



REL Pacific Ask A REL Response

Literacy

December 2016

Question:

Is there evidence that students' reading proficiency has increased in districts that have adopted the Common Core Standards?

Response:

The following document is a response to an Ask-a-REL inquiry from the Program Director of Teacher Evaluation at the American Samoa Department of Education. The requester is interested in research on the evidence that the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) supports increased literacy in students. American Samoa has adopted a version of the CCSS for ELA-Literacy.

In response to this inquiry, REL Pacific has gathered literature and online resources.

REL Pacific conducted a web-based search, seeking relevant research articles and evaluations. Search terms and selection criteria for the resources are included in Methods. Overall, few studies were found that used student achievement data to assess the impact of the CCSS in literacy. This lack of evidence is due to uneven and unknown degrees of implementation of the standards in classrooms, as well as the fact that states and districts only have a couple years of assessment data that reflects CCSS implementation. Thus, the studies in this response also include some that report on the perceptions of students and teaching staff who are implementing the standards.

Descriptions of the resources are quoted from the publication abstract (Abstract) or the publication itself (Introduction or Excerpt). An abstract is always used when available. However, if additional text in the resource provides important information not contained in the author's abstract, the additional information is also provided.

Research References

Cronin, J., & Jensen, N. (2014). *The "phantom" collapse of student achievement in New York: Lessons for educators as states implement the common core*. Northwest Evaluation Association. 5885 SW Meadows Road Suite 200, Lake Oswego, OR 97035-3256. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED558778>

From the abstract: On August 7th, 2013, the New York State Education Commissioner, John King, announced the initial results of the state's new assessment, which was designed to measure college and career readiness relative to the Common Core Learning Standards. Commissioner King noted that the proficiency rates on these assessments were significantly lower than proficiency rates on the prior year's assessment. The observed drops in proficiency rates reflected a change in the difficulty of the proficiency standard and not a decline in student scores or performance. One important question is: Did student performance in New York actually decline between 2012 and 2013, or was it a "phantom" decline that was reported in the media? One way to address this question is to compare student performance across both years using the same measurement scale while holding the proficiency threshold constant. Unfortunately, reports of declines in proficiency rates created the erroneous impression of a collapse in student achievement. This was a "phantom collapse," and as illustrated in the six district examples, schools with apparent declines in proficiency rates actually showed improvements in student achievement between 2012 and 2013. This New York narrative illustrates the need for educators to become data literate, and be able to coach the public when student achievement information is misrepresented, whether that occurs in the media or elsewhere. This paper concludes the "phantom collapse" of student achievement in New York reflects a misguided narrative of supposed school failure that does little more than feed distrust about public education, and comes at a time when educators are working to raise expectations for student learning to better prepare them to be successful throughout high school and beyond.

Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2014). Student and teacher perspectives on a close reading protocol. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 53(1), 25.

From the abstract: Close reading is an instructional practice that has gained attention of late. It involves reading a complex text, annotation, and repeatedly reading to answer text-dependent questions. Although there are a number of recommendations for the use of close reading, there has not been a systematic analysis of student or teacher perceptions of this approach. We interviewed 45 teachers, grades 4-12, and conducted focus groups with 327 students. The participants in this study recognized that close reading was useful in helping deeply analyze a text. They noted that students had more responsibility and engagement during close reading instruction, and were tired as a result. In addition, teachers noted that the planning process required to develop a close reading was time consuming and complex.

REL Pacific was unable to locate a free link to the full-text version of this resource. Although REL Pacific tries to provide publicly available resources whenever possible, this resource

may be of sufficient interest to the reader to warrant finding it through university or public library systems.

Loveless, T. (2016). *2016 Brown Center report on American education: How well are American students learning?*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Brown-Center-Report-2016.pdf>

From the excerpt, pt 1, p. 7: Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have been adopted as the reading and math standards of more than 40 states. All but a few states scheduled full implementation of the standards, including assessments, by the end of the 2014–15 school year. Three states (Indiana, Oklahoma, and South Carolina) have rescinded previous adoptions of the Common Core, and others have made minor revisions. This section of the Brown Center Report (BCR) will exploit the variation in state implementation of CCSS to look at the association of the standards with reading and mathematics performance in grades four and eight, the two grades tested by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

From the excerpt, pt 1, p. 12–13: Regardless of implementation status, states made only slight progress in reading. The medium implementers made the largest gains (2.15) in IMP11 and the nonadopters made the largest gains in IMP13 (2.52). The gains for all three implementation categories fall within a single NAEP scale score point of each other. The standard deviation (sd) of the 2015 NAEP fourth grade reading scores is 37 points. One point is less than 0.03 sd units. That is a miniscule difference, especially if taking six years to emerge. The NAEP fourth grade reading assessment has experienced other six-year intervals of underperformance, most notably from 1992 to 1998, when scores were flat. It is interesting that CCSS's implementers and nonadopters have experienced different periods of superior performance. In the early years of CCSS implementation (2009–2011 and 2011–2013), both strong and medium implementers made larger gains than the nonadopters in fourth grade. In 2013–2015, the nonadopters made larger gains, two points or more in the 2013 model. NAEP changes that occur in a single two-year interval can easily evaporate, so whether this potential trend continues in 2017 NAEP data will be important.

Rentner, D. S., & Kober, N. (2014). *Common core state standards in 2014: Districts' perceptions, progress, and challenges*. Center on Education Policy: Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED555389.pdf>

From the abstract: This report, based on a survey of a nationally representative sample of school districts in Common Core-adopting states, examines school districts' efforts to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The report addresses district leaders' views on the rigor of the CCSS and their impact on learning and instruction, progress on and challenges in implementing the standards, outreach efforts to inform various stakeholders about the CCSS, district collaboration with other entities on various implementation activities, and the types and helpfulness of CCSS-related assistance from the state education agency.

From the excerpt, p. 7: Nearly three-quarters of district leaders agreed that the CCSS will lead to improved skills in math and ELA among students in their districts—far greater than the 55% (math) or 58% (ELA) who agreed with this statement in 2011.

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

- "Common Core" or "CCSS" AND "impact" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "Common Core" or "CCSS" AND "literacy results" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "Common Core" or "CCSS" AND "results" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "Common Core" or "CCSS" AND "assessment" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "Common Core" or "CCSS" AND "MAP" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "Common Core" or "CCSS" AND "Dibels" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "Common Core" or "CCSS" AND "reading" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "Common Core" or "CCSS" AND "improvement" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"
- "Common Core" or "CCSS" AND "decline" NOT "Dissertations & Theses"

Databases and Resources

Google/Google Scholar, ERIC, EBSCO Host, ProQuest Education Journals

Reference Search and Selection Criteria

The web search sought research studies that were published in peer-reviewed research journals within the last 5 years. REL Pacific searched for documents that are freely available online, but not all sources included are publicly available.¹ Resources included also had to be in English. Resources included in this document were last accessed in December 2016. URLs, descriptions, and content included in this document were current at that time.

¹ This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by educational stakeholders in the Pacific Region (American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Hawai'i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL Pacific) at McREL International. This memorandum was prepared by REL Pacific under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-17-C-0010, administered by McREL International. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.