

## Testimony on Common Core State Standards

Chairman Farrow, Chairman Thiesfeldt, members of the committees, thank you for the opportunity to join you today to discuss the Common Core State Standards. My name is Tim Schell and I am the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Waunakee Community School District. My role in the district is to work with our teachers and principals in developing our instructional program. I will speak to the role of academic standards, how we have implemented the Common Core in Waunakee, and my overall assessment of the Common Core for our state.

Academic standards set benchmarks for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Wisconsin has had state standards in place since 1998. These state standards provided overall guidance, but local school districts have made independent decisions on curriculum, instructional materials, and local assessments. Classroom teachers use their professional judgment in using these resources in their teaching to help their students meet these expectations. Standards do not specify curriculum and they certainly do not dictate what is happening in classrooms. Standards set expectations that are a floor, not a ceiling. For example, in Waunakee Algebra is our primary math course for 8<sup>th</sup> graders in our Middle School. This exceeds the expectations of the 1998 state standards. Common Core is replacing the 1998 state standards but our district retains local control over curriculum and instruction as always.

Waunakee has been working with Common Core for more than three years. Our department chairs and Curriculum and Instruction began following the development process and the draft standards in the 2009-2010 school year. Principals and teacher leaders attended regional trainings in 2010-2011 to review the standards in detail and understand the major shifts from the old Wisconsin standards. The Common Core has been a major theme of our professional development, materials review and

adoption, and curriculum projects in English Language Arts and Mathematics for the last three years. Our elementary and intermediate school report cards are updated to reflect the new expectations this year. Our teachers find the standards very helpful and set strong expectations.

We emphasize continuous improvement of all our programs and have a regular cycle for program evaluation and review and purchase of instructional materials. The Common Core expectations aligned well with our existing initiatives to improve our literacy and mathematics programs, so the additional cost has been limited. For several years now, we have been focusing on disciplinary literacy to increase the rigor of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and critical thinking in all content areas at the secondary level, not only English classes. The Common Core's emphasis on increasing disciplinary literacy and rigor across the subjects added wind to our sails and we are seeing the results in increased student achievement.

Our work of improving learning opportunities for our students is never done, but at this stage we have made our adjustments to the Common Core expectations and would not settle for the lower expectations of the 1998 standards. We have not narrowed our curriculum at all and are confident that we are improving the expectations and learning opportunities for our students, which will open more doors for them after graduation.

Overall, the Common Core State Standards are strong academic standards and certainly more specific and rigorous than the 1998 standards they replace. Waunakee has high expectations and high student achievement and we have been stretched to increase our rigor as we have worked to align with the Common Core. Text complexity, modes of writing, earlier introduction of the important fractions and ratio topics are a few examples and there are more. The Common Core raises the floor of expectations in Wisconsin. No standards are perfect, but the Common Core standards are a clear step forward for

Wisconsin and the higher expectations will provide our students with more opportunity. They are excellent standards and I feel that is one reason some parochial school systems are beginning to adopt them.

Wisconsin's Constitution calls for the establishment of public schools "which shall be as nearly uniform as practicable." Shared expectations for what students should be able to know and do, the role of academic standards, are an important topic that should interest everyone. I hope today's hearing and those in the future are useful in developing understanding of the Common Core and why they are a step forward for our students. Thank you for your time on this important issue and your public service.

I would be happy to discuss this topic at greater length with you as a group or individually.

Tim Schell

[tschell@waunakee.k12.wi.us](mailto:tschell@waunakee.k12.wi.us)

608-849-2025

Please accept the following as written testimony for the hearings being held by the Select Committee on Common Core

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To: Senator Paul Farrow, Chair  
Select Committee on Common Core

From: Michael P. Garvey, Ph.D.  
District Administrator  
Johnson Creek School District

Date: October 1, 2013

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Dear Senator Farrow and Select Committee Members:

My name is Dr. Michael Garvey and I have the privilege of serving the Johnson Creek School District as its District Administrator. I have spent the past seventeen years as a District Administrator and I am in my eighth year leading Johnson Creek.

I understand the comments which Governor Walker has made that Wisconsin can develop academic standards better than the Common Core. That may be a true statement. However, we have traveled down that road before. Our Wisconsin Model Academic Standards were lengthy, cumbersome, and caused problems when standards that were developed to "aspire to", were used as "minimum standards". A great percentage of the Model Academic Standards were easy to adopt--good things we wish to see in all kids--but not easily assessed. This caused a state assessment system which assessed the standards that could be "assessed using a paper and pencil" and left many quality standards assessed only locally. The Model Academic standards were a "mile wide" and an "inch deep".

The Common Core standards have great depth. They allow for content specific standards to be used across the state and throughout the US as well. As a mobile-global society, we see students transferring within the state and between states. Having a shared set of standards is very beneficial from a logistical standpoint. We have moved away from memorization (the curricular outcomes we were assessed against when we were students) to real critical thinking.

A common misconception from folks outside of education is that standards, curriculum and instruction are interchangeable terms. They are not. They complement each to educate our children. Standards can be considered the base. Districts develop curriculum which will allow staff to present information and provide students the opportunity to develop skills to meet the standards. The method of presentation, the skill practice, the exposure to businesses, etc. is the instructional piece. Having standards across Districts, the state, and throughout the country

brings validity to assessment comparisons, provides for greater mobility of student learning, and strengthens the preparation of our young people for college and the workforce.

We know that the past few years have been contentious in the state capitol. Education somehow became a partisan issue. Johnson Creek is in both the Madison and Milwaukee media markets (or in neither depending upon whom you ask). Each evening on television we saw protests, educated individuals arguing and even some unprofessional activity throughout the passage of Acts 10 and 32.

The reality is that the majority of the state does not live in Milwaukee or Madison nor do they live in a major media market. The reality is that educators, administrators and School Board Members continued to work hard around the state, away from the media, to educate our students. The Common Core Standards were adopted in 2010 and schools across this state have been preparing for the complete local adoption over the past 3 years.

I am able to brag that Johnson Creek is leading our area in the adoption of the Common Core. We have changed our instructional practice and our curriculum to align with the Common Core Standards. Our staff have put in thousands of hours on the adoption of Common Core Standards because as a District, we believe in the Common Core Standards. We adopted the ACT Suite long before it became a state budget discussion item. Early adoption of the Common Core has helped move our MS/HS from a "School of Focus" to "meets expectations" and our District as a whole to "exceeds expectations" in the new state report card system. We expect even better results as we move forward. Our ACT scores and participation grew last year as well.

I am confident that a detailed examination of the Common Core standards would shed some light on their value. As Dr. Evers stated in his June 2, 2010 press release, "These standards are aligned with college and career expectations, will ensure academic consistency throughout the state and across other states that adopt them, and have been benchmarked against international standards from high-performing countries." I have been on the front lines observing how hard our staff members have worked to bring adoption of Common Core in Johnson Creek to fruition. Our staff members have modernized their instructional practices. Our curriculum is stronger because we have a stronger base in the Common Core Standards. Our students are benefiting by developing critical thinking skills.

I would personally be more than willing to visit with any of you and also invite you to speak with our Director of Teaching and Learning Lisa Krohn who continues to lead Johnson Creek on this transformational journey.

I urge you and your legislative colleagues to work hard to continue to support quality education in the state. I am the first one to request local control. I believe that local control sets us apart from other states--in a good way. However, if we will continue to be assessed on a state determined set of standards, please adopt a set of standards which are created to help our students succeed and not standards as a result of political interests. We have such standards available in the Common Core. Please support the Common Core Standards as our state's academic standards.

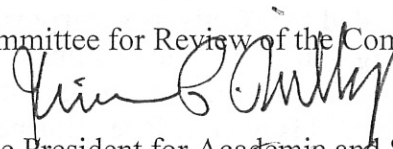
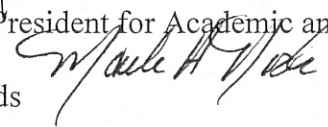


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October 3, 2013

TO: Members of the Select Committee for Review of the Common Core Standards

FROM: Kevin P. Reilly, President   
Mark A. Nook, Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs 

RE: Common Core State Standards

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Common Core State Standards.

Since the State Superintendent adopted the Common Core Standards, UW System has worked collaboratively with DPI and other education stakeholder groups to ensure that this initiative is implemented in a way that truly promotes college readiness. Our overriding goal is to make certain that prospective and current UW students have access to high-quality opportunities that prepare them for success in school, in work, and in life.

The adoption of these common standards and assessments gives us the opportunity to:

- 1) **Better define college readiness** – This is important because the ACT National Curriculum study shows a persistent mismatch between high school teachers’ and college instructors’ views on whether graduates are truly college ready.
- 2) **Redefine remedial education so that students enter UW institutions taking credit-bearing courses from day one** – As college tuition rises, students need to pay for credit-bearing courses rather than remedial courses that do not provide them with credit toward graduation. As we are all concerned with the time it takes a person to get a degree, reducing the need for remedial coursework is critical. In addition to the cost to students, it is costly and inefficient for institutions to have faculty and staff focused on remedial instruction instead of teaching credit-bearing courses. We don’t want Wisconsin taxpayers to pay twice for the same level of instruction.
- 3) **Better align the last two years of high school with college entry courses** – This is related to the remedial education issue. If high schools can use the new standards and assessments to determine if 11<sup>th</sup> graders need an additional year of mathematics or writing, and then the students can complete that coursework during their 12<sup>th</sup> grade year – effectively completing the remediation while still in high school – students will truly be entering UW institutions “college ready.”

- 4) **Provide more dual enrollment/credit options for high-achieving high school students**  
– As we better align the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum in high schools with post-secondary coursework, many more students will enter college having already earned credits toward their degree. This in turn will reduce the cost of college for students who take part in dual enrollment programs.
  
- 5) **Produce graduates of teacher preparation programs with knowledge and competencies needed to effectively incorporate the Common Core State Standards into their teaching** – In addition to working on undergraduate teacher education, our institutions will also be providing ongoing professional development for teachers already working in the field. This work will be influenced by these new standards.

All five of these areas listed are important for higher education institutions and K-12 schools to address, in order to avoid wasteful, duplicative expenditure of taxpayer dollars, and hold down the cost of higher education for students and families by enabling faster progress toward a degree. The Common Core standards provide us with the best opportunity to date to make meaningful progress in these areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony and we look forward to continuing the conversation on quality standards and assessments.

Copy: Board of Regents  
Chancellors  
Provosts  
Deans of Education

September 29, 2013

Dear Senator Farrow:

I am writing in regards to the upcoming assembly and senate hearings for the Common Core State Standards which were adopted by Wisconsin in June, 2010. I have been an educator for the past 22 years as a middle/high school teacher, middle school associate principal, elementary principal and currently as a Director of Learning Services for the Pulaski Community School District. My educational experiences and especially my passion for curriculum, instruction and assessment have allowed me to deepen my knowledge and skills related to student learning and lead our educators in a quest to produce college, career and community ready students for the 21st century. I also have four children ranging in ages from 12-16 years old in the public school system who I feel are gaining an exceptional education with the adoption of the Common Core State Standards.

During most of my educational career, I have worked with the Wisconsin Model of Academic Standards, which were developed for the content areas, fine arts and Career and Technical Education areas in 1998. Although these were developed in Wisconsin, they easily were out-of-date for the majority of my teaching and administrative career. The Wisconsin Model Academic Standards were only developed with standards/benchmarks for Grades 4, 8, and 12 which led to many differences in interpretation and implementation in most districts and even within schools of the same district of what was expected at each grade level. The Common Core State Standards has expectations for each grade level in math and English Language Arts as well as a progression to show student learning from kindergarten to Grade 12. With the development of the CCSS progressions, it has allowed for a more consistent implementation of learning expectations for our teachers and students within our district, area schools and state.

The CCSS were really the result of the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of State School Officers (CCSSO). These two groups recognized the need to clearly define the knowledge and skills that would prepare students for the 21st century workplace and ensure students were truly college and career ready. The CCSS are not a national or state curriculum nor are they federally mandated. They were developed by teams of experts, educators and stakeholders in a process led by the NGA and CCSSO. I find it ironic that three years later as a result of the "politics" in this state, we are looking at reconsidering the adoption of the CCSS. The CCSS really represent a shift in instructional intent from high school graduation to college and career readiness which I find is really difficult to argue with when you truly look deeply at the intent of these shifts. For example in English Language Arts, the major instructional shifts include:

- Building knowledge through content-rich informational text and a balance between informational text and literary text
- Reading and writing grounded in evidence from text
- Regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary

The instructional shifts in mathematics include:

- A strong focus on going deeper in mathematics rather than a mile wide and inch deep in the curriculum
- Coherence by thinking across grades and linking to major math topics within a grade
- Rigor which requires conceptual understanding, procedural skills and fluency of math as well as true "real-world" application of math

There have been comments recently made that Wisconsin can do better than the CCSS and should have more rigorous standards. I really question if these individuals have unpacked the standards, aligned the standards to current curriculum and courses, adopted resources with a scope and sequence to meet the CCSS shifts and looked for more authentic ways to assess student learning. Pulaski Community School District educators as



well as Wisconsin educators have done exactly this the past three years. I truly believe that political pressures from anti-Common Core groups who are providing misinformation and propaganda regarding the CCSS have taken the forefront on important educational issues in Wisconsin rather than doing what is best for the students and their learning. I believe that Pulaski Community School District educators would tell you that the CCSS are more rigorous in preparing our students to be college, career and community ready. The CCSS are internationally benchmarked in English Language Arts and math against the leading countries such as Finland, China, New Zealand, Singapore and many others. Continuously I hear from our science and social studies educators asking when it is their turn to have rigorous college and career ready and internationally benchmarked standards for their content areas.

I would like to extend an invitation to visit the Pulaski Community School District and our classrooms to learn more about the Common Core State Standard implementation, alignment to our curriculum and authentic assessment of student learning. Please do not hesitate to contact me to schedule a visit to our district or to answer any questions you may have regarding the CCSS. I look forward to working with you on behalf of our students.

Yours in Education,  
Jennifer Gracyalny  
Jennifer Gracyalny  
Director of Learning Services  
Pulaski Community School District  
143 W Green Bay St  
Pulaski, WI 54162  
920-822-6016  
[jrgracyalny@pulaskischools.org](mailto:jrgracyalny@pulaskischools.org)



October 3, 2013

Dear Rep. Jeremy Thiesfeldt and Sen. Paul Farrow:

I am concerned about a potential interruption in the State of Wisconsin's adoption of the Common Core and that delay's impact to Greendale Schools.

Since 2011, teachers and administrators have adopted the Common Core and implemented the standards in their daily classroom instruction in the Greendale School District. Our teachers have evolved their lessons to align to these new standards.

The Common Core Standards are the basis of the Smarter Balanced Assessments that our students will take in the spring term, 2015. In creating a standardized testing system, it is imperative that what is taught in the classrooms and what is tested is linked. This link exists between the Common Core Standards and Smarter Balanced.

