



A Union of Professionals

AFT & the Common Core State Standards

A WORK IN PROGRESS



Background on the Common Core State Standards Initiative

In June 2010, the Common Core State Standards Initiative, led by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, released the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for mathematics and English language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science and technology. These standards were adopted by 45 states, the District of Columbia, four territories and the Department of Defense Education Activity.

Ad Hoc Committee

The AFT believes that, if implemented carefully and with the needed supports and resources, these new standards will help improve education for all students. In 2010, president Randi Weingarten created the AFT Ad Hoc Committee on Standards Rollout to initiate an action plan so that all levels of the union—and our partners at the local, state and national levels—can ensure that the CCSS are implemented as part of a comprehensive standards-based system. This committee, which consisted of AFT state and local presidents, higher education representatives, state education issues coordinators and classroom teachers, met with the writers of the standards, representatives of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), members of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and other experts to develop recommendations for the appropriate rollout of the standards. These recommendations, which were adopted as an AFT resolution on May 19, 2011, are divided into six broad categories:

Standards Design—the AFT’s commitment to ensuring the continued involvement of

teachers, as well as commitment to advocate for the early consideration of all students in the development process of standards and other supporting materials;

Shift in Culture—a call for a shift away from excessive testing and test preparation and a *joint* effort to develop a high-quality, focused and coherent system;

Curriculum—options of rich curricula that serve as thoughtful guides to help teachers use their repertoire of skills to ensure students master the required content;

Professional Development—support, time and resources for appropriate professional development for school, district and state administrators, teachers and other classroom staff;

Instructional Tools, Time and Resources—appropriate instructional materials and resources, including model lesson plans, original text materials and exemplars of model instructional strategies; innovative use of and equitable access to modern technology for all students; and time for teachers to learn and collaborate; and

Assessments—high-quality, aligned, appropriate, timely assessments that are not used excessively or punitively.

AFT Teacher Involvement in the Development and Implementation of CCSS

The CCSS is an effort that has been supported by the American Federation of Teachers, beginning with reviews of the College and Career Readiness

Standards (the first step in the development process of the CCSS) to the release of the final grade-by-grade standards in June 2010. The AFT gathered a team of 30 teachers from around the nation to work collectively to bring judgment and real-world classroom experience to bear in drafts of the standards before they were released for public review.

Teachers Continue to Be Involved in the Process of Refining and Providing Feedback on Resources and Supports for Implementation of the CCSS

English language arts (ELA) and mathematics teachers have been engaged in developing additional resources for CCSS implementation in the areas of unit development and resource alignment, the videotaping of CCSS lessons and the development of parent letters.

ELA and math teachers also reviewed and provided feedback on Student Achievement Partners Evidence Guides for ELA and Mathematics. These guides are designed to provide concrete examples of what the CCSS shifts for English language arts and literacy as well as mathematics look like in daily instructional planning and practice. It is designed as a developmental tool for teachers and those who support teachers.

With strong input from teachers, *Assessing Alignment to the Common Core State Standards A Curriculum Review Tool for English Language Arts* and *Mathematics* were developed. These documents provide guidance in the review and development of curriculum and instructional resources, which facilitates real and significant improvements in teaching and learning.

In addition, the AFT Innovation Fund began soliciting teacher-driven ideas for implementing the Common Core State Standards in 2011. To date, the fund has made grants to union affiliates in Albuquerque, N.M.; Boston; Chicago; Cleveland; Jefferson County, Ala.; and Quincy, Ill. The grants support local and state AFT affiliates as they develop CCSS lessons and units, prepare future teachers to work in Common Core classrooms, and ensure that the needs of particular groups of students, such as English language learners, are met as the standards are taught.

In 2013, the AFT Innovation Fund plans to make a grant that “connects the dots” of teacher evaluation systems and the Common Core, so that teacher evaluation and development systems reinforce the instructional shifts necessary to ensure student learning of the CCSS.

AFT Conferences and Workshops for Supporting CCSS Implementation

In July 2012, labor-management teams from 22 districts nationwide convened at a CCSS stakeholders conference. Attendees were able to hear from practitioners on topics such as ways to engage the community, CCSS and English language learners, ELA and mathematics implementation strategies, assessment updates and additional ways to create work plans for district implementation.

In November 2012, labor and management teams gathered again for a “connecting the dots” conference. Attendees learned about aligning teacher development and evaluation and CCSS, using feedback within CCSS instruction, CCSS implications for instructional practice and tools for aligning lessons, units and curriculum to the CCSS.

In January 2013, some 135 participants from both labor and management convened for a Center for School Improvement Leadership Conference focusing on team building and strategies for school improvement. “Table talk” sessions provided opportunities for attendees to discuss the CCSS, teacher development and evaluation, community schools, Share My Lesson, and the AFT’s professional development offerings.

The AFT Educational Issues Department provides courses that also support quality implementation of the Common Core standards. For example, English language arts and mathematics courses are aligned to the CCSS and will be offered in summer 2013. The “Modules on Writing in the Common Core” course is under development. Additionally, the AFT continues to provide on-site technical assistance to locals as requested.

Online Resources on the Common Core State Standards

Share My Lesson

Share My Lesson is a place where educators can come together to create and share their very best teaching resources. Developed by teachers, for teachers, this free platform gives access to high-quality teaching resources and provides an online community where teachers can collaborate with, encourage and inspire one another. Share My Lesson’s Common Core Information Center is dedicated to all aspects of the Common Core from identifying aligned resources to illustrating instructional strategies to providing the latest news about implementation. Share My Lesson was developed by the American Federation of Teachers



and TES Connect, the largest network of teachers in the world. Everything can be accessed for free at www.sharemylesson.com.

Colorín Colorado

The resource section on Colorín Colorado, a project of WETA and supported by AFT, offers information to educators and parents about what the new standards will mean for English language Learners (ELLs). The Common Core State Standards and English Language Learners webpage provides a compilation of CCSS materials focused on ELLs; these resources continue to fill a void because most standards-related material lacks information specific to ELLs. The materials include video interviews with experts and practitioners, informational guides, a blog, ideas for lesson plans, and more. The Colorín Colorado team regularly engages with educators, researchers and policymakers regarding news from the field. Visit www.colorincolorado.org/educators/commoncore for more information.



AFT Partners

- Student Achievement Partners in collaboration with Helmsley Charitable Trust
- Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
- The Teaching Channel
- Hunt Institute
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Recommended Resources

- A complete list of recommendations from the AFT Ad Hoc Committee on Standards Rollout at www.aft.org/about/resolution_detail.cfm?articleid=1612
- Both assessment consortia have websites where you can find the most up-to-date information about their progress and activities:
 - PARCC: www.parcconline.org
 - Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium: www.smarterbalanced.org
- Alliance for Excellent Education—Accelerating the College and Career Readiness of the Nation’s Students (state cards) www.all4ed.org/publication_material/CommonStandardsStateCards
- This site provides free, high-quality resources to educators now doing the hard work of implementing these higher standards. www.achievethecore.org
- Visit the Common Core State Standards Initiative’s website to read the standards and learn more about them. You will find the standards and supporting appendices under “The Standards” tab. www.corestandards.org
- See the CCSS in action on the Teaching Channel. Click on the “Common Core” tab to see video clips of educators teaching the standards. www.teachingchannel.org/
- Tools for the Common Core Math Standards www.illustrativemathematics.org

For more information or to request support for your local or affiliate, contact:

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