



Myths v. Facts about the Illinois Learning Standards

Myth: The Common Core State Standards are a national mandate dictating a national curriculum.

Fact: Common Core State Standards adoption and implementation is a state led initiative. Individual states voluntarily chose whether or not to adopt the standards and retain full authority for implementation. Illinois' version aligned with the Common Core State Standards is called the Illinois Learning Standards. The Standards are not a curriculum. They are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents and others will decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.

Myth: The Standards tell teachers what to teach and what materials to use.

Fact: The best understanding of what works in the classroom comes from the teachers who are in them. That's why these standards will establish **what** students need to learn, but they will not dictate **how** teachers should teach. Instead, schools and teachers will decide how best to help students reach the standards.

The Illinois Learning Standards define what students need to know; they do not define what teachers should teach or how students should learn. The standards will actually help preserve freedom for curriculum choice. These decisions are left to each state and local teachers, principals, superintendents and school boards will continue to make important decisions about curriculum and how their school systems are operated.

Myth: The Standards are not research or evidence based.

Fact: The Standards have made careful use of a large and growing body of evidence. The evidence base includes scholarly research; surveys on what skills are required of students entering college and workforce training programs; assessment data identifying college- and career-ready performance; and comparisons to standards from high-performing states and nations.

Myth: The Illinois Learning Standards will cost more by requiring states to spend for training, tests, etc.

Fact: There is no additional cost associated with implementing Illinois Learning Standards as the process uses existing resources. The Illinois State Board of Education sets learning standards, which outline the content and skills students must master at each grade level in order to be on track for high school graduation and postsecondary success. School districts then implement curriculum to meet these standards. The implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards is included in curriculum costs already incurred by local school districts. The estimated cost of testing aligned to the Standards approximates Illinois' current expenditures.

Over time, the standards may even result in cost savings for Illinois. In addition to reducing the need for costly remediation in college, the aligned learning standards will allow states to share curriculum materials, items on state tests, best practices and experiences. Therefore, each state does not have to separately invest time and money in these undertakings.

What's more, state standards aligned to the Common Core State Standards make economic sense. Improving the quality of education delivered in American classrooms through higher standards holds the potential to lessen the next generation's reliance on our ever-expanding entitlement and corrections programs. Higher standards will prepare our future workforce for the global economy, strengthening our nation's competitiveness.

Myth: The federal government collects academic and other information about individual students.

Fact: The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation amending the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Education Reform Sciences Act of 2002, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) prohibit the creation of a federal database with students' personally identifiable information (i.e. information such as SSN). The federal government is authorized to publicly report specific aggregate-level data only. Federal law prohibits the reporting of aggregate data that could allow individuals to be identified. The federal government does not have access to the student-level information housed in state data systems.

Myth: The Illinois Learning Standards do not require my child to learn cursive.

Fact: Cursive has never been included in the learning standards in Illinois. Local school districts and schools may include instruction on cursive under the Illinois Learning Standards, as they did under the previous Illinois standards.

Myth: The Illinois Learning Standards eliminate the reading of fiction.

Fact: The Illinois Learning Standards require a greater variety of text exposure. Elementary students now receive an equal exposure to age-appropriate narrative and informational texts. (Thus, about half of what they read will still be fiction.) By introducing more informational text early and increasing its complexity each grade, students will be prepared to analyze and interpret complex texts to meet college- and career-ready benchmarks. In high school, English Language Arts reading will consist entirely of literature and literary non-fiction. Literacy will be better integrated into other subjects under the Standards. For example, a history class might read the Declaration of Independence or a biology student may analyze a scientific journal article.

Myth: The Illinois Learning Standards decrease standards for some kids.

Fact: Illinois was in the process of updating standards in English Language Arts and Math, which had not been updated since 1997 when our state joined an initiative spearheaded by governors and state education chiefs from across the nation to develop common standards. The Common Core State Standards were designed to build upon the most advanced current thinking about preparing all students for success in college and their careers. They were informed by the best in the country, the highest international standards, and evidence and expertise about educational outcomes. This will result in moving even the best state standards to the next level. Moreover, the Common Core raises the floor; it does not impose a ceiling.

Myth: Teachers were not involved in the development of Common Core State Standards.

Fact: The Common Core State Standards were largely designed by teachers who are experts in their subject areas, under a process led by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors' Association.

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