These standards and testing make up a large portion of the accountability system in Wisconsin. If you want this accountability system for education to accurately measure learning in Wisconsin then you must maintain the linkages between what is taught and tested.

Any disruption in full adoption of the Common Core would then require the State to reevaluate its transfer to the Smarter Balanced Assessment system. I am concerned that this sort of delay will be problematic for all school districts and that it will ultimately hurt the students of Wisconsin who will not be appropriately prepared for college and career and to compete with their peers across the country.

I appreciate this opportunity to share my thoughts regarding this matter. Please keep in mind that any delay in making a final decision negatively impacts classroom instruction and student learning.

Sincerely,

Dr. John Tharp  
Superintendent  
Greendale School District

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Administrative Office (414) 423-2700 • FAX (414) 423-2723 • Pupil Services Office (414) 423-2714

Dr. John Tharp, Superintendent of Schools

Erin Green, Director of Business Services

Colleen McHugh-Moore, Director of Pupil Services

Kimberly Amidzich, Director of Curriculum

Julie Grotophorst, Director of Human Resources



## ***Wisconsin Reading Coalition***

October 3, 2013

The Wisconsin Reading Coalition supported the adoption of the Common Core State Standards in 2010, and strongly supports their continued implementation. The English Language Arts standards lay out the key developmental milestones that all good readers must attain, from beginning decoding skills to close reading of complex text and effective written expression.

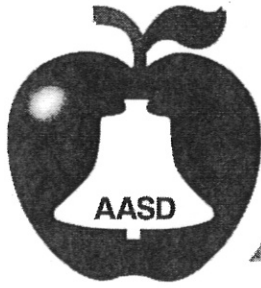
The Common Core is also integrated with other important education initiatives that are underway and paying dividends in Wisconsin, including student screening, early intervention, assessment, teacher preparation, professional development, and classroom and school effectiveness. These efforts are all intricately linked and support each other. At the same time, the Common Core satisfies the college and career-ready bar necessary for Wisconsin's waiver from No Child Left Behind.

Many aspects of education are appropriately left to local control. However, reading standards are not among them. The process of reading acquisition does not vary from community to community. Quality standards-writing demands a tremendous investment of time, money, and expertise that is not available on the district level. Even at the state level, our previous standards-writing efforts were costly and inadequate. There is nothing to indicate that we would do better by trying again. We agree with the conclusion of the Fordham Foundation that no state's standards took as big a leap forward as Wisconsin's when we collaborated with other states to create the Common Core.

There is still a huge role for local districts to play in the implementation of the standards, including curriculum design, selection of textbooks and reading material, and development of writing activities. To keep Wisconsin moving forward, districts must be able to focus their resources on those critical tasks, and the Department of Public Instruction must put its energy into supporting local communities. Wisconsin's momentum will be derailed if we push those efforts aside in order to take up a standards-writing project.

The better plan is to continue implementing the Common Core and keep our resources where they are now, benefiting our children, our teachers, and our state.

For more information, contact Steve Dykstra at 414-399-7201, or email [wisconsinreadingcoalition@gmail.com](mailto:wisconsinreadingcoalition@gmail.com)



# Appleton Area *School District*

Office of the Superintendent

**Lee D. Allinger**

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October 2, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

The Appleton Area School District is committed to continuous improvement. In our efforts to assure the highest learning standards for our students, we engage local educators, facilitated by the leadership of our Assessment, Curriculum, and Instruction team, to review and revise curriculum, as well as district assessments. Throughout this process, staff also identifies instructional strategies/delivery models and materials that promote rigorous, high-quality learning for all students.

Within the past three years, as part of our local curriculum cycle, our English Language Arts and Mathematics curriculums were revised and aligned to Wisconsin's Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The Wisconsin CCSS provide a rigorous, minimum set of standards for all students. We attest that the CCSS provide a foundational set of competency expectations that are much more robust than the previously defined Wisconsin Model Academic Standards provided. Although there has been some concern related to the rigorous competencies associated with the CCSS, students are making great strides and are achieving higher levels of performance than we imagined they would at this early stage of implementation. As we all know, the key to our students' success lies in building the capacity of our staff to instructionally design and deliver the highest-quality learning experiences that match the diverse learning needs of each of our students. CCSS provide consistent learning targets upon which educators can focus and collaborate to transform instructional practices in order to strive to meet the learning needs of all students. This is especially beneficial for our students whose families are more mobile. Assuring a more common set of learning experiences for all students serves our communities well.

We would be happy to talk in greater depth about the Appleton Area School District's journey of implementing the CCSS. It is our hope that as the conversation continues around CCSS, that strong consideration be given to the perspective of educators that are working to develop curriculum, select materials, and adopt the instructional practices that are moving us forward towards higher levels of students' achievement through the CCSS.

Sincerely,

Lee Allinger  
Superintendent of Schools

Nan Bunnow  
Director of Humanities

Kevin Steinhilber  
Chief Academic Officer

Becky Walker  
Director of Math

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the Common Core State Standard. My name is Jenny Gracyalny and I serve as the Director of Learning Services for the Pulaski Community School District. I have been an educator for the past 22 years as a middle/high school teacher, middle school associate principal, and elementary principal. My educational experiences and especially my passion for curriculum, instruction and assessment have allowed me to deepen my knowledge and skills related to student learning and lead our educators in a quest to produce college, career and community ready students for the 21st century. I also am a parent of four children ranging in ages from 12-16 years old in the public school system who I feel are gaining an exceptional education with the adoption of the Common Core State Standards.

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Yours in Education,

Jennifer Gracyalny

Director of Learning Services, Pulaski Community School District

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920-822-6016 [jgracyalny@pulaskischools.org](mailto:jgracyalny@pulaskischools.org)

## Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Feedback Fall 2013

### **Seymour Community School District**

The following are a sampling of statements from teachers in our district regarding the Common Core State Standards in English/ Language Arts and Math. These statements demonstrate how the Common Core State Standards have positively affected teaching and learning in our district, which ultimately impacts student achievement.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Pierre  
Director of Curriculum and Instruction  
Seymour Community School District

#### **5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher**

As a 35 year veteran teacher, the CCSS have been one educational mandate that makes the most sense. All children need certain skills at a certain point in their educational career. The standards allow teachers to teach in depth understanding rather than a lot of concepts in many subject areas. I have witnessed student success and skills movement in the positive direction. Students that move many times during the year will be able to have consistent learning targets between school buildings and school districts. This is a positive change for education, let us not take a step backwards, but look to the future of using CCSS for our 21<sup>st</sup> century learners.

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers**

One of the positives of the CCSS, to me, is that it is rigorous, yet attainable for students. It gives teachers the freedom to choose “how” they are going to teach the standards so that all their students can meet success. It provides us a clear understanding of the curriculum we need to teach so that students are prepared for higher education and/or jobs in our competitive world. With its learning progressions students, parents, and teachers know the expectations. By using the CCSS in a second grade classroom can elevate children’s thinking to levels that we have never had before!

#### **High School English Teacher**

I believe the Common Core State Standards have provided clear, concise, and specific targets to aide teachers in properly preparing our students for life beyond high school – preparing our students for college, for work, for a shrinking global community, helping them become contributing members of our society. The CCSS provide teachers with a specific map and tools for best practice to educate our children.

### **High School Math teacher**

The Common Core has really helped us take a long-term view of students' mathematical development. It ensures that – in each grade level – student learning builds on the students' previous work and prepares them effectively for their future studies.

The Common Core creates consistency among schools and districts and states, while still being flexible about how we teach the material. This gives us confidence that when students transfer to our school (or when our students transfer elsewhere) they will be able to continue their mathematical learning effectively.

### **High School English Teacher**

I find that the common core has focused our learning objectives and increased rigor. Incorporating the Common Core Standards has been intimidating and challenging, but I believe the net gain has been positive. Also the fact that the Common Core Standards expand throughout the nation allows collaboration with educators who have created assessments to address the CCS. This collaboration is much more extensive than in the past since many of us are using the same standards. In fact, just today I used an assessment with my English 10 class on a non-fiction text about the author of the book we are reading that I accessed from another teacher, and it is not the first time I have found such resources online. Furthermore, in my advance class (again just today) I had my kids read a very challenging essay entitled "Why I Write". In the past I wouldn't have selected such a dense and challenging text, but the common core is pushing me to do just that. Finally, as educators we are going beyond basic comprehension to understand structure, tone, purpose, rhetorical devices, etc. which all foster greater critical thinking. Furthermore, the students are empowered to use some of these same devices to strengthen their own writing. Being persuasive, overcoming objections, and critical thinking (all fundamental elements of the CCS) are essential life-long skills for our students. As an educator and as a parent, I would be hard pressed to find skills that will serve our students better once they leave high school.

### **1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher**

The Common Core has helped cultivate communication between grade levels on a curricular level. The only times we met to discuss curriculum was every 7 years when we did an adoption and took a look at what each grade level taught. We (K-3) were working off of 4<sup>th</sup> grade WKCE standards that were not well divided between grade levels. Instead of a guessing game we have a clear cut definition of who's responsible for which skills. We also have objectives that are much more age appropriate because they have been research based (Such as 'time' being moved to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade because they have to understand a whole before they can understand factions). The "Practices" as belief statements that carry across the grade levels creates target ways to help students become multifaceted students and keeps all teachers using best practices.

### Grade 8 Reading / Language Arts teacher

First of all, the Common Core State Standards set a high standard for our students, which has caused them to work harder, be more responsible, and become better at reading, writing, and math.

Secondly, being that we have so many transfer students from all over the U.S., the kids come in and have the same background knowledge as the students in our district. It saves time from having to catch up those who transfer into the district.

Thirdly, it increases teachers' professional development because they need to "learn" new approaches and strategies for teaching, which is CRUCIALLY important when educating children!! And it forces teachers to move out of their "comfort zones".

I will truly be disappointed if the Common Core is taken away. It is always those who make educational decisions who have never stepped into a classroom ☹

### 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher

The CCSS has positively affected teaching and learning in my classroom.

Teacher development workshops are based on best practices and common language now.

Students are coming into my classroom from 5 different teachers all using the same common language and having similar experiences

Students are getting more depth and rigor from my curriculum

Teachers and students don't feel so rushed to brush the surface of many topics....instead we can go into detail and learn more of the important skills

Students are more positive about reading and writing but also the fact that the CCSS encourage us to explore standards more deeply....students can see that they are learning and showing growth

Majority of Students are showing growth over the course of the year due to implementing the Common Core Standards.





*School District of*  
*West Allis-West Milwaukee, et al.*  
EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION CENTER

October 3, 2013

Dear Select Committee for Review of the Common Core Standard Initiative Members,

On behalf of Kurt Wachholz, the Superintendent of Schools in the West Allis-West Milwaukee School District, I am providing testimony on Common Core Standards.

The West Allis-West Milwaukee School District has embraced the Common Core Standards. We feel that it's vital to maintain a focus on these Common Core Standards for West Allis-West Milwaukee because:

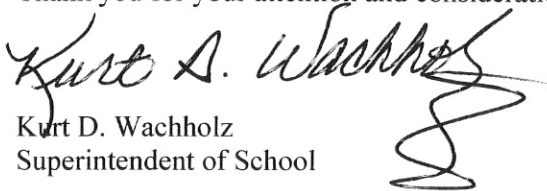
- The Common Core State Standards are the culmination of nearly a twenty-year effort, beginning with the Bush administration, to set expectations for what students should know and be able to do. Throughout the years, different versions have been created by national subject discipline organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. In 2007 state education chiefs discussed the issue of creating a common set of standards at a policy forum of the Chief Council of State School Officers (CCSSO). The CCSSO and the National Governor's Association issued a report, "Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring that US Students Receive a World-Class Education". The report called for a common core of internationally benchmarked standards in math and language arts for grades K-12 to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to be globally competitive. Since then committees of educators and subject-matter experts have met to develop the standards using the criteria with representatives from ACT and the College Board, and State Higher Education Officers. In each cycle, drafts were released for public comment and panels made revisions from feedback they received.
- The Common Core Standards are a framework in English Language Arts and Mathematics which spell out the knowledge and skills that all students should know and be able to do at each grade level from Kindergarten to grade 12. The Common Core are significant in that they set common expectations for all students. With a common set of standards, it will be possible to measure student achievement in a uniform fashion and provide a uniform lens to view accountability. In the past each state has had its own set of standards making it difficult to look at achievement accountability across states.
- In addition, the Common Core differ from the state standards that preceded them. The Common Core are tied to college and career readiness and internationally benchmarked to match expectations of the highest performing nations. As a result, the standards call for significant shifts from traditional practice in both English Language Arts and mathematics. The mathematics standards now include far fewer topics, particularly at the elementary grades, so that teachers focus on the most important topics in depth and are able to focus on critical thinking and reasoning so that they can apply the learned skills in problem solving applications. The new English Language Arts Standards require students to be able to read and comprehend complex text so that they will understand the books and documents they will read in college and workplace.
- For the past three years we have been working on aligning our curricular frameworks with the Common Core Standards. This alignment has increased the rigor of the learning in our classrooms. The Common Core Standards require students to become deeper thinkers as they focus on higher order skills such as drawing conclusions, analyzing, synthesizing and thinking critically to solve problems.

- The Common Core Standards are the foundation of the new accountability assessment in the State that will be put into practice with the implementation of the SMARTER Balance assessment in 2014-2015. Alignment of curriculum with the Common Core Standards will only support increased levels of student achievement in this regard. The same holds true with districts such as West Allis-West Milwaukee who use other forms of standardized testing such as the NWEA MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) assessment which are all aligned with the Common Core Standards.
- Print and digital resources available to educators across the country are all aligned with the Common Core Standards. A shift away from this would make resource vetting and acquisition more difficult, more time consuming, and ultimately more costly.

The Common Core Standards are designed to respond to rigor for our entire country which is designed to evolve over time. Those standards that currently are not as rigorous will develop and become stronger over time. The Common Core Standards is not developed to be stagnant but rather a dynamic and evolving over time. These standards come together and then are assessed by Smarter Balanced. We have attached sample exam questions from the Smarter Balanced Assessment which uses the Common Core Standards as we look to the future. As you will see by these samples, the Common Core Standards provide significant rigor and relevance as well as reinforcing high expectations.

We would like to reiterate our strong support for Common Core Standards and the important role they already play in providing a broad nation-wide accountability focus that is being woven into the fabric of our education curriculum across the country.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of this matter. Please contact my office with any questions.

  
Kurt D. Wachholz  
Superintendent of School

The Common Core provides a more rigorous framework of accountability. In terms of accountability a Common framework to measure achievement accountability is necessary. SMARTER Balance is the tool that will be used to measure that accountability in 2014-2015. It does require rigor from students. Here are some sample questions that demonstrate the rigor of the standards.

