



**Plagiarize this:**



**A user-friendly**



**guide to talking about**



**college- and career-ready**

**standards**



**with just about anyone**



This toolkit is designed to help you have more inspired conversations with teachers, parents, and the general public about college- and career-ready standards, like the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards. It will help you to honor the challenges they have experienced to date and build both understanding of and enthusiasm for these higher standards.

*Section 1:* [Pages 4—6](#)

## Introduction

*Section 2:* [Pages 7—14](#)

## Messaging Architecture

*Section 3:* [Pages 15—37](#)

## Sample Content

*Section 4:* [Pages 38—52](#)

## Copy bank

*Section 5:* [Pages 53—56](#)

## Appendix

This work was fueled by 100Kin10 and its partners.

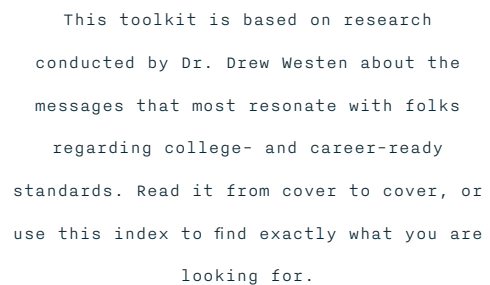
# Toolkit Index

## Sample Content

- Blog Posts (26)
- Email (20, 22)
- Facebook (30)
- Frequently Asked Questions (17)
- Instagram (35)
- Op-eds (28)
- Speeches (24)
- Twitter (36)

## Message Themes

- Outcompete (39)
- Class and Color (41)
- Across State Lines (43)
- Changing Times (44)
- Math Homework (46)
- Transition (47)
- High-Stakes Testing (49)



This toolkit is based on research conducted by Dr. Drew Westen about the messages that most resonate with folks regarding college- and career-ready standards. Read it from cover to cover, or use this index to find exactly what you are looking for.

*Section 1*

# Introduction

# Challenging academic standards have the potential to dramatically accelerate opportunity for our nation's kids by helping them to learn how to think critically and apply their knowledge creatively to solve new problems.

But potential doesn't always materialize. For any set of academic standards to actually accelerate student learning and give kids a real leg up in the game of life, we need to come together to implement them in a way that supports teachers, parents, and students.

Across the country, educators, administrators, and leaders—just like you—are trying to figure out the best way to support teachers, parents, and students through a transition to more challenging academic standards. In addition to the very important programmatic and policy supports needed, we must ensure that we are managing the transition itself with the care required of such a big change. To do that effectively, we need to engage with teachers, parents, and students, listen to their concerns, and explain why this change matters and what it means for their real, lived experience. As we've seen with the transition to the Common Core, some ways of talking about new academic standards close down the conversation, where others can open it up and lead to better understanding and support for teachers and parents—and better results for students.

Over the last year, Dr. Drew Westen—a professor at Emory University and an internationally renowned expert on the intersection of neuroscience, psychology, and communications—conducted rigorous research in order to develop a set of tools to help us have empowering conversations with teachers, principals, and the general public.

Dr. Westen conducted focus groups and dial tests with thousands of teachers, parents, and voters across the country. This research led to the development of specific messages that allow us to meet teachers and parents where they're at, acknowledge the challenges many have experienced in their experience with the Common Core and other new standards, and then illustrate the powerful potential of college- and career-ready standards to provide our kids with more meaningful learning experiences and better chances to grow into contributing citizens with a range of family-supporting and fulfilling career opportunities.

When thoughtfully implemented, conversations about college- and career-ready standards have the potential to create enthusiasm and allay the apprehensions of teachers, parents, and the voting public alike—opening up the opportunity for kids to benefit from the deep learning that high academic standards can make possible.

On December 10th, 2015  
Congress authorized  
the Every Student  
Succeeds Act (ESSA)  
as a way to support  
states in ensuring  
that all students  
graduate from high  
school ready for  
college and careers.

# How do you create messages that inspire teachers, administrators, parents, and the general public to better understand and appreciate the need for challenging academic standards?

First, you need to listen to your audiences and understand their hopes and fears related to high academic standards.

Over the last year Dr. Drew Westen—an internationally renowned expert on the intersection of neuroscience, psychology, and communications—conducted rigorous research to create messages in response to our audience's hopes and legitimate concerns regarding the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards.

Second, infuse all communications with the messages that genuinely reflect that understanding back to them and, having acknowledged the legitimacy of their experiences and concerns, help move the dialogue forward.

This toolkit provides guidance on how to reflect these messages back to your audiences in all of your communications touchpoints so that change can happen and kids can benefit from the deep learning that challenging academic standards make possible.

This project emerged through a Solution Lab—a 100Kin10 convening that begins with deliberation, expertise, and shared learning, and moves to collaborative action: partners co-funding the creation of a concrete product, strategy, approach, or intervention that's beyond the capacity of any single partner to afford or design on their own. They are a method of responding to big challenges with commensurately big, coordinated responses, instead of going it alone.

## *Section 2*

**Messaging**

**Architecture**

## How do you structure messages in a way that opens up the space for productive and meaningful interactions?

Based on years of research conducted by Dr. Drew Westen, successful messages use an architecture that enables you to:

1. Connect around shared values and empathize with lived experiences
2. Acknowledge concerns
3. Prepare for potential misperceptions
4. Connect your audience's values to your solution
5. Establish context and credibility
6. Avoid exacerbating conflict and confusion

To create messages that align to this architecture, you have to do lots of research. Thankfully, Drew did that for us.

To create powerful messages you have to first listen to your audiences. Over the last year, Dr. Drew Westen conducted rigorous research to determine the messages that best reflect our audiences' values, experiences, and fears related to academic standards.


November 2014	Analysis of existing messaging & desk research
January 2015	Six parent and teacher focus groups, Dial test #1
February 2015	Dial test #2
April 2015	Dial test #3

For a more detailed explanation of each of these aspects of the messaging architecture, see pg 54.



# 1. Connect Around Shared Values and Empathize with Lived Experience

According to Drew's research, these are the messages that most resonate with parents, teachers, and the general public. These messages will reassure your audience that you understand where they're coming from and share their values—opening up the space for deeper and more meaningful conversations about all college- and career-ready standards.

<h2>7 shared values</h2> <p>Cut these out to guide your content</p> 	<p>1. <u>American students should be able to compete with students from anywhere in the world.</u></p> <p><i>(primarily for parents)</i></p>	<p>2. <u>All students—regardless of class or color—deserve equal opportunity.</u></p>	<p>3. <u>Kids who move across state lines shouldn't be bored or disadvantaged because schools are not teaching the same thing.</u></p>
	<p>4. <u>Times change. Technology changes. Teaching and learning should, too.</u></p>	<p>5. <u>Math homework is different now, and schools need to support parents in understanding how their kids are learning.</u></p> <p><i>(primarily for teachers)</i></p>	<p>6. <u>The transition to the Common Core was much harder than it needed to be.</u></p> <p><i>(primarily for teachers)</i></p>

See pg 15 for sample content and pg 38 for talking points aligned to these values.

## 2. Acknowledge Concerns

When asked about goals for our nation's kids, parents, teachers, and the general public hold many of the same values that college- and career-ready standards help bring to life.

Yet the perception of these standards has been tarnished by poor implementation of the Common Core—and the fact that challenging academic standards are often conflated with more “high stakes” testing hasn’t helped. It is critical that you understand the hopes, fears, and challenges your audiences associate with academic standards, and acknowledge them in your communications.

Concern	Acknowledgment
"high stakes" testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education should be about helping kids meet high standards, not about learning to take high-stakes standardized tests.</li> <li>• More than ever before, kids need to learn how to use their knowledge to think carefully, critically, and creatively to solve new problems and new dilemmas. That's what we should be teaching, and that's what we should be testing.</li> <li>• Testing ought to get at what kids really understand about something and how well they can apply it, not how well they've learned to take the test.</li> <li>• Education should be about helping our kids learn to think and to master the skills they'll need to live successful, productive, and satisfying lives. Tests should be nothing more than a way to make sure our kids and schools are achieving that goal.</li> </ul>
one-size-fits-all education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• States and districts need to do a better job of keeping principals and teachers informed about how to access resources like websites with model curricula, lesson plans, and examples teachers can use or adapt to their own kids and teaching styles.</li> <li>• The Common Core should allow teachers to integrate their knowledge, experience, and creativity with new resources like model lesson plans on the web or handbooks for each class at each level.</li> <li>• The Common Core shouldn't tie the hands of teachers or assume that all kids learn the same way.</li> </ul>
implementation without supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All transitions are hard but this one was harder than it needed to be, because the Common Core got rolled out in many states before principals were given the information they needed to support teachers and parents about the changes they could expect, and because the resources teachers needed weren't in place yet, like model lesson plans and curricula, and examples for parents to help their kids with homework.</li> </ul>
math homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kids are learning math in ways that sometimes leaves those of us who are parents scratching our heads at their third grade homework.</li> </ul>

### 3. Prepare for Potential Misperceptions

This table highlights potential misperceptions associated with college- and career-ready standards, and offers suggestions for how to respond.

