

**Report on an Analysis of Correspondences between  
the EFF Curriculum Frameworks and  
the Common Core State Standards  
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## 1. Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to report on an analysis of correspondences between the Equipped for the Future (EFF) Curriculum Frameworks for *Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Math*, and the *Common Core State Standards* (June 2, 2010), developed for K-12 by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) & the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center).

## Rationale:

The Common Core documents offer a new resource to the field; thus, a review of the upper levels of the EFF Curriculum Frameworks was undertaken to determine whether they adequately reflect the current knowledge about what students need to know and be able to do in order to succeed in college and careers. To more fully understand the specific knowledge, skills, and strategies proposed in both documents and implications for the field, the review also entailed a comparison of their key features and appropriateness for adult education.

## 2. Process:

To complete this analysis, a team of Equipped for the Future (EFF) staff and consultants with the Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee, used the following documents:

- The June 2, 2010 *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects*, and the *Common Core State Standards for Mathematics*. (This final version of both documents can be accessed at <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>.)
- The Equipped for the Future (EFF) Curriculum Frameworks for the content standards *Read with Understanding (2006)*, *Convey Ideas in Writing (2008)*, *Speak So Others Can Understand (2011)*, *Listen Actively (2011)*, and *Use Math to Solve Problems and Communicate (2010)*, developed in collaboration with a number of state partners.

The EFF staff focused on the sections of each Common Core document that appeared to be most relevant to college and career readiness, using the standards and performance descriptions in those sections as the basis for comparison and contrast with the content of upper/transitional levels of the EFF Curriculum Frameworks. Specifically,

- From the *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects*, the consultants drew from the standards listed under the headings “College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards

for Reading,” “College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing,” and “College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening”; from the performance descriptions included in the section titled “Students Who are College and Career Ready in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Language “ (though the Common Core authors are explicit that these are not standards); and specifically for *Read with Understanding*, from the Grades 11-12 items in each of the following: Reading Standards for Literature; Reading Standards for Informational Texts; Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies; and Reading Standards for Literacy in Science and Technical Subjects.

- From the *Common Core State Standards for Mathematics*, EFF drew on information offered in the sections titled “Standards for Mathematical Practice” and “Standards for Mathematical Content.”

For the analysis that led to identification of correspondences (and differences) with the *Common Core State Standards* for reading, writing, speaking/listening and math, EFF staff focused on the following aspects of each relevant EFF Curriculum Framework at its upper levels:

- Components of the EFF Standard
- Performance Indicators (including Examples of Performance)
- Teaching and Learning Objectives ( benchmarks)
- OTHER (Content Examples, e.g.’s, etc.)

When this analysis was completed, each reviewer wrote a narrative summary of findings. What follows is a synthesis of those narrative summaries.

### **3. General Comments:**

The two Common Core documents (i.e., for the English Language Arts and for math) were developed by different groups and use different organizing features, which makes general statements about “the” Common Core State Standards difficult to make. For instance:

- the *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* present a set of common performance descriptions titled “Students Who are College and Career Ready in Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Language,” which is followed by a list of “College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards” for each individual content area

(Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening). These Anchor Standards articulate what students should know and be able to do to be “college and career-ready” and are followed by grade-level standards which form a progression leading to the exit performance described by the anchor standards. Meanwhile,

- the *Common Core State Standards for Mathematics* do not have the common performance descriptions nor Anchor Standards. There is no statement at all about what “college and career-ready” performance looks like. Instead, each set of standards for a grade level is organized into “Standards for Mathematical Practice” (which are the same across all levels) and “Standards for Mathematical Content” through Grade 8, after which high school standards are provided for different strands (e.g., Algebra, Geometry).

The EFF Curriculum Frameworks, on the other hand, use a consistent philosophy and format throughout. For instance, across all content areas, each EFF standard comprises a set of bulleted statements, or *components of performance*, which describe an integrated skill process used in the pursuit of important adult goals and purposes. Furthermore all the Curriculum Frameworks present the same kinds of information at each performance level:

- the content standard itself (the same integrated process is presented at every level);
- indicators and examples of proficient performance for that particular level;
- teaching and learning objectives (TLOs), or benchmarks, that include the knowledge, skills and strategies needed to perform at that level; and
- examples or “sub-objectives” of the TLOs (benchmarks), when appropriate.

This alignment across all the EFF Curriculum Frameworks – both in skill definition and in organization – helps users know how to navigate the documents as they plan and implement instruction, which facilitates ease of use and the ability to make general statements about the Frameworks as a group.

#### **4. Key Findings:**

- **Correspondences Across Content Areas**

The analysis confirmed that the Common Core State Standards and the EFF Curriculum Frameworks share many priorities and are not in conflict in any fundamental way.

**Focus on College/Work Readiness:** Both documents are intended to describe knowledge and skills, the development of which will lead to college or work readiness. In all content areas

included in this analysis, then, it is possible to identify correspondences between the two documents, although some correspondences are much stronger and more consistent than others.