**In grade 4** a student might be asked to read two articles about the usage of cell phones in school and then asked :

*“Based on what you read in the text, do you think cell phones should be allowed in schools? Using the lists provided in the text, write a paragraph arguing why your position is more reasonable than the opposing position.”*

To do this a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student is not only asked to read and understand but must be able to evaluate and write a position paper with supporting details.

The same fourth grade student might be asked to:

*“Determine what the width of a rectangle that has a length of 6 feet and a perimeter of  $20 \frac{1}{3}$  feet.”*

Not only would they need to determine the width, but they would be asked to explain how they solved the problem.

**In grade 8** a student might be asked the following question:

*“Claire is filling bags with sand. All the bags are the same size. Each bag must weigh less than 50 pounds. One sand bag weighs 58 pounds, another sand bag weighs 41 pounds, and another sand bag weighs 53 pounds. Explain whether Claire can pour sand between sand bags so that the weight of each bag is less than 50 pounds.”*

**In high school**, students would be asked to respond to a question like this:

*“The “two-second rule” is used by a driver who wants to maintain a safe following distance at any speed. A driver must count two seconds from when the car in front of him or her passes a fixed point, such as a tree, until the driver passes the same fixed point. Drivers use this rule to determine the minimum distance to follow a car traveling at the same speed. As the speed of the cars increases, the minimum following distance also increases. Explain how the “two-second rule” leads to a greater minimum following distance as the speed of the cars increases. As part of your explanation, include the minimum following distances, **in feet**, for cars traveling at 30 miles per hour and 60 miles per hour.”*

Finally is the area of literacy a high school student might be asked to apply learning in the area of literacy to compete the following task:

*"You are chief-of-staff for your local congresswoman in the U.S. House of Representatives. She has called you into her office to outline an urgent project. "I have received advance notice," she says as you sit down, "that a power company is proposing to build a nuclear plant in the southeastern corner of our state. The plan will be announced to the public tomorrow morning, and citizens and journalists will want to know what my position is on this controversial issue. To be honest, I am not sure how I feel about it. We currently don't have any nuclear power plants in this state, so I haven't taken time to consider the issue deeply." "I need you," she continues, "to conduct a brief survey of the pros and cons of nuclear power. Summarize what you have learned and report back to me this afternoon." Back in your office, you enter "nuclear power pros and cons" into a Google search engine, and it returns what looks like a promising mix of articles, videos, and data charts. You must review and evaluate these*

*Later that day when you return to provide your report you hear, "Some emergency meetings have come up and I don't have time to review your research notes," she says. "Instead, go ahead and make a recommendation for our position on this nuclear power plant. Should we support the building of this nuclear plant in our state, or should we oppose the power company's plan? Be sure that your recommendation acknowledges both sides of the issue so that people know that we have considered the issue carefully. I'll review your report tonight and use it for the press conference tomorrow morning."*

*Write an argumentative report that recommends the position that your congresswoman should take on the plan to build a nuclear power plant in your state. Support your claim with evidence from the Internet sources you have read and viewed. You do not need to use all the sources, only the ones that most effectively and credibly support your position and your consideration of the opposing point of view."*



October 3, 2013

Legislative Hearing: Common Core State Standards

Good morning, I am Pat Deklotz, superintendent in the Kettle Moraine School District located about 45 minutes east of here, right in the heart of Waukesha County. We serve approximately 4,500 students. Fifteen hundred students attend our three high schools, two of which are charter schools. We have one middle school that serves 1,000 students and we have five elementary schools, one of which is a charter school. Last year we started an Advanced Manufacturing Certificate program, a Youth Apprenticeship model working with GPS Education Partners, GE Waukesha gas engines, and Generac Power Systems. Currently we are working on a Health Science High School, partnering with Oconomowoc School District, ProHealth, Aurora, and the Medical College of Wisconsin. We are changing the way we do schooling and why are we working so hard?

Eight years ago my school board charged me to “transform the educational delivery system to better and more efficiently meet the needs of all students.” That has been my quest and that of my team. We are beginning to see the fruits of that labor and I invite each and every one of you to tour our district with me so that you can see it with your own eyes. But the first thing I did as I embraced that charge was to seek higher standards. I looked at the highest achieving countries in the world and in our nation and I found that they held higher standards and they measured their success on a common assessment, at that time, the PISA exam, developed by the OECD. I have shared that test with my faculty and I worked with foundations to fund the development of higher standards and assessment. It was lonely and frustrating work.

I was delighted when I learned the National Governors’ Association embraced the same vision that I held. The foundation I was working with told me that rather than pursue this dream of mine, using the route I was taking, they were in support of America Achieves and the development of Common Core State Standards. When Dr. Evers, our State Superintendent, announced that Wisconsin had signed on to the Common Core, I was thrilled – and I was impatient. I didn’t want our students to have to wait. We were on board. We wanted higher standards and we want to be able to compare our students’ performance against that of others across our nation. We wanted that comparison to be aligned against international standards. We have that in the Common Core. Are they perfect? Standards never are, but they are internationally benchmarked, they are shared across our nation, and they allow us to compare our performance across states, something that Wisconsin standards can’t and will never do. When we stand alone, we lose that ability.

My staff has been working for five years to align our teaching to support students so they can demonstrate their proficiency in the expectations set by the Common Core. We were involved in the hearings that were held. We offered input, challenged assumptions, and gave our suggestions. We gave updates to our board and community. As I have learned of opposition to the Common Core I have tried to understand why people see them as evil. I attended the Waukesha Co. Republican party breakfast meeting and I researched position statements trying to learn why people see them as undermining our democracy and truth and everything that I, as a conservative God-fearing, American patriot, should believe. I can’t find what they are afraid of, other than fear itself. There is no conspiracy. Could there be issues around the assessment? Could there be concerns over the data collected? Those questions can be answered, but they are separate and outside of the standards. Please understand the difference and do not lump them all together. Please stand firm in support of the good work, the courageous work that we have been doing over the past years. It is work that I see aligned to your expectations. I’ve been coming here all these years with the same message and I’ve been listening to yours. This work aligns with your expectations. Do not pull the rug out from under us. Respect us and the good work that we do and support us as we move Wisconsin forward. Thank you.

*- Learning Without Boundaries -*



October 3, 2013

Legislative Hearing: Common Core State Standards

As the Assistant Superintendent in Kettle Moraine School District I have had the pleasure of hosting visits from hundreds of educators in the last 18 months. These visitors seek us out as they travel across our state, across our nation and across the globe. Leaders and teachers from these organizations visit in an effort to understand and experience our cutting edge work in personalizing learning. The question inherent in each visit is, "How are you able to move beyond the factory model of education and create a personalized environment of learning?" Among the many lessons learned through our transformation is the power of Common Core Standards in English Language Arts and Math. Both sets of standards provide us a map to rigor and personalization.

Some who do not live the standards on a daily basis might suggest that they take away an educator's flexibility to respond to individual student needs; as a district leading a national movement toward personalized learning we strongly disagree.

Within the framework of the standards comes a clear set of targets that are aligned to college readiness and consist of depth in both skill and concept. When the standards are laid out across the entire k-12 experience our kids aren't held back by artificial ceilings, aren't bogged down with repeating earlier learning and aren't blinded by striving for the unseen target. Quite the opposite. When the targets are rigorous and shared with students a transformation occurs; students begin to own their learning.

For the first time in my 20 years as an educator, I am excited to think that we are on the edge of being able to compare our students to their real competition... the world. When our state created and adopted our own standards we were only able to compare our students to others living in the state. That comparison assumed that our students' only competition were other students in Wisconsin. Believing that a comparison within our own state is good enough for our students future is myopic and short-sighted. It creates a generation of kids who are irrelevant in a global society.

I expect our state to support any practice that gives my two children and our districts 4500 students a chance to own their learning and be relevant in a global society.

Theresa Gennerman Ed.D  
Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning  
Kettle Moraine School District

Common Core State Standards  
Ben Shaver, Greta Kaufman  
Delafield, WI  
Kettle Moraine School District

Hello I'm Ben Shaver, and I'm Greta Kaufman. We are high school seniors from the Kettle Moraine school district. As students, we feel that common core standards are crucial to our college readiness, as well as our competitive edge on a global level.

Speaking on college readiness, I will take the same standardized tests, like the ACT or SAT, as students all across the country. I will be attending college with students all across the country. In the past, there has been a disparity between what was deemed a proficient level between states. What was considered proficient in Wisconsin was not considered proficient in Connecticut. What was considered proficient in Texas, might not have been proficient in Wisconsin. Doesn't it make sense that we should all share some common knowledge on basic reading, writing, and math? I believe we should all have the same foundation to build our education off of.

The same is true on a global scale. In an increasingly globalized society, it is certain that I will be interacting with people all over the world in my secondary education and beyond. Common core standards will help to ensure that my education will measure up to that of my future peers. Throughout my education, I have heard time and time again that I will not just be working with people in my hometown, my state, or even the US. I will be interacting with people all over the world. It is incredibly important that my peers and I are challenged by a set of standards that can guide our education and lead us to success on a global scale.

Common core is great because it allows for more freedom in the classroom, while still holding a basic standard. When we look back at our high school career, an excellent example of the benefits of common core is english language arts. In our high school there are eight english teachers. Although there are a variety of classes offered, typically, multiple teachers teach the same course. The common core standards provide a basic foundation that ensures all students are learning what is necessary. For example, throughout high school, we have both taken the exact same english courses. Even though we have had different teachers, read different books, and done different activities, the common core has ensured that we have the same knowledge base. While one class read "Three Cups of Tea," another went more in depth with Shakespeare. Some classes spent more time on large group discussion, while worked more with projects. All students emerged with a strong english education.

There are many factors to be considered in the continued use of common core standards, but at the end of the day, this decision should reflect what will offer Wisconsin students the best education possible. After four years of high school, the majority of which were built off of common core standards, we firmly believe this model allows students the best opportunities to succeed. Keep the Common Core in place. Thank you

# Hustisford School District

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District Administrator

**Chad Schraufnagel**  
Principal

**Janice Weigman**  
Principal

**Michael Gerlach**  
Director Financial Services

**Steve Pasono, Ed.S**  
Director of Special Education

October 3, 2013

Members of the Select Committee for Review of the Common Core Standards Initiative:

Thank you for the opportunity to address you about this most important issue – the future of our children and the education they receive to prepare them for life.

My name is Douglas Keiser and I am superintendent of Schools in the Hustisford School District – a small rural school district in southeastern Wisconsin with a little over 400 students pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Our students deserve the same opportunities for high quality instruction and a challenging education as any other students in Wisconsin or in our nation.

I know that this hearing is designed specifically to take testimony regarding the Common Core State Standards. But the real question is how can we, as school leaders and policy decision-makers, best prepare our students for a changing world and the demands for them to compete in a global environment.

The Common Core State Standards, adopted in Wisconsin three years ago, and adopted and implemented in 45 other states, are a set of highly regarded, well thought-out standards in English/language arts and mathematics that guide instruction and learning in classrooms through the nation. These standards have rigor and are benchmarked against the best educational standards in our country and from around the world.

High standards that are consistent across school districts throughout Wisconsin and across other states will provide teachers and students with a clear set of expectations for their learning. These expectations as articulated through the Common Core State Standards not only match the expectations we have for preparing our students for college and careers, but they promote equity by making sure that all students are will prepared with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed when they graduate high school.

I have two young grandchildren who live in Sheboygan and are starting their formal education in this year. I have high hopes for them, no matter what school district they attend. Whether they complete their K – 12 education in Sheboygan or some other school district, they deserve to have clearly defined goals for their educational experience no matter where they attend school.

These standards are not a curriculum, nor do they dictate how a teacher provides instruction. They do not define what materials or resources a teacher will use to meet the needs of his or her students. Having clear and defined quality



expectations is the foundation for good instruction and high levels of learning. Without them there is no clear direction for learning to occur.

I have heard people say that the Common Core is a federal initiative to establish a national curriculum and that will take away the professional judgment of educators. This is clearly not the case with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

I believe that without these standards in English/language arts and mathematics we are doomed to repeat mistakes of the past and we will certainly short-change a generation of students.

In my 37 years in education I have witnessed all too often where the voices of a few and the political winds of the day have dictated education policy and have resulted in a failure on the part of adults to secure a positive future of our students. Let's not do it again by ignoring the good work of our teachers and the benefits that these standards will mean for education and our students.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Douglas W. Keiser, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
Hustisford School District



**2013-2014**

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Honorable Governor Scott Walker.  
Office of Governor Scott Walker  
115 East Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702

October 4, 2013

Dear Governor Walker:

As president of the Wisconsin State Reading Association (WSRA) I urge you to give your unequivocal support to the adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in Wisconsin. The work already accomplished by Wisconsin's local school districts and educators in implementing the Common Core State Standards is admirable and is absolutely essential to preserve. Through the high and rigorous expectations of the Common Core State Standards, Wisconsin educators are leveraging quality instruction. It is important that the state of Wisconsin continues to prepare our students for their future via the learning progressions structured by the Common Core State Standards. Please work to understand the quality standards set forth by the National Governors Association, ACT, Achieve, and the CCSSO. Please work to calm the fears expressed by citizens who operate without the privilege of classroom evidence.

WSRA, a professional organization of approximately 3000 members joins the School Administrators Association (SAA), the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA) and the Wisconsin Education Leaders Alliance (WELA) in support for the continued implementation of the Common Core State Standards in Wisconsin.

Local school districts have studied the College and Career Readiness anchor standards, the grade level progressions within each strand, and analyzed the district's curricula to ascertain if gaps exist between the previous and new standards. When needed, curriculum was aligned or developed by local school districts to reach the higher levels demanded by international benchmarks. This work promises to increase Wisconsin's competitive edge. With the changes made to Wisconsin's schools' curricula for English Language Arts, students have increased opportunities to apply the learned higher order thinking in reading, writing, language, as well as with speaking and listening skills. To fully implement the CCSS, school districts have tailored their professional development to meet the needs of their teachers.

To begin again, will set the students of Wisconsin back.

**Promoting Excellence in Reading • [www.wsra.org](http://www.wsra.org)**

The learning progressions from kindergarten to grade twelve provide a strong structure on which to attach scaffolded units of study. In other words, the learning progressions of the CCSS build on one another. These learning progressions are not only being implemented in Wisconsin's classes, they are being used across the country. Students who move within a district, within the state, and between states, now have a universal set of expectations in the new classroom. Moreover, educators now have a familiar frame, which helps students to meet the benchmarks no matter where they live. The ultimate outcome of the CCSS learning progressions is that students will be better prepared for college, careers, and the world of work - no matter the address of the school or child.

Additionally, there seems to be some confusion regarding the difference between standards and curriculum. The CCSS for English Language Arts and mathematics are statements of what students in kindergarten through grade 12 should know and be able to do. In other words, the CCSS are statements of the structure or the "what" of instruction. In turn, Wisconsin's local school districts determine the curriculum or the "how" to teach the standards. Curriculum writing - that which ensures the guaranteed and viable curriculum - is a local school district decision. The Standards are not the curriculum.