Misperception	Response
America's public schools are #1 in the world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American students should be able to compete with students from anywhere in the world, because when they graduate from high school, technical school, or college, they will be competing with them for jobs in a global economy.</li> <li>Our standards should be higher than countries like Hungary and Slovakia, whose kids' scores on tests are at the same level as ours.</li> </ul>
The Common Core was created by the federal government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic standards should be similar enough across schools that kids in the military or whose parents take a job across the country don't find themselves bored, disadvantaged, or lost because they don't know what's going on.</li> <li>That's why the states worked together to develop and produce college- and career-ready standards for what kids ought to know by the end of each year, based on the best performing schools, states and countries in the world, and with constant feedback from classroom teachers, parents, and employers.</li> </ul>
The old way of teaching is still fine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Now more than ever, kids need to learn to think critically and flexibly, because we live in a rapidly changing world, where we have no idea what challenges and technologies lie ahead.</li> </ul>

## 4. Connect your Audience's Values to Your Solution

Make sure that you focus on the values that are important to your audience when describing your solution.

### Parents value academic standards when they help students...

*...think critically, flexibly, and creatively*

More than ever before, kids need to learn how to use their knowledge to think critically, flexibly, and creatively to solve new problems and new dilemmas.

Education should be about helping our kids learn to think and to master the skills they'll need to live successful, productive, and satisfying lives. In the 21st century, this means acquiring not only a core of knowledge, but an agile and flexible mind.

*...apply knowledge effectively*

Today, the key to success, whether you're a mechanic called in to fix something you've never seen before, or a medical professional dealing with an outbreak of some new disease, is the ability to transfer your skills from one domain to the next.

Education needs to give our kids a core of knowledge and an ability to apply that knowledge in real-world settings.

*...move forward successfully*

The point of setting standards for what children should know at the end of each year is so that we know when kids are ready to move to the next level or are falling behind, so we can help them catch up rather than give up.

### Teachers value academic standards when they...

*...foster problem-solving and critical thinking skills*

Rather than memorizing some new formula, teenagers taking algebra ought to understand why it matters, why it works, and how they might use it in real life someday. Rather than wondering why they're studying Shakespeare, kids taking an English class ought to be able to get to the central point of an essay, story, or play, and to learn to see things from multiple perspectives.

*...make use of their existing knowledge—while teaching them new skills*

Academic standards like the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards give teachers the room to use their existing knowledge and experience in their teaching. It also creates the space for the development of new resources they can integrate into their teaching, like readily-accessible model lesson plans and curricula.

## 5. Establish Context and Credibility

In order to truly connect to your audience, it can't just be about them. To establish a personal connection you need to share about yourself: who you are, why you personally care, and what you are doing to make things happen. Otherwise your content risks coming across as empty rhetoric.

Whether you are writing an email or making a speech, you need to share your goals for communicating and articulate your core content. The guidelines in this document are only useful in as much as they open up the space for you to have meaningful and deep conversations with your audience. Make sure that you are focusing your efforts on your core content, while following the guidelines expressed in the rest of this document.

### Tips for establishing context and credibility:

- Explain who you are, and why you personally care about college- and career-ready standards
- Use a tone that is appropriate for your audience, but also allows your personality to shine
- Employ humor when appropriate—it can often defuse tension
- Share specific case studies that help bring shared values to life
- Select a communications channel that reflects your goals and needs

## 6. Avoid Exacerbating Conflict and Confusion

When connecting with your audience it is important that you set off the right emotional cues based on the existing ideas and images that people already hold in their mind.

Use the words and phrases that activate the parts of your audiences' neural networks that are sympathetic to and supportive of the topic at hand—and avoid those that don't.



Always acknowledge past experiences with Common Core implementation, rather than disagreeing about or belittling them.



If the audience is teachers, honor their experience and expertise and avoid talking about how "best-performing" schools are addressing standards.



If the audience is parents, focus on the experience and potential of their children.



If discussing the potential of students, talk about preparing all kids to have productive futures, no matter if they're headed to college, technical school, or straight to work, no matter their class or color. The point of setting standards for what children should know at the end of each year is so we know when kids are ready to move to the next level or are falling behind, so we can help them catch up rather than give up.



Avoid using acronyms, in-speak, jargon, or very specific numbers or facts, and round numbers to the nearest five. Connect everything you share to what your audience cares about.



Focus on outcomes rather than inputs and processes. Do not dwell on details about the process of developing the standards or your specific implementation solutions. Terms like "internationally benchmarked" are not useful when talking to parents or even teachers.



Frame statements about academic standards with the word "should." Doing so provides a vision for how the standards ought to work without challenging people's lived experiences with implementation.

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## *Section 3*

# Sample Content

The following section illustrates how to use Drew's messaging architecture to create content across a variety of channels. In each piece we have identified where we:

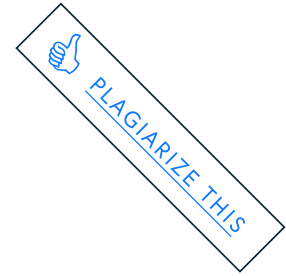
1. Connect around shared values and empathize with lived experiences
2. Acknowledge concerns
3. Prepare for potential misperceptions
4. Connect your audience's values to your solution
5. Establish context and credibility
6. Avoid exacerbating conflict and confusion

Please do "plagiarize" any of these sample pieces—except for those that are meant for mass media publications. In addition, you should use your own content for pieces that are designated as "fill in the blank." Look for these icons to help you navigate:



Clicking on this icon throughout the toolkit will take you to a word version of the content on the page. Use these word documents to easily copy-and-paste text directly into your work.





## Frequently Asked Questions About Academic Standards ?

The goal of these FAQs is to decrease the tension between teachers and parents by using highly rated messages to inspire more informed conversations about college- and career-ready standards. Feel free to mix and match and add your own responses as needed.

Audience: Parents and the General Public

Author: Principal at a local elementary school

FAQs: Everything You Need to Know about Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards

### 1. What are they?

The Common Core are a set of academic standards in math and English language arts that lay out what students should know by the end of each year of school. The Next Generation Science Standards do the same thing for science education.

### 2. Why were they created?

These new academic standards were created because American students should be able to compete with kids from anywhere in the world, because when they graduate from high school, technical school, or college, that's who they'll be competing against in a global economy. Rather than memorizing some new formula, teenagers taking algebra ought to understand why it matters, why it works, and how they might use it in real life someday. Rather than wondering why they're studying Shakespeare, kids taking an English class ought to be able get to the central point of an essay, story, or play, and to learn to see things from multiple perspectives.

The point of setting challenging academic standards for what children should know at the end of each year is so that we know when kids are ready to move to the next level or are falling behind, so we can help them catch up rather than give up. And the point of those standards building on each other from one year to the next is to ensure that a high school diploma means the same thing in every state that chooses to use or adapt those standards to fit local conditions: that this child is ready for the next step in his or her life, whatever that may be.



The answer to this question is based on the "outcompete" (pg 41) message. You should feel free to replace it with "class and color" (pg 42), "across state lines" (pg 43), or "changing times" (pg 45) depending on the framing that makes the most sense in your context.

### 3. I didn't use the Common Core, and I turned out okay. Why do we need to change?

Now more than ever, kids need to learn how to think critically and flexibly, because we live in a rapidly changing world, where today's technology can readily become yesterday's news. For too long, we've seen teachers forced to teach to the test, and students forced to learn what's on it, rather than understanding the concepts behind the calculations, or what lessons we can learn from history, not just a bunch of names and dates. Today, the key to success, whether you're a mechanic called in to fix something you've never seen before, or a medical professional dealing with an outbreak of some new disease, is the ability to transfer your skills from one domain to the next. That's the idea behind academic standards, like the Common Core and the Next Generation Science Standards. Education should be about helping our kids learn to think carefully, critically, and creatively, and acquire the skills they'll need to live successful, productive, and satisfying lives. In the 21st century, that means acquiring not only a core of knowledge but also an agile and flexible mind.

