4-29-2015

Teacher Survey: Common Core Standards

Sarah C. McKenzie
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Gary W. Ritter
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Recommended Citation

McKenzie, Sarah C. and Ritter, Gary W., "Teacher Survey: Common Core Standards" (2015). *Policy Briefs*. 20.
http://scholarworks.uark.edu/oepbrief/20

Office for Education Policy

Teacher Survey on Common Core Standards

Summary Points

- **Over 975 Arkansas teachers participated in a survey about Common Core State Standards from February 26th to April 28th, 2015.**

- **Teachers would choose to keep the Common Core Standards (61%).**

- **Teachers feel that CCSS will lead to improved student learning (69%).**

- **Teachers report that the work associated with CCSS has made them better teachers (63%).**

- **Teachers do not like the assessment associated with CCSS, and have varied suggestions for assessment.**

- **Some types of teachers are less supportive of CCSS:**

  - Teachers who have been teaching for more than 15 years

  - Teachers from the smallest districts

  - Teachers from lower performing districts.

Office for Education Policy

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for K-12 English language arts (ELA) and mathematics were adopted by the Arkansas State Board of Education in July 2010. Teachers have been implementing CCSS in their classrooms for several years, and this spring students across the state are being assessed on CCSS through the PARCC assessments.

In February 2015, Governor Hutchinson announced the formation of a Council on Common Core Review, and the Office for Education Policy began a survey of Arkansas public school teachers to gather their opinions on this important topic.

In this brief, we will share the preliminary findings from the teacher survey and suggestions for next steps.

About the Survey

Beginning on February 26, 2015, the Office for Education Policy sent a survey invitation to Arkansas teachers to gather information on their perceptions about the Common Core State Standards. The survey consisted of 40 questions addressing the impact of CCSS on student learning and teacher attitudes toward their work, as well as CCSS implementation and the associated testing.

The sample of 2,795 teachers selected to receive the survey invitation teach English language arts and/or mathematics in grade three through high school in one of 60 selected public school districts in Arkansas. Districts were identified through a stratified, random sampling procedure. Stratification was based on 2013-14 assessment results and district size. Each region of the state was represented in the sample roughly in proportion to its student enrollment. Details about the respondents can be found in Table 2 in the Appendix.

Teachers were contacted directly though an email that included a link to the survey. Teachers could enter to win one of three $100 gift cards upon completion of the survey. As of

April 28, 2015, 975 teachers had responded to the survey resulting in a response rate of 34.9%.

Key Findings

Student Learning: The majority of teachers responded positively regarding the Common Core Standards.

- CCSS are more rigorous than the previous standards.
- CCSS are more helpful in preparing students academically.
- Given the choice, teachers would keep the CCSS in their school curriculum.

Teachers also reported that they feel CCSS will lead to improved student learning for the majority of their students, although they are concerned that students who are working below grade level will not benefit from CCSS.

Teacher Attitudes: Teachers indicated that the work they had done to implement CCSS had made them better teachers, but they report that teaching is more stressful than in prior years.

Implementation: Teachers reported that they have read the standards, attended professional development about CCSS, and felt that CCSS was implemented well at their school.

Assessment: Teachers dislike the assessment associated with CCSS implementation, but were not unified in their perceptions regarding what type of assessment, if any, they would recommend.

These findings and others will be examined in more depth in the following pages. Comparisons between grade levels taught, level of teacher experience, and district size and performance will also be considered.

We begin the analysis of the survey results by focusing on teachers' perceptions of the impact of CCSS on student learning. This is followed by examination of CCSS impact on teacher attitudes toward their work. We then examine teacher opinions regarding the implementation of CCSS and the associated assessment. To close we consider differences in teacher perceptions based on grade level taught, years of teaching experience, as well as district size and performance.

Impact on Student Learning

Improving student learning is the goal of CCSS. There were several questions on the survey that asked teachers for their perceptions of how student learning had been or would be impacted by CCSS. The results indicate that some teachers are concerned about CCSS, but the majority feel CCSS are positive for students.

The majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that CCSS are beneficial to student learning. As shown in Figure 1, most teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements: CCSS encourage students to think more critically (79%), CCSS will lead to improved student learning for the majority of students (69%), CCSS will help students be better prepared for college (71%) and to compete in the workforce (63%).

In addition, the majority of teachers did <u>not</u> feel that the implementation of CCSS had decreased student learning of the 'basics'. Questions specific to English language arts and mathematics were asked to teachers that indicated teaching in those content areas. The English language arts teachers were asked if CCSS decreased the amount of time students spend on literature, and mathematics teachers were asked if CCSS decreased students' understanding of key math concepts. Sixty-two percent (62%) of English language arts teachers disagreed that CCSS decreased the amount of time that students spent on literature, and 64% of math teachers disagreed that CCSS decreased student's understanding of key math concepts.