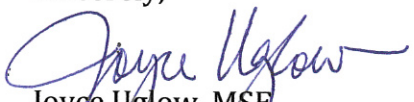
For the first time, the United States has a united instructional structure and can now share educational and professional development tools across classrooms, districts, and state lines. Professional organizations such as the International Reading Association and state councils such as WSRA have engaged educators in professional learning opportunities to develop higher order thinking and subsequent instruction. Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) offer courses to undergraduates and graduates; consequently universities are stretching educators to new levels.

Over the course of the past three years professional organizations, Wisconsin's CESAs, and the Department of Public Instruction have worked together to develop a common language to help guide state teachers and districts in the implementation process. Thoughtful conversations amongst educators have increased the awareness for what is needed to better prepare students for college and careers.

One intended consequence of the CCSS has already happened in Wisconsin. A common instructional vernacular has emerged across teachers, classrooms, agencies, schools, districts, state departments, professional organizations, and publishers who have come to understand the plan set out to create consistency and increased rigor in instruction across the United States. Equity across districts and states is the right of all children.

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts have started to move the United States' schools in a more positive direction as it relates to ensuring all students are striving toward higher, more rigorous learning goals. As the president of the Wisconsin State Reading Association, I urge you to stop the "pause" and to support the Common Core State Standards implementation and the progress that has been made to date across Wisconsin. To stop and create new standards will move Wisconsin backward.

For the students and educators of Wisconsin,  
Sincerely,

  
Joyce Uglow, MSE  
2013-2014 WSRA President

Good Afternoon and Thank you Chair

I, Dr. Sue Savaglio-Jarvis am representing Kenosha Unified School District as the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning.

Kenosha Unified is the third largest school district in the state of WI.

The Common Core Standards emerged and have remained a volatile political football, tossed about by educators, politicians, and parents. Within the uproar, exists misunderstanding and controversy. This confusion calls for clarity from the experts, educational leaders.

Common Core Standards are neither curricula nor assessments. Therefore, it is essential that we help our communities of teachers, parents, and Boards of Education understand exactly what the Common Core Standards are. As this groundswell of objection grows, we are in a complicated position. In and of themselves, the CCSS are not bad. They simply require us to reexamine our current practices and evaluate where we are doing well and where we can and should do better. The purpose of the Common Core is to create systems that support continuous improvement of instruction and increased shared accountability for raising levels of student achievement for all students by a prescribed set of rigorous standards.

These standards help prepare students for college and career readiness. The Common Core standards outline expected knowledge and skill development in students, relevant to real world applications. These standards help prepare our students for the demands of college and careers.

Common Core standards are more than just topical benchmarks for students; they outline grade level expectations for development of those important skills previously mentioned and provide a more in-depth understanding of those essential skills. The CC standards allow teachers to know the expected outcomes and have a better understanding of how to plan and target the appropriate depth of knowledge around learning targets.

The CCSS are designated for Math and English Language Arts, K-12 and 6-12 Literacy in all other content areas.

Within the CCSS for mathematics, there are several noted shifts. First, the standards require teachers to teach fewer concepts at each grade level. Without the pressure to "cover" everything in a curriculum that is a mile wide and an inch deep, teachers are able to engage students in a more rigorous study of each concept, emphasizing procedural skills, conceptual understanding and real-world application of the mathematics that children are learning. In addition, the Standards for Mathematical practice emphasize the skills and habits of mind that students need to develop in order to become expert problem-solvers and critical thinkers - skills that will serve them well beyond the mathematics classroom.

Within the Common Core standards for reading, the standards emphasize the importance of reading several texts about a topic, with readers determining the central ideas, issues and disputes in those topics, and anticipating the arguments around a topic. This means that instead of reading a summary of the American Revolution, fifth graders in a CCSS-aligned classroom will read speeches made by Patriots, look at propaganda on the part of Loyalists and Patriots, weigh the reasons people took sides in that war, and imagine themselves in the shoes of people who hold different views on this topic.

For decades, previous standards in content areas such as History, Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects, have not demanded attention in reading and writing. The Common Core Standards require that students become fluent, fast, structured and proficient writers across the range of genres, making it easy for students to use writing as a tool for thinking across all the disciplines ensuring preparedness for college and career readiness.

KUSD has invested a substantial amount of taxpayer dollars and countless amounts of time, human resources, and physical resources in support of the newly adopted CCSS. This investment was carried over into a three-year plan since the adoption in 2010. We have just begun implementing the CCSS into our curriculum. We are open to any new rigorous standards, but have not seen those. Thus, we support the state adopted common core standards for increasing standards of excellence.

While the long-term impact of the Common Core standards is unknown, the impetus and potential of meaningful classroom learning has begun.

In closing, our goal is to make our schools centers of high quality learning for all by structuring our practices and protocols using the standards outlined in the Common Core. As we design our schools, we must be sure to provide all students with opportunities to engage in the more rigorous worked outlined and expected within the Common Core State Standards. The focus on lifting the level of student achievement surpasses past standards of learning; and pushing us to exceeding high levels of accountability in order to seek high levels of student achievement.

## Testimony on the Common Core State Standards

October 3, 2013

George Mavroulis, Ph. D., Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services  
Laura Love, Director of Teaching and Learning for Secondary Education  
Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District

Thank you, Chairperson Thiesfeldt, Chairperson Farrow, and to all of the committee members for making the time to learn more about this important topic. My name is George Mavroulis and I am the Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services for the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District. We are here today to give you the point of view of practitioners. My primary responsibility is to work with teachers and principals on developing our district's instructional program for students. I want to provide insight as to how our district is using the Common Core State Standards – what they are and what they are not.

In the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District, we are using the English language arts standards as guideposts for what we expect all students to know and be able to do at the end of each grade level. They represent the minimum benchmarks, not a ceiling. We have many students who are performing at levels beyond their grade level and instruction is provided accordingly. We also have some students who are performing below the benchmarks and they are receiving supplemental services and interventions.

While the standards establish what students need to learn and be able to do, they are not a curriculum and they do not dictate how teachers should teach. This is very much a local decision. Our teachers will continue to select instructional materials, devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to meet the individual needs of the students in their classrooms. For example, one of the Common Core standards for English language arts in grade 5 states: "By the end of

the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 4–5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.” This standard does not spell out how teachers will teach students to “read and comprehend literature.” Nor does it indicate which texts to use. However, the Common Core State Standards do include sample texts that demonstrate the level of text complexity appropriate for the grade level and compatible with the learning demands set out in the standards. The exemplars of high quality texts at each grade level provide a rich set of possibilities and have been very well received by our teachers. This ensures teachers have the flexibility to make their own decisions about what texts to use, while providing an excellent reference point when selecting their texts.

This year, we are beginning our formal math review process where, like with English language arts, we will use the Common Core standards as grade level guideposts. So far, we have focused primarily on the standards of mathematical practice. We will eventually select our curriculum materials, develop our instructional strategies and design our formative and summative assessments based on the needs and talents of our students while looking toward alignment to the standards.

Our teachers have found the Common Core standards to be clear, concise, and more rigorous than the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards. They appreciate the guidance they provide while maintaining our local control over instructional decisions. Our district reviews and purchases new curriculum materials on a regular cycle so the Common Core standards have had little financial impact on us. English language arts and math are just part of that cycle, along with all of the other disciplines.

Overall, our educators feel that the Common Core standards are a step in the right direction for our students. They find them informative but not limiting. They especially like the emphasis on both reading and writing across the curriculum. I've also had many parents express their satisfaction in knowing what their children will be learning about in school so that they can provide support at home. While they are not perfect, I can honestly say that in my 30 years as an educator, all of them in Wisconsin, the Common Core standards provide the most complete picture of a K-12 learning sequence for English language arts and math that we've ever had.

Thank you for allowing me this time to speak to you.

#### **From the Building-level Perspective**

Good afternoon. My name is Laura Love. I currently serve as the Director of Teaching and Learning for Secondary Education in the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District, but worked for the past three years as High School Principal in Hudson. Both districts have strong reputations in the state as high-performing districts because they both have rigorous expectations, accompanied by strong support for students and staff members.

The work we did at Hudson High School in the past three years using the Common Core Standards was substantial. All of the teachers and support staff members were engaged in a process of examining and interpreting the standards because of the literacy expectations across the curriculum. In addition, the English language arts teachers translated every standard at every level into student-friendly language. The math teachers dissected the standards and classified them by course content. A great deal of important dialogue in collaborative teams was accomplished that was helpful in calibrating instruction and assessment.



Significant professional development has occurred in both districts that has helped teachers in all content areas understand their role as teachers of disciplinary literacy—both reading and writing across the curriculum. In large part this has happened because of the rollout of these standards. What the Common Core Standards have initiated are professional conversations across disciplines about what evidence there is that our students are thinking critically.

Students are expected to read and write a great deal more in every classroom than they were under previous state standards. Students must explain their reasoning when they provide an answer and often explain why another answer is not correct. In English and other content areas, like science, social studies, engineering and electives, students are expected to provide evidence cited from the text to support their own reasoning.

In math, students are now expected to persevere in solving problems and to communicate their thinking in new ways, beyond the formula, and to apply their thinking in multiple contexts. For example, math problems are now presented as real-world scenarios and often, therefore, include much more complicated thinking, reasoning and problem-solving at every grade level. The math teachers I worked with at the high school level felt the standards expected in each of their courses were more rigorous with the Common Core than they had been using past state standards.

We believe collaborative professional learning will strengthen teachers' individual classroom goals as well as raising the levels of engagement and achievement for all students. Moving this work from small content teams to interdisciplinary teams within a building to greater networks of teachers across districts and even across state lines helps us improve

education exponentially. Just as in other professions, networking between educators helps us work smarter with the wide range of students in our local classrooms. Finally, a substantial amount of energy and effort has been spent in making progress on common standards over the past three years. We have serious concerns about the costs in moving away from the Common Core—in time, in costs to districts—both large and small, in undoing the type of collaborative work I have described, and in the development of relevant assessments.

Thank you for your time and listening ear today. I am thankful for Representative Knudson’s response to our request to speak to you directly. I appreciate the challenge we all have in determining what’s best in the education of all students across the state.

**Legislative Hearing on Common Core Standards  
October 3, 2013**

**Good morning, I am Gary Vose, Board President – Kettle Moraine School District. The Kettle Moraine school board has begun a process of thoroughly understanding the Common Core Standards and the recent escalation of concerns that have been expressed. Our most recent presentation and discussion took place last Tuesday evening, October 1 and will continue at our next board meeting in two weeks. As a result, our board has not taken any formal action relative to my testimony today and I am therefore expressing my own opinions.**

**I believe we can all agree on some basic concepts:**

- 1) Greater rigor in our schools is desired – the Common Core Standards clearly establish greater rigor, especially when compared to Wisconsin’s prior standards.**
- 2) Being able to compare the performance of our district with other districts, our state, our country and other countries is also highly desirable. The Common Core Standards will allow these comparisons to be made and analyzed.**
- 3) A significant amount of time, effort and money has already been invested in the implementation of Common Core. Further delays or the development**

of new standards would be extremely expensive and result in a significant delay in the implementation of standards with greater rigor.

So, what is “all the fuss about”? Are the concerns being expressed legitimate?

And if so, how should we respond?

Based on my research, the concerns being expressed are more related to testing, the data that may be requested and “mined” and the perception these issues may lead to a federal takeover of our schools and the associated loss of local control.

Looking at the “big picture”, I believe we would all agree that losing local control is not a desirable outcome – We do not want the federal government dictating our curriculum. In fact, we do not want the state government to dictate our curriculum either. We desire local control, i.e. each district controls the content of their own curriculum. Common Core are standards not curriculum. I suggest you take the time to review a brief YouTube of the Mike Huckabee interview with Kyle Olson where they discuss Common Core (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mow256-axNo>)

The analogy of football may help. The football “common core standard” is to score more points than your opponent – what plays are called, the defense

deployed, the players utilized at each position are “local” decisions and in effect are the “curriculum” employed to meet the “standard”. Common Core provides the standard, not the curriculum.

However, there are other areas of concern that should be understood.

1. Some believe the fact that 45 states have signed up for Common Core must mean the standards are appropriate. While it is true 45 states initially agreed to implement Common Core, it is also true that a significant amount of stimulus money was provided by the federal government to encourage (or some may say bribe) states to agree to implement the standards. I agree the money may have influenced the decision of some states, however, it does not mean the standards are inappropriate either.
2. FERPA (The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) was modified in 2011 to allow the testing companies more flexibility to share data with others without parental consent. I am not a lawyer, nor have I personally studied the law to understand exactly what changed and the impact of these changes. As our state representatives, you should understand the impact of these changes.

3. Some critics believe personally identifiable student data which goes well beyond what most consider applicable to student achievement is going to be requested or required as part of the testing process. Examples of these data elements include social security number, sexual preference and political party affiliation. Do I believe developing a database with this data is appropriate? Absolutely Not! However, in reviewing the data elements included in the Wisconsin ISES (Individual Student Enrollment System – see attached), these controversial data elements are not being requested and as our state representatives you should not allow them to be collected either.

So, what is “all the fuss about”? It is about the related data mining and the possible increased control of our local schools by the federal government. You have the power and the responsibility to ensure improper data is not collected and the federal government does not take control of our schools. Common Core Standards as they currently exist do not violate these two principles.

Additionally, let us not stop the progress and the positive impact which will result from the implementation of these more rigorous standards out of a fear of what may happen in the future. Instead, let us take advantage of these standards to improve the achievement levels of our children and do our job of

**properly managing any future attempts by the federal government to remove local control.**

**Thank you.**

Good afternoon,

Thank you for taking the time to hear testimony today regarding the state standards. I am Dr. Susan Borden and I serve as a superintendent for the DeForest Area School District. The state standards have been a significant part of our work in school districts for the past four years and I wholeheartedly support the continued implementation of the state standards.

As experts in our field, we are already seeing the results of the higher standards. They are a uniform, aligned system and a needed update to the previous Wisconsin state standards. The standards, accepted through the collaborative efforts of many groups prior to their adoption in 2010, are richer and deeper than previous standards. They are specific and detailed - far more rigorous. Students are being challenged to work at a higher level and in different ways. Further, the standards are better aligned with the tests that currently drive college admissions like the ACT and SAT. Additionally, these standards are internationally benchmarked - making it easier to give comparison across nations.

From these standards, I have observed local control exercised to determine curriculum. Curriculum is the domain of our local school boards. Many facets with districts have been chosen or developed in each district across Wisconsin by locally elected officials and school personnel: texts, methods, teacher training programs, report cards re-designed, in-district assessments developed, new out-of-district adaptive assessments chosen, data to demonstrate student growth has been an increasing part of our training, verbiage for individualized education plans (IEPs), and so much more. Local CESAs and our professional organizations also supported the implementation of standards as we (to use an analogy) rebuilt the plane while flying it - on the time line established - aiming all Wisconsin systems for readiness with the start of 2014. Further, local districts shared resources to ensure all students in Wisconsin benefit from the higher standards. To use another analogy, we moved like a run of sardines rather than a pod of whales focused on creating a systemically better experience for students. This was a solid process. The state began with the end in mind - standards. Districts executed at their level - curriculum and teachers aligned through lesson plans.