### 4. How do they help my kid? Do they help all kids, or just some?

College- and career-ready standards help kids in two important ways: First, they make sure everyone is stretching and learning, no matter how privileged or challenging their life circumstances; and second, they help kids learn how to use their knowledge to think carefully, critically, and creatively to solve new problems and new dilemmas.

White, black, and Latino kids who are born into poverty shouldn't also be born into schools with low funding and low expectations. And kids from schools that already have what every school ought to have, like computers in classrooms, should be actively engaged at school, not just sitting at their desk taking notes. Academic standards should be similar enough across schools that kids whose parent takes a job across the country, are in the military, or just buy a home in a neighboring district don't find themselves either bored or lost. Rather than just memorizing a new formula, teenagers taking algebra ought to understand why it matters, why it works, and how they might use it in real life someday. Kids taking an English class ought to be able to get to the central point of an essay or story quickly and accurately.

That's the idea behind college- and career-ready standards, like the Common Core and the Next Generation Science Standards, which focus not just on what kids should know by the end of every year but also on their ability to apply that knowledge. Benchmarks like these allow us to know when kids are ready to move on, or to catch them early before they fall further behind each year and eventually give up. Regardless of how humble our home or the color of our skin, all families deserve the opportunity to know whether their kids are on track, so we can guide and enrich them if they are, or to catch the problems early if they're not.



Make sure not to repeat sentences or phrases in more than one FAQ. In this sample, question #2 is based on "outcompete," question #3 is based on "changing world," and question #4 is based on "class and color."

### 5. How does this impact me?

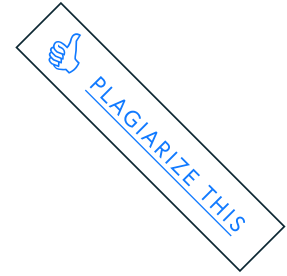
Developing new and better academic standards means that sometimes your kids may have homework that has content that is different than the way you may have learned it. And we know this may be frustrating for you. There's nothing better than seeing your kids succeed, and there's nothing worse than not being able to help them when they're struggling. But times change, technologies change, and most importantly, knowledge changes about how to teach kids to apply what they know to real life situations. We've created lots of materials and workshops to help you understand how math is being taught. Please reach out to your child's teacher with additional questions.

### 6. Does this mean my kid is going to have to sit through even more tests?

Not if we have anything to say about it. At our school, we're excited about the new academic standards for exactly this reason. The standards don't tie the hands of teachers, tell states what to teach, or assume that all kids learn the same way. The goal is simply to set high standards and to help kids develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills with real-world applications. Since we are teaching kids differently, the tests we use to measure how well they're learning should test what they're learning—how to think carefully, critically, and creatively. The whole point of these new standards—which the states generated—was to hold themselves, their schools and teachers, and their families and students accountable, so we can proudly say once again that we have the most educated workforce in the world. As the states put these standards into practice, we are holding the Common Core and other standards just as accountable. We're working with the district to keep testing to a minimum while our state and others work to develop better ways of assessing whether our kids are on track, so we can enrich those that are and support kids who need extra help.

- 

Parents have expressed that the new standards have impacted them the most through math homework, so we focused on that. Notice how we ended this response with a statement about how we are helping parents through this transition.



# Email from a Principal to Families

## re: Math Homework

In this example, a school is sharing a math toolkit with families.

Author: Principal

Audience: Families

SUBJECT: Homework help toolkits for families now available for math



*[Greetings Erwin Elementary Families!*

*We are excited to begin another wonderful school year with you!*

*We want to address an important issue that many of you have brought to us over the last year: your kid’s math homework. We’ve all seen the memes—some of them are pretty clever. Did you see the guy who wrote a check by “counting up?” I admit, that was pretty funny. But what isn’t funny is the struggle behind the humor.]*

I know that there’s nothing better than seeing your kids succeed, and there’s nothing worse than not being able to help them when they’re struggling.

And at the end of a long day, helping your kids with their homework can be a mixed blessing.

There’s nothing like seeing that lightbulb go off in that little head—but sometimes you just wish somebody else could change the bulb, because you’ve got dinner to cook or just want to have a few minutes to yourself.

And it doesn’t help when they’re learning math in some way that leaves those of us who are families scratching our heads at their third-grade homework. I admit, it was hard for me when I first encountered it, too.

Some things will always be the same. Two plus two will always equal four.

But times change, technologies change, and most importantly, knowledge changes about how to teach kids to apply what they know to real life situations, and I certainly want that for my kids—and yours.

↓

This message starts with a shared value and begins to touch on the negative experience that some parents may have recently had with regards to helping their kids with math homework.

This sentence directly expresses empathy for how much harder helping kids with homework has become given the way that the Common Core was initially rolled-out.

This sentence expresses a shared value that we all want for our kids: that teaching methods should adapt to changing times.



*[We are going to do a better job helping you keep up with what your kids are learning. We're starting with a few simple things—like more emails from your kid's teacher with links to step-by-step instructions that explain how your kid is learning something we learned differently, and old-fashioned notes in the lunchbox for families who don't email or text.*

*But we are going to do more than that. Today we are unveiling a series of Homework Help toolkits to arm you, families, with the tools to help your kids better.*

*In this toolkit you will find:*

- *step-by-step lesson guides*
- *video lessons that walk you through a sample problem*
- *frequently asked questions by families*
- *comments provided by other families on what worked for them*
- *and more.*

*Use the toolkit, and please give us feedback on it so we can make it better. And as always, your teachers are here to help answer any questions you might have. We are eager to be better partners in your children's learning and growth moving forward. Together, we will help take all of Erwin Elementary's kids to new heights.*

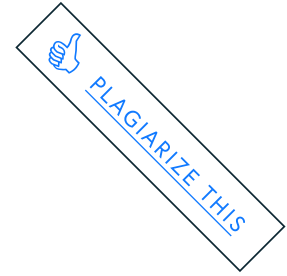
*We are looking forward to this school year and are excited for the future of education.]*

We can't stop the clock—and we wouldn't want to for our kids, who deserve a state-of-the-art education. But we can help you, their families, understand how it ticks.

•

These sentences provide a high-level articulation of solutions while at the same time addressing a major concern (lack of information during implementation).

You'll notice we used Drew's tested messages to wrap the core content—the announcement of a new math toolkit. This is just an example—you can fill in this section with whatever intervention you have or will create. If you don't have a specific resource to announce, you could simply ask your parents to share what their experience has been like, and ask them what supports they want or need.



# Email Announcing a new PD Resource for Teachers

The goal of this piece is to get teachers excited about a new science module, reinforcing the support that is available to them.

Audience: Teachers

Author: Director of Education, SciencePlus Museum

SUBJECT: Just for You: New Teaching Resources

Fellow educators,

As scientists, we know better than anyone that our world is rapidly changing. Now more than ever, kids need to learn how to think deeply, flexibly, and critically, because today's technology can readily become yesterday's news.

Whether they become mechanics called in to fix something they've never seen before, or medical professionals who have to address an outbreak of some new disease, the kids we're teaching today need to learn not only a core of knowledge but also how to transfer their skills from one domain to the next.

*[At SciencePlus Museum, it is our mission to help every teacher keep pace with scientific progress. That's why we are releasing a SciencePlus Museum Extreme Weather module that is aligned to our state's challenging academic standards in science. The module includes:*

- *how-to guides for tracking environmental factors*
- *fieldwork toolkits*
- *sample field missions*
- *classroom curriculum*
- *professional development opportunities*
- *and more.*



This piece starts by connecting around a shared value: the world is changing, and teaching and learning ought to, as well.

You'll notice we used Drew's tested messages to wrap the core content—the announcement of a new teaching module. This is just an example—you can fill in this section with whatever intervention you did or will create. Just don't get too far into the weeds in this initial communication—save that for a workshop or training session.





→ *[Download, modify, customize, share, and please send us feedback on what is working in your classroom.]*

Education should be about helping our kids learn to think and acquire the skills they'll need to live successful, productive, and satisfying lives. In the 21st century, that means acquiring not only a core of knowledge but an agile and flexible mind.