A majority of teachers were concerned that certain student populations will not benefit from CCSS (73%). Ninety percent of the teachers concerned indicated that their concern was for students working below grade level. Teachers also identified Special education students (85%), English Language Learners (73%) as groups that they are concerned will not benefit from CCSS.

Although a majority of teachers consistently responded that positively about specific impacts of CCSS on student learning, some inconsistency arose when teachers were asked questions about the overall impact of CCSS. As can be seen in Figure 2, 46% of teachers responded that overall, their students will be better off after the introduction of CCSS. Twenty-eight (28%) of teachers reported that their students would be the same, and 26% felt that their students would be worse off after the implementation of CCSS. These responses pose an interesting contrast to the results shown in Figure 3, where it can be seen that the majority of teachers reported CCSS is more helpful in preparing students academically (62%).

Figure 1. Responses of teachers regarding CCSS impact on student learning.
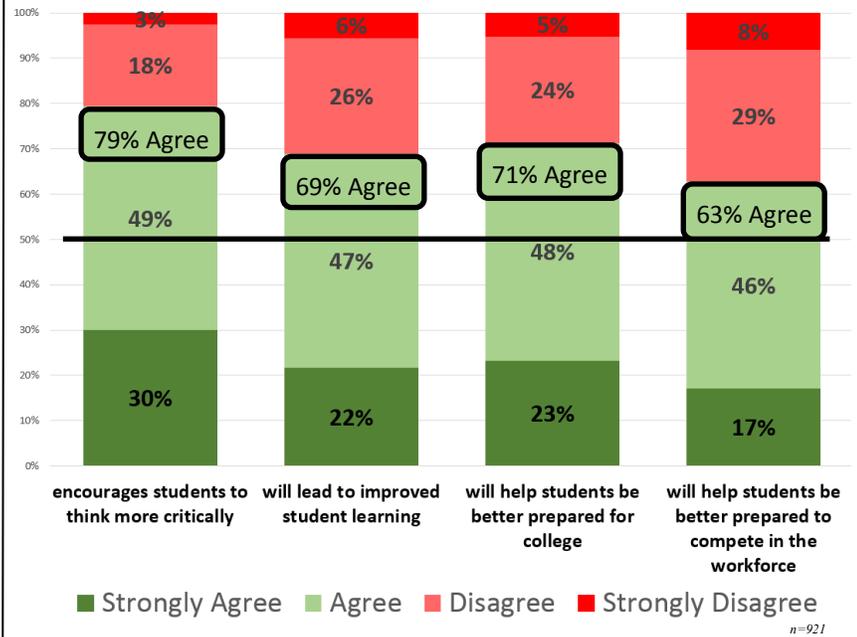

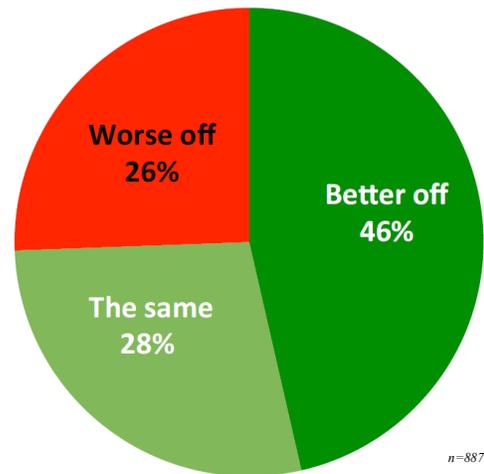Figure 2. "Overall my students will be _____ after the introduction of the Common Core Standards than before."