So, both the process and content have been solid. It's up to all of us to keep our eye on the vision of moving the bar higher for students as we work on a daily basis to develop world class thinkers for a knowledge economy. The standards ask students to move to a higher level of thinking by synthesizing, analyzing, evaluate, create, and apply skills in academic situations.

What does this look like in the classroom?

1. Kindergarten students may be asked to bring in a variety of teddy bears and lay them out in a bar graph (by characteristics of the bears) on the floor of the classroom in order to begin to develop and use data working toward using these skills later in probability and statistics.
2. During the start of this school year, I observed our teachers implementing the locally chosen writing workshop. The workshop parallels the emphasis on writing skills in the standards. I have seen teachers grow significantly in their practice through the adoption of new methods; research shows that an expert teacher in the classroom is the single most important factor in student achievement.



3. Students are utilizing the results of data to drive their own goal setting. Even our youngest learners can see where their strengths are and where they would like to grow. I watched this happen as fourth grade students set learning targets.

We know that teaching does not cause learning. It is the learner's engagement with and the processing of teaching that makes learning happen. Please continue to support the standards in order to offer students the opportunity to engage at this higher level. Please support our systems in the effort we have expended and the forward thinking that has been a part of the systematic changes in education to ensure personalization with the standards.

Finally, as I always do, I extend to you an invitation to visit any of our schools in DeForest. I encourage you to see the standards in action as part of your decision making. You are welcome at any time.

Thank you.

Good afternoon, Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today. I am Abby Krause and I live in Dousman WI. I have attended public schools all my life. I am 16 years old and I go to school in Kettle Moraine School District, attending KM Perform. This is one of the charter high schools in my district. I am here today speaking in favor of the Common Core State Standards.

Some of my friends have asked me, "Why do you want to spend a day here with all these people doing this? Why do I care?" It isn't something I have ever done before. I feel very strongly that I want you to hear the voice of someone who is attending school. Someone who represents the students who will be affected by the decision you make.

Society is something that is ever changing, it is one of the many things that people can't stop or prevent. We just have to learn to adapt and work with what is surrounding us. Education in Wisconsin is something that many have mixed emotions about, but the truth is we need to grow.

Sitting as a student I have realized two things;

1. I am not just competing with other students in Wisconsin for a higher education, but am now competing with students internationally for a spot in a selected college.
2. Due to the economy and outsourcing of jobs, I will probably not get my selected field of work in Wisconsin but will probably have to move to a different location.

I am currently in a school which has pushed me to a level of thinking of how the competition will be in the next few years. This has allowed me to think not only ahead about my higher education.

We are no longer who we used to be as both a state and as an international society, which means that as a fully functional education system we have to adapt to these changes as well.

The Common Core State Standards set the expectations that will allow me, and other students across our state and our nation to reach higher goals. They will allow me to know how I compare with other students in the United States, not just in Wisconsin. I have heard that they are ambitious, that they stretch the expectations that were previously in place. I don't know about that, but I know I want to be the best and I want our state and our country to be the best.

It seems crazy to me that after all the work that our teachers have done that the legislators would change this, just because some people don't like them. It seems crazy to me that you don't believe the experts, the people who are teaching in our classrooms, who are helping us to become future citizens and members of society. Please, pay attention to the good work that is being done in schools across our state. Keep the common core state standards in place and let us improve education for every student. Thank you.

**Date: Thursday, October 3, 2013**

**From: Dr. Fran Finco, Superintendent - School District of Onalaska**

**Re: Support for Common Core State Standards**

I am Fran Finco, and I am the superintendent for the School District of Onalaska.

I am also here as a representative of the Wisconsin Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development. WASCD has been a state leader in curriculum and instruction for 60 years.

The organization is non-partisan with a focus on improving student achievement through quality curriculum and instruction. Members of our organization include superintendents, curriculum directors, teachers, and other educational professionals.

Our mission is to advocate for effective policies and practices to achieve success for each learner.

That is why I am here today. To share WASCD's beliefs regarding the Common Core State Standards and also to give you an insight how the teachers and leaders in the School District of Onalaska have embraced the Common Core and all the actions that come with writing a new, and more rigorous curriculum, and set of assessments, that challenge our students and prepare them to be college and career ready.

As experts in curriculum and instruction, WASCD is committed to supporting the use of the Common Core standards as the foundation for the development of more rigorous, focused, and coherent curricula, instruction and assessments.

BREAK

Why does WASCD support the Common Core State Standards?

### **1. The Common Core Standards are CLEAR**

The Common Core State Standards take Wisconsin's previous Model Academic Standards in reading, language arts and math to the next level. The old standards were a patchwork of expectations - only providing what students should know and be able to do by the end of grades 4, 8, and 12. These, every four year learning outcome lists, made it difficult to write vertically aligned curricula.

The Common Core standards provide a clearly articulated set of expectations across each grade level – making the writing of curriculum documents by teachers and school leaders easier and more understandable.

### **2. Under the Common Core - Reading and Writing is taught across all curricular areas.**

No longer is the teaching of reading and writing the responsibility of the English/Language Arts teachers. Improved writing skills lead to improved reading which leads to greater success in all other course subjects. The CCSS has specific expectations for non math and reading teachers to teach reading and writing.

### **3. Mathematics, under the Common, is more rigorous than in the past Model Academic Standards.**

About 50% of the Algebra content is now taught in the 8th grade. Factoring which is also an Algebra skill begins to be taught in grade 7. In kindergarten, where five year olds used to only need to know the number pairs of ten and two dimensional objects - like circles, squares, triangles, NOW need to understand the number pairs of 20 and three dimensional objects such as spheres and cubes.

### **4. Local Control**

Because the CCSS are not a curriculum (which is a misunderstanding in some circles), the local educators have control over writing curricula that will lead to students success in learning the Common Core standards

## **5. Improved college and career readiness.**

WASCD believes that mastering the Common Core Standards in Reading and Math will lead to a better understanding of critical skills in math, literacy and problem solving, skills needed by all students as they enter the world of work or higher education.

I would like the committees to know that WASCD is on record as supporting the Common Core standards as a significant component of systemic improvement in math and literacy across the state.

From a School District Perspective -

Our educators have been involved in learning about and implementing the CC for the past three years. (I have attached the first notice we received from our CESA in 2010 that we would be embarking on a five year journey of implementing the Common Core by 2014 because of the state adopting the CCSS as Standards in Wisconsin.)

The process was scary for our teachers at first. Breaking down standards that outlined annual expectations was new to many. Some people cried because they had to teach differently and think differently. They had to be out of their comfort zone.

But I can say that our involvement in implementing the Common Core has strengthened our ability to work in collaborative teams, examine standards documents, write curriculum, write common assessments and plan for instruction to meet the needs of ALL children. It has made Onalaska a better district, our teacher better educators, and has helped our children learn at higher levels.

### **One example of learning at higher levels.**

We now see students understanding mathematics and no longer memorizing mathematics. Think about how you learned math. The lesson was taught from the left side of the book and the practice problems were on the right side of the book.

Except you only had to do the odd numbered problems - remember why? - yes, because the answers to the evens were in the back of the book. Now students learn to understand the whys and are able to explain and demonstrate how a problem is solved.

**Challenge to the Committees - go to the following website and take the Smarter Balanced Practice Test in Mathematics - see how easy it really is.**

**(Web site of practice test - <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/pilot-test/>)**

In closing I would like to quote one of our current Republican legislators:

"It has been all too easy in this state, to be a hero, by finding an enemy. We need to rise above that and work together."

I would like to add that there is too much at stake here, and that is - the future of the children of Wisconsin.

I hope as committee members, you have entered these hearing with open minds and that at the end of the day - you realize how much better our state will be because of a decision you made three years ago - to implement the Common Core State Standards.

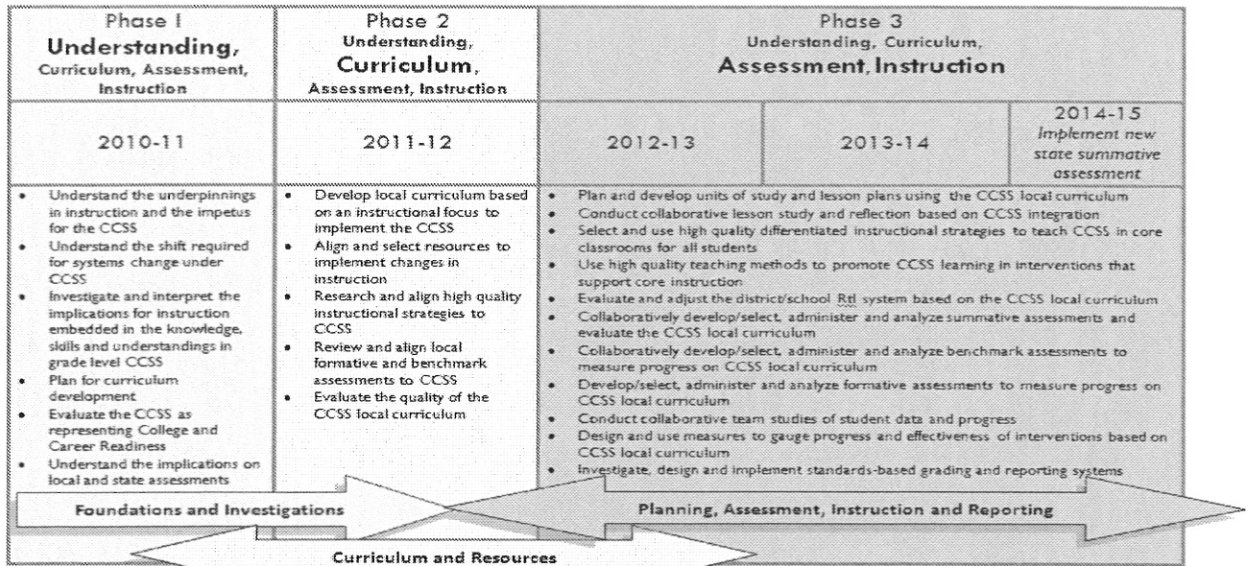
With regards. Thanks for all you do for the children in the State of Wisconsin.

Dr. Fran Finco, Superintendent  
School District of Onalaska

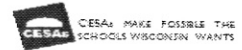
# CESA Plan to Roll Out the Common Core State Standards - 2010

August 12, 2010

## Wisconsin Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Focusing Instruction to Create Better-Prepared Learners *"The Work of School Districts"* Phase-by-Phase Roll Out



Developed by Wisconsin CESAs in collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction



Common Core State Standards Hearing  
October 3, 2013  
Rm 417 North  
Wisconsin State Capitol

My name is Jesse Harness, Commissioner of CESA Statewide Network (CSN). I serve the twelve Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (or CESAs) in Wisconsin and their member school districts. CESAs were created by the Legislature in 1963.

Thank you for providing a forum to discuss the Common Core State Standards and how their adoption and implementation is preparing our children to be college and career ready.

CESAs have played a key role in helping educators understand the Common Core State Standards that were adopted in 2010 by Wisconsin and in 45 other states. CESAs have led the way in emphasizing how instruction in English/language arts and mathematics **MUST CHANGE** for students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education and a globally competitive workforce.

Never before have PK-12 educators been provided a guide to the content that students should master at each grade level. The standards are a huge improvement over their predecessor, which were **NOT** college and career ready. The Common Core State Standards are rigorous and challenging. They are internationally benchmarked. They were written by content experts, teachers and researchers focusing on college and career readiness.

There is a cost to implementation of any worthwhile educational change. Professional development is needed to understand the shift required for this system change and the implications for instruction. CESAs provide purchased services to their member districts based upon their needs. The past three years we have diligently designed and facilitated high-quality collaborative work between districts and between CESAs related to standards implementation--designing LOCAL curriculum, units of study, lesson plans and formative assessments.

Sharing common learning targets has opened the doors to a level of educator collaboration that we have never experienced before. This collaborative effort has not only resulted in higher quality curriculum and instruction for students, it has also allowed for significant cost savings to local districts.

The CESAs are certainly not alone in this effort. They have partnered with the DPI and the Institutions of Higher Education in the state to form the College Readiness Partnership with the goal of promoting effective implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The focus is on enhancing the intersection of PK-12 and Higher Education.

To delay or interfere with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in Wisconsin would be a huge and costly misstep. Much work has been accomplished and deep conversations and sharing of best practices are taking place. Not only would such action derail this much needed, highly coordinated educational change effort in the state, it would deny our children the opportunity to become best prepared for postsecondary education and careers in a globally competitive society.

Thank you!

**Jesse Harness**  
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# School District of Hillsboro

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October 1, 2013

In the School District of Hillsboro the common core state standards have broken down the walls that separate our classrooms and have demanded that we approach our profession in the same manner as doctors, lawyers, accountants, and architects. We are professionals working collaboratively to bring about the highest levels of achievement for our students.

On the common core state standards...

Mrs. Clarson and Mrs. Hora, Hillsboro High School English teachers shared the following:

The level of literature, and what students are asked to do with it, has definitely increased with the core standards. But the major benefit that we're seeing here is how now, across the grade levels, we're all "speaking the same language"—sixth grade students and twelfth grade students are discussing theme, inference, technique, etc., and though we're at different levels of reading, we have clear goals in sight and we're all on the same track to get there.

Furthermore, we have incorporated much more writing into our curriculum, both formal and informal. Students know when they come into an ELA class that they aren't simply going to take a multiple-choice test, but they will be expected to demonstrate their understanding through constructed response. More writing is a challenge—for both students and their teachers—however, it not only allows students to become more proficient with more practice, but also allows us to better assess their understanding. They are simply not able to fake it or get lucky with a "multiple guess."

Also, we cannot say enough about how we value the emphasis on reading and writing across the curriculum. Now, as a school, we are *all* responsible for teaching students reading and writing skills in each discipline—as a school, we are *all* responsible for instilling in them the value of reading and writing, that they are essential skills for success in college and career for our students.

With respect to the supposed lack of rigor, we would like to invite the legislators (and our governor) to actually examine the standards, read the performance tasks, take a sample test. We are both English majors and we found the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Smarter Balanced Practice test to be quite rigorous in what it asks of our students.

We have spent over two years now working with this material and the past year implementing it in our classrooms. We know it is asking a lot of our students, and of us, in terms of rigor.

