

Senate Common Core Hearing Testimony

Lansing, Michigan
October 2, 2013

Good afternoon, my name is Valerie Mills. I am a Mathematics Education Consultant at Oakland Schools where I support the work of about 20,000 teachers and a quarter of a million students. I began my career in Ypsilanti where I taught high school mathematics for nearly 20 years. In addition, I currently serve as President of the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics. As president, I work with mathematicians and mathematics education leaders across the country. Both my local work and national office have required me to develop a deep understanding of the Common Core State Standards and the many implications they have for our teachers, schools, and most particularly students.

One of the most dramatic, unexpected, and rarely referenced implications of the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) by Michigan and in 44 other states, is the way in which this *shared* set of educational goals has drawn teachers and university educators together into a rich array of activities all designed to meet this common challenge. To illustrate this phenomenon, I would like to share two stories of collaborations that suggest the degree of acceptance these standards enjoy in Michigan and across the country and how continuing to participate in the collective use of these standards can be leveraged for Michigan's teachers and students.

The first story is that of an Oakland pilot and review workshop series run during the last three years with well over 500 teachers working together to develop K-12 CCSS aligned curriculum materials. During a session last year, one of the teachers in the fourth grade group raised a question about *how* student's understanding of measurement concepts is likely to develop during the elementary years. Until about 12 months ago the answer to her question would have been found scattered across multiple studies and buried deep in research publications. However, the broad adoption of the CCSS has prompted working groups of university faculty to begin to synthesize research on topics such as this into a number of free online resources, each organized around the CCSS. Accessing this resource online, literally within a few minutes, this teacher and her colleagues, had multiple resources with relevant, well-vetted research to help them answer their questions.

In this story you hear about two important levels of collaboration that are already producing results, one at the state level among teachers and one nationally among academic faculty, *both* directly enabled by the presence of the CCSS. The result of these collaborations is that teachers come away smarter about teaching and learning, with their students as the ultimate beneficiaries.

The second story comes from the series of regular meetings of national groups that I attend as President of the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics. Two are particularly relevant. First, the Mathematics Common Core Coalition is a small group of 8 that includes only the presidents of the four national mathematics education associations along with representatives from the NGA (National Governors' Association) and CCSSO (council of chief state school officers).

The sole mission of this young organization is to ensure the successful implementation of the Common Core by coordinating the work of the individual states and organizations and by identifying new resources and training needed to help teachers meet this set of standards. Among the important early products is a collaboration of two organizations (AMTE and NCSM) to promote formative assessment nationally in preparation for the higher expectations of the CCSS and the new more challenging assessments.

The second is a slightly larger group, the Conference Board of Mathematical Sciences (CBMS). This group is composed of the presidents of America's 16 national mathematics and mathematics education associations. A roll call at a CBMS meeting would include the venerable Mathematics Association of America (MAA), the American Statistical Association, the Society of Industrial and Applied Mathematics, and others. The purpose of CBMS is to promote research, improve education, and expand the uses of mathematics. We also serve an advisory function, regularly consulting for the President, Congress, and a host of national agencies. All but one of the member presidents signed an open letter in support of the CCSS, with one abstaining for lack of time. The December meeting was entirely given over to the various reports on how each of the 16 organizations is working individually to provide support and resources for the CCSS.

In each of these settings (workshops and professional meetings), the energy and enthusiasm focused on supporting the work of implementing the Common Core provides us with tangible evidence of widespread belief in the efficacy of the CCSS. The stories also offer us dramatic examples of the not so visible ways in which the introduction of the CCSS has stimulated and mobilized educators both in Michigan and across the country to work together in support of CCSS. I believe that these collaborative efforts are likely to support

greater mathematics achievement. Already, the list of free high-quality resources available for teachers is impressive, and more are scheduled for release each month.

As a lifelong member of Michigan's mathematics education community I have seen no fewer than five entirely new sets of Michigan standards. Each time I was faced with the challenge of implementing these standards, making sense of the new content, locating textbooks, aligning local assessments, and adjusting teaching strategies with support from no farther a field than my colleagues down the hall.

For the first time in my 37 years, the Common Core State Standards has sparked coordinated, thoughtful, curriculum focused collaborations among the mathematics community in Oakland, in Michigan, and across our nation. Effectively one sustained conversation with the common goal of helping every child in our land learn mathematics—exactly the goal that our former Governor John Engler and other members of NGA had in 2007 when they called for the creation of a set of core standards common across states. As a math teacher who personally understands what it means to face the challenge of raising scores for every child in a classroom of students who struggle with mathematics, I want to encourage you to join my colleagues and I as we embrace this opportunity to leverage the intellectual resources of a nation in support of Michigan's children.

Valerie L. Mills
Supervisor, Mathematics Education Consultant, Oakland Schools
President, National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics

1221 Westmoorland
Ypsilanti, MI 48197



CBMS

CONFERENCE BOARD OF THE MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES
1529 Eighteenth Street NW, Washington DC 20036

Telephone: 202-293-1170
rosier@georgetown.edu
kolbe.lisa@gmail.com
www.cbmsweb.org

Common Core State Standards for Mathematics Statement by Presidents of CBMS Member Professional Societies

In a great act of foresight for this nation, most of the states have now adopted a consistent set of expectations for school mathematics, called the Common Core State Standards. Building on long years of work, the Common Core State Standards are an auspicious advance in mathematics education. They define the mathematical knowledge and skill that students need in order to be ready for college and career, and provide the basis for a curriculum that is focused and coherent. If properly implemented, these rigorous new standards hold the promise of elevating the mathematical knowledge and skill of every young American to levels competitive with the best in the world, of preparing our college entrants to undertake advanced work in the mathematical sciences, and of readying the next generation for the jobs their world will demand. Much remains to be done to implement the standards, in curriculum, assessment, and teacher education. But we now have, for the first time in our history, a common blueprint for this work across state lines. This is not the time to turn away from our good fortune. We, the undersigned presidents of the following member societies of CBMS, hereby express our strong support for the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics.

James Roznowski
American Mathematical Association
of Two Year Colleges

Hans Kuensch
Institute of Mathematical Statistics

David Vogan
American Mathematical Society

Robert Devaney
Mathematical Association of America

Marie Davidian
American Statistical Association

Nathaniel Dean
National Association of Mathematicians

Alasdair Urquhart
Association for Symbolic Logic

Valerie Mills
National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics

Ruth Charney
Association for Women in Mathematics

Linda Gojak
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics

Fran Arbaugh
Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators

Irene Fonseca
Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics

Diana Kasbaum
Association of State Supervisors of Mathematics

Don Balka
TODOS: Mathematics for ALL

Vanessa Cleaver
Benjamin Banneker Association

