



A Union of Professionals

Making Common Core Standards Work before Making Them Count Message Points

- The Common Core State Standards have the potential to transform teaching and learning and provide all children, no matter where they live, with the problem-solving, critical-thinking and teamwork skills they need to compete in today's changing world. But we have to make the standards work before we make them count.
- If we're able to step on the accelerator of high-quality implementation and put the brakes on the stakes, we can take advantage of this opportunity and guarantee that deeper, more rigorous standards will help lead to higher achievement for all children.
- We are calling for a midcourse correction: a moratorium on the high stakes—for students, teachers and schools—that are linked with Common Core assessments, until an implementation plan is developed in partnership with teachers, parents and the community and is field-tested in classrooms.
- States and districts are giving students assessments based on the standards that have not been fully implemented, without giving teachers the tools and resources they need to make these instructional shifts, and based on content students may have never seen. And these test scores may be used to determine if a student advances or is held back, to designate a school's performance, to evaluate teachers and even to decide school closures.
- The fact that these transformational changes are being made nationwide without anything close to adequate preparation is a failure of leadership, a sign of a broken accountability system and, worse, an abdication of our responsibility to kids, particularly poor kids.
- Teachers believe in these standards and want to make them work. A recent AFT poll found that 75 percent of teachers support the new standards, but it also found that they have not had enough time to understand them, put them into practice or discuss them with colleagues.
- This moratorium is a transition period to get it right. If we believe that these standards will equip our kids for the jobs of today and tomorrow, then we owe it to them to get it right.
- During this transition period, states and districts must work with teachers to develop a high-quality curriculum and professional development, provide students with the time needed to try out new methods of teaching to the standards in their classrooms, commit financial resources to ensure its success, and engage parents and the community. Then assessments should be field-tested to ensure that the curriculum, teaching and testing are actually aligned.

Message points – con't.

- If businesses field-test new products as a matter of course, why would we do something less in education?
- This moratorium is not a period of inactivity. It must be a time of intense activity in order to properly implement the standards. And during this time, teachers will still be evaluated and standardized tests will still be given. When states and districts get the alignment right—moving from standards to curriculum to classrooms to feedback and improvement—student success will follow. But until then, a moratorium on stakes is the only sensible course.