

A Top Ten List of Unreasonable Reasons to Adopt The Common Core State Standards

The Partnership for Learning has provided a top ten list of reasons they say will accelerate student achievement and save the state money. They present this list as support for why Washington should adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Here is a look at those reasons one by one, with comments indented to consider with regard to each reason. Do any of these reasons lead you to believe they will accelerate student achievement and save the state money?

[A Top Ten List That Will Accelerate Student Achievement and Save the State Money](#) (0)

Reason 1: To date, 41 states have adopted the Common Core Standards. Washington is behind.

Many states planned to adopt the standards sight unseen before the standards were even written. Just because 41 states have adopted does not mean it is a good idea for Washington. Lemmings everyone?

Reason 2: Numerous education associations, businesses, nonprofits, and union groups support the Common Core, including: American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, Council of Great City Schools, National PTA, U.S. Department of Education and many more.

Some groups jumped on board to support the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) before they were even written. Does it make the standards good because these groups support them? What reasons are behind their support? All too often, the reasons have nothing to do with what is in the best interests of students.

Reason 3: Washington teachers support the Common Core. A survey by the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession indicates that 76 percent of Washington state National Board Certified Teachers support the state formally adopting the Common Core Standards.

The [Center for Strengthening the Teacher Profession \(CSTP\) surveyed](#) (1) 79 National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) who participate on the [CSTP Sounding Board](#) (2). It appears 30 of these teachers indicated they read the English Language Arts standards and fewer read the math standards. Does it matter that less than half of the surveyed teachers read the standards? [OSPI's website](#) (3) indicates WA had a total of 3,974 NBCT in 2009. Are the 79 NBCT Sounding Board teachers a representative sample or a convenience sample of all 3,974 NBCT teachers? The [OSPI Washington State Report Card website](#) (4) shows 59,487 classroom teachers in WA for the 2009-10 school year. Is this survey sample of 79 truly representative of all classroom teachers in WA? How about asking all of the teachers across the state? How about giving every elementary teacher a copy of the current 2008 WA math standards and the CCSS for their respective grade levels and ask which they prefer?

Reason 4. Washington voters support the Common Core. A 2011 poll by Partnership for Learning identified that 70 percent of Washington state voters support the state formally adopting the Common Core Standards. The Common Core Standards are similar to or higher than Washington's current standards. According to the Fordham Foundation's national study, *The State of State Standards*, Washington's standards are only slightly higher than the Common Core Standards in math and much lower in English-language arts than the Common Core Standards.

A 2011 poll by the [Partnership for Learning](#) (PFL) could not be found on their website. (5). The Partnership for Learning is a part of the [Excellent Schools Now Coalition](#) (ESN). The poll or survey the PFL is referring to may be the one showing the [results](#) found on the ESN website. What questions were asked? Was the sample representative of the population? Were people asked if they were aware of the CCSS? Were they asked if they have read any of the standards? Were 70% of those who opted to participate in the survey already familiar with the CCSS? That would be surprising. If they were, it is doubtful they are a representative sample of the voters in the state. It is more likely that most voters have never heard of the CCSS.

Reason 5. The Common Core Standards are similar to or higher than Washington's current standards. According to the Fordham Foundation's national study, *The State of State Standards*, Washington's standards are only slightly higher than the Common Core Standards in math and much lower in English-language arts than the Common Core Standards.

The CCSS English Language Arts standards did not receive an A rating. There is no reason WA cannot develop better standards or simply adopt proven and highly rated standards from CA or MA. As for math, why lower our standards. The CCSS A- and WA A math standards ratings may be close, but a lot of the similarities end there. The CCSS math standards are written in such a way that most teachers will find them difficult to interpret. This is in contrast to the WA standards that are very clear and written in plain language.

Reason 6. The Common Core will prepare Washington students for what's next. The standards were developed to ensure students graduate college and work ready. They identify the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in post-secondary education and training.

Do we need the CCSS to identify the knowledge and skills students need? WA could not identify the knowledge and skills without the CCSS? Will knowledge and skills really be taught? The SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium is developing assessments oriented to [assessing deep understanding and higher-order thinking skills](#) (7) (subjective) rather than testing for knowledge and skills (objective). WA can do as good a job or better preparing students for what's next without the CCSS.

