

English Language Arts Standards Public Comments

EXHIBIT #1

Date Submitted: September 11, 2017
(Art Marmorstein, Northern State University)

Eliminating the Common Core label is misleading. These are still pretty much the Common Core standards. Copy any of the standards, do a Google search, and one gets dozens of hits from dozens of states. It's pretty clear that no-one has yet done the work of cleaning up the awful, jargon-filled language of the Common Core.

I've served on state-wide standards review teams myself, and I know how hard it is to get committees to agree on wording. Difficult or no, it's important that *English* standards at least are a model of clear, concise writing. The standards here are badly in need of a rewrite.

Problems abound. Consider, for instance, 1.RF.3.d which insists that 1st grade students be able to "Use knowledge that every syllable must have a vowel sound to determine the number of syllables in a printed word."

That's really awkward. It would be simpler to say students should know how to divide words into syllables.

Then there's 2RF.3.c which says 2nd graders should be able to "Decode regularly spelled two-syllable words with long vowels and short vowels." Note that the misplaced prepositional phrase makes this ambiguous and hard on the reader. The phrase is unnecessary anyway. What's wrong with simply saying 2nd graders should be able to sound out two-syllable words?

It's hard to tell what "decode" means in 2RF.3 and elsewhere. Does it mean "sound out"? Does it mean "read"? If "sound out" then 2RF.3.f (which asks 2nd graders to "recognize and read grade-appropriate high frequency words") is misplaced. That's a sight-reading skill, not a phonics skill.

I suspect that many work-group members wanted to bleed red ink over the standards draft or just put a big 'X' across the page with a big "rewrite" in the margin. Passages like the following really need to be cleaned up:

- 4.RF.4 Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
- Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.
 - Read grade-level texts in a variety of genres orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody (stress, phrasing, intonation, and expression) on consecutive readings.
 - Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

This is the kind of language George Orwell (among others) warned against. Be great to see some of your work-group members read Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" and then clean up the standards following Orwell's suggestions.

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EXHIBIT #2

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It's curious that the Standards web page goes out of its way to make this claim:

"The South Dakota Content Standards were neither written nor funded by the Federal Government. South Dakota educators and content specialists participated in the review, revision, development, and feedback process."

Wouldn't it have been more useful to the public to know who *did* fund the development of the standards? And wouldn't it have been more useful to note who the *primary authors* of the standards were instead of stating (rather misleadingly) that South Dakotans helped in the review and feedback process?

Since the new standards retain so much of the Common Core, primary credit ought to go those who paid for and wrote the original Common Core standards.

As to authorship, Wikipedia says this:

"In 2009, the NGA convened a group of people to work on developing the standards. This team included David Coleman, William McCallum of the University of Arizona, Phil Daro, and Student Achievement Partners founders Jason Zimba[6] and Susan Pimentel to write standards in the areas of English and language arts."

And as to funding, Wikipedia says this:

"Development of the Common Core Standards was funded by the governors and state schools chiefs, with additional support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Pearson Publishing Company, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and others."

Credit where credit is due...