



400 Atlantic Avenue, Boston, MA 02110 • tel 617-737-3122 fax 617-737-3126 • www.mbae.org

MASSACHUSETTS
BUSINESS ALLIANCE
FOR EDUCATION

Statewide Business Group Recommends Adoption of Common Core Educational Standards

Independent Comparison Finds No Significant Differences Between High State Standards and Common Core

Boston -- July 19, 2010 – The Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE) today voted to recommend adoption of the proposed “Common Core” educational standards and incorporate, where appropriate, Massachusetts standards not reflected in the Common Core.

The Board made its decision after reviewing an independent study comparing the state’s K-12 English and math standards with the proposed Common Core Standards. Under the Common Core adoption process, states can choose to exceed the standards by up to 15 percent. Massachusetts would be the 24th state to accept Common Core.

The study, conducted by WestEd, an independent national education consultancy, found that:

- There is more in common than not between Massachusetts academic standards and the proposed Common Core; and both sets of standards are high;
- There is substantial alignment in math (96%) and English (74%) and they are comparable with regard to whether they are clear and measureable;
- In math, the two sets of standards reflect a comparable level of rigor;
- In English, the Common Core tends to have a heavier emphasis on standards that focus on strategic thinking, and those begin in earlier grades.

The Common Core State Standards (Common Core) are K-12 English-language arts (ELA) and mathematics standards designed, on the basis of research and evidence, to prepare students for college and career in an internationally competitive society. The Common Core State Standards Initiative has been led by the 48 participating states through their membership in the National Governor’s Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

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Following the vote, the MBAE Board released the following statement:

“For more than 20 years, MBAE has advocated for the highest possible educational standards for Massachusetts students. Our members, who represent employers across the Commonwealth, insist on rigorous standards in order to ensure Massachusetts remains economically competitive and a global center of innovation and productivity.

We commissioned a non-ideological, thorough review of the state’s standards and Common Core to provide the MBAE board with factual and unbiased information about whether adoption of Common Core would build on the successes of the last 17 years of education reform and investment.

After reviewing the rigorous, independent comparison between the Massachusetts and Common Core educational standards, today the MBAE board voted to recommend that the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) adopt Common Core and that the Board exceed Common Core in areas where improvements can be made.

There are many areas where Common Core strengthens Massachusetts’ standards and will better prepare our children to succeed in college-and the workforce – areas that are critically important to the Massachusetts business community.

In addition, the adoption of Common Core will create opportunities for Massachusetts to develop more sophisticated assessments about student and teacher performance.

There are too many children graduating from our public schools without the necessary skills to succeed in college and compete in today’s economy. We believe Common Core will improve upon our successful education reforms and position Massachusetts for continued progress.

The study found that these standards not only draw heavily from Massachusetts current standards, but improve upon them by incorporating the some of the best international standards. To maintain our competitive advantage, Massachusetts must regularly update its standards to make sure that we’re applying the best current thinking about educating our young people. In our view, adoption of the Common Core Standards would benefit the state’s competitive economic position by challenging students and educators to develop the skills and knowledge that are essential for success in the coming decades.

In short, the proposed Common Core standards build on the Massachusetts model – they do not dismantle it.

For more information, please contact Linda Noonan, executive director of MBAE, at 617-737-3122, or lnoonan@mbae.org. For more information, visit: www.mbae.org.

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About MBAE

The Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE) is committed to a high quality public education system that will prepare all students to engage successfully in a global economy and society. We bring together business and education leaders to promote education policies and practices based on measurable standards of achievement, accountability for performance, and equitable educational opportunities for all students.

MBAE was established in 1988 by employers concerned about the educational attainment and skills of graduates entering the workforce. Our core work – improving public schools by influencing state policy – is driven by the business community’s concern that all students graduate prepared for success in college, career and citizenship.

MBAE has been a leader in education reform from the development and passage of the Education Reform Act of 1993 through our recent advocacy for the Act Relative to the Achievement Gap passed in January 2010. The compact of high standards and accountability in return for funding to meet these demands has propelled Massachusetts to the top of the nation on many measures of education progress. Yet, despite our students’ achievement, we still have the same unacceptable socio-economic and racial achievement gaps as we did when we started education reform twenty years ago. MBAE therefore continues to focus attention that leads to action on the most pressing challenges in education.

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