



Building the Machine: Common Core Movie Fact Sheet
Embargoed for Release until March 31, 2014

About Building the Machine

The creators of this movie would like you to think the Common Core State Standards were created in a cloak of secrecy by a small group without the input of teachers, parents, or the public. They also falsely assert that state and federal governments broke laws in replacing old state standards. However, the process—organized by governors and state education chiefs—included many of the most accomplished educators and academics from across the United States, was thoughtful and deliberative, incredibly inclusive, totally transparent, and completely legal.

- The movie is championed by the Home School Legal Defense Association. The film’s trailer uses spurious accusations such as:
 - “The federal takeover involved no teacher or parent input.”
 - “People with little experience are dictating education policy.”
 - “Common Core disincentives parent involvement. It stops parents from a deep and abiding interest in their child’s education.”
 - “You don’t pass the greatest education reform in decades without breaking a few laws in the process.”

The Home School Legal Defense Association will release the movie on March 31st.

Fact Check: The Truth versus False Assertions

ASSERTION: THE COMMON CORE WILL NOT BENEFIT CHILDREN.

FACT: NO LONGER WILL A ZIPCODE BE THE LEADING INDICATOR OF WHAT ACADEMIC GOALS A CHILD IS EXPECTED TO REACH.

The future of our children will depend on the next generation’s ability to gain family-sustaining jobs. Rigorous educational standards must be available to all children, especially those in poverty who need clear signals of what skills they need to succeed in college or a career.

Previously, the quality of state standards varied widely. In fact, a 2009 study by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—the Nation’s Report Card—found a large number of states had reading proficiency standards that would qualify their students as functionally illiterate on NAEP.

ASSERTION: THE STANDARDS ARE TOO LOW OR, ALTERNATIVELY, TOO HIGH.

FACT: THE STANDARDS PROVIDE ACADEMIC BENCHMARKS BY GRADE. IF THE BENCHMARKS ARE ACHIEVED, A STUDENT WILL BE READY FOR COLLEGE OR CAREER. THE BENCHMARKS ARE A FLOOR, NOT A CEILING.

The standards are too low:

Opponents claim that high school students who reach a level of mathematics proficiency equivalent to Algebra II will not succeed in STEM careers or gain admission to highly selective colleges and universities. Yet, even detractors such as James Milgram have acknowledged publicly that the Common Core math standards are better than 90% of the standards they replaced. (He acknowledges their superiority in the film, too.)

The fact is Common Core does not place a ceiling on achievement or learning. The standards do not dictate that students should only master the skills outlined in the Common Core. Instead the standards provide key stepping stones in a logical pathway to higher-level math such as trigonometry, calculus, and beyond. This pathway to higher-level math is not being provided to enough students today. Even the best students have not received sufficient mathematical preparation. On average, high school calculus students score a measly 1 out of 5 on the Advanced Placement test. In addition, half of bachelor's degree-seeking students and 70% of community college students require remediation. Only 10% of students who are required to take three semesters of remedial math ever pass a college level math course.

The Common Core will provide a solid foundation, but many students should go far beyond their expectations.

They are too high:

Other opponents claim that students should not be expected to reach Algebra II in high school. They assert this expectation is too high and will decrease the number of high school graduates. Yet everyone needs a base knowledge of mathematics, whether or not they choose to pursue college. The baseline the Common Core sets will allow students to enter college and take a college level algebra class, the minimum they will need to take to gain a degree.

ASSERTION: "THE COMMON CORE DISINCENTIVIZES PARENT INVOLVEMENT. IT STOPS PARENTS FROM A DEEP AND ABIDING INTEREST IN THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION."

FACT: WITH STANDARDS, PARENTS CAN CLEARLY ASSESS IF THEIR CHILD IS BEING CHALLENGED TO GAIN THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE NEEDED TO SUCCEED IN COLLEGE OR CAREER.

The existence of standards enables parents to clearly track if their child is gaining the necessary knowledge and skills to be ready for college or career. There were state academic standards before the Common Core State Standards. Previous state standards did not disincentivize parental involvement, nor do the Common Core State Standards.

