

Common-Core Standards Require Nuanced, Multifaceted Analysis

Too often, people evaluating the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) movement conflate the Standards as learning goals with implementation factors and associated testing/accountability systems. A more nuanced analysis of the CCSS demands a consideration of the following five dimensions:

1. the Standards themselves – Are these worthy goals? (even if people may disagree with the placement of a few of the grade level standards)
2. Standards implementation – Is the implementation timeline realistic? Have teachers been given proper training and support to teach to the Standards?
3. the associated tests – Are these appropriate measures of the Standards? .. all of them (what about Speaking)? Can we draw valid inferences from a once-a-year ‘snapshot’ tests?
4. the use of assessment results – Are test results being used in defensible ways (e.g., to sanction schools; using test scores in teacher evaluation)?
5. politicalization – Have the Common Core Standards been unfairly politicized (e.g., labeled as Obamacore; implying that the Federal Govt. has taken over education)?

My view is that unless people can separate and critically judge each dimension, the problems of rushed implementation, testing craziness or politicalization will derail the entire effort. Do we really want to throw out the “baby” and return to a patchwork of 50 different sets of state standards and incomparable tests?

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