Some examples from the Individual Analyses include the following:

- The Common Core description of the English Language Arts/Literacy practices of college-and career-ready students represents a strong correspondence to elements of many of the EFF Curriculum Frameworks. For instance, according to the Common Core, “They (college/career-ready students) respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline.” Many of the EFF Curriculum Frameworks at their upper levels describe the kind of competent skill performance (and application of the underlying knowledge, skills and strategies required to achieve that performance) that results in students’ ability to respond in this way. “Examples of Proficient Performance” and an “Illustration of [the EFF Standard]” at these upper levels provide especially clear pictures of adults addressing real-life skill needs.
- There are strong, consistent correspondences between the Common Core “Production and Distribution” Anchor Standards for Writing and the EFF Writing framework in matters of 1) relating writing to specific purposes/audiences/contexts, and 2) using strategies for planning and revision. This is where “the full writing process” so integral to the EFF Curriculum Framework seems to get most attention on the Common Core side.
- There is consistency between EFF and the Common Core regarding the belief that math is more than computation. Both the Common Core math standards and the EFF Curriculum Framework for Math reflect the National Research Council’s report *Adding It Up* (Center for Education [CFE], 2001. *Adding It Up: Helping Children Learn Mathematics*. Washington, DC: National Research Council.) which stresses that math proficiency involves adaptive reasoning, conceptual understanding, strategic competence, procedural fluency, and productive disposition.

**Theoretical/Research Base:** The EFF Curriculum Frameworks and the Common Core across all content areas share a strong basis in recognized theory and research, particularly in a theoretical model of skill development that is characterized by integrated growth in content knowledge, independence, fluency, and range (what EFF refers to as “the 4 dimensions of performance”). This shared theoretical basis results in numerous strong correspondences between the two sets of documents.

Some examples from the Individual Analyses include the following:

- Both the EFF and the Common Core documents highlight the role of content knowledge in supporting reading comprehension and prompt educators to make the learning of content related to the subject under study (e.g., social studies, science, career readiness, parenting) a feature of instruction.
- The Common Core Standards for Mathematical Practice rest on important “processes and proficiencies” with longstanding importance in mathematics education. Among these are the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) process standards of problem solving, reasoning and proof, communication, representation, and connections (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2000. *Principles and standards for school mathematics*. Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. ) The EFF *Use Math* Curriculum Framework is also based on these NCTM Standards, which have been developed, tested, and continually revisited over 25 years.

**Nature of Teaching/Learning Guidance:** Both documents provide an overall sense of what should be taught and learned at a particular level without requiring that a teacher (or student) use a particular strategy to facilitate that learning. The choice of useful strategies depends on the task and situation. As a result of this similar approach to teaching/learning guidance, the analysis often revealed multiple correspondences between each Common Core document and its parallel EFF Curriculum Framework.

- **Differences Across Content Areas**

The analysis also uncovered some differences between the Common Core documents and the EFF Curriculum Frameworks.

**Learning Purposes:** The two documents differ in that the Common Core focuses on academic (and to some extent, vocational) purposes for all, while EFF contextualizes skills within a fuller range of adult family-related, work-related, and civic purposes at all levels. For example, in its Speaking and Listening standards, the Common Core’s emphasis on well-reasoned, informed argument suggests that its primary interest is in academic purposes. While the EFF documents address these academic purposes, they also include preparation for effective listening and speaking for non-academic adult purposes, such as clear communication with family or successful participation in daily life tasks.

**What Is Being Described by Standards:** Another key area of difference is in what the “standard” attempts to describe. Each EFF content standard describes a transferable skill process that can be applied to a wide variety of adult purposes and tasks. EFF state partners maintain that the central focus of this skill process as the overarching “content standard” for a skill (e.g., reading, math) reminds programs to engage students in rich, meaningful tasks

(whether academic or “life”- focused) that require students to use and manage the full process and make decisions about which knowledge, skills, and strategies to apply and integrate.

In contrast, the Common Core documents target discrete skills and sub-skills which, like other sets of K-12 standards, may lead teachers to focus only on each sub-skill and not also provide learning activities which help students apply and transfer their skills outside of the immediate learning situation. The EFF documents do include lists of discrete knowledge and sub-skills— and have received high marks from teachers for them. However, what gets called a “standard,” and thus focuses administrative, instructor, and student attention, is the problem-solving skill process itself.

For example,

- The EFF writing standard/framework describes – often explicitly – an integrated writing process in which a writer employs purposeful planning, text generation, attention to English language conventions, and revision to meet an adult writing goal:
  - Determine the purpose for communicating.
  - Organize and present information to serve the purpose, context and audience.
  - Pay attention to conventions of English language usage, including grammar, spelling, and sentence structure, to minimize barriers to readers’ comprehension.
  - Seek feedback and revise to enhance the effectiveness of the communication.

