

Common Core Math & English Language Arts Standards

Information provided by
Utahns Against Common Core

Contents

- 1-Sandra Stotsky testimony for Utah on CC ELA standards
- 2-How Common Core Doubles Down on NCLB
- 3-Integrated/Constructivist Math Approach being implemented by USOE
- 4-USOE textbook project for Math 1- comments by Dr. Wilson and Dr. Wright
- 5- State of Utah's Math Education by Dr. David G. Wright, Professor of Mathematics, BYU
- 6- Math Standards as rated by Fordham Institute
- 7- Dr. Ze'ev Wurman comments on Utah Waiver Application, Pages 24-25.
- 8-Letter from Judy Park in early May 2012 to USOE employees
- 9-US Dept. of Education offering Race to the Top money to schools and districts bypassing states
- 10-Common Core Standards are mediocre
- 11-What does Sec. of Education Arne Duncan say about Common Core?

1-Sandra Stotsky Testimony for Utah on CC ELA standards

**Restoring Local and State Autonomy
To Strengthen Public Education:
Testimony Submitted to Utah's 2012 Education Interim Committee**

**Sandra Stotsky
University of Arkansas
August 15, 2012**

Purpose: I thank State Senator Howard A. Stephenson and State Representative Francis D. Gibson, Co-Chairs, and other members of Utah's 2012 Education Interim Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on the deficiencies of Common Core's standards. I also suggest why the legislature is justified in negating the state's adoption of Common Core's English Language Arts Standards and how Utah could develop and assess first-class standards in the English language arts at a relatively low cost.

Professional Background: I hold a doctoral degree in reading research and instruction from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. From 1999-2003, I was senior associate commissioner at the Massachusetts Department of Education where I was in charge of revising the state's K-12 standards, professional development criteria, licensing regulations for all educators, and teacher tests in all major subjects. I was appointed to serve on the National Assessment of Educational Progress committee to develop the reading framework for 2009 (2003-2004), the National Mathematics Advisory Committee (2006-2008), Common Core's Validation Committee (2009-2010), and the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (2006-2010). At the local level, I served as Trustee of the Brookline Public Library (1984-1999) and Town Meeting Member (1984-1994), both elected offices.

I address the following points in my written testimony:

- 1. That Common Core's standards for the English language arts are neither research-based, nor internationally benchmarked. Nor are the percentages for literary and informational reading in the English class supported by research or the NAEP reading frameworks.**
- 2. That Common Core's college readiness standards were designed to lead to intellectually undemanding secondary mathematics curricula and tests to enable all students to enroll in college. We don't know yet what its readiness standards mean for the academic level of its ELA tests, although one can presume they will have similar goals.**
- 3. That state boards of education adopted Common Core's standards under false premises as part of a truncated public comment process and unwittingly transferred control of the local curriculum to the federal level.**
- 4. That Utah can develop and assess first-class standards in the English language arts at relatively low cost.**

Background

The ostensible goal of the Common Core project is to prepare all students for higher education in this country, using common tests based on curricula aligned to Common Core's standards that are developed by testing consortia funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The standards, the tests, and the curricula reflect the USDE's belief that all students should be prepared for college and that the federal government should determine what students learn in English and mathematics to be prepared for college.

State boards of education in 2010/2011 apparently believed that federal officials could establish sounder educational policies for their state than they themselves could, despite lack of evidence that federal officials have ever established effective educational policies in K-12. Board members who voted to adopt Common Core's standards and to join one of the testing consortia developing curriculum and tests seemed willing to believe that implementing something called

"college and career readiness standards," giving tests based on them, and making all teachers take professional development in them will make all students ready for college.

(1) Common Core's standards for English language arts are neither research-based nor internationally benchmarked. Nor are the percentages for literary and informational reading in English classes supported by research or NAEP reading frameworks.

Common Core provides no comparison of its own sets of standards with any sets of international objectives in English or mathematics. I requested information on international benchmarking many times during my tenure on the Common Core Validation Committee, yet it was never provided. To judge from my own research on the language and literature requirements for a high school diploma in Ireland, British Columbia, Canada, and Alberta, Canada, Common Core's ELA standards fall far below what other English-speaking nations or regions require of college-intending high school graduates. In fact, that is the main reason that I and four other members of the Validation Committee declined to sign off on Common Core's standards.

Nor is there research evidence to support the usefulness of the generic reading skills Common Core offers as "anchor" standards (and as grade-level standards). Common Core's anchor standards are not authentic academic standards. Only authentic academic standards can guide development of a coherent and progressively demanding literature/reading curriculum in K-12, and only such a curriculum can prepare students adequately for a high school diploma, never mind authentic college coursework. Skills, processes, and strategies by themselves cannot propel intellectual development or serve as an intellectual framework for any K-12 curriculum.

