



CORE KNOWLEDGE FOUNDATION SUPPORTS COMMON STANDARDS INITIATIVE
E.D. Hirsch, Jr.: Voluntary standards "a not-to-be-missed opportunity"
for American Education

Charlottesville, Virginia, March 10, 2010 — The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts released today represent “a significant improvement over the earlier drafts and a not-to-be missed opportunity for the nation to begin catching up in verbal achievement,” said E.D. Hirsch, Jr., the founder of the Core Knowledge Foundation.

“Especially welcome is the drafters’ insistence that the language arts standards must be complemented by a well-developed, content-rich curriculum and their recognition that verbal achievement—including reading comprehension—is based on general knowledge,” Hirsch commented. “By emphasizing the critical fact that language mastery also requires knowledge of history, art, music, and science, and moreover that these subjects should be included in the class time devoted to literacy, these standards go beyond the narrow literary emphasis of even the best of the existing state standards,” concluded Hirsch, who noted that a student’s ability to read, write, speak and listen competently is the single most important predictor of future income and general competence.

The product of a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Common Core State Standards guidelines issued today explicitly state that the standards “must be complemented by a well-developed, content-rich curriculum.” Most critically, the Standards describe the need for elementary reading instruction to be “fully integrative, including a rich blend of stories, drama, and poetry as well as informational texts from a range of content areas.” This call for schools to teach a coherent curriculum that builds knowledge across grades, represents an important validation of the work of the Core Knowledge Foundation, notes President Linda Bevilacqua.

“While various reading approaches include nonfiction, and textbook publishers are paying greater attention to reading in the content areas, they have typically failed to grasp the importance of developing a *cumulative and coherent* approach to building knowledge within grades and across grade levels,” emphasized Linda Bevilacqua, the president of the Core Knowledge Foundation. “States and textbook publishers who wish to be standards-ready will now need to understand that randomly selecting and inserting individual nonfiction titles into their English Language Arts programs is not sufficient,” said Bevilacqua. “This random approach to content in language arts fails to recognize how domain knowledge builds within and across grade levels. It’s a missed opportunity and a waste of precious instructional time,” Bevilacqua also noted.

The Core Knowledge Foundation has long advocated for a curriculum that is coherent, cumulative, and content-specific. While not directly involved in the drafting of the final Common Core State Standards, several key members of the Core Knowledge Foundation were consulted substantially in the preparation of several sections of the Common Core State Standards. “We are very gratified to see many of our ideas about how to systematically build knowledge within and across grade levels during the language arts block reflected in the standards,” Bevilacqua said. “We are also very pleased to see recognition of the importance of building children’s oral language competence in listening and speaking as a necessary prerequisite to literacy in reading and writing,” she concluded.

Founded in 1986, the nonprofit Core Knowledge Foundation publishes and distributes a wide variety of education books and materials, including the *Core Knowledge Sequence*, a detailed outline of recommended curricular content to be taught in language arts, history and geography, mathematics, science, music, and the visual arts from preschool to Grade 8. The Foundation supports a growing nationwide network of Core Knowledge schools through instructional materials and professional development workshops.

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