



# Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  
Commissioner

## Memorandum

**To:** Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education  
**From:** Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner  
**Date:** July 9, 2010  
**Subject:** National Reports on the Common Core State Standards

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As I wrote to you in last week's memorandum, this is the first of a series of reports I will send you on the Common Core State Standards. I have included links to events, national reports and analyses by individuals. I share these to help inform your decision on whether or not to adopt the Common Core State Standards at our meeting on July 21, 2010. According to *Education Week*, 23 states had adopted the Common Core standards by July 9 (Arizona, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming).

Next week I intend to send you additional reports from educator panels in Massachusetts, analyses of the standards by our staff, and a report of a survey on the Common Core standards posted on our website.

For each website link, report, or individual analysis, I provide a short description below.

### Website links

**1. Standards documents and related reports on the Common Core State Standards:**  
<http://www.corestandards.org>. In addition to the Common Core documents themselves, this site provides the report of the Validation Committee, materials from a June 30, 2010 webinar in which Bill McCallum of the mathematics writing team and Jim Patterson of the ELA writing team spoke, and a list of states that have adopted the Common Core Standards to date.

**2. Webcast of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education/Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy Forum on the Common Core in Boston on June 29, 2010:**  
[www.mbae.org/webcast](http://www.mbae.org/webcast). This forum addressed some of the pressing questions facing the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education as it decides whether or not to adopt the new Common Core State Standards. Speakers and panelists included Gene Wilhoit, Executive Director of CCSSO, Robert Antonucci, President of Fitchburg College, Rob Richardson of Intel, Jason

Zimba of the Common Core Mathematics writing team, and Jim Patterson of the English language arts writing team.

### **National Reports**

#### **3. Memorandum to the Achieve Board of Directors from Mike Cohen**

Achieve has actively supported the development of the Common Core standards. This summary report reviews the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics and English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies and Science and Technical Subjects. It compares them to Achieve's American Diploma Project Standards, standards of high performing countries, standards of Massachusetts and California, and NAEP Frameworks for mathematics, reading, and writing.

#### **4. A joint public statement of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics (NCSM), the Association of State Supervisors of Mathematics (ASSM), and the Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators (AMTE) on the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics**

This statement in support of the standards is from the major professional organizations for mathematics education.

### **Individual Analyses**

#### **5. Letter from Sandra Stotsky to Gene Wilhoit, CCSSO and Dane Linn, NGA, dated June 2, 2010 (this was shared with the Board at the June meeting)**

Massachusetts Board member Sandra Stotsky served on the Validation Committee for the Common Core State Standards. In this letter she explains why she cannot endorse the Committee's validation of the Common Core Standards. Her analysis primarily concerns the English Language Arts standards.

#### **6. Review of Final Draft Core Standards by R. James Milgram, Professor Emeritus, Algebraic topology, Department of Mathematics, Stanford University**

This is a detailed critique of the Common Core Standards for mathematics, presented in the context of California's review of the Common Core Standards.

#### **7. How Good are the Common Core Math Standards? by Hung-Hsi Wu, Professor of Mathematics, University of California, Berkeley**

This statement supports the Common Core Standards for Mathematics and provides Wu's argument and evidence for why California should adopt the Common core Standards.

### **Schedule of Reports You Will Receive**

I anticipate the following schedule of reports and analyses:

By July 14: We will forward reports and analyses that compare the Common Core and Massachusetts standards, including:

- Reports from the expert panels of Massachusetts educators that we convened to review the Common Core Standards.
- A report on results of the Massachusetts public comment on the Common Core Standards; and
- A side-by-side comparison of the Common Core Standards in English language arts and mathematics and our working drafts of the revised curriculum frameworks in each of those subjects that will be completed by curriculum and instruction staff of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

By July 20: I will send the following reports/analyses to the Board:

- An alignment report being produced by the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE)/WestEd.
- Any additional reports/analyses that were not available for the previous two mailings.

**Commissioner's Recommendation**

As I have stated all along, I am evaluating the Common Core Standards carefully before making a recommendation to the Board. My goal is to ensure that we maintain high academic standards for our students and schools. I expect to make my recommendation to the Board prior to the meeting on July 21. I look forward to our discussion. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the process, please contact me.

Enclosures: