

Common Core Learning Standards Faith Heritage School Position Statement

Faith Heritage has and will always deliver a curriculum where Scripture is at the center. Our curriculum is a tool that teachers use to prepare our students to excel in K through 12 and college academics. Our curriculum is a plan for instruction and assessment that helps to deliver content in an engaging and relevant manner while developing a biblical worldview in the hearts and minds of students so that they can understand and interpret their world through the lens of God's unchanging truth. Teachers within each content area review and update their curriculum on a regularly scheduled cycle. In that review, New York State Learning Standards have been taken into consideration to set minimum standards. Standards are an agreed upon list of skills and concepts that should be mastered at each grade level. This year, NYS has adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) so that 85% of the standards are from the Common Core State Standards and 15% are added by the New York State Education Department, together constituting what are being called the NYS P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The Standards themselves do not prescribe how a skill or concept should be taught, instead it is the Faith Heritage Curriculum that will determine *which* standards will be taught and *how* they will be taught and assessed. **Faith Heritage will use the NYS P-12 CCLS, as we have in the past with previous NYSL (New York State Learning Standards), as one tool for determining minimum standards at each grade level while at all times keeping Scripture at the center, academic excellence as a requisite, and our core values as our guide.**



Background

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have become a politicized topic and for many of us the words themselves result in a negative emotional response. It is my desire to share some of the facts about the CCSS and to briefly show how the negative elements associated with the CCSS have no impact on Faith Heritage School and our mission.

What are the Common Core State Standards? The CCSS are a set of standards that have been developed for Math, ELA, and now Science. Standards are list of minimum requirements of skills and concepts that a child should have mastered at each grade level. It is good for every school to have quality performance standards to inform their curriculum. Below are examples from the Math and ELA NYS P-12 CCLS:

Writing Standards K-5

[W]

Grade 3 students:	Grade 4 students:	Grade 5 students:
Text Types and Purposes		
<ol style="list-style-type: none">Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.<ol style="list-style-type: none">Introduce the topic or text they are writing about, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure that lists reasons.Provide reasons that support the opinion.Use linking words and phrases (e.g., <i>because, therefore, since, for example</i>) to connect opinion and reasons.Provide a concluding statement or section.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.<ol style="list-style-type: none">Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases (e.g., <i>for instance, in order to, in addition</i>).Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.<ol style="list-style-type: none">Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., <i>consequently, specifically</i>).Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

Expressions & Equations

6.EE

Apply and extend previous understandings of arithmetic to algebraic expressions.

- Write and evaluate numerical expressions involving whole-number exponents.
- Write, read, and evaluate expressions in which letters stand for numbers.
 - Write expressions that record operations with numbers and with letters standing for numbers. *For example, express the calculation "Subtract y from 5" as $5 - y$.*
 - Identify parts of an expression using mathematical terms (sum, term, product, factor, quotient, coefficient); view one or more parts of an expression as a single entity. *For example, describe the expression $2(8 + 7)$ as a product of two factors; view $(8 + 7)$ as both a single entity and a sum of two terms.*
 - Evaluate expressions at specific values of their variables. Include expressions that arise from formulas used in real-world problems. Perform arithmetic operations, including those involving whole-number exponents, in the conventional order when there are no parentheses to specify a particular order (Order of Operations). *For example, use the formulas $V = s^3$ and $A = 6s^2$ to find the volume and surface area of a cube with sides of length $s = \frac{1}{2}$.*

How were the CCSS developed? The standards movement began in the 1980's and was a response to studies that showed that American Schools were not performing as well as other industrialized nations. *A Nation at Risk* was published in 1983 and started a movement toward educational standards. Organizations such as NCTM (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics) began to study best practices in teaching and learning while simultaneously there were huge gains in Brain Research so that educational institutions we were able to better understand how students learn best. Until now, standards were being developed exclusively by individual states. Federal legislation has included the re-authorization of ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) under President Clinton and NCLB (No Child Left Behind) under President George W. Bush. By 2001 the District of Columbia along with 48 states had performance based academic standards in place for all core content areas. Recently the National Governors Association for Best Practices and the Chief State School Officials established collaborative groups to develop standards that would be common to all states with the goal of providing "a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce." Additional

goals of these common standards have been to increase rigor and demand, to align standards with the most rigorous standards internationally, and to provide accountability for schools, districts, and states. What has resulted is what we know now as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Concerns about the Common Core? Most of the concerns have little or no impact directly on Faith Heritage. Here is a short list of some of the controversial topics that you may have heard about.

1) Government Involvement:

- a. **Federally Influenced:** Some dispute the claim that the CCSS have been created outside the influence of the Federal Government. Regardless of whether or not the CCSS were created with political agendas in mind there has certainly been pressure put on states to adopt common performance based standards and accountability systems through competitions for federal funding such as the \$4.3 Billion that the USDE (US Department of Education) made available through the RTTP (Race to the Top) competition.
- b. **Loss of State Control:** Some believe that states that are adopting the CCSS are losing control over how they deliver education and that the standards are a tool for a government to use the public school system to greater influence its youth in developing a secular and politically slanted worldview. There may be some truth to this but as you consider this argument be careful to differentiate between standards and curriculum. Standards are somewhat neutral. Some may disagree with what exact skills and concepts should be mastered at each level and some may have concerns about how rigorous the standards are but curriculum (how the standards are taught) has not been mandated by the Federal or State Governments.

- 2) NYS Modules: New York has developed free curriculum modules for districts to be able to use to help them address the NYS CCLS. These modules are available Online through EngageNY. While districts are not required to use these modules many are adopting them to save money on textbooks and to help insure that the standards are being taught in a way that students will score competitively on high-stakes assessments. There have been many concerns about reading passages and lesson plans that are included in these modules. The more public schools adopt the Common Core Curriculum the less power individual districts and teachers have over their local curriculum and the greater influence the government will have in influencing the hearts and minds of young people.

FHS Response: Faith Heritage does not have the pressure to adopt these modules, and does not intend to adopt them. We will always have complete control over our biblically based curriculum and it will always be created and taught by Spirit-led, expert teachers that will accurately discern God's truth.

3) Quality and Content of the Standards:

- a. **Mathematics:** A criticism of many current standards, including NYS, has been that they are a "mile wide and an inch deep" meaning that there are so many topics to cover that none can be covered in any depth. The CCSS claim is that they are reducing the number of skills and concepts that are required at each grade level so

that students can achieve deeper understanding. In doing this there has been some criticism to what is being left out. Some claim that by leaving certain skills out of certain grade levels the US students will be behind and the standards will not truly be benchmarked internationally. The CCSS have also embraced the mathematics movement over the past decade which has leaned toward creating what is now understood as mathematical proficiency. The National Research Council defines mathematical proficiency as students having adaptive reasoning, strategic competence, conceptual understanding (comprehension of mathematical concepts, operations and relations), procedural fluency (skill in carrying out procedures flexibly, accurately, efficiently and appropriately), and a productive disposition (habitual inclination to see mathematics as sensible, useful, and worthwhile, coupled with a belief in diligence and one's own efficacy). The goal is to train students not only to be able to perform mathematical calculations but also to understand conceptually what they are doing with the ability to communicate why they are doing what they are doing. This instruction involved in having students acquire mathematical proficiency may look much different from the math instruction many of us received.

- b. English Language Arts: Supporters of the CCSS claim that students will have the necessary fluency, comprehension, analytic, and communication skills to be on track for college- and career-readiness. Most of the contention regarding ELA has been over the increased time that the CCSS are requiring for students to engage with reading informational texts (70% informational by 12th grade). Naturally, the increased time spent with informational/non-fiction texts will reduce the amount of time students will be able to work with great works of literature. Opponents to the CCSS see this as a move to transform literature into merely a critical skill while weakening the cultural knowledge needed for authentic college coursework. Political and conservative detractors would claim that this is also a move to increase the number of socially and politically charged texts that students will be encountering.

FHS Response: As a school we will work carefully to make certain that students are strong in all content areas. We welcome the debates about improving Math and ELA instruction and will engage in worthwhile conversations as a faculty to make certain that we are providing the very best education for all of our students. As it relates to ELA we will make certain that our students are proficient in analyzing informational texts while not forfeiting the encounters our students need to have with classical literature. The greatest of all non-fiction texts that our students engage with on a daily basis is the Word of God!

- 4) Accountability and High Stakes Testing: Accountability for public school teachers and administrators has reached an all-time high. There are varying opinions on how schools should be held accountable for the performance of their students in demonstrating proficiency of the standards. Many educators are not happy that their jobs will be evaluated and impacted in part by the results of high-stakes tests that are now

accompanying the NYS CCLS. The amount of pressure that is being put on students to perform on these exams is extremely high.

FHS Response: Faith Heritage does not participate in NYS testing so any negative impacts from high-stakes testing that is talked about simply does not impact our school. FHS will continue to determine the best ways to make certain that students are mastering the FHS curriculum so that they are prepared to excel in college and to impact the world for Christ.