Nor is there evidence to support the idea that having English teachers teach more informational reading (or literary nonfiction) and less literary reading will lead to greater college readiness. There is also no research to support Common Core's division of reading into 10 informational and 9 literary standards at all educational levels.

Moreover, an approximate 50/50 division of informational and literary reading in the curriculum is not supported by NAEP's reading frameworks. NAEP makes it clear that the percentages it proposes for types of reading passages are for its tests, not the English curriculum (it has never assessed drama), and that its percentages are intended to reflect the kind of reading students do outside as well as inside school. Common Core's ELA architects have misguidedly applied the NAEP percentages, which are themselves not research-based, to the English curriculum and the ELA college-readiness test, misleading teachers, school administrators, and test developers alike.

(2) Common Core's college readiness standards were designed to produce an intellectually undemanding secondary mathematics curriculum and test so that all students can be declared "college-ready." We don't know yet precisely what its readiness standards mean in ELA, but we can assume that they were designed with similar intentions.

Passing a college readiness test in mathematics will not mean that Utah's students are capable of competing in a global economy. It will mean only that they are qualified to enroll in a non-selective community or state college, as Jason Zimba, lead writer of Common Core's mathematics standards, admitted at a March 2010 meeting of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

We don't know what passing a college readiness test in English will mean because we don't yet know how many reading passages will be above a grade 8 readability level and where the cut score will be. The testing consortia have not indicated what readability level "college readiness" means. Does the Utah Department of Education know if the cut score will reflect a readability level of grade 10, 11, or 12 with respect to vocabulary and syntactic difficulty?

(3) State boards adopted Common Core's standards under false premises as part of a truncated public comment process and inadvertently transferred control of the curriculum away from local school boards.

Common Core claims that its standards are research-based and internationally benchmarked. But state boards of education were never given clear information on the research base or international benchmarks before or after a vote to adopt them. Moreover, the Utah State Board of Education did not provide full public discussion before it voted to move control of the curriculum from local school boards to a distant federal bureaucracy.

The USBE tentatively approved the standards two days after they were published (June 4, 2010) to meet a U.S. Department of Education deadline of August 2 and then approved them on August 6, 2010. Despite this short timeline, the Utah State Office of Education website claimed through April 2012 that "They were vetted thoroughly by the Utah State Board of Education and by parents who attended public meetings held across the state prior to the State Board's unanimous vote to adopt them in 2010." After recent complaints to the USOE about how hearings could have happened in such a short period of time and when no one was aware of them, the claim was removed from the website. Because the USOE website prevents such statements from being archived, the fact that this claim was once made depends on the testimony of those who read it.

