

This Spring 2015, less than 50% of students will score at least PROFICIENT on reading and math assessments. That is the prediction.

What should we do? Get rid of the Common Core or stay with it?

We must stay with it because RIGOR, COMPLEXITY, and PROBLEM-SOLVING – what our students must accomplish in the 21st Century is a process. Choosing excellence for all students is a process.

I believe that translating the Common Core State Standards (what Kansas calls the College and Career Ready Standards) into the school curriculum will produce marvelous results educationally. It is a PROCESS, and just like coaching in sports, I believe that students will rise to the expectations of teachers and administrators.

In 1960-1990 – 95% jobs required low skills

From 2008-2015 – 10% jobs require low skills

Literacy is critical for success today.

WE MUST RAISE THE RIGOR AND COMPLEXITY IN OUR CLASSROOMS

Our students are no longer competing regionally and nationally – they are competing GLOBALLY

The social, economic, technological environment our students are growing up in is unique and pervasive:

The Top 10 Jobs in 2013 --- DID NOT EXIST IN 2004. Therefore,

- Teachers are preparing students for jobs that do not exist
- Where they will use technologies that have not been invented
- In order to solve problems we do not know are problems yet

- In 2010 my school district sent me to a 3-day workshop on the Common Core State Standards
- I went with the idea I would not like it – just another new fad in education
- But, I discovered the elegance of the Common Core.
- When I returned, I asked my principal if we could go ahead and translate the Common Core into our high school language arts curriculum

After our translation, my high school made AYP in all sub-groups 3 straight years and made the state's Standard of Excellence.

Positives about the Common Core:

- Common Core put the creativity back in the classroom
- Common Core emphasized understanding and taking time to explore and immerse in content
- Common Core ratcheted up the Rigor by including non-fiction paired with literary text
- Common Core is collaborative (with students, across the curriculum)
- Common Core advanced equity (by raising the rigor it helps all students)
- Common Core gets kids ready for college because of emphasis on problem-solving and critical thinking
- Common Core has had a huge impact on mobile students – like Fort Leavenworth – across districts, states

Note elegance

- The standards align with a logical learning progression for kids from one grade to the next.
- Every teacher or administrator group I have worked with has responded “Wow” when it was explained.
- The standards represent the first time in my teaching career that standards make sense

We need to give teachers appropriate and adequate training (like my high school translating CCSS)

We need to understand that the CCSS provides a common language across a district and state – especially beneficial in districts like mine with Fort Leavenworth.

[Educational Beliefs of Countries Scoring ahead of U.S.]

For our students to compete in the world, we need the Common Core standards. They make sense, and they work. I wrote an article last fall in Education Week about my experience with the Common Core – how it improved my teaching and made a difference in my classroom. One of the criticisms was that my evidence “was anecdotal.” At this point, that is all that anyone has. If we allow the PROCESS TO TAKE PLACE, we will see success. As one of my state teacher of the year colleagues said, “Mend it, don’t end it.”

Notes from a presentation to the Title 1 National Conference in Salt Lake City:

Jeff Baxter

Leavenworth High School

2014 Kansas Teacher of the Year

