

## The Case for Common College and Career Ready Standards for Alabama

The *Common Core State Standards* provide consistent and clear learning goals for all students in grades K-12 for English Language Arts and Mathematics, regardless of where they live. The state-led standards drafting process relied on standards experts from throughout the country, and included multiple opportunities for feedback from states and the public, allowing for the most thoughtful and transparent development process. The standards are designed to be rigorous and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that young people need to be ready for success in college and careers.

Developed in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders including content experts, state department staff, teachers, school administrators, parents and members of the higher education and business communities, the standards are:

- aligned with college *and* workforce training expectations
- built upon the strengths of current state standards
- evidence- and research-based
- informed by the standards of other top performing countries so that all children are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society.

States voluntarily participated in the standards development process and are voluntarily adopting the Common Core State Standards. The federal government has had *no role* in the development of the Standards.

There are four main reasons why Alabama should join 37 other states and the District of Columbia by adopting the Common Core State Standards, developed by a coalition of states during the past 18 months:

1. While existing Alabama standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics are strong, the Common Core State Standards build upon them and provide a clear and focused pathway for college and career readiness at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
2. Once Alabama adopts the Common Core State Standards, it can take advantage of the considerable economies of scale that can be derived from a partnership with 37 other states with regard to assessments, instructional materials and teacher preparation and professional development.
3. The nation's business community has indicated a preference to locate in states that adopt the Common Core State Standards because they include the skills necessary for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce and so that employees can be assured their children's educational opportunities will not be diminished.
4. Children of military families move more frequently than those from civilian families and the Common Core State Standards will provide predictability of academic expectations for students and their parents and less disruption as military families are asked to relocate.

## Strengthening Alabama's Standards

In English Language Arts, there are several key advances in the Common Core State Standards that build upon the work the Alabama has already done (see also page 5 for more details):

1. The standards are **anchored in college and career readiness**. There is a carefully constructed grade-by-grade progression of content and skills—a staircase of preparedness in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening and Language--that ensures students will be fully on the path to success.
2. The standards **spotlight what students read**, not only what they can do with what they read. The standards establish a “staircase” of increasing complexity in what students must be able to read so that all students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading no later than the end of high school.
3. The standards **offer new grounding in informational text** and place a premium on students building knowledge from that reading while, of course, providing critical attention to literature as a discipline. It is expected that literacy skills will also be developed in other content area subjects.
4. **Logic, reasoning and the art of argument** pervade all aspects of the standards. Beyond writing narratives, students will develop the ability to write logical arguments based on evidence from the earliest grades.

In Mathematics, the Common Core State Standards include a careful, logical progression of content and rigor from grade to grade and require computational fluency and mastery including these key advancements, again building upon the standards work that has already been completed in Alabama:

1. The Standards require that students know **addition and multiplication facts** from memory so they have instant recall.
2. The standards call for fluency with the **standard algorithms for all four operations** (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) so that students gain true mastery of whole-number manipulation, which is required of them as they are asked to master more difficult topics in later years.
3. The standards on **fractions are specific and focused** and build towards algebraic thinking, while including a clear path to the mastery of fraction arithmetic, another building block for success as students progress to the more difficult topics encountered in later years.

### Benefitting from Economies of Scale

Adopting the Common Core State Standards not only allows the state to develop its standards with input and expertise from a cross section of educators and experts from throughout the country, it also affords the state the benefits of sharing all of the tools that support implementation of those common standards. There are multiple opportunities for states to use resources more efficiently and to save money through the economies of scale achieved by a partnership of almost 40 states.

1. Assessments – Through a consortium with other states, a system of high quality assessments is being developed, which will include formative assessment items that will provide real time data to teachers and administrators so that instruction can be modified to address student needs throughout the school year. This system will be more robust than any state could afford to develop on its own and **will result in savings to the state.**
2. Instructional materials – Until now, most school districts have had to settle for whatever instructional materials were produced and hope that they were aligned closely enough to the state’s standards to support good instruction. With the adoption of the Common Core, publishers and designers are producing carefully and closely **aligned instructional materials** (including textbooks, technology based, and open source resources), which will give teachers and students access to higher quality instructional materials.
3. Teacher professional development and preparation - Adoption of the Common Core has spurred the design of **professional development to support teaching of the standards**, which includes how to use instructional materials and formative assessments effectively to improve student achievement. In addition, **colleges will align teacher preparation programs with the Common Core State Standards**, which will prepare new teachers to teach more effectively and allow teachers to relocate more readily in states that have adopted the Common Core.