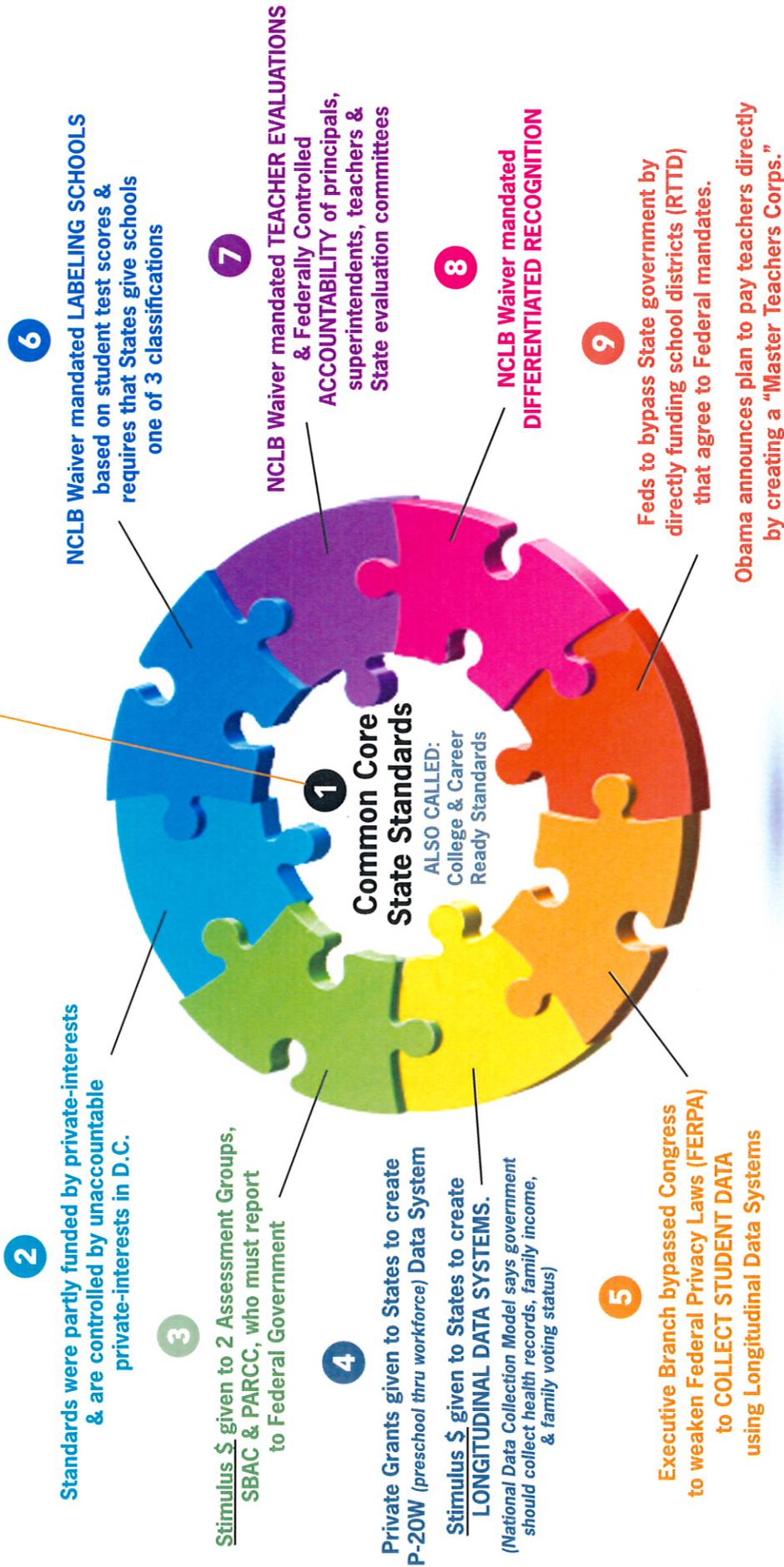
Because the USBE did not follow procedures that would have facilitated full public awareness of the deficiencies in Common Core's English language arts standards, and because Common Core's English language arts standards are not internationally benchmarked or supported by substantial evidence, it would be reasonable to pass a law negating the Board's adoption of Common Core's English Language Arts Standards.

(4) Utah can develop and assess first-class ELA standards at relatively low cost.

If Utah negates its adoption of Common Core's English language arts standards, I volunteer to help Utah develop a first class set of ELA standards. **All I would want paid for are travel expenses.** It would not be difficult for experienced and well-read English teachers in Utah to develop a coherent set of literature standards for K-12. Moreover, most of the new standards could be assessed by the first-rate test items developed by English teachers in Massachusetts for its own state assessments and released annually for public scrutiny.

How Common Core Doubles Down on No Child Left Behind

Stimulus \$ + No Child Left Behind Waiver = The End of State Sovereignty over Education.



ADDITIONAL CONCERNS TO STATES:

- Unvetted Costs
- NCLB waiver is only a one-year waiver and violates federal laws
- Congress bypassed by the executive branch in many instances
- Department of Education seeks to create a defacto national database violating federal laws

Sources:

1. NCLB Waiver: Principle 1, Page 20
2. See: Gates Foundation Grants / National Governor's Association, Chief Council of State School Officers, ACHIEVE
3. NCLB Waiver: Attachment 6, Page 9
4. <http://www.choicep20.com/about-us/meet-our-clients.aspx>
5. <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2009-title34-vol1/pdf/CFR-2009-title34-vol1-part99.pdf>
6. NCLB Waiver: Principle 2Aii, page 44
7. NCLB Waiver: Principle 3, page 60
8. NCLB Waiver: Principle 2A, Page 35
9. <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/education-department-invites-districts-apply-400-million-race-top-competition-scholarship-program>
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/07/17/president-obama-announces-plans-new-national-corps-recognize-and-reward>

3-Integrated/Constructivist Math Approach being implemented by USOE

You may recall the math wars of a few years ago when Investigations math style learning was happening in various districts around Utah. It devastated families, and caused tens of thousands of students to graduate without even knowing the times tables or how to perform long division. The USOE is taking the entire state in this direction with their professional development training for teachers. It is nothing short of immoral to allow this to happen to the children of Utah.

The following quotes are from Utah public school teachers who wish to remain anonymous.

