



Who we are

Every student in Connecticut deserves a world-class education. That is the clear message and ongoing commitment of a partnership formed by our organizations, which represent six of Connecticut’s leading education and business groups.¹ Although our groups represent different stakeholders and perspectives, including school boards, superintendents, principals, advocates, and the business and civic community, we are united in our desire to see systemic improvement in our public schools.

Why we support the Common Core Standards

Our groups know that great public schools are essential to our children’s future and to our state’s economic and civic survival. To make that future bright, we must make sure that Connecticut’s children are prepared to succeed in our increasingly global economy and society. To keep this commitment, students, parents and educators need clear, high and consistent expectations for what students need to know and be able to do so that our children are ready for the challenges ahead.

That is why our organizations are coming together to support the [Common Core State Standards](#). Across our state there are district leaders, principals and teachers who are working hard to make these standards come alive and raise expectations for all our children. We believe that these efforts will help ensure that all Connecticut students know more by the time they graduate high school and are prepared for college and careers, which, in turn, will help ensure Connecticut thrives.

Unfortunately, we are witnessing a lot of confusion and misinformation about these standards that could prevent us from reaching these goals. This statement will be the first of several joint efforts to set the record straight about the myths and facts about these standards, and to advocate for fair, sensible and

¹ Our partnership includes the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA), Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now (ConnCAN), and the Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER).

timely implementation of these standards in our schools and districts.

About the Common Core State Standards

In [2010](#), teams of leaders and teachers from [45 states](#), including Connecticut, came together to raise their expectations of students and create a set of common, consistent learning standards across their states, called the Common Core State Standards. Before these standards, our expectations for students looked very different from state to state. These Math and English standards were drawn from the highest performing states and countries, and were written by teams of educators, curricula and content-area experts.

These standards are clear and consistent, and make sure that what kids need to learn at each grade level builds on the grade level before. The standards are more rigorous than what has been in place. They can also help promote real understanding because the standards are designed to go deep into topics, and help students focus on content and knowledge mastery, not memorization.

[Surveys show](#) that teachers support the Common Core State Standards. A recent [Harrison Group survey](#) of 279 Connecticut teachers found that ‘nearly three in four (73 percent) English language arts, science, and/or social studies teachers in Connecticut are enthusiastic about the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in their classroom.

Ultimately, these standards can help give all stakeholders peace of mind in knowing how well students are being prepared for success in college and careers, no matter where they live.

In 2010, the [Connecticut State Board of Education](#) unanimously voted to sign onto the Common Core State Standards. Now, [schools across Connecticut](#) are implementing these standards by selecting curriculum, training teachers and administrators, and talking to parents about what the new standards mean. This year, most districts will also start to administer new tests aligned with these standards, and all districts will administer the new tests in 2015.

Our Recommendations

The shift to these new standards requires clear communication, commitment and hard work from all involved in this effort, and that work needs to be supported with training, time and resources. We know Connecticut can do it and we know the effort will be worthwhile. Strong implementation of these standards can help ensure all children in Connecticut have the knowledge and tools they need to succeed. To achieve this, we recommend:

- **Implementation support, in the form of clear and timely information, guidance, training and resources is provided by the state to districts and by districts to schools.** We are encouraged that the State Department of Education recently released a [new online resource](#) to help, and [other organizations](#) have also developed tools and resources to help. More assistance will be needed to help implement this change effectively.
- **Regular and ongoing communication between the state, districts and schools to monitor and adjust implementation as needed.** Effectively managing a complex new undertaking requires clear, consistent and transparent communication and a problem-solving approach between all parties involved.
- **Sensible implementation of these standards and the new tests aligned with them. Ultimately, the results of these tests, in combination with multiple methods of assessing student achievement outcomes, must be linked to district, school, and educator evaluation and accountability.** For this reason, we agree with the latest consensus of the [Performance Evaluation Advisory Council \(PEAC\)](#), which allows districts an extra year to adjust to implementation of these new standards before linking the test results to [educator evaluations](#). We urge the PEAC and the Commissioner of Education to work with stakeholders, including the PEAC, to continue to monitor implementation and make reasonable adjustments to ensure school and district accountability and the educator evaluation system and the Common Core Standards are implemented fairly, with fidelity, and without overly lengthy delays.
- **Clear and consistent communication about these standards and implementation to families as well as family and community organizations from the state, districts, schools and advocates.** Parents and communities need to understand these standards in order to be full partners in making this change work. Our organizations commit to sharing in the responsibility for communicating with the broader public about these standards. We urge the CT State Department of Education to lead this effort by providing communication tools for local district leaders.