*[That is precisely what our new lesson plan is designed to help teachers to do.*

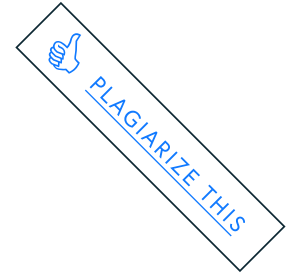
*Find this module and all our education resources at [sciencepluseum.org](http://sciencepluseum.org)*

*All the best,*

*Jane Hernandez]*



This piece provides a great example of how to use the messages outside of purely standards-focused pieces.



# Speech Welcoming Teachers to a PD Session

The goal of this piece is to help teachers—some of whom were particularly unhappy with the way that the Common Core was rolled out—be more open to, and even excited about, challenging academic standards.

Audience: Teachers

Speaker: Principal of a large high school



→ *[Good morning, everyone. For those of you I haven't met yet, I'm John Doe, Chief Academic Officer, and I'm happy to welcome you all to Day 1 of our first Focus Forward Professional Development workshop.*

*Now, I was a teacher for 16 years, and if you're like me, the best thing about PD is the free breakfast. But today, we're hoping to give Springfield teachers something even better than a corn muffin: a promise.*

*I know. I know. It's as corny as the corn muffin. But when it comes to implementing the Common Core? We fell short. I fell short. You didn't fail to implement the new standards, our implementation process failed you.]*

We share some very important values. We all want our kids to think more deeply and to be able to articulate how they got from point A to point B. And we all want them to learn a core of knowledge as well as problem-solving and critical thinking skills they can use to apply that knowledge in new settings.

These values form the basis of college- and career-ready standards like the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards. Unfortunately, to date, they are good values that haven't been implemented all that well yet.

All transitions are hard, but this one was harder than it needed to be, because the Common Core got rolled out in our state before principals were given the information they needed to help teachers as well as families understand the changes they could expect, and because the resources and supports teachers and families needed, weren't yet in place.



This sentence is crucial as it immediately acknowledges that implementation hasn't gone according to plan. This helps the audience see that the speaker empathizes with them and understands where they are coming from.

This set of sentences articulates shared values: helping students think more deeply and critically.



FILL IN  
THE  
BLANK

*[My promise to you is that, as teachers, you will retain the autonomy to use your skills and expertise to help your kids meet college- and career-ready standards, and learn to think more carefully, critically, and creatively.]*

Change doesn't happen overnight, but when I hear stories, like I did just recently about 5th grader *[Marie Martinez]* using reading and analytic skills she learned in *[Ms. Rubio's English class]* to explain how a drought in California raises the price of fruit in Ohio, I think we're getting somewhere.

*So, enjoy breakfast, and thank you again for participating.*

•

This message inoculates against a major concern: that the academic standards tell teachers how to teach, and what curriculum to use.

This piece ends with an inspirational message that provides the listener with a visual representation of shared values.



# Blog Post Announcing a Case Study

This piece tries to share inspirational stories without being patronizing. This isn't about sharing best practices from the best schools—this is about sharing humble and inspirational stories about schools and teachers who overcame the difficulties associated with implementation for the benefit of the entire school community.

Audience: General Public

Speaker: Executive Director at Leaders for Education, a national educational leadership training organization

Title: Implementing Common Core: Ingredients for Success



→ *[At Leaders for Education we believe in teachers. We believe that education should focus more on high-quality teaching and less on high-stakes testing, and educational innovation should build on what teachers know, not replace it. This belief is at the core of all of our leadership training programs.]*

All standards—including the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards—should allow teachers to integrate their existing knowledge and experience into lesson plans and curricula.

Over the last year we profiled leaders across the nation and found something remarkable.

When teachers are supported in using their existing knowledge and expertise, standards can help kids dig deeper, and they learn to think more critically and creatively. And if the standards lay out what kids should know by the end of each year, we can cut back substantially on time wasted preparing for standardized tests, because the only preparation kids need is what they've been learning all year.



→ *[Today, we are releasing a series of case studies that articulate the ways that other principals have supported teachers in integrating their existing knowledge and experience into model lessons and curricula.]*

← This opening sentence created an immediate connection to a shared value: that education should be about high-quality education, rather than high-stakes testing.

← This sentence connects what the audience values with what academic standards provide.

↓

Teachers aren't against change. They just want to know that the change is for the better. And they need to be supported to do what they do best.

*[Share your thoughts in the comments section of this post. Are you a principal or school leader? How have you supported teachers in using their skills and expertise to bring new standards to life?]*

•

This piece ends with an inspirational message that connects back to a core value.

Blog posts imply engagement—this piece ends with a call-to-action aligned to a core value (supporting teachers in using their existing skills and expertise to bring standards to life).



# National Op-Ed About the Importance of High Standards

The goal of this piece is to inspire folks to support challenging academic standards. This piece is focused on highlighting the transformational impact of standards—while directly addressing myths regarding the connection between high standards and high-stakes testing.

Audience: General Public

Author: Math teacher at a local high-school

Headline: Solving for the X Factor in Education

*Jenny has 36 weeks to learn math. 6 of those weeks will be spent taking standardized tests. If it takes 1 week to prep for each test, how far behind the kids in Korea will Jenny be by the time she's 18?*



→ *I have been a math teacher for over 25 years, and I have never seen kids face challenges like they do today.*

*Before we were just competing with other kids in the area. Then with other college applicants.*

*Now it's the entire world competing for the same jobs, the same resources, the same opportunities. It's no longer about Jenny understanding math, it's about thriving in an increasingly worldwide workforce.*

*Is it any wonder that education policy has been wrestled away from educators and thrown into the world of politics? Everyone wants Jenny to have an edge over the global competition.*

*Everyone wants our kids, and our kids only, to have that X factor.*

*We could keep doing what we've been doing, adding test after test after test, trying to find any way to out-test Japan and Korea and Slovenia and the other 23 countries who rank ahead of us in math.*

*Or we could outsmart them.]*



This piece establishes the author's personality while at the same time establishing a shared value: that challenges today are bigger and different than ones in the past.

American students should be able to compete with kids from anywhere in the world, because when they graduate from high school, technical school, or college, that's who they'll be competing against in a global economy.

Rather than memorizing some new formula, teenagers taking algebra ought to understand why it matters, why it works, and how they might use it in real life.

Rather than wondering why they're studying Shakespeare, kids taking an English class ought to be able get to the central point of an essay, story, or play, and to learn to see things from multiple perspectives.

Those are valuable skills in life, both in relationships and at work.

The point of setting standards for what children should know at the end of each year is so that we know when kids are ready to move to the next level or are falling behind, so we can help them catch up rather than give up.

And the point of those standards building on each other from one year to the next is to ensure that a high school diploma means the same thing in every state that chooses to use or adapt those standards to fit local conditions: that this child is ready for the next step in his or her life, whatever that may be.

Now more than ever, kids need to learn to think critically and flexibly, because we live in a rapidly changing world, where we have no idea what challenges and technologies lie ahead.

*[I've seen kids get it. I've seen eyes focus, spines straighten, and hands shoot into the air for the very first time. You can almost see the fireworks going off around them. You hear their English skills used to describe a math problem, solved in a new way, articulated with fresh vocabulary. And you won't just see it on a math test. You'll see it on every test they will ever face.]*

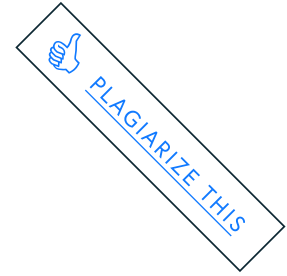
That's why education needs to give our kids a core of knowledge and an ability to apply that knowledge in real-world settings.

*[Now they'll always know how to solve for the X factor. It will be within them.]*

•

This is something that many parents and the general public value: giving students the skills to compete in a global economy.

This sentence is inoculating the audience from arguments about a one-size-fits all education that was mandated by the federal government.



## Social Media Posts about Academic Standards

Social media is a great way to reinforce your ideas over time. Make sure that your campaign has an arc that inspires, addresses fears and concerns, and is uplifting. Not every post will have each element—think about your posts strung together, and how they might be read over time.

### Facebook: Teachers / School-Based Staff

Knowledge and technology are constantly changing, and our classrooms and standards for what kids should know need to reflect that. Don't teach to the test. Teach to the future. #commonsense #commoncore [LINK TO RELEVANT AND TIMELY ARTICLE]

This turn of phrase acknowledges concerns about standardized testing while reinforcing the potential of high academic standards.