Figure 3. "Overall the Common Core Standards are _____ than the previous standards in preparing students academically."
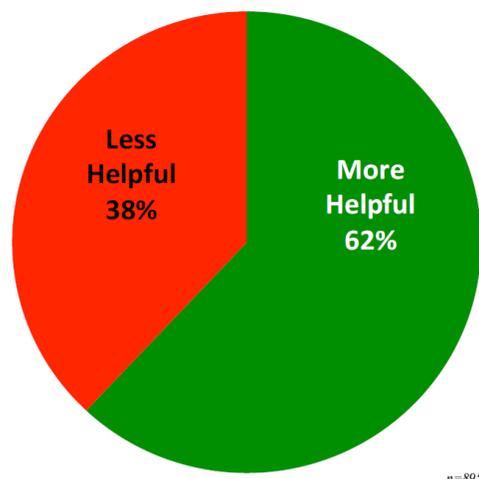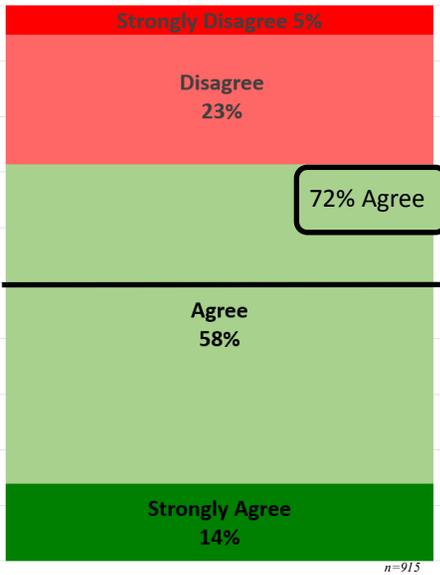
Figure 4. "The CCSS were implemented well at my school."

Strongly Disagree 5%

Disagree
23%

72% Agree

Agree
58%

Strongly Agree
14%

n=915

Figure 5. "I don't like the testing involved with implementing CCSS."

Strongly Disagree 2%

Disagree 11%

87% Agree

Agree 26%

Strongly Agree
61%

n=886
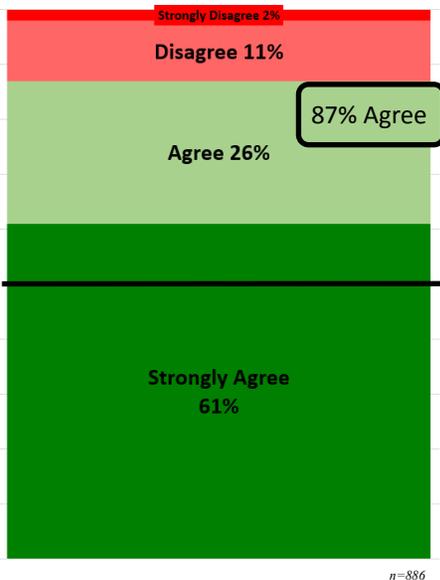
Figure 6. "If I were in charge of assessment I would_____."

Purchase another assessment 22%

Give no assessment 24%

Develop a new state assessment for students 20%

Return to Arkansas Benchmark and End of Course exams 23%

Continue PARCC 11%

n=468
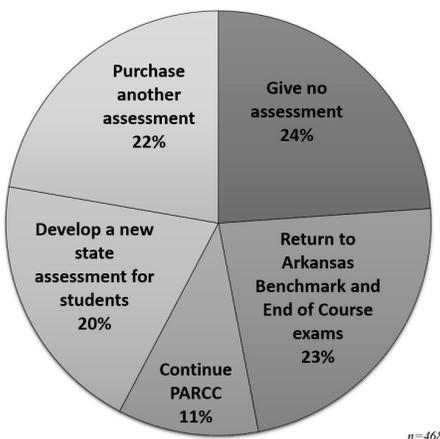
Impact on Teacher Attitudes

Teachers reported mixed feeling regarding how the implementation of CCSS has impacted them and their work. The majority of teachers believed that the work they have done to implement CCSS has made them a better teacher (63%), but also indicated that implementing the CCSS has made teaching more stressful than earlier years (74%).

A minority of teachers reported that they like teaching more now than before CCSS (35%) and that they have more freedom to develop their own curriculum (37%). About half of the teachers that responded to the survey indicated that CCSS limited their flexibility to teach what his/her students need (53%).

The majority of teachers (66%) reported that they were satisfied with the CCSS, and almost all teachers (92%) reported that the CCSS were more rigorous than the previous state standards. The majority of teachers disagreed that the previous standards were better than the CCSS (62%). Teachers did report, however, that they felt CCSS were less clear in describing what needs to be taught than the previous standards (62%).

Implementation of CCSS

Teachers were also asked questions regarding the implementation of CCSS. Essentially all teachers reported that they had read the CCSS for their grade level/content area (99%) and had participated in professional development for CCSS (95%). Most teachers had also received additional support for CCSS implementation beyond professional development (64%).

Teachers varied in their feeling of preparation to teach their subject according to CCSS. Only 8% reported feeling not prepared at all, 51% indicated they were somewhat prepared, and 41% reported they felt completely prepared. As shown in Figure 4, the majority of teachers (72%) felt that CCSS was implemented well at their schools.

Assessment Associated with CCSS

The vast majority of teachers indicated that they did not like the testing involved with CCSS (87%). As can be seen in Figure 5, 61% of teachers strongly agreed with the statement "I don't like the testing involved with implementing CCSS." After the initial survey release, an additional question was added to the survey to gather more information about teachers' feelings about assessment. The question "If I were in charge of assessment I would_____.", was available to teachers who responded after March 9, 2015. As Figure 6 demonstrates, teachers disagreed about assessment options. Twenty-four percent (24%) responded that they would prefer to give no assessment to students, while 23% would prefer to return to Arkansas Benchmark and End of Course Exams. Twenty-two percent (22%) preferred that a different assessment be purchased, like ITBS, NWEA or ACT. Twenty percent preferred to develop a new state assessment for students and 11% preferred to continue with PARCC assessments.

Differences Within the Sample

These preliminary survey results were compared by teacher's grade level and years of experience as well as district characteristics to identify any important differences in survey response patterns. We found no substantial differences in responses between elementary, middle and high school teachers. We did, however, find some interesting patterns based on teacher experience, district size, and district achievement.

Teacher Experience: Teachers with more than 15 years of experience were consistently less supportive of the CCSS than their peers with fewer years in the classroom. For example, only 62% of the most experienced teachers indicated that CCSS would lead to improved student learning, while 78% of teachers with less than 15 years of experience agreed that it would. One of the greatest discrepancies between responses based on teacher experience surrounded workforce preparation. Seventy-two (72) percent of teachers with 15 years or less of classroom experience agreed that CCSS would support students entering the workforce, while only 55% of teachers with more than 15 years of experience agreed.

District Size: Teacher responses also varied depending on the size of their district. Teachers in districts with fewer than 650 students were consistently less supportive of the CCSS than their peers in larger districts. For example, only 57% of teachers in the smallest districts indicated that CCSS would lead to improved student learning, while 73% of teachers in the larger districts agreed that it would. Teachers in the smallest districts were also less likely to agree that the CCSS were implemented well at their school (59% compared to 76%) and that they received any support aside from professional development to implement the CCSS (49% compared to 66%). Given the choice, over half of the teachers in the smallest districts would choose to eliminate CCSS (55%).

District Achievement: District achievement as measured by student performance was also related to teacher responses. Teachers in lower performing districts were consistently less supportive of the CCSS than their peers in higher performing districts. For example, only 56% of teachers in the lower performing districts indicated that CCSS would lead to improved student learning, while 75% of teachers in the higher achieving districts agreed that it would. Similar to the results found for district size, teachers in the lower achieving districts were also less likely to agree that the CCSS were implemented well at their school (61% compared to 77%) and that they received any support aside from professional development to implement the CCSS (54% compared to 68%). Given the choice, over half of the teachers in the lower achieving districts would choose to eliminate CCSS (51%).

Summary

The Teacher Survey on Common Core has brought teacher perspectives into the conversation on CCSS through a rigorous sampling procedure. We would have preferred a higher response rate to ensure that those who replied were representative of Arkansas teachers as a whole, but 35% is higher than other reported teacher surveys on CCSS.

Overall, the Arkansas teachers that responded to the survey were supportive of Common Core Standards. They felt that the work they had done to implement CCSS had made them a better teacher, and that CCSS would improve student learning including preparation for college and the workforce. Teachers reported that CCSS were more rigorous than prior standards, encouraged students to think more critically, and were more helpful than prior standards in preparing students academically.

Teachers reported some areas of concern regarding CCSS. Overall teachers felt that that the standards were less clear than prior standards and limited their flexibility to teach what their students need. Although almost all teachers had read the CCSS for their grade level/content area and had received professional development to support the implementation, only 41% of teachers reported feeling completely prepared to teach CCSS.

Teachers are also reportedly experiencing increased feelings of stress and only 46% felt that their students would be better off since the implementation of CCSS than before. Teachers were specifically concerned that CCSS would not benefit students that are working below grade level, special education, or English Language Learners.

Teachers reported disliking the assessment associated with CCSS implementation but were not unified in their perceptions regarding what type of assessment, if any, they would recommend.

Next Steps

Sometimes analyzing data raises additional questions, and the Teacher Survey on Common Core is a perfect example. After reviewing these initial results, we want to ask more questions including:

- Why is there such a discrepancy between the percentage of teachers that report CCSS are beneficial for students and those who feel that their students will be better off?
- Why are more experienced teachers less supportive of CCSS?
- Why are smaller and lower achieving districts less supportive of CCSS?
- Do teachers feel differently about assessment after administering PARCC?