Mr. Koopman 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Reading and Language Arts teacher wrote the following:

The CCSS has completely changed not only what I teach, but also how I teach. They provide me with a destination, and I get to design the map to get my students there. I am a better teacher because I chose to accept these standards. As for not being rigorous enough, I know that I have worked harder in the last two years than I ever have designing lessons to meet these standards. My lessons are more challenging and complete because of the depth of the standards. We have spent countless hours poring over them, dissecting them, and interpreting their meaning, and I still don't have a grasp on every aspect of them. Finally, I think it makes teachers accountable. All teachers. Every teacher needs to know and understand them, and then teach them to their students. The science teacher needs to make sure their students are citing evidence when presenting an answer. History teachers need to make sure students are doing a close reading of the informational text. Every teacher is involved in the discussion of standards. The standards just work so well together.

Mr. Bothe, Hillsboro High School Social Studies

The CCSS will be the culmination of a teacher's best lesson plans with that of an extensive depth of knowledge for the student on the subject at hand. Teachers are not "teaching the test". Teachers are preparing students for life-long learning by having each student hone in on their best style of approaching any question with reasoning.

Who am I, you ask? My name is Mrs. Fanta. I am the district's curriculum coordinator - an eye witness, to the amazing resilience and stamina of our professional staff. Our work aligning these rigorous standards with curriculum for our students has gone from chaotic and fragmented to the beginning stages of cohesiveness and coherency. Do not disrupt our work. We have invested our teaching hearts and teaching souls to raising our rigor to meet the CCSS because we believe our students with these standards as the framework will be better prepared to meet the demands of college or career.

Committee members, I thank you for your time and attention. Come visit us at 777 School Rd. or 853 Hillsborough Avenue and observe the roll out of these standards in action.



# CHEQUAMEGON SCHOOL DISTRICT

*"The Home of the Screaming Eagles"*

**DISTRICT OFFICE**  
David G. Anderson  
District Administrator

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715.762.2474  
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October 1, 2013

Representative Jeremy Thiesfeldt  
Room 16 West  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Senator Paul Farrow  
Room 323 South  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

Re: Common Core State Standards

Dear Senator Farrow, Representative Thiesfeldt and Members of the Select Committee on Common Core Standards:

I am giving this statement to the Select Committee on Common Core Standards with much concern that a legislative committee would, at this late date, consider limiting or ending adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The CCSS were adopted over three years ago by this state along with 44 other states and the District of Columbia. In 2009 when announcing that Wisconsin would participate in the CCSS initiative, then State Superintendent Burmaster said, *"The Common Core Standards will help the education community align instructional materials, textbooks, digital media and curriculum. Common Core Standards will help states provide professional development based on identified need and best practices and will provide a framework to develop assessment systems that measure student performance against the common core."*

That is exactly what has happened over the last four years as districts all over the state have collectively spent many millions of dollars of state and local taxpayer funds to align our instruction and instructional materials with the CCSS. Locally we have adopted a new Reading/Language Arts text K-12 that is based on CCSS. Our professional development has incorporated CCSS and will be more heavily CCSS based over the next couple years. The state has adopted a new Smarter Balanced test to replace the WKCE test. It is based on CCSS principles and is much more demanding of students than the current WKCE test. The CCSS expects students to "analyze, delineate, integrate and interpret" while reading. The current WKCE test does not expect as much from students. I invite you to compare sample questions from each. Smarter Balanced Samples may be found at: <http://sampleitems.smarterbalanced.org/itempreview/sbac/ELA.htm> Sample comparable WKCE test questions may be found at: <http://oea.dpi.wi.gov/files/oea/pdf/readrelease6.pdf> You will note that the 4<sup>th</sup> grade Smarter balanced test question requires more creative thought than the 6<sup>th</sup> grade WKCE test question. The bar on expectations has definitely been raised in the new CCSS based Smarter Balanced tests.

The CCSS provide:

- Consistent learning expectations for all students.
- Clear standards that focus on understanding over memorization.
- Emphasis on the critical topics students need to succeed after high school.
- Faster testing results with a better, more focused online assessment system.

Is the CCSS perfect? Hardly. But it is something the state and the 424 school districts around the state have invested millions of dollars in that is better at preparing our students for life as adults in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is more rigorous than that which it replaces. To pull the rug out from under the school districts of the state now with nothing better to replace it would merely be setting up school districts and teachers of Wisconsin for failure. This is especially disconcerting to the educators of this state who are now preparing to be evaluated under a new Educator Effectiveness model that is tied to the Smarter Balanced Assessments and the CCSS in the 2014-15 school year.

Stop Common Core groups have made outrageous accusations and claims that are without basis in fact. Two examples include: "Florida schools conducted iris scans on students without permission as part of new Common Core Standards " or "Instead of whining about health curriculums that teach five year olds to masturbate and that teach falsehoods about American history, become a voice for the children. Stand up and stop the Common Core." This type of inflammatory rhetoric merely incenses those you do not understand the CCSS and the improvement it will bring over the old standards. The DPI has prepared an excellent web page that addresses the myths regarding CCSS at: <http://commoncore.dpi.wi.gov/files/cal/8.6UPDATEDWCSSMythFacts.pdf>

As a superintendent of a small school district in northern Wisconsin, I can say we face unique issues that make success challenging. We are the largest district by area in the state, covering 750 square miles. Well over 50% of our students live in poverty. Given these circumstances and the challenge facing many rural school districts across the state with declining enrollment and shrinking revenue, it is very difficult to prepare for and make these kinds of changes, even over multiple years of preparation. It would be devastating to us, and many other districts, to suddenly change course and expectations.

I know you all want the best possible education for the students of Wisconsin just as I do. Please consider that as you ponder the CCSS now and understand the disruption that would occur to the educational process should the direction of the last 6 years suddenly be changed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



David G. Anderson  
District Administrator



Metropolitan Milwaukee  
Association of Commerce

**DATE:** OCTOBER 3, 2013

**TO:** SELECT COMMITTEES ON COMMON CORE

**FROM:** STEVE BAAS, VICE PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS  
METROPOLITAN MILWAUKEE ASSOCIATION OF COMMERCE

**RE:** COMMON CORE

On behalf of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC) I would like to thank you for inviting input on the Common Core education standards and their impact on Wisconsin.

The MMAC represents over 1800 member businesses employing more than 300,000 workers throughout the metro Milwaukee region. We are also a founding partner of the Milwaukee 7 – Southeast Wisconsin’s regional economic development organization. As such, we are acutely aware of two things on a nearly daily basis: First, how critical a well-educated workforce is to providing the fuel for our existing economy; and second, how important the quality of our workforce – and our ability to quantify that quality to prospects - is in allowing us to compete nationally and internationally for new jobs and businesses.

We support the Common Core, because it represents a step forward on both these fronts. The state’s ability to honestly assess its own students’ performance and to measure that performance relevant to other states has been severely handicapped over the years by our reliance on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE). Specifically, the WKCE is hampered by the low bar it has set for academic proficiency here in Wisconsin and by the fact that its results cannot be accurately compared to other states’ results. Being able to assess our students’ performance via the Common Core and its associated tests will provide Wisconsin with an academic proficiency measure that is far more rigorous than our existing standards and, equally important, one on which our Wisconsin students’ performance can be credibly and accurately benchmarked against their peers nationwide.

I am aware that some individuals have concerns about the Common Core, and believe Wisconsin can do better. While there is nothing wrong with looking for possible ways to strengthen how we implement and test the Common Core, I would caution the state from going backwards in a way that once again makes Wisconsin an island in terms of the nationwide relevance or comparability of its academic standards and student performance.

Thank you once again for your attention to this important topic. Thank you too for your continued attention to the concerns we have about the impact any changes to Wisconsin’s adoption of Common Core standards could have on our ability to compete for new jobs and business both nationally and internationally.

###

756 North Milwaukee Street, Suite 400 • Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

Phone (414) 287.4100 • Fax (414) 271.7753 • [mmac.org](http://mmac.org)

To: The Select Committee for Review of the Common Core Standards Initiative

From: Terry Kaldhusdal

6<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies Teacher, Kettle Moraine School District

Wisconsin State Teacher of the Year, 2007; Kohl Fellow Award, 2006; Wisconsin History Teacher of the Year, 2011

Re: Keeping the Common Core State Standards Intact

Members of the Select Committee for Review of the Common Core Standards Initiative:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in our democratic process. It's important to my students that they see how our republic works.

My name is Terry Kaldhusdal and I'm proud to say that I teach in the Kettle Moraine School District. I'm a Kohl Fellowship Award winner, a former history teacher of the year, and in 2007 I was honored to represent our state in the Oval Office where I met with President George W. Bush as the State Teacher of the Year.

I want to give you quick history of where we were in this state and where we need to go. Because there was an overwhelming feeling in 1983 that our public schools were beginning to fail, President Ronald Reagan commissioned a report titled "A Nation at Risk". That report pointed out that in order for our state and our nation to compete in the world economy we needed to create strong academic standards. We still feel the positive impact of that report today.

So now we knew that overall our schools needed to improve, but which ones. That led to President George W. Bush to sign the No Child Left Behind Act. NCLB gave all of us: teachers, students, parents, administrators, community members, and politicians' hard data on who was failing and who was succeeding.

At least we thought it did.

I say that because in the 2006-2007 school year the results were shocking. Ninety percent of Mississippi 4th graders were considered proficient in reading, by far the highest results in the nation. What were they doing that we weren't?

We found out when the NAIP test results came out. NAIPs is a nationally normed test that is a true barometer of how our students are doing nationally and internationally. The number of proficient readers in Mississippi didn't drop they crashed. The results went from 90 percent to 17 percent.

Mississippi lowered their standards to the point where it was nearly impossible to fail. They gamed the system.

When a parent asked, "How is my child doing in reading?" And the answer was, "He's right where he needs to be," that was a flat out lie. And that's not okay, because that child was failing.

I hope engineers never tell me that the bridge I'm about to drive under is safe when the reality is it's failing. And I hope the one who checked off that the jumbo jet I'm about to board is just fine when the reality is it's about to fail.

I use Mississippi's results because their numbers are so extreme. But they are not alone. Kentucky's test results dropped more than 30 percent. Why did they drop? Because their new state test was based on the Common Core. New York's test results dropped 49 percent. Again, it was because the new state test was based on the Common Core. Their standards were too low. But be careful, because next year, when our state test results come out, our test scores will drop. Everyone agrees, because our former state standards were too low.

But this is Wisconsin where we don't run away from a fight. We shouldn't hide because our state standards are too low. We should embrace these rigorous standards. I can tell you that for the last two years the Common Core have given me a laser focus to what my students need to learn and improved my students' ability to problem solve. I ask that you help me help my students by keeping the Common Core State Standards intact.

**Testimony before the Select Committee for Review of the Common Core Standards Initiative  
Madison, Wisconsin  
October 3, 2013**

Good afternoon. I am Dave Polashek, Superintendent at the Oconto Falls School District. The Oconto Falls School District is a quick 15 or 20 minutes north of Green Bay and has an enrollment of just under 1,800 students. I have been in the business long enough to remember a time when instead of classrooms, it seemed that teachers were working in silos with no connections with anyone other than the blue sky above. To some it seemed that a teacher could walk in his or her classroom on the first day of class, shut the door and come out on that last day of the school year with no one the wiser as to what had happened for 180 days behind that closed door..

Over time, that changed as school districts began to put a greater emphasis on curriculum development. There were too many overlaps what was taught in some cases and gaps in other situations. In the early and mid-nineties, school districts in Wisconsin began the process of adopting curriculum standards. Some districts did this on an individual basis while leaders at the state level were determining if it made more sense to write standards unique to Wisconsin or adopt something that had been created elsewhere. Ultimately, it made more sense not to reinvent the wheel and existing standards from another state were revised slightly to apply to all districts in Wisconsin. The extensive collection of standards was criticized as being a mile wide and an inch deep. To many teachers, they looked overwhelming. After several years, most teachers and school districts were hungry for something better.

When Wisconsin adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010, the Oconto Falls district was quick to jump on board with lots of staff training. These standards are in two areas, English Language Arts and Math. As a result of our work with the Common Core in English Language Arts, our teachers speak a common language about what is expected in student learning. Teachers collaborate on lesson planning, assessment, and strategies for teaching. Teachers have participated in more concentrated ELA professional development delivered in a number of different formats, including released time during the contract day.

As teachers applied what they learned in that professional development, students began to read more informational text. They were reading and writing informational text using argument. While doing so, they cited

evidence for their argument. Students were reading and being held accountable for reading text at higher lexiles. We have revised daily schedules and increased the ELA block to accommodate the time needed for the increased rigor of the reading and writing.

This effort has expanded beyond being the sole responsibility of English Language Arts teachers. Teachers across the curriculum are reading text and writing informational text and arguments. Partnering in this effort are teachers in music, phy ed, and the career and technical education classes.

Turning to the math standards, teachers analyzed the standards and found that the level of rigor needed to master the standards was not possible with the current math program. As a result, changes were made. Students now work in cooperative groups to solve relevant problems and gain understanding of the “math” behind the math. Students are held accountable for their understanding by explaining how they solved the problems. Students now can write about math and how the problems solved. Communication is a regular part of today’s math curriculum.

In our schools, students are appropriately using math concepts at earlier grade levels than was the case prior to our adoption of the Common Cores. Teachers at all levels in ELA and Math are co-planning lessons and sharing materials. Teachers have much more of a sense that “We are in this together.” Students have a heightened awareness of their own accountability for their achievement. To help facilitate higher achievement levels in math, we have increased math learning time at the elementary and middle schools.

The adoption of the Common Core Standards, with the need for heightened rigor and relevance, has caused the district to rethink much of what was once the norm. The adage, “You can’t do the same thing and expect to get different results,” has changed much of how we operate and the expectations of ourselves and of our students. Revised schedules, time with the content, collegial planning, targeted assessments, expanded summer school and additional after school sessions for at risk students are only some of the changes we have made as part of the implementation of the Common Core Standards.

Our experience with the Common Core Standards has been positive and worth every ounce of energy we have invested in them. We strongly endorse the legislature’s continued support of this initiative.



The Common Core State Standards are about jobs  
Nick Madison  
Superintendent  
Brillion Public Schools

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a big deal in education. They represent the biggest reform of K-12 curriculum in the history of this country. The standards specifically focus on defining what kids should learn in the areas of literacy and mathematics. The CCSS have redefined and refocused what our expectations should be about the level students should be able to read, write, speak, and do math. The standards have raised the bar of expectations for all students and have provided a focus for what schools do like never before.

The perspective I bring to this issue is from a small town superintendent in Brillion, Wisconsin. One of the unique features of Brillion is that while the city has about 3,000 residents, we also have about 3,000 manufacturing jobs. We are the world headquarters of the Arians company, maker of outdoor power equipment and also home to Endries International, Professional Plating, and the Brillion Iron works. The relationship between the Brillion Public Schools and these businesses is a close one. Teachers from Brillion spend time at these companies learning what they do. Brillion students visit, complete internships, and learn about these companies. Engineers from these companies spend time working with our students in our classrooms. We value this relationship as it is the knowledge and expertise of business that drives what we do.