When my kids ask if they'll ever use algebra in real life...I finally have an answer. #collegeready #careerready

Dear parents. Common Core math is weird for teachers, too. We also learned it the old way! But we're really seeing it work. Kids who couldn't "get" math are getting it. And, in 15 years of teaching, I'm not too proud to try anything that gets results. That doesn't mean we can't laugh about how hard it's been. Here is a link to the best math homework meltdowns of the week. Enjoy. #itgetsbetter [LINK TO RELEVANT BUZZFEED-TYPE POST AGGREGATING BEST PARENT MELTDOWNS OVER MATH]

The Common Core shouldn't tell any state, school, or teacher how to teach. But I'm digging the new resources: websites with model curricula, lesson plans, and examples we can use to adapt these new standards to our own kids and teaching styles. AND this forum to share ideas, so that when something works, we can share it with teachers all over the country, not just down the hall. [LINK TO THE FORUM]

This is an example  
referencing a  
hypothetical forum

If we're teaching differently, we should be testing differently. So how 'bout eliminating some of the standardized tests we added over the years that waste valuable classroom time? Eh?

Personally, I agree with the intended goals of college- and career-ready standards like the Common Core and the Next Generation Science Standards, they just haven't been implemented all that well yet. Looking forward to changing that this year, and helping kids think critically, flexibly, and creatively.

At the risk of being very unpopular, I gotta say, I'm loving these new science standards. Rather than just memorizing formulas as fast as possible, I'm actually focusing on whether my algebra students understand why it matters, why it works, and how they might use it in real life. #finally #isthisreallife?

The use of hashtags  
here quickly  
reinforces how high  
academic standards  
bring to life the  
vision that many  
teachers have for  
teaching.

Higher standards for all our kids is a good thing. No matter where they come from and no matter how you get them there. So keep complaining. The rest of us will be over here teaching the kids who need it most. #teachdontlecture #getwiththeprogram

Just took a look at the Common Core materials. My school is eliminating 2 duplicative tests. TWO. Removing. Somebody pinch me. [LINK TO RELEVANT AND TIMELY ARTICLE]

### Facebook: Organization

We believe in the mission of the Common Core. When we graduated from high school, the future was going to be flying cars and talking robots. When our seniors graduate in the fall, it's going to be flying robots and talking cars. The future changes, and the kids we're teaching today need to learn not only a core of knowledge, but also how to transfer their skills from one domain to the next. It's up to our teachers to prepare them. So let's give them all the Common Core we can. [LINK TO TEACHER RESOURCES]

No two kids are the same. Any high-quality educational standards needs to be adaptable, so teachers can adjust the way they teach, to help both gifted kids who exceed the standards but also kids with less ability or who come from disadvantaged homes or neighborhoods learn without feeling like they—or our teachers—have failed. #rantover

Kids need to learn how to use their knowledge to think carefully, critically, and creatively to solve new problems and new dilemmas. That's what we should be teaching, and that's what we should be testing. #collegeready #careerready

There's nothing worse than not being able to help your kids when they're struggling with homework... Especially when it's 3rd grade math homework. Never fear! Our school has parents covered: [LINK TO PARENT TOOLKIT]



Next generation scientists, like Ahmed Mohammed, require next generation science teachers who know a clock when they see one. #NGSS #scienceisfearless #istandwithahmed [LINK TO RELEVANT AND TIMELY ARTICLE]

Testing ought to get at what you really understand about something and how well you can apply that understanding, not how well you've learned to take the test.

If politicians can't stand behind something as simple as setting high educational standards their own states just developed, then maybe it's time we develop higher standards for politicians.

We shouldn't be testing whether children can memorize facts. We should be testing whether they can use their knowledge to think carefully, critically, and creatively, which high academic standards set them up to do.

College- and career-ready standards like the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards should be responsive to feedback coming from teachers, parents, principals, and other administrators at the local level, not from politicians who haven't been in a classroom since they were kids.

We have to make sure we leave time for basic skills, and don't displace other essential components of a well-rounded education, like science, PE, music, dance, and art.

The Common Core should allow school districts to eliminate so many of the standardized tests that waste valuable classroom time, because if we're teaching differently, we should be testing differently.

American students should be able to compete with kids from anywhere in the world, because when they graduate from high school, technical school, or college, that's going to be their competition in a global economy.

It's not fair to hold teachers and principals who are willing to work in tough neighborhoods or poor rural schools accountable for where their students are starting out. But it's not fair to any of our kids—white or black, Latino or Asian—to go to schools without the resources to help overcome the obstacles they face. High academic standards set all of our kids up for success.

### Instagram: Teacher

I teach because I want the next generation to lead the world

I teach because I don't want to see another child from my community give up on my watch

I teach because every day is different

I teach because tomorrow's problems will need better leaders than we have today

I teach because there is nothing better than the "Aha!" moment

I teach because I want to hear what they have to say

I teach because our kids are our greatest investment

Photos of kids (with permission from their parents!) are always a great choice. Using stock photos on Instagram is not recommended.

### Instagram: Organization

I support teachers because the future is too important

I support teachers because they make all the difference

I support teachers because they are our economy's secret weapon

I'm for the Common Core because knowledge is better when it's shared

I'm for the Common Core because every kid deserves the best teachers

I'm for the Common Core because testing isn't everything

## Twitter

Education should focus more on high standards and high-quality teaching and less on high-stakes testing #commoncore #commonsense

I don't come to your job and tell you how to ruin the economy #teachdontlecture #commoncore #teacherrant

#CommonCore should mean common input. Bottom up and out. Not top down. #pleaseandthankyou

#tbt to the time when kids used to ask me "why I gotta read Shakespeare." Now they quote it at lunch. #proud #commoncore #criticalthinking #teachingnottesting

That moment when a student quotes english class in my earth science class #proud #commoncore

Thankfully my students are able to compete with kids from anywhere in the world, because when they graduate that's who they'll be competing against #commongoals #commoncore

When your class is 45% military kids who move every 2 years, you are thankful for #commoncore. #ittakesavillage

The best part about #newmath is even the parents have homework :) [LINK TO PARENT RESOURCES]

Where my middle school earth science teachers at? I just found this great NGSS forum [LINK]. Share your #NGSS resources and help teach the teachers, not the test.

Retweet if you believe that no kid deserves lower funding or lower expectations because of where they live #risingstandards #risingtide #commoncore

This tweet powerfully conveys the values behind the "across state lines" message through the use of a personal anecdote.

Hey #newmath teachers, tweet your tips. Good ideas come from good classrooms, and there's a lot we can learn from top-performing schools, states, and countries  
#commonknowledge #commoncore

Not all kids learn the same way. But that doesn't mean we should lower the standards. #problemsolving #commoncore #commonsense

I am for the #commoncore because white, black, and Latino kids who are born into poverty shouldn't also be born into schools with low funding and low expectations. #getwiththeprogram

Fewer tests, more learning?! When it comes to #commoncore, we're all for it.  
#commongoals

Parents, before you send a teacher your #newmath rage email, please watch this:  
[LINK TO VIDEO LESSON EXPLANATION]

When did we start trusting tests more than teachers? Join us in bringing back teaching. Sign our petition to promote the #commoncore in your district. [LINK TO PETITION]

Retweet if you think teachers, not politicians, are the core of education  
#commoncore #commonsense

Supporting teachers means listening to them. Teachers can teach each other a thing or two. #commoncore #betterknowledge

Test what kids really understand and how well they can apply it, not how well they've learned to take the test. #teachingnottesting #commoncore

Education should be about helping kids meet high standards, not about learning to take high-stakes standardized tests. #amen #teachingnottesting #commoncore

Higher standards require empowered teachers. Support your local teachers. They are the core. #commoncore

Note how this tweet associates "Common Core" with "Common Sense" through the use of hashtags.


Note how this post associates "Teaching not Testing" with "Common Core" through the use of hashtags.

# *Section 4*

## **Copy Bank**

# Use Tested Messages to Connect Around Shared Values and Empathize with Lived Experience

The following copy bank includes the actual messages that Drew tested with registered voters. They are broken out into longer narratives and shorter talking points which, when applicable, are organized by audience.

