



The Center on Education Policy released a [compendium](#) of research on the CCSS. This compendium will inform policy discussions and implementation as well as future research. These studies are categorized into nine areas: communications and public opinion; comparison of CCSS content to wide-scale assessments; content, curriculum and alignment; cost analysis; governance and leadership; implementation; teacher preparation; professional development and testing and assessment. Achieve's studies of public perception of the CCSS from 2011, 2012 and 2014 are included.

Career Opportunities

Achieve has career opportunities [here](#).

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