



Do our Communities Understand the Difference Between Standards and Curriculum?

The recent elections have everyone talking about what it means for the AZCCRS/Common Core. While many are talking about the fate of the standards, I wonder, do most people understand the difference between a standard and curriculum? It's important to consider the distinction between standards and curriculum and understand how much of an impact one really has on the other.

Let's say a state wants all students to know how to read an essay and determine the author's position and the arguments he or she used to support that position. That would be a **standard**. In practical terms, the **curriculum is how** that standard is taught. The curriculum would essentially take into consideration the specific teaching materials, a lesson plan, and methods of teaching; things our teachers are trained to develop and implement. Getting students to understand an author's argument doesn't dictate the types of materials a district uses to teach and it doesn't force teachers into a particular lesson plan.

We need to continue to message accurate information about the standards and what they are asking students and teachers to do. The AZCCRS/Common Core is not a curriculum. Below is an article written by a teacher on how the standards (not the curriculum) changed the way students are learning. – Cheryl Mango-Paget

It's working: A teacher's report on the Common Core By Pat Sprinkle

A recent Gallup Poll reveals our nation's teachers are divided on the Common Core State Standards. From the perspective of teachers, disgruntled from decades of changing standards, many see the recently decreased test scores and students authentically struggling on deep and meaningful tasks, and assume the worst—it must be a fault in the Common Core and the exams. These critiques have been echoed by others and represent a serious misunderstanding of what is occurring in classrooms across the United States where the Common Core standards are being implemented. The truth lies in the fact that teachers in states who have had more time and experience with the Common Core increasingly support the new standards.

From the perspective of a teacher, I see the exact opposite of what those opposed to the Common Core describe. The Common Core provides exactly what students need—high standards that are pushing educators and students to excellence every single day. I want schools that will allow all children to discover their passion, give them the tools to follow that passion and help them succeed in 21st century colleges and careers. As we have seen in Kentucky, Common Core implementation has coincided with [higher performance](#) and greater participation on the ACT. While correlation does not prove causation, it should come as no surprise that a focus on close reading and analysis of text ultimately leads to greater college and career readiness.

As a teacher at a high school with students of all ability levels, I knew the implementation of the higher standards of the Common Core would be difficult. In this difficulty I found strength: strength in myself as an educator, strength in my supervisor in supporting me, strength in my peers in collaboration, and most important, strength in my students who worked harder than they had ever been expected to. The higher you raise the bar, the higher our children will climb with the love and support from their school community.

Let's take a unit on President Lyndon Johnson from my high school curriculum. Before the Common Core, students would have heard a lecture, memorized the endless legislative accomplishments of LBJ, and hopefully learned about how the Vietnam War hampered the Johnson presidency. **In a Common Core-aligned lesson, students synthesize LBJ's different speeches, analyze different historical interpretations, and use critical thinking to write argumentative essays and historiographies. This new approach challenges students, all while developing perseverance, a prerequisite to ensuring that our students can overcome challenges they will inevitably encounter in the real world.**

In a class survey, several students commented about how their learning changed in our history class. One student wrote that she felt "challenged, but supported", and another celebrated her development as a writer and a public speaker due to the rigorous learning environment partially created by the Common Core. I can attest to the fact that it is more difficult to create deeply enriching Common Core aligned lessons, but this is the education our children deserve.

Our students also deserve assessments that measure hard work and increased achievement in the classroom. While student proficiency scores have dropped throughout New York State, we are finally being honest with our students and families about their starting point and the necessary growth we will need to make together. The Regents Exam reflects the changes I'm making in my classroom. Challenging, analytical responses rather than rote memorization questions have become the norm in my classroom, and new standards reflects this.

The Common Core empowers communities to improve learning NOT by mandating how to teach, but by setting ambitious goals. It is important to recognize that the Common Core alone will not achieve anything. Without effective pedagogy, deep and engaging professional development, the Common Core will not come alive for teachers and students. Pat Sprinkle is a sixth-year Advanced Placement United States History and United States Government and Politics at the New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies.

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Contact Us:

Cmango-paget@coconino.az.gov

Newsletter

Contributors:

Cheryl Mango-Paget,
Hesper Petersen

Resources

Here are a few links containing additional information, including details on what each child will be expected to know and do in each grade and tips for parents:

<http://ccesa.az.gov/>

To view the detailed testing calendar, [click here](#).

www.azed.gov/AzMERIT

<http://www.azed.gov/assessment/azsampleassessmentitems/>

<http://achievethecore.org/>

<https://www.engageny.org/>

www.corestandards.org

www.pta.org/parentsguide

<http://www.azed.gov/standards-practices/files2012/05/rttt-implementation-plan-2-6-12.pdf>

www.theteachingchannel.org/