### Providing a Skilled Workforce

The development of the Common Core State Standards has been supported and endorsed by national business organizations including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Business Roundtable. The U.S. Chamber believes the Common Core State Standards are essential to helping the U.S. remain competitive and enabling students to succeed in a global economy. Calling the Common Core one of the most important developments in the history of American education, the Business Roundtable expects the Common Core will help students in the U.S. achieve at the same levels as their international peers in high performing countries.

It is likely that in the future, businesses will consider whether a state has adopted the Common Core State Standards when making decisions about where to relocate or expand operations. Steve Rohleder, the Health and Public Service Operating Group Chief Executive from *Accenture*, participated in a panel discussion when the Common Core State Standards were released at an event on June 2, 2010 in Suwanee, GA. He said that adoption of the Common Core could be a key criteria used by business to decide whether to move from one state to another as the first questions employees ask when considering a relocation is the quality of the education system. See and listen to Steve's comments beginning at the 7:55 minute point of the video found at <http://corestandards.org/presentations/watch/4>.

In addition, more than 60 companies from across the nation signed a letter in support of the Common Core State Standards, encouraging states to adopt them. (see the letter and the list of companies that signed on beginning on page 5; it can also be found on the Common Core State Standards website at: [http://corestandards.org/assets/k12\\_statements/Business\\_Endorsement\\_Letter\\_on\\_CCSS.pdf](http://corestandards.org/assets/k12_statements/Business_Endorsement_Letter_on_CCSS.pdf)).

### *Addressing Military Mobility*

Almost 1.5 million children of military families are school-aged and more than 80% of them attend public school systems within the United States. Many of these families will be asked to relocate from six to nine times before those children graduate from high school. States that adopt the Common Core State Standards give those children and their families predictability with regard to the concepts and skills that students will be asked to master at each grade level. In the future, when asked to move, military families can do so with the confidence that their children will be held to the same expectations in every state that is implementing the Common Core State Standards and that they will be prepared for success in college and the workforce after high school graduation.

In January 2010, the Military Child Education Coalition sent a letter of strong support and endorsement of the Common Core State Standards signed by its President and CEO, Dr. Mary M. Keller (see page 8 and also found at: [http://corestandards.org/assets/ccsi\\_statements/StatementMilitaryChildEducationCoalition.pdf](http://corestandards.org/assets/ccsi_statements/StatementMilitaryChildEducationCoalition.pdf)). In addition, the United State Army Accessions Command issued a press release offering its support for the development of common standards to address the issues faced by children of military families as they transition between schools.

## **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects**

The English Language Arts standards include specific references to the development of literacy skills in other content areas. This change allows elementary school students to build background knowledge so they are better prepared for the rigorous demands of high school coursework. At the secondary level, it means shared responsibility for students' literacy development by other content area teachers. It also ensures that students read the kinds of sophisticated informational texts that will be required in college and the workforce.

### **Reading**

- The standards establish a “staircase” of increasing complexity in what students must be able to read so that all students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading no later than the end of high school. The standards offer numerous sample texts to help teachers prepare for the school year and allow parents and students to know what to expect.
- The standards also require the across-the-curriculum emphasis on students' ability to read and comprehend informational text so that students advancing through the grades are able to gain more from whatever they read.
- The standards mandate certain critical types of content for all students, including foundational U.S. documents, seminal works of American literature, and the writings of Shakespeare.

### **Writing**

- The ability to write logical arguments based on substantive claims, sound reasoning, and relevant evidence is a cornerstone of the writing standards, with opinion writing—a basic form of argument—extending down into the earliest grades and across-the-curriculum.
- Research—both short, focused projects (such as those commonly required in the workplace) and longer term in depth research—is emphasized throughout the standards.
- Annotated samples of student writing accompany the standards and help establish adequate performance levels in writing arguments, informational/explanatory texts, and narratives in the various grades.

### **Speaking and Listening**

- An important focus of the speaking and listening standards is purposeful academic discussion in one-on-one, small-group, and whole-class settings.
- Formal sharing of information and concepts, including through the use of technology is also highlighted.

### **Language**

- The standards expect that students will grow their vocabularies through a mix of conversations, direct instruction, and reading. Students are required to determine word meanings, appreciate the nuances of words, and steadily expand their repertoire of words and phrases.
- The standards recognize that students must be able to use formal English in their writing and speaking but that they must also be able to make informed, skillful choices among the many ways to express themselves through language.

### **Media and Technology**

Just as media and technology are integrated in school and life in the twenty-first century, skills related to media use (both critical analysis and production of media) are integrated throughout the standards.