Outside of the city of Brillion, we are also an agricultural community. While the entire school district has about 5,000 residents. We are also home to about 15,000 cows. The dairy industry is big business and today's dairy farms are highly complex and technical organizations that require the skills needed to run an advanced business operation. The FFA organization has been and continues to be an extremely strong link between the school and the agricultural community. That link ensures that our school has a direct line to what skills are needed to be a farmer in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is from this background that I come before you today to tell you that the skills needed in business and industry today are the skills the CCSS are focused on having student achieve. Implementation of the CCSS is a job creator and a job saver.

A large part of why the CCSS came into existence was because of the demands of the American business community to increase the skill levels of workers. For American business to compete in the global economy, high wage jobs require student to know more and to be able to do more. That is why businesses such as Exxon, State Farm, and Boeing support the common core. It is also why these more rigorous standards are endorsed by the US chamber of commerce. The CCSS are what business has asked for and it is what Wisconsin public schools have been working so hard the last three years to achieve.

One example that I have seen the impact of these standards on first hand has been in the area of welding. Industry needs welders. They are a critical skill needed in Wisconsin's economy. While welding is often seen as a hands-on physical occupation, it surprises some people to know that the welding profession requires a high level of literacy comprehension. The technical manuals required for careers in welding, which are often coupled with expertise in robotics, require students to be able to read and understand complex text. Literacy instruction in the past has often centered around fiction and personal narrative. Students had to write about what they think of a piece of literature or what they feel the author may have been thinking. While that type of instruction still has its place and should not be abandoned, that is not the type of interaction a welder needs to have with the technical manual needed to program a robot to perform a certain type of weld. Instruction has to evolve to the increasing complexity and technical skills needed for sustainable careers.

To conclude, I testify here today as someone who comes from a community where we tend to value getting things done. People in Brillion roll up their sleeves and get the work done. Whether it is milking cows or building a better snowblower, we don't talk about it all day, we just do it. The CCSS are the foundation we need and are evidence of the work of a lot of people who did something productive.

I believe that debate is the strength of any democracy and I believe the recent debate on the common core is healthy. Good ideas look even better when challenged. I also believe the Jeb Bush had it right when he said about the CCSS debate: "The key to reigniting social mobility and maintaining American competitiveness lies in giving every child access to the best education on the planet. Let this, not politics, be at the heart of our dialogue."

Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today and let's make sure we do what is best for kids.

## Northern Ozaukee School District - Common Core State Standards

A few years ago, the Northern Ozaukee School District embarked on the process of receiving, unpacking, and implementing the Common Core State Standards for use within our schools. Our goal through all of this work and professional development has been to utilize this set of rigorous standards to create consistency in our students learning, a common understanding of how to move forward with curriculum and related materials, and a much more aligned set of proposed outcomes from which to create applicable assessments to more truly gauge our students understanding of core competencies and their extension to non-core areas such as music, art, and physical education.

Our school district relies on the concept of Professional Learning Communities. In PLC's, teachers and administrators, along with students and their families, work collaboratively to answer 4 key questions:

1. What do our students need to know, understand, and be able to do? (Common Core)
2. How will we know that they have learned? (Assessment related to Common Core)
3. What will we do if they have not learned it? (Rtl related to Acuity/Classroom Assessments)
4. What will we do if they already know it? (Rtl related to Acuity/Classroom Assessments)

Using these 4 corollary questions, we have been able to use the Common Core State Standards to provide an extensive clarity to our processes and make this work much more efficient and productive for everyone who is involved in this great effort across grade levels and subject areas.

We continue to be very appreciative of the Common Core State Standards for a variety of reasons:

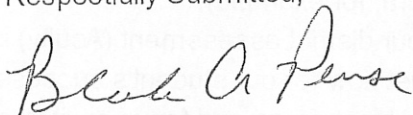
- There is greater specificity in the areas of Math, Reading, and Language Arts to guide our work to insure high level outcomes for our students.
- The standards are much more succinct, yet give us the ability to cater individual student's learning should they already know and have deeply embedded a concept within the knowledge base.
- The sequencing of the knowledge and skills needed by students has remained similar, yet the point at which students start the process has increased by 1-2 years, such as learning higher level math skills at a younger age (Algebra, for example).
- We are able to address progress monitoring because our district assessment (Acuity) is aligned with the CCSS so we know exactly what to target now for our student's success.
- We are able to create a stronger alignment across all subject areas and focus on literacy based in Common Core State Standard attainment through multiple approaches.
- Professional Development/Learning has become much more focused as we fully implement these standards into our grading and assessment mechanisms (rubrics).
- As a district that has fully implemented standards based assessment and grading, we have been able to create consistency in our reporting and student preparation for high level learning.

- The Smarter Balanced Assessment and the ACT Suite are also CCSS aligned, creating yet another consistency so needed in our system
- Common Core State Standards act as a floor and not a ceiling (The CCSS floor is the previous ceiling based upon rigor and expectations of our students)
- Inexpensive products, such as CESA 7's Common Core Curriculum Companion, have created outstanding guides for our teachers that have been developed by practitioners and not by a federal or state task force. This companion product has vastly improved our curriculum by creating consistency and delineation in our standards.

Much has been said that the Common Core State Standard adoption and implementation has cost districts extraordinary amounts of money. In our case, we have used many free and low cost alternatives to become approximately 75%-80% implemented in all of our schools. Much has also been said that the Common Core State Standards do not allow for students to be creative and experience a broad range of classes. In our school district, we expect that our students get a varied level of coursework and experience as much as we have to offer. We are not "widgetizing" our students by any means. We are expecting our students to use skills across the subject areas to improve learning and success across the board. Finally, much has been said that the Common Core State Standards focus on simple/basic skills rather than higher level skills. It is our belief and experience that having clarity in the skills that are the building blocks for the future is of utmost importance and that sometimes you have to go a little slower to go fast. This is very true of our CCSS implementation and we owe it to our students to insure that they have all of the foundational skills in place so they can burgeon those skills later into deeply embedded, higher level THINKING skills rather than rote memorization and simple recall.

Common Core State Standards are about creating a streamlined, rigorous set of standards from which we can create a curriculum that focuses on higher order thinking skills and increased levels of achievement and retention of critical concepts and knowledge. This is why it is important to maintain our CCSS adoption and implementation and make sure that our students are college and career ready.

Respectfully Submitted,



Blake A. Peuse  
Superintendent of Schools  
Northern Ozaukee School District

I am here as a former classroom teacher, a Director of Instructional Services, a Wisconsin Association of Curriculum Development/WASCD board member and parent. Over my career, I have witnessed many changes in education. I support the CCSS as a significant component of systemic improvement in math and literacy across the state.

As a classroom teacher, when the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards were to be released, I was thrilled to learn with certainty what my Wisconsin students were to know, understand and do. However, to my disappointment, the standards only outlined grade level expectations for students in grades 4, 8 and 10. Each district was individually left to determine grade level expectations for each of the unarticulated years. Across the state each district created its own unique set of standards for Kindergarten and grades 1, 2,3,5,6,7,9,11,12. This became increasingly challenging as students moved from district to district and state to state.

The world has seemed to become smaller; we have students move to our district from other areas of our state and nation. The CCSS help to level the playing field by laying the foundation for all students across the United States reach the same learning targets. The CCSS take the guessing game out of understanding each grade level's student outcomes because the standards are grade level specific. In addition, the CCSS are a research based, internationally benchmarked learning continuum that builds upon the prior grade level's expectations. The standards provide clear and consistent expectations of students statewide that far exceed the expectations of Wisconsin's former standards (Wisconsin Model Academic Standards).

The CCSS benefit our students and teachers. By having a consistent set of academic expectations through Common Core standards, districts are able to collaborate and develop greater opportunities for equity and access to key skills and concepts that are aligned with college and career expectations.

In our global society, our goal is to ensure that our students are not only competitive for careers in our town but hope that they spread their wings to the far corners of our world and soar. For our students to succeed, they need more than the ability to memorize and recall facts. Children today need to be able to take math and literacy skills and apply them in real world, this will prepare them for their future beyond PK-12 education. The CCSS asks student to dig deep into reading or math to analyze, explain and support the claim they have made both verbally and in writing, collaborate with other students to expand their thinking, and apply new knowledge in multiple situations. Students who can apply this skill set will continue to thrive as adults in whatever career they choose. The Common Core sets the stage for their success.

The Common Core standards serve as a guide for local districts. The standards do not represent the full curriculum. Districts still have local control related to specific outcomes, curriculum, resources, and assessments that are used. Long term, the question that needs to be asked is "Do the Common Core standards in reading and math better position our students in the state to be competitive nationwide with colleges and viable careers?"

As an educator, I am committed to supporting the use of the Common Core standards as the foundation for the development of more rigorous, focused, and coherent curricula, instruction, and assessments.

# **Facts and Myths about the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics**

## **What the Common Core is:**

- a set of research-based expectations for student learning
- a core set of standards for all students with acceleration options to meet the needs of higher-achieving students
- meaningful mathematics learning targets that will increase our global competitiveness in business and academics
- the highest academic bar we have ever set for students in Wisconsin

## **What the Common Core is not:**

- a requirement for increased testing
- a lockstep mandate for schools about mathematics course offerings
- a one-size-fits-all approach for students and schools

## **Why the Common Core is good for Wisconsin children:**

- provides more consistent and clear expectations for all students and teachers state-wide
- increases productive dialogue between districts about how to best support students
- empowers local districts to focus resources on how to best teach students, not what to teach students

**The Common Core. High Standards for all students.  
Better outcomes for Wisconsin.**

My name is Colin Butler. I'm a member of the Kettle Moraine school board and a director of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards. There are 426 public school districts in Wisconsin meeting a constitutional mandate to provide an education to just under 900,000 students statewide. It's safe to say that every one of these districts is very heavily involved and invested in implementing the Common Core State Standards which were adopted in Wisconsin several years ago. In the case of my district, we've consumed a tremendous amount of staff time and spent upwards of \$3 million in these efforts. It's been money well spent, in my opinion. These new standards are more rigorous and more consistent than what they replace. They have prompted us to redesign our curriculum to better serve our students' needs in preparing for college and careers. And these standards will allow us to employ standardized assessments that will allow us to gather meaningful data showing how our students and staff are performing compared to all other public schools in Wisconsin as well as most of the other states.

For the first time ever, there is a hope that scientifically valid data will be available to help local school boards determine what's working, what's not and where to deploy resources for the best results for nearly a million Wisconsin students who are counting on us for their futures and the future of our state and nation.

Please do not attempt to undo all the good work which has been done in implementing the Common Core State Standards. Please do not throw up any additional roadblocks threatening our ability to meet our constitutional mandate. This legislature is developing quite a record of undermining support for public education, including diverting tax dollars to private schools, incenting parents to leave public schools to obtain tax credits, reducing funding for public schools and stopping the implementation of a desperately needed state student information system among other actions. This all must stop.

Public schools are the foundation of our strength and success as a nation

and you, as our elected legislators, have no greater responsibility than to do all you can to ensure the long term viability of our public schools. Thank you for your consideration.





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Deputy  
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## Testimony for the Joint Select Committee on the Common Core

Dear Chairpersons Thiesfeldt and Farrow and members of the Select Committee,

My name is Debra Zarling and I am here speaking in favor of the **Wisconsin Common Core State Standards**. I am a licensed Reading Specialist and the Reading Coordinator for the Oshkosh Area School District. I am also a member of the Executive Committee and Past President of the Wisconsin State Reading Association.

I started teaching before we had standards, when the curriculum was determined by the publisher's program being used and when students were tested on their ability to memorize and reiterate isolated bits of information, but were not asked to think or apply that knowledge to new situations. These standards ask students to think critically, to become engaged and discerning adults, to independently become twenty-first century learners.

I was involved in introducing the **Wisconsin Model Academic Standards** in our district when they were instituted in 1998. Those standards were very broad and only defined expectations at grades four, eight, and ten. Local districts were required to fill in the blanks themselves. The **Common Core State Standards** begin with a clear set of Foundational Standards which describe the building blocks needed by beginning readers, yet recognize the need for even our youngest students to think deeply and purposefully about concepts and ideas. The standards then progress through the grade levels to define what students need to know and be able to do to be college and career ready.

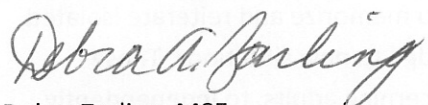
I served on the English Language Arts Design Team of the Wisconsin Standards Project which convened several years before the adoption of the **Common Core State Standards**. With guidance and feedback from the *Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* and the *American Diploma Project*, we were charged with creating a new set of standards for Wisconsin. After several years of involvement in this complex, lengthy process, and well before we were finished, we were introduced to the **Common Core Standards** which were in development. We participated in discussions around early drafts of these standards and provided feedback regarding their content. At that time, we still anticipated developing Wisconsin's own standards and I admit to having significant reservations as well as being disappointed when the announcement came that we would be adopting the **Common Core State Standards**. However, after working with these standards during their development and for the last three years since they were adopted, I can truly say that they are appropriate for our students and raise expectations for student performance well beyond what we had in place previously.

In my role as district Reading Coordinator, I have been involved in providing extensive professional development focused on these standards. I have worked directly with teachers to help them raise their expectations for themselves and their students. I have listened as teachers have told me "My students

can't do that," and I have coached and supported them in helping their students achieve these new, more complex goals. I have seen their excitement and pride when their students excel and do achieve these new standards and, as a district, we are only starting to fully implement the **English Language Arts Standards** during this school year.

These standards define those abilities that students will need to be successful in life and on tests of knowledge and application. The standards do not necessitate "teaching to the test," they expect teachers to teach students to be competent, independent learners and to prepare them to succeed with whatever path they choose – college, technical school, or the workforce. I am convinced that they are right for our students and that, as a state, we need to continue to move forward with their implementation. I urge you to support the continued implementation of the **Wisconsin Common Core State Standards** as well.