ASSERTION: THE COMMON CORE WILL MAKE OUR CHILDREN “MACHINES” AND TAKE AWAY THE LOCAL CONTROL UNDER WHICH OUR DIVERSE NATION THRIVES.

FACT: LOCAL TEACHERS, DISTRICTS, AND STATES ARE TASKED WITH FIGURING OUT HOW THE HIGHER STANDARDS OF THE COMMON CORE ARE REACHED.

There is a lot of public confusion that equates the standards with curriculum. The Common Core standards are not curriculum, so they do not dictate what is taught in class, but instead put forward learning goals by grade (a sample Grade 1 ELA standard is: “retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson”).

Of course the Common Core standards don’t embody everything we want for our children’s education; they are focused on the two basic subjects of English and math. Schools will continue to have the flexibility to teach a comprehensive curriculum.

ASSERTION: “THEY THINK YOU’LL QUANTIFY EVERYTHING AND THIS WILL MAKE IT ALRIGHT. IT WILL MAKE US A NATION WHERE NO ONE IS BRILLIANT.”

FACT: THE COMMON CORE DOES NOT CALL FOR INCREASED TESTING. THE COMMON CORE WILL NOT ONLY RAISE STANDARDS, BUT ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO EXCEED EXPECTATIONS.

The Common Core State Standards are higher than almost all previous standards and shown to be as high as those in the highest achieving countries. Raising standards will raise expectations for students.

ASSERTION: THE COMMON CORE WILL AFFECT ALL CHILDREN DUE TO THE CHANGES IN THE ACT AND SAT ASSESSMENTS.

FACT: HIGHER EDUCATION HAS CALLED ON THE K–12 SYSTEM AND COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTING GROUPS TO MORE RIGOROUSLY EVALUATE THE HIGHER LEVEL THINKING SKILLS STUDENTS NEED FOR COLLEGE AND THE WORKPLACE.

The makers of the ACT and SAT answer to colleges and universities. Higher education uses these tests to determine if a student has the ability to complete college level work. Forthcoming changes to these tests—which aim to measure students’ abilities to use higher-order thinking skills and determine proficiency in the use of English and mathematics skills—verifies that colleges and universities value the college-ready benchmarks set in the Common Core.

ASSERTION: THE COMMON CORE WAS A FEDERAL TAKEOVER INVOLVING NO TEACHER OR PARENT INPUT.

FACT: TEACHERS WERE REPRESENTED AT EVERY POINT OF THE STANDARDS' WRITING, REVISION, AND VALIDATION PROCESS, AND PARENTS WERE INVOLVED BOTH INDIVIDUALLY AND AS A PART OF PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PLAYED NO ROLE IN DRAFTING THE STANDARDS.

Teachers were represented at every point of the process. Classroom teachers served on the writing and feedback groups as well as the validation committee. Groups such as the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Education Association, and the American Federation of Teachers organized their own teacher representatives to provide feedback. In addition, the Parent Teacher Association provided feedback to initial drafts and organized state chapters to have parents submit comments to the public period. Furthermore, during public comment periods the majority of input came from K–12 teachers and parents.

The creation of the Common Core State Standards was led by states. The federal government did not participate or influence the writing process.

ASSERTION: THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FORCED STATES TO ADOPT THE STANDARDS THROUGH RACE TO THE TOP.

FACT: THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DID INDEED PROVIDE A FINANCIAL INCENTIVE FOR STATES TO ADOPT THE STANDARDS, THOUGH MOST WOULD LIKELY HAVE DONE SO ANYWAY.

The federal government did provide incentives through the *optional* Race to the Top program for states to adopt bold education reforms, including higher standards. Each state made its own decision about whether to adopt Common Core and followed its own specific constitutional, legislative, or administrative processes to do so.

ASSERTION: LAWS WERE BROKEN WHEN THE COMMON CORE WAS PASSED.

FACT: EACH STATE FOLLOWED ITS OWN PROCESS TO ADOPT THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS.