## **BUSINESS LETTER IN SUPPORT OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS**

As companies and business organizations, we believe that it is imperative that ALL American students have access to an education that will prepare them for the opportunities and challenges they will face after high school. In a competitive world economy where education and/or training after high school is increasingly the norm for access to good jobs, to prepare students for anything less is, by definition, to deny opportunity.

Unfortunately, today, too few high school students graduate and, among those who do, too few graduate well-prepared for life after high school. In order to prepare today's students for the challenging world they will encounter, it is critical that we set the right expectations. For this reason, we believe states need to have K-12 standards that will prepare all students by the end of high school for success in college and careers.

Currently, each state sets its own standards. This has led to a nation with 50 sets of inconsistent standards, even though the expectations of colleges and employers in math and English are nearly universal and are not bound by state lines.

We believe that the Common Core State Standards Initiative, led by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, has produced K-12 standards in the foundational subjects of math and English that meet the business community's expectations: they are college- and career-ready, grounded in evidence and internationally-benchmarked. We, the undersigned companies and organizations, support the adoption of the Common Core State Standards by the states.

The Common Core State Standards are an important opportunity to set consistent, focused, rigorous expectations for all students; a necessary foundation for making the changes needed to improve student achievement and ensure the United States' educational and economic preeminence.

Accenture

ACT, Inc.

AdvanceED

Advance Illinois

Aetna

Association of American Publishers

BAE Systems

Battelle

Berkshire County Regional Employment Board, Inc.

The Boeing Company

Business Coalition for Student Achievement

The Business Coalition for Educational Excellence at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce

The Business Council of New York State, Inc.

Business-Higher Education Forum

Business Roundtable

Dell Inc.

Eastman Chemical Company

Eastman Kodak Company  
Evans Newton Incorporated  
Georgia Chamber of Commerce  
Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education  
GlaxoSmithKline  
Greater Oklahoma City Chamber  
Greater Phoenix Leadership  
Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce  
Greenville Chamber of Commerce, Greenville, SC  
Harper Industries, Inc.  
Hawaii Business Roundtable  
IBM Corporation  
Illinois Business Roundtable  
Illinois Quad City Chamber of Commerce  
Indiana Chamber of Commerce  
ING  
Intel Corporation  
Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce  
Knoxville Chamber  
Laurinburg/Scotland County Area Chamber, Laurinburg, NC  
MetaMetrics  
Microsoft  
Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce  
National Association of Manufacturers  
Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry  
Nevada Manufacturers Association, Carson City, Nevada  
New Mexico Business Roundtable  
Ohio Business Roundtable  
Partnership for 21st Century Skills  
Partnership for New York City  
Pennsylvania Business Council  
Qualprint  
Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce, Rochester, Minnesota  
Rockwell Automation  
Rockwell Collins  
Rodel Charitable Foundation of Arizona  
SAS Institute, Inc.  
Software & Information Industry Association  
State Farm Insurance  
Tennessee Business Roundtable  
Tennessee Chamber of Commerce & Industry  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce  
Verizon Communications, Inc.  
Wireless Generation  
Worldwide Interactive Network (WIN)  
Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber



...for the sake of the child

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January 12, 2010

Subject: Letter of Endorsement of the Common Core Standards

The Military Child Education Coalition strongly supports and endorses the efforts related to the Common Core Standards. Today there are over two million military-connected children from birth to age 21. These children live America's foreign policy. Almost 1.5 million of these children are school-aged (pre-kindergarten through grade 12). Over 80% of military-connected children attend public school systems within the United States.

More often than not, military-connected students experience a life characterized by the turmoil of school moves and frequent separations from a deployed parent. The average military-connected child will move three times more frequently than their civilian classmates (six to nine times) from starting school through high school graduation. Clearly, different state standards pose major problems for these students and their parents. Each state's unique curriculum, specific materials, and different format for assessments become additional requirements or hurdles to be overcome.

All children deserve thorough and thoughtful standards; highly mobile military-connected students deserve predictability. As military assignments or family circumstances resulting from a parent's deployment lead to school moves, parents and students need to be confident that these transitions will not increase turbulence in student's lives or endanger their opportunity to achieve. They also need to know that no matter where they attend school, they will have the chance to master those concepts and skills that ensure successful study at the post secondary level and prepare them to enter the world of work.

The Military Child Education Coalition applauds the leadership of the National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State Schools Officers, Achieve, ACT, Inc., the College Board, and all those organizations and individuals involved in developing and adopting the common core standards. When completed, these standards will enable military families and other mobile populations to finally have a common, high quality reference point that delineates expectations across state lines and grade levels. We lend the support of our organization to this vital effort.

On behalf of America's military-connected children and their parents—thank you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary M. Keller".

Mary M. Keller, Ed.D.  
President and CEO