Reason 7. The Common Core will prepare Washington students to compete: These standards are internationally-benchmarked against the standards of other nations and will help to ensure our students are globally competitive.

Statements and claims are commonly made that the CCSS are internationally benchmarked. This is a carry over from a promise that was made before the standards were written. The National Governors Association (NGA), the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) made this promise and it is often repeated as if true. The standards are not and were never internationally benchmarked. The CCSSI did not deliver on this promise and now says the standards “[are informed by other top performing countries](#)” (8). Maybe the CCSS will be internationally benchmarked in the future, but at present they are not internationally benchmarked.

Reason 8. The Common Core is equitable: The standards set expectations that are clear and consistent for all students.

Those promoting and making decisions about adoption that make the claim that the CCSS math sets clear expectations should read a whole grade level of math standards if they haven't already. Everyone is encouraged to compare the [CCSS math standards](#) (9) for grades 4, 5, or 6 (math at a level most people understand) and compare it to the same grade level of our current [WA math standards](#) (10) adopted in 2008. Many elementary teachers will have great difficulty understanding the CCSS math standards because of how they are written. Even Phil Daro, one of the CCSS math standards authors who chaired the CCSS Mathematics Workgroup, has recognized and acknowledged with a group of others that [teachers and schools will need help interpreting the CCSS for math](#) (11). Due to lack of clarity, the math standards will be inconsistently implemented and teachers will require an inordinate amount of expensive professional development.

Reason 9. The Common Core will create economies of scale: The standards will allow Washington to work collaboratively with other states and districts, pooling resources and expertise for affordable instructional materials and supports, consistent and high-quality professional development, and aligned assessment systems.

If this is so great, why weren't we doing these things already? Maybe we weren't allowed to and now these standards will allow us to. These things will be a big financial drain on the school districts and will generate a nice profit for the publishers and others providing support services.

Reason 10. Adopting the Common Core will save Washington money: Curriculum costs will decline because national publishers will be developing common curriculum sets based on the Common Core Standards. Additionally, adopting the Common Core Assessments will cut the per student cost of the state's assessment system in half (from \$43 per student to \$22 per student).

Save money? It appears it will cost a great deal of money for implementation of the CCSS and OSPI has not provided information about how local school districts will fund implementation. OSPI's report, [Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics: Analysis and Recommendations Report to the Legislature January 2011](#) (12) indicates estimated costs and fund sources and amounts related to implementing the CCSS. The total five year estimated state level and district level costs come to \$182,600,000. The state's portion is \$17,100,000, or 9.4%, and the local districts' portion is

\$165,500,000, or 90.6%. OSPI identified fund sources and amounts covering all but \$4,875,000 of the state's portion. Potential fund sources are identified for local school districts; however, it is not possible to determine fund amounts from any given source that would be allocated to support the implementation of the CCSS. How will local school districts be able to afford the costs? Is it fiscally responsible to commit to this without knowing if funds are available to meet the incurred fiscal obligations? Will we really realize a savings with the assessments if they are given two times a year? The assessments are heavily dependent on technology. How much money will the state and local school districts have to invest in the required technology? No one seems to be asking about those costs. Parents, taxpayers, local school districts, legislators, and others---is this okay with you?

(0) [A Top Ten List That Will Accelerate Student Achievement and Save the State Money](#)

(1) [ON COMMON CORE STANDARDS – SOUNDING BOARD SAYS...](#)

(2) Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession

[WA Teachers Weigh-In on Common Core Standards](#)

(3) OSPI website

[Washington Second in New National Board Certified Teachers](#)

(4) [OSPI Washington State Report Card website](#)

(5) [Partnership for Learning Opinion Polls](#)

(6) [What Voters Think about Excellent Schools Now's Agenda for Improving Education in Washington](#)

(7) [SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium Application Executive Summary](#)

(8) <http://www.corestandards.org/articles/8-national-governors-association-and-state-education-chiefs-launch-common-state-academic-standards>

Informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society;

(9) [Common Core State Standards for Mathematics](#)

(10) [Washington State K-12 Mathematics Learning Standards](#)

(11) [Curriculum Design, Development, and Implementation in an Era of Common Core State Standards: Summary Report of a Conference](#)

(12) [Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics: Analysis and Recommendations Report to the Legislature January 2011](#)