"I just attended the Core Academy for math as an elementary teacher and was told for 4 straight days that the common core does NOT require math facts or the teaching of standard algorithms. I was taught how to teach solely using discovery learning or weird, unusable, at least with larger numbers, fuzzy math algorithms which actually make understanding place value unnecessary to solve problems requiring regrouping. What? I thought the core was supposed to help teachers REMEMBER to teach skills and standard algorithms ... I am devastated and do not even know if I can teach in Utah if this is the direction we are going...aligning ourselves with Washington state which is all discovery and has some of the poorest performing math students in the country...where they still believe Terc Investigations is great Curriculum. May the saints preserve us all."

"I teach in the _____ district. Our district is adopting the core and is very involved in training their teachers. I will be attending meetings at my school to receive training. What can I do, if anything to keep my job, but not be chained to teaching the core? **Last year, we implemented the writing portion of the core. I followed the core. My students did not accomplish as much with the core, as with the program I had been using. This year, I am quietly going back to the writing program I used before.** This year we will be implementing the core math curriculum, I think I will quietly take ideas that I like, but keep teaching what I know works. Any advice?"

Last Tuesday, Rep. Kraig Powell hosted a forum in Heber on Common Core. In attendance at this meeting were a number of teachers and administrators including Wasatch Superintendent Shoemaker. At lunch, a teacher who is involved with trying to get Utah off Common Core, was speaking with Sup. Shoemaker and another long time teacher's name came up that this teacher had student-taught under. The Superintendent told this teacher how fortunate it was that she student-taught under her because she was a master teacher. She told the Superintendent that this long time teacher told her she wasn't thrilled with Common Core and the Superintendent replied, "I'm not surprised, a teacher like her wouldn't be." The exact note this master teacher had sent her was **"too bad districts aren't questioning [common core] instead of parents. As a teacher, I am having common core shoved down my throat. We're back to the 70's. Way to go on your endeavors. 😊"**

I attended the Math CORE Academy this summer and was told that Utah is not going to suggest a math book that will meet the new standards, instead I have to use whatever math book my school is using to create work for the students. It is incredibly difficult to teach the Common Core using Tasks with the math book we have, and I imagine it is just as difficult with any math book. First of all, it takes 2-3 hours to create a Task using a math book, I had to help create 2 at Core Academy. Secondly, the instructors encouraged us to leave out key pieces of information so that the students could construct their own knowledge. **I cannot imagine elementary students doing well in Algebra or Calculus after spending years learning that whatever number they come up with is correct.** I am frustrated that students are required

to make a guess to solve the problem, and of course, they are correct, because any number they choose would work. They would then see that their classmates all chose different numbers, and yet all of the answers are correct? How confusing for an elementary student! I have decided to send these Tasks home as extra credit so that the parents in my class can see what to expect in the next school year. I am sure I will get many complaints that the problems are unsolvable, because important information has been left out! I believe that math has right and wrong answers, and that teaching students that any answer can be correct is foolish.

“As a teacher, I am truly concerned about the direction Common Core is taking our children’s educations. We implemented Common Core Math in our district last year. As a first grade teacher I am super frustrated with the curriculum we are spoon feeding our children! My little 6 year olds come into my classroom with varying abilities. Some are very capable and learn quickly. Others are far behind. Imagine teaching them to regroup when they can’t count to twenty or even understand what twenty is! We are pushing these children faster than they can run! We need to spend more time developing a foundation to build math skills on. If understanding isn’t there, math becomes an exercise in frustration that follows them throughout their entire school career.”

4-USOE textbook project for Math 1- comments by Dr. Wilson and Dr. Wright

Utah was one of 2 states to adopt the Common Core with the Integrated upper math method instead of the traditional discrete years. Dr. David Wright in BYU's math department warned the USOE when they did this that there were no textbooks available if they followed this course. They told him not to worry and they hired 5 constructivist/inquiry-oriented teachers to write the textbooks. The first Utah Math 1 book was released and posted at:

<http://www.mathematicsvisionproject.org/>

Dr. Stephen Wilson is a math professor at Johns Hopkins University and mathematician who reviewed math standards for Fordham Institute. He was asked to review the content of what had been released. He stated:

"Sorry. Wanted to help, but there is not enough here to criticize. It isn't a text or a curriculum. For starters, you can't learn anything by reading it."

He states this because there is no instruction in the textbook. Students will have nothing to review when they go home. Parents will have nothing to reference trying to teach their children when they have a question. This is a total constructivist approach and will reignite the math wars with parents who want real textbooks and learning in the classrooms.

Dr. Stephen Wilson was asked about Utah writing better standards and this was his reply:

It would take very little effort to write better standards, but a lot of politics that probably can't be done. There were about 5 states with clear cut better standards than CCSSM, so just copying one of them would be better, but most of them can be seriously improved on as well. Getting rid of any process standards is the obvious thing to do to improve standards. The focus on the Math Practices in CCSSM is seriously undermining reasonably good standards.

