

PRESENTATION BY ARKANSAS OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN CAMPAIGN ON COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

The Arkansas Opportunity to Learn Campaign would like to share the National Opportunity to Learn Campaign policy statement on the Common Core State Standards.

In education, "alignment" is a fancy word that stands for a commonsense notion: at every level of education, students should learn what they need to know in order to do well at the next level in a trajectory that eventually prepares them for college, career and citizenship. Early education programs should give students and parents what they need for a strong start. Elementary school should prepare students for middle school; middle school should prepare students for high school; high school should prepare students for postsecondary institutions; and community college should enable students to easily transfer to baccalaureate programs.

College readiness is not always a clear goal of K-12 education and student mobility can come at a high cost. Although student mobility is something that schools cannot control, the academic downside of moving frequently can be addressed systemically by making sure that the curriculum is aligned across schools and grades. When high school curricula do not lay a foundation for college, and when students move frequently from one institution to another, money and time are wasted. Students may accumulate credits that ultimately do not add up to a high school or post-secondary credential and student and national success are undermined. (Adelman 2010, Brown Lerner and Brandt 2006, Carnegie Council 2010, Green and Forster 2003, Hooker and Brandt 2010, Tierney et al. 2009). By defining and adopting measures for success that are aligned with the next stage of the educational pipeline we can improve the performance of the system as a whole and more importantly, enhance the performance of the mobile 21st century student that our system serves.

While not an absolute determinant of coordination, national standards within each academic area can encourage alignment of educational content at every grade level. Adopting and implementing the Common Core State Standards for primary and secondary education can help ensure alignment with learning standards required by institutions of higher education and across jurisdictions.

The Opportunity to Learn Campaign believes that standards must also be paired with Common Resource Standard to ensure the supports are available for each student, school and district to achieve the common core goals.

The OTL Campaign also believes that the Arkansas Department of Education and local school districts must develop and implement plans for meaningful parental and community involvement in implementation of the Common Core State standards.