Unfortunately, the answers to these questions are not obvious. The first step in answering these questions is to analyze the results of the survey more thoroughly using quantitative and qualitative methods. Follow-up surveys and interviews with teachers would also be beneficial. We urge open conversation about the issues raised through this survey between policy makers, community members, teachers, and parents.

Although the preliminary results indicate the majority of teachers support CCSS, this is a controversial topic. It is critically important that policy makers listen to the opinions of teachers in the classrooms throughout our state. We hope this Teacher Survey on Common Core has allowed their voices to be heard.

Appendix

Table 1: Question Responses from the CCSS Teacher Survey.

	Eliminate the Common Core Standards	Keep the Common Core Standards		
If I had the choice I would _____.	39%	61%		
	Less Rigorous	More Rigorous		
The Common Core Standards are _____ than the previous standards.	8%	92%		
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Common Core Standards encourage students to think more critically compared to the previous standards.	3%	18%	49%	30%
I believe that the Common Core Standards will lead to improved student learning for the majority of students I teach.	6%	26%	47%	22%
The Common Core Standards will help students be better prepared for college.	5%	24%	48%	23%
The Common Core Standards will help students be better prepared to compete in the workforce.	8%	29%	46%	17%
The Common Core Standards have decreased the amount of time students spend on literature. (only presented to teachers who indicated they taught English language arts)	15%	47%	28%	11%
The Common Core Standards have decreased students' understanding of key math concepts. (only presented to teachers who indicated they taught mathematics)	18%	46%	24%	12%
	No	Yes		
Are there any student populations that you are concerned will not benefit from the Common Core Standards?	27%	73%		
	Worse off	Same	Better off	
Overall, my students will be _____ after the introduction of the Common Core Standards.	26%	28%	46%	
	Less Helpful	More Helpful		
Overall, the Common Core Standards are _____ than the previous standards in preparing students academically.	38%	62%		

Appendix

Table 1 (continued): Question Responses from the CCSS Teacher Survey.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The work I've done to implement the Common Core Standards has made me a better teacher.	7%	31%	45%	18%
Implementing the Common Core Standards in the classroom has made teaching more stressful than earlier years.	3%	23%	38%	36%
I like teaching more now than before the Common Core Standards were introduced.	18%	46%	29%	6%
The Common Core Standards limit my flexibility to teach what my students need.	14%	39%	29%	18%
Under the Common Core Standards, I feel that I have more freedom to develop my own curriculum than before.	20%	43%	29%	8%
	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Overall, I am _____ with the Common Core Standards.	8%	27%	51%	15%
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The previous Arkansas state standards were better than the Common Core Standards.	10%	52%	27%	10%
	Less Clear	More Clear		
The Common Core Standards are _____ than the previous standards in describing what needs to be taught in my subject area.	62%	38%		
	No	Yes		
Have you read the Common Core Standards for your grade level and content area?	1%	99%		
Have you participated in professional development related to the Common Core Standards?	5%	95%		
Aside from professional development, did you receive any other support to implement the Common Core Standards?	36%	64%		
	I do not feel prepared at all	I feel somewhat prepared	I am completely prepared	
How prepared do you feel to teach your subject according to the Common Core Standards?	8%	51%	41%	
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Common Core Standards were implemented well at my school.	5%	23%	58%	14%

Appendix

Table 1 (continued): Question Responses from the CCSS Teacher Survey.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
I don't like the testing involved in implementing the Common Core Standards.	2%	11%	26%	61%	
	Not administer standardized assessments to students	Return to Arkansas Benchmark and End of Course exams	Continue with PARCC	Develop a new state assessment for students	Purchase another assessment (like ITBS, NWEA, or ACT)
If I were in charge of assessment I would_____.	24%	23%	11%	20%	22%
	Collaboration has decreased	There has been no change	Collaboration has increased		
How has collaboration between teachers changed because of the Common Core Standards?	6%	46%	48%		
	No	Yes			
Do you think increased collaboration between teachers is beneficial to students?	4%	96%			

Table 2: Description of Survey Respondents (as of April 28, 2015 n=975).

Grade Level Taught	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8	Grade 9 and other (HS)	
	42%	28%	29%	
Content Area	English Language Arts	Math	Both ELA and Math	
	35%	32%	30%	
Teaching Experience	0-5 years	6-9 years	10-15 years	More than 15 years
	25%	17%	22%	36%
Gender	Female	Male		
	88%	12%		
Political Affiliation	Republican	Democrat	Independent	
	43%	22%	34%	
District Enrollment Group	Small	Medium	Large	
	12%	18%	70%	
District Achievement Category	Lower Half	Higher Half		
	33%	67%		