

Setting the Foundation for journalism education

The Common Core State Standards were developed by the National Governors Association Center of Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers to “provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn” and were “designed to

be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers.”

When released in June 2010, the NGA Center and CCSSO indicated these standards are “aligned with college and work expectations, so that all students are prepared for success upon graduating from high school.” The writers concluded, “With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy.” As of mid-February 2011, all but nine states have adopted some form of these.

The standards only address English-language arts and math, according to the Common Core State Standards website, “because these two subjects are skills, upon which students build skill sets in other subject areas. They are also the subjects most frequently assessed for accountability purposes.” The group “may develop common core in additional subject areas.”

Yet, without the legal and ethical foundations on which the United States is based and the free expression these support, no amount of focus on rigor or international benchmarking will be enough to save our democracy. Standards that offer expectations for tomorrow’s citizens, whether headed to college or career, are

vital. Being able to read is not enough without the ability to assess accuracy, completeness and bias of content. Being able to write or speak without knowing legal constraints and ethical guidelines is equally worthless.

Thus, members of the Journalism Education Association’s Scholastic Press Rights Commission offer these additional standards as a way to address what we believe is missing from those currently available. We offer the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Citizenship and the Media. These mirror the format of the Common Core Standards in all but two ways: (1) They are readily applicable to journalism and/or media classes, though they could apply to social studies and English courses as well, and (2) they do not offer grade-specific standards because many such courses have a range of student grade levels included. With no national group currently proposing such a set of standards, we suggest each state adopt its own.

Key Ideas and Details

1. Demonstrate the core values and principles of U.S. democracy as set forth in documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and court decisions.

- Understand First Amendment



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rights and responsibilities when choosing media content.

- Analyze relevant court decisions as precedents.
- Practice these key ideas by collaborating on decisions through a student-led democratic process.

2. Demonstrate understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and the principles of civic involvement, including individual rights and their accompanying responsibilities.

- Produce opinion or editorial pieces that spark conversation and question authorities regarding current issues.
- Report accurately and objectively on the news and issues of the day.
- Search for solutions to problems.
- Provide alternative voices through credible reporting and constructive criticism.

3. Understand the importance and function of the marketplace of ideas in a democracy, including the necessity for diverse views.

- Create an open forum for student expression, including opportunities for outside voices to be heard.
- Strive to ensure all social, economic, ethnic, academic and grade-level groups are represented.
- Use a balance of sources and coverage in presentation of topics.
- Resist prior review and restraint by authorities and present sound reasons why that practice should not be instituted or continued.
- Exercise critical thinking and exchange ideas when making final content decisions.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

4. Demonstrate knowledge of the function, effect and parameters of law as they apply to the specific content areas.

- Exercise rights as afforded by the First Amendment and court cases.
- Recognize the difference between protected and unprotected speech and apply it to media choices.
- Recognize and abide by accurate interpretations of FERPA, FOIA, HIPPA and other relevant legislation.

5. Assess ethical issues and how society might be impacted by choices affecting students and community members.

- Explore, analyze and debate the impact of ethical choices by government officials, including public school administrators, school board members and other figures of authority.
- Provide leadership through sustained coverage of topics related to such ethical choices.
- Localize off-campus issues to show how they impact readers.
- Engage communities through accurate and thorough reporting of such issues.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

6. Apply ethical principles in decision-making, including responsibility, thoroughness, honesty, accuracy, independence, accountability and credibility.

- Recognize the importance of independent thought in reporting.



“essential to the content of the story, and honors confidentiality promised.

- Utilize constructive criticism in editorial commentary.
- Access multiple resources to ensure accurate, thorough and balanced reporting.
- Accept accountability for all content.
- Correct and retract misleading or incorrect information.

7. Develop and refine ethical skills for choosing, gathering and organizing information.

- Investigate credibility of sources and confirm questionable assertions.
- Use anonymous sources only when it is essential to the content of the story and honors confidentiality promised.
- Verify and synthesize when gathering and disseminating information.

Application of Knowledge and

Ideas to Future Concepts

8. Prepare for the legal and ethical implications of technological changes in communication.

- Apply copyright laws to digital media.
- Properly attribute sources when using the work of others.
- Practice transparency in information-gathering by identifying methods of acquisition.
- Refrain from creating a false impression of reality through digital manipulation of photo, video or audio files.
- Avoid conflict of interest in information presented.
- Work to assure accuracy and thoroughness of information.
- Recognize privacy implications when gathering and publishing information.