<p><b>7 shared values</b></p> <p>Cut these out to guide your content</p> 	<p>1. American students should be able to compete with students from anywhere in the world.</p> <p><i>(primarily for parents)</i></p>	<p>2. All students—regardless of class or color—deserve equal opportunity.</p>	<p>3. Kids who move across state lines shouldn't be bored or disadvantaged because schools are not teaching the same thing.</p>
<p>4. Times change. Technology changes. Teaching and learning should, too.</p>	<p>5. Math homework is different now, and schools need to support parents in understanding how their kids are learning.</p>	<p>6. The transition to the Common Core was much harder than it needed to be.</p> <p><i>(primarily for teachers)</i></p>	<p>7. Education should focus more on high standards and high-quality teaching and less on high-stakes testing.</p>

**1. Outcompete:  
American  
students should  
be able to  
compete with  
students from  
anywhere in the  
world.**

American students should be able to compete with kids from anywhere in the world, because when they graduate from high school, technical school, or college, that's who they'll be competing against in a global economy.

Rather than memorizing some new formula, teenagers taking algebra ought to understand why it matters, why it works, and how they might use it in real life someday.

Rather than wondering why they're studying Shakespeare, kids taking an English class ought to be able get to the central point of an essay, story, or play, and to learn to see things from multiple perspectives.

Those are valuable skills in life, both in relationships and at work.

The point of setting standards for what children should know at the end of each year is so that we know when kids are ready to move to the next level, or are falling behind so we can help them catch up rather than give up.

And the point of those standards building on each other from one year to the next is to ensure that a high school diploma means the same thing in every state that chooses to use or adapt those standards to fit local conditions: that this child is ready for the next step in his or her life, whatever that may be.

Now more than ever, kids need to learn to think critically and flexibly, because we live in a rapidly changing world, where we have no idea what challenges and technologies lie ahead.

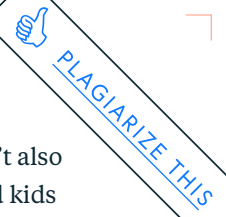
That's why education needs to give our kids a core of knowledge and an ability to apply that knowledge in real-world settings.





Talking Points

- American students should be able to compete with students from anywhere in the world, because when they graduate from high school, technical school, or college, they will be competing with them for jobs in a global economy.
- A high school diploma should mean something; that every child who earns one now has a core foundation of knowledge, and skills that will allow them to compete with kids from anywhere in the world.
- Educational standards in America need to match or exceed the standards for the best-performing countries in the world.
- Americans should lead the world in education again. Our standards should be higher than countries like Hungary and the Slovak Republic, whose kids score on tests at the same level as ours.
- Good ideas come from good classrooms at the local level, but there's a lot we should learn from top-performing schools, states, and countries as well, if we want our kids to be able to compete for jobs in the global economy.
- Educational standards in America need to match or exceed the standards of the best-performing countries in the world, so that we'll ensure we have the best-performing workers in the world.



**2. Class and Color:  
All students—  
regardless of  
class or color—  
deserve equal  
opportunity.**

White, black, and Latino kids who are born into poverty shouldn't also be born into schools with low funding and low expectations. And kids from schools that already have what every school ought to have, like computers in classrooms, should be actively engaged in learning. Rather than just memorizing a new formula, teenagers taking algebra ought to understand why it matters, why it works, and how they might use it in real life someday. Kids taking an English class ought to be able to get to the central point of an essay or story quickly and accurately.

That's the idea behind the new academic standards, which focus not just on what kids should know by the end of every year but also on their ability to apply that knowledge.

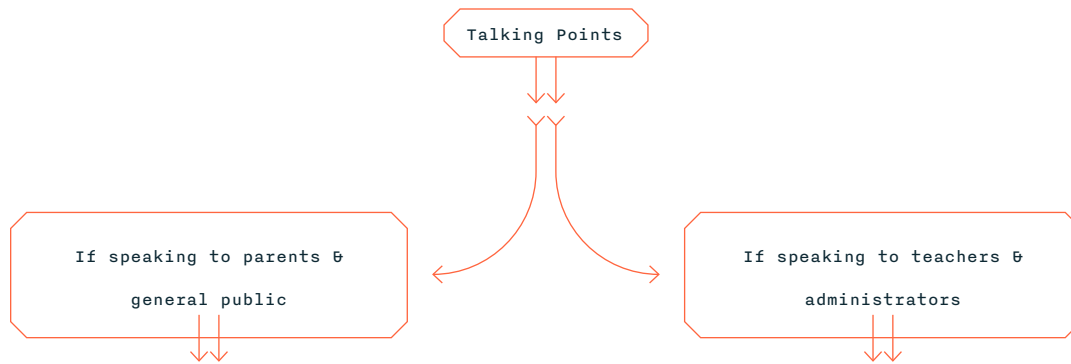
Benchmarks like these allow us to know when kids are ready to move on, or to catch them early before they fall further behind each year and eventually give up.

The goal shouldn't be to blame teachers for kids who come to school hungry, or whose parents aren't involved in their educations.

There's no substitute for parents reading to their kids when they're young and helping them with their homework when they're older.

But regardless of how humble our home or the color of our skin, parents deserve the opportunity to know whether our kids are on track, so we can guide and enrich them if they are, or to catch the problems early if they're not.





- White, black, and Latino kids who are born into poverty shouldn't also be born into schools with low funding and low expectations.
- Poor kids, particularly kids in rural America and children of color who are born into poverty, shouldn't also be born into schools with low funding and low expectations.
- It's not fair to hold teachers and principals who are willing to work in tough neighborhoods or poor rural schools accountable for where their students are starting out. But it's not fair to any of our kids—white or black, Latino or Asian—to go to schools without the resources to help overcome the obstacles they face.
- The Common Core needs to be adaptable, so teachers can adjust the way we teach, to help both gifted kids who exceed the standards but also kids with less ability or who come from disadvantaged homes or neighborhoods learn without feeling like they—or we—have failed.

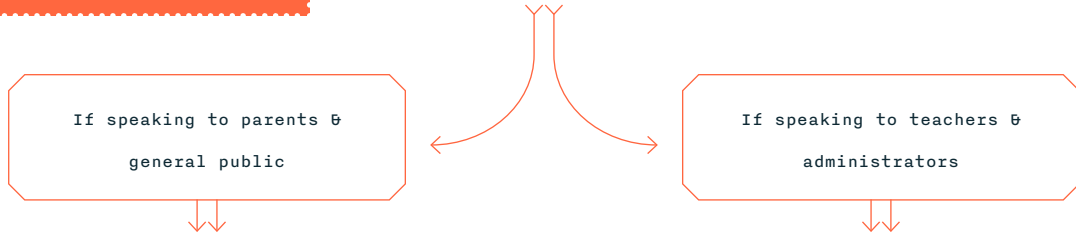
**3. Across State Line:  
Kids who move across state lines shouldn't be bored or disadvantaged because schools are not on the same page.**

Education should be about helping kids meet high standards, not about learning to take high-stakes standardized tests.

The standards should be similar enough across schools that kids whose parents take a job across the country, are in the military, or just buy a home in a neighboring district don't find themselves either bored or lost.

That's why the states worked together—rather than each reinventing the wheel—to produce standards for what kids ought to know by the end of each year. They relied on constant feedback from classroom teachers, so that the standards would be sensible and rigorous and our kids would be able to compete successfully in a global world.

Academic standards [like the Common Core, or the Next Generation Science Standards] don't, and shouldn't, tell any state, school, or teacher how to teach.



But states and districts need to do a better job of keeping principals and teachers informed about how to access new resources like those we're seeing now, like websites with model curricula, lesson plans, and examples teachers can use or adapt to their own kids and teaching styles.

Knowledge is changing so quickly that tomorrow's workers will need to anticipate what's coming next and be able to transfer their skills to meet new challenges.

More than ever before, kids need to learn how to use their knowledge to think carefully, critically, and creatively to solve new problems and new dilemmas.

That's what we should be teaching, and that's what we should be testing.

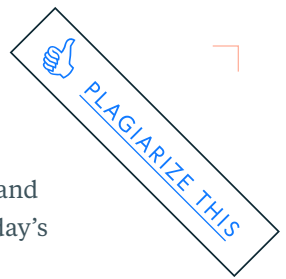
That way, teachers can continue to use their knowledge and expertise and innovate in their classrooms, and when something works, they can share it not just with teachers down the hall but all over the country by sharing it online.

It's time to return to the days when American students got the best education in the world, because when they graduate from high school, technical school, or college, they'll be competing for jobs in a global economy.

We shouldn't be teaching or testing children on their skills for rote memorization, because knowledge is changing so quickly that tomorrow's workers will need to anticipate what's coming next and be able to transfer their skills to meet new challenges.