Dr. David Wright, a mathematician from BYU was asked about Utah choosing a state-wide implementation of the "integrated math approach" and this was his reply:

I think Utah has done a terrible job of implementing the Common Core. The USOE has used the Common Core as an excuse to emphasize inquiry-based, student centered instructional tasks as a way of teaching. This is what was done in Investigations Math. They have downplayed the importance of good textbooks by implementing the new core without good textbooks.

In choosing the integrated math model for secondary school, Utah has chosen the uncommon core. Only one or two other states are choosing this track. It could work, but there are no good books for the integrated path. The books created by the state <<http://www.mathematicsvisionproject.org>> are especially poor and do not meet the standards of the Common Core. The national math panel considered the integrated approach but made no recommendation because there was no evidence that it gave different results.

5-State of Utah’s Math Education by Dr. David G. Wright, Professor of Mathematics, BYU

I am writing these comments as a mathematician, educator, and citizen of Utah. They do not reflect the position of my employer.

1. Math achievement in Utah. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the only nationally representative assessment in mathematics. ACT scores cannot be used to make comparisons because the students who take the ACT are not a representative sample of their states. The NAEP is given to all 50 states, Washington, DC, and the Department of Defense Educational System. As a state we appear to be slightly above average, but when we disaggregate by ethnicity, Utah’s white students are mediocre and our Hispanic students are near the bottom.

NAEP Math Scores			
Fourth Grade	Utah 2011 Average	National 2011 Average	Utah's Rank
All Students	242.54	240.11	21 out of 52
White	247.18	248.7	30 out of 52
Hispanic	222.84	228.87	46 out of 49
Eighth Grade	Utah 2011 Average	National 2011 Average	Utah's Rank
All Students	283.31	282.73	26 out of 52
White	289.47	292.57	39 out of 52
Hispanic	256.81	269.45	47 out of 48

2. The Common Core Math Standards compared to Utah’s 2007 Math Standards. I helped write Utah’s 2007 Math Standards. The Fordham Foundation gave both Utah’s 2007 standards and the Common Core Math Standards a grade of A-. Brenda Hales of the State Office of Education is telling people that I testified to the legislature against the 2007 Math Standards. This is not correct. I testified that the writing committee could not agree on a definition of “world-class” and that not all of the recommendations of the external reviewers were implemented. **Under the 2007 Utah standards, the majority of students would take Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra 2 in grades 8 through 10. Under the Common Core, the majority of students will be one grade behind. Under the 2007 Utah standards, students could take pre-calculus to prepare for calculus. Under the Common Core, the majority of calculus students will have to skip pre-calculus. The honors sections proposed by the Utah State Office of Education will not prepare students for calculus nearly as well as a pre-calculus course.**
3. Investigations Math. Investigations Math is a curriculum that is taught by what is called *student-centered teaching, inquiry based instruction, or cognitively guided instruction*. The proponents of this method say, “Teaching isn’t telling.” They also call courses taught in this manner *reform math*. They do not like teachers or textbooks that tell students how to do math. Investigations Math was highly

unpopular in Alpine School District, but the investigations math way of teaching is strongly supported by the Utah State Office of Education.

4. The Utah Core Academies. This past year the Utah Core Academies used *5 Practices for Orchestrating Productive Mathematics Discussions* (Margaret S. Smith and Mary Kay Stein). This book promotes the investigations math way of teaching.
5. The BYU Math Science Partnership. The BYU Math Science Partnership has been funded for the past six years and will be funded for the next three years from grants awarded by the Utah State Office of Education. The BYU Math Science Partnership has developed what is known as the *Comprehensive Mathematics Instruction* (CMI) Framework. This is mostly just the investigations math teaching method. They have regularly used material produced by the authors of Investigations Math.
6. Utah State University. Utah State University under the direction of Math Educator Professor James Cangelosi strongly pushes the investigations math way of teaching.
7. Math Materials Access Improvement Grant. This grant was recently awarded to the University of Utah to produce textbooks for seventh and eighth grade math. The grant proposal from the University of Utah states: *We are convinced that learning takes place in the classroom, and that texts should be accurate and concise, providing (in as engaging a manner as possible) and introduction to concepts and a reference to which the learners can turn to refresh their grounding in the concepts.* So the teaching will be done via activities in the classroom and not out of a textbook.
8. The State Office of Education has provided a link to a possible textbook for Secondary Math 1. The text is all about CMI and teaching math with the investigations math teaching method.