No federal or state laws were broken when states adopted the Common Core State Standards. Each state has a standard protocol to follow when adopting state standards—in most states the responsibility is vested with the State Board of Education. In other states the responsibility for approving academic standards is held by the legislature or the state education chief.

ASSERTION: THE STANDARDS WERE DEVELOPED THROUGH A SECRETIVE PROCESS WITHOUT CONSULTING STATES, QUALIFIED EXPERTS, OR THE PUBLIC.

FACT: THE PROCESS TO WRITE, REVISE, AND VALIDATE THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS WAS INCREDIBLY INCLUSIVE, OPEN, AND TRANSPARENT. IT INCLUDED STATE REPRESENTATIVES, EDUCATION AND CONTENT EXPERTS, AS WELL AS THE PUBLIC.

Governors and state education chiefs drew on their networks to select the best academics, standards and content experts, as well as state and district officials, teachers, and principals. These leading thinkers formed development teams to write and provide feedback on the drafts, as well as a validation group. Using the best evidence and research on learning, those assigned with the responsibility for writing the standards focused on what students must be able to do to be prepared for college and career. State officials and their teams were keyed into the process at all times and the public had the opportunity to provide comments on the standards twice. More than 11,000 teachers, parents, and individuals submitted comments during two separate periods. This consensus-driven process ensured no single opinion or personality could overly influence the collective wisdom of the group.

ASSERTION: "PEOPLE WITH LITTLE EXPERIENCE ARE DICTATING EDUCATION POLICY."

FACT: NEVER BEFORE HAS A GROUP THIS HIGHLY CREDENTIALLED WORKED ACROSS STATE LINES TO POOL EXPERTISE ON THE BEST OF STATE STANDARDS.

There has never been an academic standards writing process with as many esteemed academics and teachers from across the country involved. The National Governors Association and the Chief State School Officers leveraged their network of local and state leaders to pull together leading content experts, teachers, and researchers who had devoted much of their life's work to the development of great academic goals and materials for students. Although many of these experts had played a key role in the development of their own state standards, never before had there been an opportunity to collaborate across state lines, share best practices, and build on the standards in existence in states like Massachusetts and California where the academic standards have historically been very high.

ASSERTION: "THOSE WHO DID NOT SIGN WERE EXPUNGED."

FACT: THOSE ON THE VALIDATION COMMITTEE WHO DID NOT SUPPORT THE FINAL STANDARDS WERE SIMPLY LISTED AS PARTICIPANTS, BUT NOT AS SUPPORTERS OF THE STANDARDS.

The members of the validation committee who would not "validate" the standards represented a very small fraction of those who participated in the entire process, and a small fraction of the validation committee. Those who did not sign are listed as participants in the validation committee, but are not listed among those who "validated" the standards.

ASSERTION: DETRACTORS, JIM MILGRAM AND SANDRA STOTSKY, HAD OUTSIZED ROLES IN THE CREATION OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS AND WERE THE ONLY MEMBERS OF THE VALIDATION COMMITTEE WITH CONTENT KNOWLEDGE.

FACT: IN A GROUP OF MORE THAN 130 EDUCATION AND CONTENT EXPERTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF THE STANDARDS, ONLY TWO ARE PUBLICLY CAMPAIGNING AGAINST THEM.

More than 130 people participated as members of the English language arts development team, the mathematics development team, or the validation committee. Participants were chosen due to their expertise and experience. The [development teams](#) were tasked with writing, critiquing, and revising the standards. The [validation committee](#) was tasked with providing a third-party verification of the standards' quality. Twenty-four of the twenty-nine members of the validation committee signed off on the final standards. Only two of the twenty-nine former members of the validation committee are actively campaigning against the standards. The detractors wrongly portray themselves as the sole content experts who participated in the process.

***See the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation document on the creation of the Common Core State Standards for further details.**

MORE INFORMATION ONLINE:

- www.thecommoncore.com
- www.highercorestandards.org
- www.businessforcore.org (For business owners)
- www.get2core.org
- <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards> (Offers exact list of math or English language arts standards, by grade level)
- <http://www.achievethecore.org/common-core-intro-for-parents> (For parents and community leaders)
- <http://pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583> (For parents)