Kids need to learn how to use their knowledge to think carefully, critically, and creatively to solve new problems and new dilemmas.

And if that's what we're teaching, that's what we ought to be testing, to make sure we're succeeding, and to help kids, schools, and districts that are struggling.



**4. Changing Times: Times change. Technology changes. Teaching and learning should, too.**

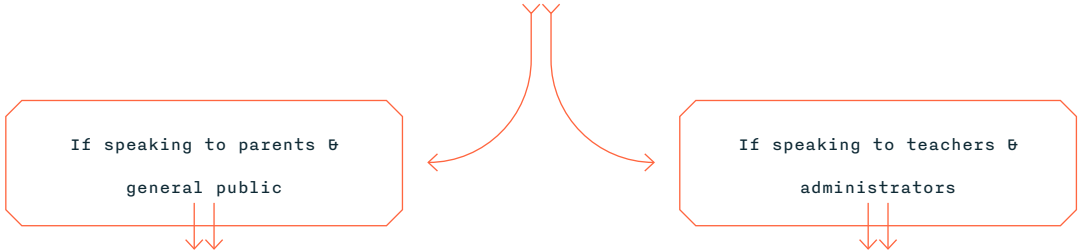
Now more than ever, kids need to learn how to think critically and flexibly, because we live in a rapidly changing world, where today’s technology can readily become yesterday’s news.

For too long, we’ve been forced to teach to the test, rather than teaching the concept behind the calculations, or how to extract the central themes from a novel or essay.

Testing ought to get at what kids really understand about something and how well they can apply it, not how well they’ve learned to take the test.

This is a generation of kids who need to learn to think more deeply, flexibly, and critically.

Today, the key to success whether you’re a mechanic called in to fix something you’ve never seen before, or a medical professional dealing with an outbreak of some new disease, is the ability to transfer your skills from one domain to the next.



That’s why I like the idea of states getting together to develop standards that set the bar high for what our kids should know, but leaving it to teachers, school districts, and individual states to decide how or if they want to meet those standards.

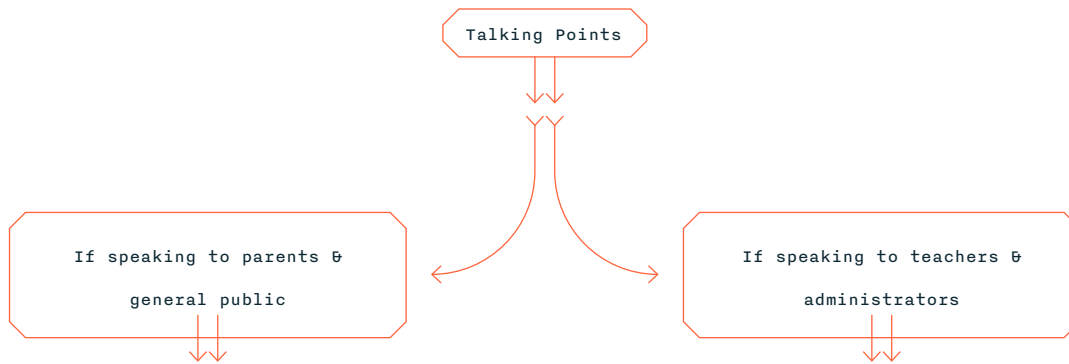
Education should be about helping our kids learn to think and to master the skills they’ll need to live successful, productive, and satisfying lives.

Tests should be nothing more than a way to make sure our kids and schools are achieving that goal.

That’s the idea behind academic standards, like the Common Core and the Next Generation Science Standards, which teachers have made clear are only effective if we have the resources we need, like model curricula, lesson plans, and examples we can adapt and integrate with our own knowledge and expertise, and principals have made clear can only be effective if they have the information they need to lead.

Education should be about helping our kids learn to think and to master the skills they’ll need to live successful, productive, and satisfying lives.

In the 21st century, that means acquiring not only a core of knowledge but an agile and flexible mind.



- Just as every patient deserves a doctor whose knowledge is up-to-date and who knows the latest technology, every child deserves an education that's current and teaches them the technologies—and the ability to learn new ones—they'll need to succeed.
  - Knowledge and technology are constantly changing, and our classrooms and standards for what kids should know and do need to reflect changes that will impact their lives and someday their ability to get a good job.
  - Today, the key to success, whether you're a mechanic called in to fix something you've never seen before, or a medical professional dealing with an outbreak of some new disease, is the ability to transfer your skills from one domain to the next.
  - Times change, technologies change, and knowledge changes about how to teach kids to apply what they know to real-life situations, and we should all want that for our kids.
  - We should focus on how to help students understand the concepts behind the calculations in math, so they can apply what they know to whatever problems they're called upon to solve.
  - Rather than memorizing some new formula, teenagers taking algebra ought to understand why it matters, why it works, and how they might use it in real life someday.
  - Education needs to give our kids a core of knowledge and an ability to apply that knowledge in real-world settings.
  - Kids need to learn how to think critically and flexibly, because we live in a rapidly changing world, where today's technology can become yesterday's news.
- We should focus on how to help students understand the concepts behind the calculations in math, so they can apply what they know to whatever problems they're called upon to solve.
  - Rather than memorizing some new formula, students taking algebra ought to understand why it matters, why it works, and how they might use it in real life.
  - We have to make sure we leave time for basic skills, like cursive writing, and don't displace other essential components of a well-rounded education, like PE, music and dance, or art.
  - The Common Core should allow teachers to integrate our knowledge, experience, and creativity with new resources, like model lesson plans on the web, or a handbook for each class at each level, so we can help our students develop 21st century problem-solving and critical thinking skills.
  - Kids need to learn how to think critically and flexibly, because we live in a rapidly changing world, where today's technology can become yesterday's news.

**5. Math  
Homework:  
Math homework  
is different now,  
and schools  
need to support  
parents in  
understanding  
how their kids  
are learning.**

There's nothing better than seeing your kids succeed, and there's nothing worse than not being able to help them when they're struggling.

At the end of a long day, helping your kids with their homework can be a mixed blessing.

There's nothing like seeing that little light bulb go off in that little head but sometimes you just wish somebody else could change the bulb, because you've got dinner to cook or just want to have a few minutes to yourself.

But it doesn't help when they're learning math in some way that leaves those of us who are parents scratching our heads at their third-grade homework.

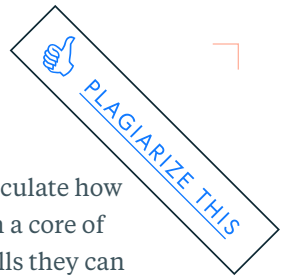
Some things will always be the same. Two plus two will always equal four—or we can hope.

But times change, technologies change, and most importantly, knowledge changes about how to teach kids to apply what they know to real-life situations, and I certainly want that for my kids.

What would help parents is if schools could help them keep up with what their kids are learning.

A few simple things would make all the difference, like an email from the teacher with a link to step-by-step instructions that explain how our kid is learning something we probably learned differently, or the old-fashioned note in the lunch box for parents who don't email or text (who are "sooooo 20th century").

We can't stop the clock and we wouldn't want to for our kids, who deserve a state-of-the-art education—but we can understand how it ticks.



**6. Transition:  
The transition  
to the Common  
Core was  
much harder than  
it needed to be.**

We all want our kids to think more deeply and to be able to articulate how they got from point A to point B. And we all want them to learn a core of knowledge as well as problem-solving and critical thinking skills they can use to apply that knowledge in new settings.

Personally, I think that idea, which is the intended goal of academic standards like the Common Core and the Next Generation Science Standards, is a good idea that hasn't been implemented all that well yet.

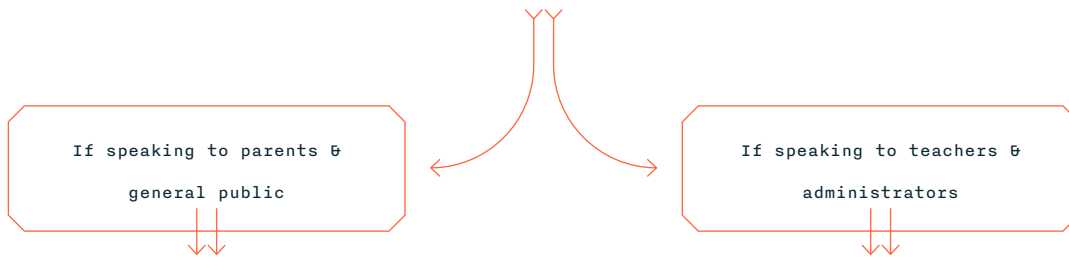
All transitions are hard, but this one was harder than it needed to be, because the Common Core got rolled out in many states before principals were given the information they needed to inform teachers as well as parents about the changes they could expect, and because the resources we needed as teachers weren't yet in place, like model lesson plans and curricula, and examples for parents to help their kids with their homework.