Thank you,



Debra Zarling, MSE  
PK-12 Reading Coordinator, Oshkosh Area School District  
Committee Coordinator, Wisconsin State Reading Association

Testimony presented to the Wisconsin Legislature at the public hearing on Common Core State Standards, Thursday, October 3, 2013, Madison, Wisconsin

Heather DuBois Bourenane  
681 Broadway Drive  
Sun Prairie, WI 53590  
(608) 217-6370

Thank you for providing this opportunity for the general public and education experts to share their concerns about the Common Core State Standards. I am speaking on this issue today as a concerned citizen with extensive personal and professional experience on this topic. I am not representing the University or any other employer or group in any official capacity and am here because I feel obligated to share my personal conclusions and experience. My relevant credentials include the following:

- Parent of two children attending CH Bird Elementary in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin
- Program Coordinator, Great World Texts in Wisconsin, Center for the Humanities, University of Wisconsin-Madison, in which capacity I have authored and organized materials for high school educators around the state and worked closely with the Department of Public Instruction to ensure our materials are of the most possible use and value to teachers, and meet their academic standards and the needs of their curriculum.
- College English teacher (15 years teaching experience at the Ohio State University, the University of Wisconsin, and Madison College)
- Citizen Representative to the Performance and Operations Committee of the Sun Prairie Area School District Board
- Past board member and active member of the CH Bird Elementary PTO, CHBEST
- Organizing member of the Sun Prairie Action Resource Coalition, a grassroots organization that advocates for open and transparent government and civic engagement and whose members have prioritized protecting our investments in excellent public schools
- Public education advocate, community organizer, and freelance writer

In each of these areas, I have a vested interest in ensuring that Wisconsin public schools meet the demand the state Constitution requires to provide a free and “as nearly uniform as practicable” education to all students (Article X, Section 3). The only way to ensure such uniformity to set and maintain high standards of excellence that give all of our students equal opportunity to succeed.

Like the vast majority of parents in Wisconsin, I choose to send my children to the excellent public school in our neighborhood. I do not want to send my children to a private or religious school. I do not want to take advantage of our open enrollment program to attend a school outside of our community. I do not want them to attend homeschool or virtual school. I want them to fully benefit from the public education system that is the pillar of pride in any successful democratic society and to learn there to be fully productive and active members of a local community in which they feel fully invested and supported, and that they will be proud to support as adults. I want them to attend a school that reflects the full possibilities of diversity in American society; a possibility that cannot be achieved through any of the other options available to me as a parent, to the great detriment of those options.

As an educator at both the university and the community college, I see the full range of preparedness of students who enter our classrooms, with an equally wide range of occupational goals. Many of these college freshman are not prepared to meet the demands of college, nor are they prepared to communicate effectively in the workplace. I routinely spend time at the beginning of a semester going over “basics” that students should have mastery of before they enter the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

Having read the standards, followed the debate closely, and I have spoken extensively with DPI, I am comfortable concluding that, **when approached with the flexibility and careful selection of curriculum advised by DPI, these standards have the potential to give Wisconsin students a huge edge when entering college and the workplace.**

While my own area of expertise and experience is in English Language Arts and I cannot speak much beyond “looks good to me” to the Math standards (which every math teacher I know supports) and the Social Studies standards that I haven’t seen, I don’t have any problem supporting Wisconsin’s implementation of the Common Core State Standards for English/Language Arts. And not because I think our teachers are doing a “bad job” or that our old standards were so terrible, or because I have a low opinion of college freshmen. But because they provide a new rigor, and a new model, that is very flexible and teacher-friendly, and THAT model will free teachers to be able to really prepare their students – as they know how to do, and want to do – to be ready for work and college. These standards are not prescriptive. They are intuitive and fluid, and they promote all of the best practices we should welcome into an English classroom: the ability to teach from multiple sources and disciplines, the ability to create original curriculum that challenge every student while meeting the needs of all learners, the ability to teach beyond the text and set the bar high to prepare students for the demands of the workplace and/or college.

In my capacity as the program coordinator for Great World Texts in Wisconsin, I worked closely with DPI’s Tamara Maxwell (English Language Arts Consultant, Common Core State Standards Team) and a workgroup of veteran educators who’ve participated in our program, to create exemplar modules to demonstrate how existing lesson plans are aligned with CCSS and how teachers can use our materials to meet the needs and demands of Common Core while meeting

their own pedagogical goals in the classroom. What we found was that the teachers could easily and intuitively adapt their lesson plans and “plug in” the standards to show how their own best practices already meet many of the standards, and how they could easily shift focus to emphasize other standards or introduce new concepts, teaching challenging works of world literature in their entirety and encouraging student projects that connect standards and ideas across disciplines and lessons. *This is real teaching. This is what real teachers do.* CCSS just gives them a new language for describing what they’re doing, and it gives them some freedom to do it. We aren’t telling the teachers what to teach; we’re giving them target goals and asking them to do what they do best to achieve that. Unless we tie their hands by tying these standards to impossibly rigid curriculum, the standards themselves only point them toward possibilities. This is what I learned in preparing these materials, and this is why I support the standards. Because I support excellence in teaching and learning practices, and I support policy that gives teachers the freedom to teach, and I understand that in order to fulfil our goal of meeting every student’s need equitably, our standards have to be high, and they have to be flexible.

That said, I think there are many misconceptions about CCSS and that there is a serious danger that their implementation will backfire if this intend of flexibility and respect for teacher practice is not prioritize. My concerns about the CCSS include the following:

- **Local control.** The success of implementing these standards depends entirely on how local school boards choose to select their curriculum and conduct their assessments. The advent of the CCSS has been matched by the birth of its suspicious twin: an unscrupulous industry of profiteers whose loose and unprofessional understanding of the standards has launched an entire industry of “CCSS-ready” materials, textbooks, and resources that are designed to profit off districts’ desire to update their curriculum to meet the new standards. Districts must carefully, with the help of educators and other professionals, assess these materials to ensure that the standards the district wants to prioritize are the ones being taught in the texts, and to be ever-vigilant against materials that serve little function but to teach-to-the-test. Meticulous review of these materials is absolutely essential to the success of CCSS in Wisconsin, and school boards should take DPI’s advice in being flexible and open-minded in interpreting the demands of the standards: they are not as prescriptive as many of these publishers would like you to think, and we (literally) buy into that fallacy at the expense of our kids.
- **Assessments.** I have not seen the Smarter Balanced Assessments myself, but have heard that they are much more interactive and accurate in assessing student knowledge than the measures we currently use in Wisconsin (most notably, MAPS and WKCE). These assessments have the capacity to redefine the way we think about and use testing in our schools, and I encourage districts to use this data to inform – not drive – their decision-making. Tying these yet-unseen assessments to Educator Effectiveness reviews and teacher pay only fosters an environment in which the kids who most need

instructional support (ie the low-scorers) are underserved and the students who score best become pawns in a game that has little to nothing to do with a desire to challenge them or see them achieve their best beyond their test score. The current obsession with assessments horrifies me as both a parent and a teacher, and I think the greatest danger in adopting CCSS lies in the too-rigid connection of the standards with “outcomes” as determined by tests which may or may not be aligned with any given district’s curriculum (see my first point on local control).

- **Propaganda.** It becomes increasingly evident every day that a certain faction of those opposed to Common Core State Standards are those who have very little to say about the standards themselves, but are simply knee-jerk opposed to “government schools” in general and any initiative established during the Obama administration in particular. This creates a climate of misinformation and hysteria and ignores the two most important issues in the discussion: (1) student success and (2) the actual content of the standards themselves. I would caution anyone against politicizing this debate, and I would reject out-of-hand the rabid opinions of people on either side of the fence who cannot demonstrate that they have actually read the standards or understand how they would be implemented into the classroom.
- **Funding.** Wisconsin has already signed on to implementing CCSS and the fiscal burden of reversing that decision would be enormous. We cannot afford to jeopardize federal funding in our schools, which are still reeling under budget cuts and struggling to meet the needs of our young learners. A partisan move to cut ties with the rest of the nation on this issue would be a reckless violation of the public trust.

**If the above concerns are approached honestly, and with a process that prioritizes respecting teacher and students, I believe the CCSS can help make our excellent Wisconsin schools even stronger. I call on the legislature to put education first and avoid politicizing teaching in learning in ways that will negatively impact our students and our schools.**

I thank you for your time and your careful consideration of the facts and the data supporting the need for high and flexible standards of excellence in our schools.

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**Attached:** (2) CCSS exemplar modules from the Great World Texts program

**Wisconsin Constitution, Article X, SECTION 3:**

The legislature shall provide by law for the establishment of district schools, which shall be as nearly uniform as practicable; and such schools shall be free and without charge for tuition to all children between the ages of 4 and 20 years; and no sectarian instruction shall be allowed therein; but the legislature by law may, for the purpose of religious instruction outside the district schools, authorize the release of students during regular school hours.

PO Box 413  
Milwaukee, WI 53201

October 3, 2013

To whom it may concern,

As a professional mathematician, and faculty member in the Department of Mathematical Sciences at the university of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM), I wish to state my strong support for Wisconsin's adoption of the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSSM). In particular, I want to emphasize the high level of mathematical rigor exemplified by these standards. The following points seem to me to be important:

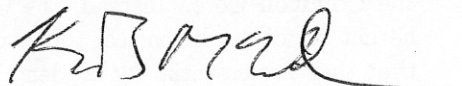
1. We know that what we have been doing in the past does not work. Nationwide, nearly 60% of first-year college students require remedial coursework in either English or mathematics.<sup>1</sup> For many of these students, completing their remedial mathematics (that is to say, high school mathematics) requirement will be a significant challenge on their path to their chosen college degree. The situation in Wisconsin mirrors the national one. At UWM, for example, over 40% of our incoming freshmen are placed in non-credit mathematics courses, and this is despite the fact that UWM awards college credit for a course (MATH 105, Intermediate Algebra) which covers no material beyond the level of a high school Algebra II course.
2. The CCSSM set a high, but realistic, level of expectations for *all* students. It is unrealistic, and unnecessary, to expect all students to master calculus (for example) in high school. That would be the "one size fits all" approach that is often brought up as an argument against the Common Core. Instead, the CCSSM attempts to identify a coherent set of mathematical topics of which it can be reasonably said that they are essential for students' future success in our increasingly technological and data-driven society. "College and career ready," yes, but also life and citizenship ready.

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<sup>1</sup>*Beyond the Rhetoric: Improving College Readiness Through Coherent State Policy*, accessed from [www.highereducation.org/reports/college\\_readiness/gap.shtml](http://www.highereducation.org/reports/college_readiness/gap.shtml) on October 3, 2013.

3. It is easy to point to a certain favorite topic and say the the Common Core delays discussion of that topic, or places it in a grade level higher than it has been taught previously. It is also dangerous. There is no merit in placing a topic at a grade level where students are unable to do more than repeat procedures without understanding or reasoning. (One example would be the all-too-frequent expectation that students compute means and medians of sets of numbers, with no significant connection to context, and no discussion of when it would make sense to use one rather than the other.) It is necessary to look at any set of standards as a coherent whole, and ask whether students who meet all expectations of the standards have been held to a sufficiently high level.
4. Any set of standards is a floor, not a ceiling. Any school district, school or individual teacher may set expectations beyond the standards, if they choose to do so. Indeed, there will be students who will need more mathematics in high school than is required by the CCSSM. Those students should indeed take more mathematics, and opportunities should be made available for them to do so. The question is whether *all* students should be required to learn more mathematics than is in the CCSSM; my answer is "no."
5. Even for talented students, the rush to learn advanced topics and procedures should not be allowed to get in the way of deep understanding of the topics covered.
6. After a discussion with my colleagues in a UWM Department of Mathematical Sciences executive committee meeting earlier this week, they expressed agreement with the points made above. There are undoubtedly some professional mathematicians who claim that the CCSSM are insufficiently rigorous; I believe they are a small minority.

Sincerely,



Kevin McLeod  
Associate Professor, Mathematics  
UW-Milwaukee



October 3, 2013

Honorable Senators and Representatives,

In 2010 the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction adopted the Common Core State Standards as the k-12 standards in mathematics and English language arts. Although the CCSS have been the state standards for three years, there has been some recent backlash, mostly from groups outside the state of Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Legislature has recently offered its support for the CCSS by including funding in the Wisconsin budget for the assessment of the CCSS.

I have had the honor and privilege of serving as the President of the Wisconsin Mathematics Council during the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics. During this time, I have witnessed the power of the CCSS-M to positively impact the way mathematics is taught and learned throughout Wisconsin.

One of the arguments against the CCSS is that it is a national initiative that takes away local control. Nothing could be further than the truth. The CCSS is a state-led effort that was initiated by the National Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. There was no federal writing, reviewing, approval, or funding of the CCSS. The CCSS do not dictate curriculum or teaching methods; local school districts retain the right to select their own curricula, and local teachers remain the experts on how to best help their students attain the standards. Local districts also have the power to determine when individual students are ready for taking advanced courses, such as Algebra 1 in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, as well as how to assist students who fall behind grade level.

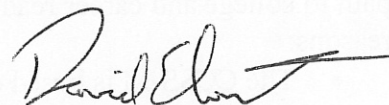
When the CCSS-M were being developed, local organizations including the Wisconsin Mathematics Council and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction offered feedback. In addition, about 10,000 public comments were considered by the writing and review teams prior to the release of the CCSS-M.

I believe that the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics offer the best path to college and career readiness for the students of Wisconsin for a number of reasons:

- The CCSS-M is based on knowing content, applying that knowledge, and truly understanding mathematics. This includes both conceptual and procedural knowledge. The CCSS-M emphasizes Standards for Mathematical Practice, stating that our students should make sense of problems, persevere, reason abstractly, construct viable arguments, critique the reasoning of others, model with mathematics, use appropriate tools, and attend to precision, among other things.
- The CCSS-M gives a clear and coherent description of what students should be able to do at each grade level in grades k-8, and throughout high school. The previous Wisconsin Model Academic Standards offered guidelines for what students should be able to do by the end of grades 4, 8, and 10, without defining a coherent path at each grade level or expectations beyond grade 10.

- The CCSS-M is research-based. There are definite progressions of skills and knowledge throughout grade levels that will help teachers build students' understanding as they progress in school. For example, knowledge of fractions is not restricted to only one or two grade levels; rather, the development of understanding of fractions is strategically built through a range of grades.
- The CCSS-M correspond with standards of high-performing countries. For years the students in the U.S. have been scoring in the middle of the pack on international assessments. The CCSS-M is a rigorous set of standards that will help our students achieve at a level comparable to students in the highest-performing countries.
- The CCSS-M will be assessed using more accountable assessments. There will most likely be a dip in our students' state test scores as the tests more accurately reflect their knowledge, ability, and understanding of mathematics. This dip will not be because of a lack of understanding; rather, it will more accurately reflect what they know and are able to do. There should be a rise in test scores in subsequent years as teachers throughout Wisconsin learn how to best implement the CCSS-M.
- Common standards offer consistency throughout the state. Students who relocate during their educational years will encounter the same standards in every school district in Wisconsin, as well as 46 states across the country. Consistency will also aid university programs, as the CCSS-M are aligned to expectations of higher education. School districts will also experience long-term benefits as teacher preparation programs focus on the CCSS-M to train their future teachers.

For each of these reasons, I believe that the Common Core State Standards offer the best path to success for the students of Wisconsin. I have seen the positive impact on teachers from all regions of the state as they engaged in professional development workshops dedicated to the implementation of the CCSS-M. My experience as a classroom teacher and as a leader within the Wisconsin Mathematics Council has reinforced my conviction about the potential the CCSS-M has to offer every school, teacher, and student in the state.



David Ebert

Oregon High School  
mathematics teacher  
Wisconsin Mathematics  
Council President, 2011-2013