



## **Talking Points**

### *Common Core State Standards Implementation in California*

*The following talking points can be used flexibly – as a source of themes for longer written pieces, as short responses in media interviews or public appearances, or as set-ups to “pre-frame” a conversation on specific policy or program proposals. Each pulls from rigorously tested messages that have been shown to shift thinking away from common but unproductive ways of thinking about education, and to build the public’s support for more effective approaches to teaching and learning. They need not be used word-for-word, but when adapting, communicators should take care when adapting to maintain the core frame elements in each.*

## Talking Points: Common Core State Standards Implementation in California

- We don't know what tomorrow's jobs will be, but we do know that our future depends on a strong workforce and today's schools have to prepare kids to be part of it. Our state needs a school system that prepares students for the modern economy by building the critical thinking, and problem solving skills that can be applied in any context. That's the idea behind the Common Core standards; they are guidelines that will help schools focus on that kind of deeper, richer, more applicable learning.
- For California to continue to be a center of innovation and leadership, we need our schools to prepare students who are ready for a complex and unpredictable future. Preparing for the surprises and opportunities ahead requires adding new skills to the traditional curriculum. That includes updating the ways we teach literacy and mathematics. The Common Core State Standards are an important tool in this effort. They are a focused set of up-to-date learning goals that work step-by-step, at each grade level, up to what the modern world expects to what students need to learn at each grade level in order to become active participants in our communities and workplaces.
- We live in a constantly changing, information-saturated world. In order for students to grow into adults who can successfully navigate this world, young people have to learn how to use information like cooks use ingredients. This means learning the qualities of good information, where it comes from, what it can be used for, and how to use it in multiple contexts. That kind of learning, like learning to cook, comes from hands-on experiences, opportunities to experiment and make mistakes, and opportunities to refine and try new approaches. Done right, the CCSS point our schools toward emphasizing this kind of learning.
- Everyone who knows California's schools knows that there are many wonderful things going on them, as well as many areas that need to be improved. Just as to maintain the value of a house, it needs ongoing maintenance and periodic updates, our school system is due for a renovation. We're certainly not alone in this - the Common Core State Standards have started conversations across the country about where to focus the remodeling efforts so that our nation's schools are better suited to meet our current needs. So, we are working to keep what's valuable and working well, and to update or change what's not. Here in California, where we know a thing or two about retrofits, we have done a great job of bringing in everyone who needs to be involved in this ambitious project. Local school boards, the state department of education, teachers, administrators, parents, and other partners across the state are working together from a common blueprint. Remodeling is hard work and it always involves some dust, noise, and inconvenience – but if we do this right, the improvements will make teaching and learning more effective, which is important for our continued civic and economic progress.

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- If we want this update to work well in the incredible diversity of learning environments we have across the state, the master craftspeople in this Common Core State Standards remodeling project have to be the people closest to the work – teachers and the local district administrators who support them. They are in the best position to gather ideas and input from families and students. And because the standards aren't a curriculum, but simply a set of consistent learning goals, we need teachers to make decisions about the best, most relevant ways for their students to reach those goals. We can't treat teachers as if they're just installing pre-fab learning experiences; if we want all students to develop their particular skills and talents, these have to be custom jobs. To do this kind of careful work, we need to make sure that educators have the right tools and supports in place as they build learning experiences for our students. They need scaffolding to succeed in this project. That scaffolding comes in many shapes and sizes, from the policies at district level to the leadership within their buildings to the resources made available by the community.
- Remodeling projects require resources – time, money, planning, and expertise. Cutting corners during a renovation will lead to long-term problems down the line. Implementation of the Common Core State Standards must be adequately funded so that communities have what they need to succeed. The preparation, resources, and materials necessary to implement these new standards and the assessments that go with them are a necessary and worthy investment.
- Response to a publicized problem: It's important to think about this in a level-headed way. Let me give you an analogy. We're in the midst of a major renovation of our school system – updating the design of curriculum and instruction so we can focus on making sure that we maximize the potential of all children in California. In any remodeling job, there's bound to be dust, noise, and inconvenience – but it is all worth it in the end. In this instance, I understand the concern and I want to reassure you that we are working to get it right. At the same time, educators need patience and understanding as they work through these major updates in a step-by-step fashion. We're not at the last step yet – but we're getting there. Pardon our dust!