It is this writing process that college- and career-ready students need to use in order to accomplish the standards (in many cases, presented as “writing products”) outlined in the Common Core document. The first set of the Common Core Anchor Standards for writing, for instance, is squarely focused on the ability to produce good examples of specific rhetorical forms of writing – persuasion, exposition, and narration. Meanwhile, the EFF Curriculum Framework both elaborates on the writing process that leads to production of such “finished” texts and also specifically addresses persuasion, exposition and narration in the content examples for transition-level teaching/learning objectives.

**Role of Metacognition:** Both the Common Core and the EFF developers discuss the importance of metacognitive strategies, but these are not treated as part of the “standards” in the

Common Core documents. Since the standards themselves guide teachers more than any introductory materials that accompany them, it is beneficial to have metacognitive strategies as a prominent feature of the EFF Curriculum Frameworks. While the Common Core does include core practices for various content areas (such as demonstrating independence, building content knowledge, comprehending as well as critiquing, etc.), it does not explicitly address metacognition (such as the ability to surface and build on prior knowledge, an awareness of what one knows and needs to know, the ability to monitor learning and adjust strategies to enhance it, etc.).

**Research, Technology, and Media:** The Common Core documents across most content areas emphasize applications related to research, technology, and media. The EFF Curriculum Frameworks do not currently include intentional emphasis in these areas (in part, possibly, because the overall EFF content framework includes standards specifically addressing two of the areas – *Learn Through Research* and *Use Information and Communications Technology* – and another standard that at minimum involves attention to media -- *Observe Critically*).

Some examples from the Individual Analyses include the following:

- The strategic and capable use of media and technology is mentioned in both the EFF Listening and Speaking documents, but it does not play as prominent a role as in the Common Core document, where the use of media and technology is mentioned specifically in two of the six standards for Speaking and Listening. By comparison, technology is less apparent in the EFF documents, where it appears as a sub-benchmark under the Communication/Comprehension Strategies Benchmarks.
- While it was challenging to find correspondences between the Teaching and Learning Objectives (benchmarks) for the EFF Writing Curriculum Framework and the Common Core Writing standards explicitly related to technology use, the EFF framework does address using technology as a writing strategy appropriate for particular purposes (such as generating and organizing ideas in the pre-writing stage of the writing process), and the internet both as an avenue of communication and as a source of writing tools/resources.

Given the increasingly important role that technology in particular is playing in the ways that adults operate and accomplish tasks in the world, the relevance and usefulness of the EFF Curriculum Frameworks may be strengthened by more explicitly integrating the EFF *Use Technology* standard with the instructional guidance that the Frameworks offer. For instance, broad phrases such as “use appropriate technology tools for the purpose and audience” might be added at the level of Teaching/Learning Objectives in each content area where

interpretation/comprehension and application strategies are addressed. Some specific examples might then be added under “Content Examples” for the appropriate TLOs.

## 5. **Conclusion:**

With the developing understanding of the role Adult Basic Education should play in preparing adults for career training and college, the Center for Literacy Studies welcomed the opportunity to explore more fully what students need to know and be able to do to transition to these types of “next steps”, and how completely the current forms of the Curriculum Frameworks address transition-level knowledge, skills and strategies. The Common Core State Standards provide a useful resource to support this endeavor.

This report has described the results of a systematic comparison of the EFF Curriculum Frameworks with the Common Core State Standards. The findings indicate that there are some ways in which the two sets of documents are similar; the findings also suggest some differences between the two sets of documents, both across all content areas and within specific disciplines.

Ways that the two documents overlap include

- A focus on the knowledge and skills that support readiness for post-secondary education and employment (though not always to the “transition” level on the EFF side);
- A grounding in a research-based concept of skill development; and
- A commitment to providing overall guidance about the content of instruction without mandating the use of particular instructional methods or strategies.

Among the differences between the two documents uncovered in the analyses are

- A difference in conception of learning purposes, with the Common Core focusing on academic (and to some extent, vocational) purposes, and EFF focusing on a fuller range of adult family-related, work-related, and civic learning purposes.
- A difference in what the “standards” articulated in each set of documents attempt to describe, with the Common Core standards targeting discrete skills/ sub-skills and specific products/outcomes, and the EFF content standards each describing a transferable skill process that can be applied to a wide variety of adult purposes and tasks.
- A difference in the way that Metacognition is addressed, with metacognitive strategies being discussed in the Common Core introductory materials but not in the standards document, and these strategies (surfacing/building on prior knowledge, monitoring

learning and adjusting strategies to enhance it, etc.) comprising a prominent feature of the EFF Curriculum Frameworks.

- A difference in approach to Research, Technology, and Media, with the Common Core documents integrating applications related to research, technology, and media into their content areas, and the EFF Curriculum Frameworks pulling these applications out as distinct Standards that may be overlooked as states focus on the Communication and Math Standards. In consideration of the increasingly important role that technology in particular plays in adults' lives, it may be useful to incorporate the EFF *Use Technology* standard more fully into instruction.