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## The Common Core State Standards – Myth vs. Fact

*Myth: The Common Core is a “federal mandate.”*

**Fact:** The Common Core State Standards are part of a state-led effort to give all students the real world skills and knowledge they need to succeed. The standards were not developed by the federal government, and individual states choose whether or not to adopt these standards. Tennessee chose to set higher expectations for students by first adopting higher standards in 2008 and then adopting the Common Core State Standards in 2010. Our state’s policymakers, legislators, business leaders, and parents were concerned that Tennessee’s students did not have the skills and knowledge needed for success in the workforce. In today’s economy, competition for jobs comes not just from across town but from across the country.

*Myth: The Common Core is a curriculum.*

**Fact:** Tennessee’s Common Core State Standards set goals for what students should know in each grade, but they are *not* a curriculum. Local school districts will continue to customize and choose their own curriculum and textbooks in order to best prepare their students for success. If the standards represent the finish line or final destination, the curriculum represents the different paths that can be taken to get there.

*Myth: The Common Core is a “dumbing down” of Tennessee’s standards.*

**Fact:** The Common Core State Standards are more rigorous than Tennessee’s old standards, focusing on more critical thinking and problem solving, which are the real world skills that students need upon graduation. In addition, Tennessee’s new standards focus on a deeper understanding of materials, not just basic memorization and test-taking skills.

*Myth: Tennesseans do not support the Common Core State Standards.*

**Fact:** In a statewide opinion poll commissioned by the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) in May 2013, 76 percent of voters supported the Common Core State Standards after hearing just a brief statement about them. To date, more than 220 organizations across Tennessee, representing hundreds of thousands of Tennesseans, have joined the *Expect More, Achieve More Coalition*. This group believes high expectations for students, through the Common Core State Standards, are critical to our state’s future.

*Myth: The Common Core is a “threat to academic freedom.”*

**Fact:** The Common Core gives teachers more freedom than they have had in the past. The new standards are clear and focused, allowing teachers to explore important topics in depth with students, rather than skimming the surface of numerous topics and spending time preparing them for tests. With fewer standards to teach in each subject, teachers can now spend more class time devoted to making sure every student understands the material.

*Myth: The Common Core will mean that personal, identifiable information about a student will be shared with the federal government.*

**Fact:** Common Core is not a tool for federal data collection and it does not authorize student data sharing between states or with the federal government. The federal government can only collect aggregate-level student data and is prohibited from reporting information that would make it possible to identify an individual student.

Personal, identifiable information about an individual student is protected under the federal privacy law known as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy ACT or FERPA. New FERPA [regulations](#) established in 2008 and 2011 were direct responses to state requests for clarification regarding the role of the state in using student data while maintaining privacy protections. The new regulations provided a clearer interpretation of the original legislation to help states better understand and fulfill their role in protecting data.

*Myth: The Common Core is the first step toward nationalizing education.*

**Fact:** The Common Core does not impact an individual state's control over its public education system. Tennessee's Constitution makes it clear that it is the state's responsibility to maintain and support the public education system. Tennessee chose to set higher expectations for students by first adopting higher standards in 2008 and then adopting the Common Core State Standards in 2010. Local school districts will continue to customize and choose their own curriculum and textbooks in order to best prepare their students for success.

*Myth: With the Common Core, students will no longer be reading *The Great Gatsby* or works by Mark Twain.*

**Fact:** With the Common Core State Standards teachers will continue to teach literary classics, as they always have. The Common Core enhances that material with added emphasis on informational text (the Gettysburg Address, for example), because research shows that the old standards required students to read little informational text in school. In addition, reading for the workplace and education beyond high school is often based on informational and non-fiction texts.

*Myth: The Common Core is unconstitutional.*

**Fact:** The Common Core does not weaken state authority over public education. In the US Constitution, the 10<sup>th</sup> Amendment reaffirms that the powers not specifically delegated to the federal government are reserved to the states or the people, and education is among these powers. Furthermore, Tennessee's Constitution makes it clear that it is the state's responsibility to maintain and support the public education system. Common Core standards were not developed by the federal government, and individual states choose whether or not to adopt these standards. Tennessee has been a leader in the state-led effort to set higher expectations for students, and chose to adopt the Common Core State Standards in 2010.