

The American Association of University Women believes that quality public education is the foundation of a democratic society. AAUW is committed to ensuring strong academic principles and bias-free public education that closes the achievement gap for all children.¹

AAUW strongly supports high-quality public education for all students. All students should graduate high school ready to succeed in their next steps. AAUW supports states' voluntary adoption of Common Core standards. If states choose not to adopt these official standards, AAUW urges them to adopt similarly robust and comprehensive standards. All students deserve a world-class education, no matter where they live.

What is Common Core?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative ("Common Core") is a state-led, voluntary effort that established a single set of educational standards for K-12 in English and mathematics. The standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to enter college programs or the workforce.

The standards establish what students need to learn, but they do not dictate how teachers should teach. Teachers continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of their students.

Origins and Current Status

The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) developed Common Core and continue to lead the initiative. Teachers, parents, school administrators, state leaders, and experts from across the country provided input in the development of the standards. The federal government had no role in the development of the Common Core and has no role in its implementation. The initiative is a state-led effort, and adoption of the standards is in no way mandatory.

Forty-five states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted these standards.

Common Criticisms

Critics of Common Core have called it a federal takeover, bad for teachers and parents, and requiring a set national curriculum.² However, states are not required to adopt Common Core. If a state does adopt Common Core, its schools are able to design their own teaching to meet the standards.

Another myth is the belief that adopting common standards will bring all states' standards down to the lowest common denominator, detrimentally affecting states with higher standards.³ Common Core States have an explicit agreement that no state will lower its standards.⁴ The voluntary standards are internationally benchmarked, supported by evidence and expertise about educational outcomes. Sadly, even in states that claim to be high performing, students still require remediation in their postsecondary work.

AAUW believes in holding schools accountable for demonstrating that they are meeting educational goals for all students. Testing is an important measure of student performance, but we know it is both problematic and discriminatory to rely on testing as the sole indicator of student progress. AAUW is supportive of provisions encouraging the use of multiple measures of student achievement which provide more flexibility. However, accountability must not be lost in the process. Transition to the Common Core will lead to better, fewer, and fairer tests for both students and school.

Importance of Successful Implementation

AAUW urges the public to leave politics out of education reform. The time has come for a facts based discussion on Common Core content, instruction, and assessment. Energy and effort wasted on "mudslinging" will detract from implementation.⁵ Instead we need to support the education professionals doing the work of implementing these standards.

Most teachers know that these standards are important, and that implementation will be difficult.⁶ Seventy-three percent of teachers support common core education reform and the same percentage acknowledge it will be a challenge.⁷ More than half of teachers (57%) in Common Core states think the standards will be positive for most students, 35% do not think it will make a difference, and only 8% of teachers believe it will have a negative impact.⁸

Teachers and parents hold the key to meaningful implementation of any educational reform. States have more success with Common Core literacy standards implementation when teachers are actively involved in the renovation, use time to collaborate on analyze student work, design curriculum, and create assessments.⁹ A report by the Fordham Institute found that implementation “gains traction when district and school leaders lock onto the Common Core standards as the linchpin of instruction, professional learning, and accountability in their buildings.”¹⁰ Best practices included “rolling out information about the standards gradually and deliberately, in the context of improved student learning and with enough advance notice that parents are not surprised by changes.”¹¹

Finally, governors, state legislators, and school boards must mirror this commitment by providing the necessary support and funding for implementation of education reform.

AAUW advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research. Since 1881, AAUW has been one of the nation’s leading voices promoting education and equity for women and girls. AAUW has a nationwide network of more than 170,000 members and supporters across the United States, as well as 1,000 local branches and 800 college and university partners.

Additional Resources

Position on No Child Left Behind/ Elementary and Secondary Education Act

American Association of University Women

www.aauw.org/resource/aauws-position-on-no-child-left-behind/

Frequently Asked Questions

Common Core State Standards Initiative

www.corestandards.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions

Primary Sources: America’s Teachers on Teaching in an Era of Change (3rd Ed.)

Scholastic

www.scholastic.com/primarysources/index.htm

Remodeling Literacy Learning Together: Paths to Standards Implementation.

National Center for Literacy Education

www.literacyinlearningexchange.org/remodeling-together

Common Core in the Districts: An Early Look at Early Implementers

Thomas Fordham Institute

www.edexcellence.net/publications/common-core-in-the-districts

¹ American Association of University Women. (2013). *2013-15 AAUW Public Policy Program*. www.aauw.org/resource/principles-and-priorities/

² See FreedomWorks. (July 26, 2013). *Top 10 Reasons to Oppose Common Core*. www.freedomworks.org/blog/iborowski/top-10-reasons-to-oppose-common-core

³ Common Core State Standards Initiatives. *Myths vs. Facts*. www.corestandards.org/resources/myths-vs-facts

⁴ Common Core State Standards Initiatives. *Myths vs. Facts*. www.corestandards.org/resources/myths-vs-facts

⁵ Thomas Fordham Institute. (2/26/2014). *Common Core in the Districts: An Early Look at Early Implementers*.

<http://www.edexcellence.net/publications/common-core-in-the-districts>

⁶ Scholastic. (2013) *Primary Sources: America’s Teachers on Teaching in an Era of Change (3rd Ed.)*.

www.scholastic.com/primarysources/index.htm

⁷ Scholastic. (2013) *Primary Sources: America’s Teachers on Teaching in an Era of Change (3rd Ed.)*.

www.scholastic.com/primarysources/index.htm

⁸ Scholastic. (2013) *Primary Sources: America’s Teachers on Teaching in an Era of Change (3rd Ed.)*.

www.scholastic.com/primarysources/index.htm

⁹ National Center for Literacy Education. (February 27, 2014). *Remodeling Literacy Learning Together: Paths to Standards Implementation*.

www.literacyinlearningexchange.org/remodeling-together

¹⁰ Thomas Fordham Institute. (2/26/2014). *Common Core in the Districts: An Early Look at Early Implementers*.

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¹¹ Thomas Fordham Institute. (2/26/2014). *Common Core in the Districts: An Early Look at Early Implementers*.

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