



Dr. Michele Ballentine-Linch Testimony
Arkansas State Teachers Association (ASTA)
House and Senate Interim Committee on Education
July 22, 2013
Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Mr. Chairmen and members of the Committee, my name is Dr. Michele Ballentine-Linch. I am submitting this written testimony in support of effective implementation of the Common Core State Standards as the executive director of the Arkansas State Teachers Association (ASTA). My perspective also includes over 20 years of education experience as a public school science teacher, professor and administrator. I hold a PhD in curriculum and instruction with an emphasis in adolescent learning.

The Arkansas State Teachers Association (ASTA) is a non-union teacher organization and affiliated with the Association of American Educators (AAE). It is a professional association that provides benefits and services to educators such as liability insurance, professional development, scholarships and a voice on education policy both state wide and nationally. Prior to becoming the executive director I was a public school teacher in a very high performing inner-city school in another state. I believe our organization brings a unique perspective to this committee concerning the implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

ASTA is member-driven and has polled members on the merits of CCSS. It's important to note that ASTA members' responses to the survey referenced below are in line with their AAE counterparts across the country within +/-3. While the jury is still out on the implementation process and its effect on the flexibility of curriculum, ASTA members appear to be moving in the direction of support for consistent standards:

- 36% of respondents believe the CCSS will make the U.S. more competitive on a global scale. 53% believed they would have no effect, and 11% assert that CCSS will have an adverse effect on global competitiveness.
- However, 64% of survey respondents believe that CCSS will provide more consistency in the quality of education between school districts and between states.
- 48% of teachers believe CCSS implementation is running smoothly, while 41% of teachers are neutral, and 11% believe implementation is going poorly.

The fact is our member educators are in the process of implementing CCSS. ASTA seeks to give members the opportunity to voice their views on the subject and participate in a process that will work to establish best practices for these standards. While ASTA does not outright endorse CCSS as an organization, we support teachers, and are interested in providing educators with a seat at the table.

We must continue to ensure that CCSS do not develop into a scripted curriculum which will dictate every resource to be used and concept and/or skill to be taught in the classroom. Rather, these standards must continue to be guidelines considered when developing curriculum at the local level giving educators autonomy for the basis of rigorous learning and instructional practices as well as appropriate resource selection to meet the needs of diverse learners in today's classrooms. Our members support local control and flexibility at all costs.

During this implementation process, we would advise the state to listen to real classroom teachers in establishing best practices. It is critical that teachers be included in this important process. Furthermore, teachers must also be afforded the preparation and professional development time needed to properly implement these new guidelines.

Our members are forward-thinking professionals who put students first. We support all efforts to help us prepare Arkansas students with the knowledge and skills to succeed in college and career, regardless of their zip code. We look forward to working with the state in properly implementing the Common Core State Standards in Arkansas so that every child in the state is college and career ready.

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