

Fully Adopt and Implement the Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards represent an ambitious, state-led initiative to outline what all students should know in K–12 English language arts and mathematics to prepare them, grade by grade, to graduate from high school ready for college or the workforce. Developed by educators and other experts under the leadership of the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Common Core State Standards were launched in 2009 and have since been adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia.¹

The Common Core State Standards are a potential game changer in terms of developing a more skilled, prepared U.S. workforce. In addition to being internationally benchmarked, they are significantly clearer and more rigorous than previous state standards and, importantly, aligned with college and employer expectations to ensure that U.S. students have the skills and knowledge they need to compete in the modern global economy.

Of course, higher standards do not guarantee better student achievement. Although the Common Core State Standards may serve as the spark that ignites action, positive impact will ultimately depend on successful implementation. Business leaders have an important role to play in communicating the value of the Common Core State Standards and ensuring their successful implementation, particularly because the initial test results can be misleading. When standards change, test scores tend to drop temporarily because the new assessments are more demanding. Likewise, when students first take assessments based on the content and skills included in the Common Core State Standards, their scores are likely to decrease until teachers become more adept in helping students learn the new content and skills. The business community's continued support is essential to maintaining a long-term commitment to the more demanding standards and tests.²

Policy Solutions

The Business Roundtable supports the full adoption and implementation of the Common Core State Standards as a pathway toward building a more skilled, prepared workforce. The following solutions will help ensure that the standards are successfully implemented:

(1) Ensure Improved Educational Outcomes: State and local policymakers should ensure that the shift to more rigorous standards results in improved educational outcomes, such as higher high school graduation rates with no need for remediation at college or work. Specifically, policymakers should:

- **Replace Previous State Tests:** To assess how well students understand the content and skills in the Common Core State Standards, states should replace existing tests with high-quality assessments. New assessments should use the capabilities of online testing, which can provide more accurate measures of student learning and more timely results. States should use common assessments, whether developed by a consortium of states (e.g.,

A CEO Perspective on the Common Core State Standards

“The Common Core State Standards maintain American hallmarks of rigor, states’ rights, economic competitiveness and accountability and should be supported and fully implemented.”

— Rex Tillerson, Chairman & CEO,
Exxon Mobil Corporation
Chair, Business Roundtable Education
and Workforce Committee

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) or other providers, which will improve the comparability of scores across states.

- **Hold Schools Accountable:** States should hold all schools accountable for achieving challenging, but attainable, growth targets for all groups of students on state assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards.
- **Prepare Teachers and School Leaders:** States should align teacher and school leader preparation and professional development to the Common Core State Standards, including best practices and instructional materials. Professional development efforts should also provide opportunities to develop and share lessons and analyze and use data to improve instruction.
- **Deploy and Apply Technology Effectively:** States should effectively deploy and apply technology to improve learning, teaching and management. Technology can be used to motivate students, individualize the content and pace of instruction, provide enrichment, and increase the productivity of K–12 education.
- **Communicate Expectations at the Next Level:** States should use the Common Core State Standards to help educators understand and communicate expectations at the next level, which will ease student transitions, especially between major grade levels (e.g., prekindergarten to kindergarten, middle school to high school, and high school to postsecondary education or the workforce).

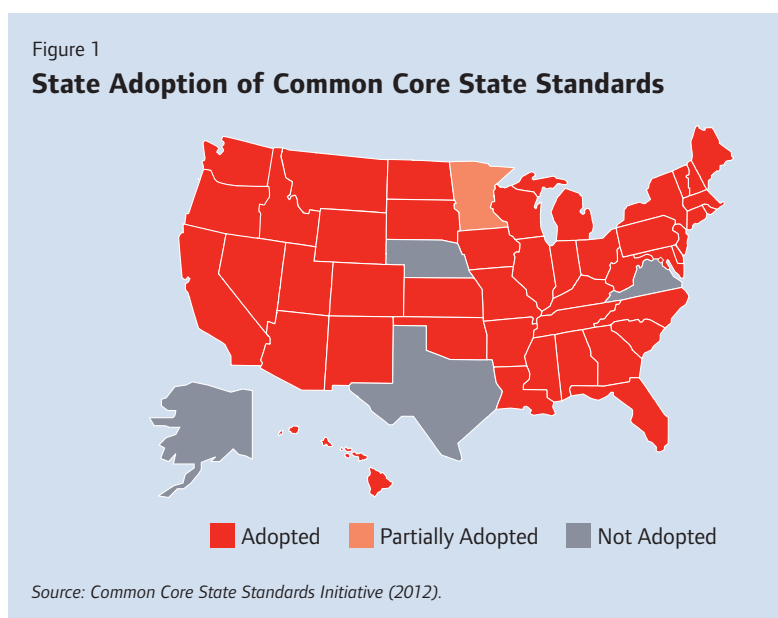
(2) Provide Multiple Pathways for Students:

Educators should use the Common Core State Standards to provide students with multiple pathways to college and career readiness. The pathways should provide academic content aligned with real-life applications, project-based learning and apprenticeships mapped to careers. They should also include clear information about the kind of

preparation those careers require. Students should have an opportunity to earn not only a high school diploma, but also college credits and workforce certifications valued by employers.

(3) Increase School Options: Federal, state and local policymakers should increase the number of public school options (e.g., charter, virtual, magnet, regular, etc.) available to parents and students. Whether selected by choice or assigned to students, all public schools should participate in their states' assessment and accountability systems.

(4) Create an Independent Organization To Review Curricula: Educators need an independent organization to create *Consumer Reports*-type reviews that assess how well curricula and instructional materials are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Although there is currently a shortage of high-quality curricula aligned to the Common Core State Standards, eventually curricula of varying quality will be available from both nonprofit and for-profit sources.



Independent reviews regarding the quality of these materials will assist educators with making well-informed, cost-effective decisions.

(5) *Reauthorize the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*: Congress should reauthorize ESEA, using data to improve the law and resolve problems that emerged during implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act.³ The Administration addressed many of these problems via state and local waivers, but these waivers should not serve as a substitute for Congressional action.

¹ Alaska, Nebraska, Texas and Virginia have not adopted the Common Core State Standards. Minnesota adopted the English language arts standards but did not adopt the mathematics standards.

² The Business Roundtable and its members are actively engaged in a number of outreach activities to support states' efforts to implement the Common Core State Standards. These activities include media outreach and work with stakeholders within the advocacy community, including teachers, state policymakers and education experts, among others.

³ For additional details, see Business Roundtable (2013). *Principles for Elementary and Secondary Education Act Reauthorization*. July 2013. Available at http://businessroundtable.org/uploads/studies-reports/downloads/Business_Leaders_Release_Principles_for_Reauthorizing_ESEA.pdf.