But as long as teachers retain the autonomy to use their skills and expertise to help their kids meet those standards, and principals retain the ability to make decisions that allow them to support good teachers and good teaching, we all want our kids to learn to think more carefully, critically, and creatively.

Change doesn't happen overnight, but when I hear a kid in my economics class use reading and analytic skills she learned in English classes explain how a drought in California raises the price of fruit in Ohio, I think we're getting somewhere.







- If politicians can't stand behind something as simple as setting high educational standards their own states just developed, then maybe it's time we develop higher standards for politicians.
- The Common Core and other academic standards shouldn't get tangled up in politics or policies in Washington—they should be responsive to the needs and feedback coming from teachers and schools, and parents and kids at the local level, who teach, participate in their kids' education, and learn in different ways.
- Great teachers, principals, and parents are the common core of a great education, because the best understanding of what works comes from the classroom and the home.
- The Common Core and other academic standards like the Next Generation Science Standards should be responsive to feedback coming from teachers and parents, principals and other administrators at the local level, not from politicians who haven't been in a classroom since they were kids.

**7. Testing:  
Education should  
focus more on  
high  
standards and  
high-quality  
teaching and  
less on high-  
stakes testing.**

Narrative For Parents: 1/3



The Common Core shouldn't tie the hands of teachers, tell states what to teach, or assume that all kids learn the same way. Its goal should simply be to set high standards and to help kids develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills with real-world applications. It shouldn't go along with traditional tests that measure how well children can memorize facts, or take up more than a day or two of school. If we're going to teach kids differently, the tests we use to measure how well they're learning should test what they're learning—how to think carefully, critically, and creatively—and shouldn't look like the ones we all took in school.

And the Common Core and other academic standards like the Next Generation Science Standards shouldn't get tangled up in politics or policies in Washington. They should be responsive to the needs and feedback coming from teachers and schools, and parents and kids at the

local level, who teach, participate in their kids' education, and learn in different ways. The whole point of these academic standards, which the states generated themselves, was to hold themselves, their schools and teachers, and their parents and students, accountable, so we proudly say once again that we have the most educated workforce in the world. As the states put these standards into practice, we should hold the Common Core and other standards just as accountable.

Narrative for Teachers: 2/3



Testing is a big issue! Here  
are two different ways to  
talk about it with teachers

Education should focus more on high-quality teaching and less on high-stakes testing, and educational innovation should build on what teachers know, not replace it.

Academic standards like the Common Core should allow us to use our existing knowledge and experience and to encourage the development of new resources so we can integrate into our teaching, like model lesson plans or curricula we can readily access.

Academic standards should help our kids dig deeper, so they can explain a concept or how they got to an answer and develop their potential to think more critically and creatively.

And if the standards lay out what kids should know by the end of each year, that should cut back substantially on time wasted preparing for standardized tests, because the only preparation kids should need is what they've been learning all year.

Teachers aren't against change. We just want to know that any change is for the better.

Narrative for Teachers: 3/3

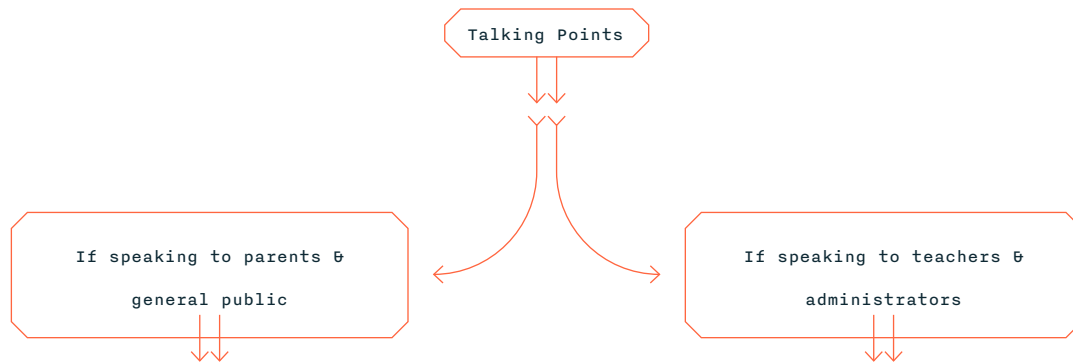


The Common Core shouldn't tie the hands of teachers or assume that all kids learn the same way. It should simply set high standards and help us help our kids develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills with real-world applications. It should also allow school districts to eliminate so many of the standardized tests that waste valuable classroom time, because if we're teaching differently, we ought to be testing differently. Rather than focusing so much on rote memorization, standardized tests should also be measuring kids' capacity to think critically and flexibly. And the Common Core and other academic standards like the Next Generation Science Standards should not be influenced by politics. They should be responsive to the needs and feedback coming from teachers, principals, and parents, who understand that teachers teach, and children learn, in different ways.

Any academic standard should also reflect best practices of schools, states, and countries around the world, because our kids deserve the best education we can give them.

As most states have now begun or put these standards into practice, nothing is more essential than that states and districts take more time to make sure that teachers and principals know how to find the resources that are now available—like sample lesson plans and model curricula for teachers, and websites for parents that describe what their kids are supposed to know by the end of each grade, and examples so they can help them with their homework. Perhaps most importantly, academic standards should add to the knowledge, expertise, and creativity of teachers, not subtract from it.





- For too long, we've seen teachers forced to teach to the test, and students forced to learn what's on it, rather than understanding the concepts behind the calculations, and the lessons we can learn from history, not just a bunch of names and dates.
- Testing ought to get at what you really understand about something and how well you can apply it, not how well you learned to take the test.
- It's time to stop making teachers "teach to the test," and instead use tests to tell us whether students are learning to think critically and problem-solve, so that they'll have the knowledge and skills they need to live successful, productive, and satisfying lives.
- We shouldn't be testing whether children can memorize facts. We should be testing whether they can use their knowledge to think carefully, critically, and creatively.
- Education should be about helping our kids learn to think and to master the skills they'll need to live successful, productive, and satisfying lives. Tests should be nothing more than a way to be sure that all of us—teachers and students, parents and schools—are succeeding at that.
- When I was a kid, we had tests, but the point was to see how well we'd mastered the material.
- The Common Core shouldn't tie the hands of teachers, tell states what to teach, or assume that all kids learn the same way. Its goal should simply be to set high standards and focus on problem-solving and critical thinking with real-world applications. Testing ought to get at what you really understand and how well you can apply it, not how well you've learned to take the test.
- The point of setting standards for what children should know at the end of each year is so we know when kids are ready to move to the next level, or are falling behind so we can help them catch up rather than give up.
- Education should focus more on high standards and high-quality teaching and less on high-stakes testing.
- The Common Core should allow school districts to eliminate so many of the standardized tests that waste valuable classroom time, because if we're teaching differently, we should be testing differently.
- Standardized testing ought to get at what kids really understand and how well they can apply it, not how well they've mastered test-taking skills.
- States should use the new tests designed to measure what we're now teaching as indicators of where we're succeeding and where we need to put additional resources, not as sledgehammers against teachers.
- I'd love to see states and school districts replace tests they've kept adding over the years with new assessment tools that assess what we're actually teaching and kids really ought to know.
- Any academic standard like the Next Generation Science Standards or the Common Core should make use of the knowledge and experience teachers already have, improve on any standards we've already been using and streamline testing to focus on what we're actually trying to teach, not waste valuable classroom time on endless testing.
- I'm all for making sure students are learning what's important but if testing takes more than two days a year, it isn't doing that—it's just wasting valuable classroom time.

*Section 5*

**Appendix**

# Messaging Architecture **Deep Dive**

## 1. Connect Around Shared Values and Lived Experience

When communicating about an especially contentious topic, it is important to immediately establish an emotional connection with your audience. To do that, express the values you share, and let your audience know that you understand where they are coming from, and that you share common values.

## 2. Acknowledge Concerns

In addition to connecting around shared values, it is important that you directly address your audience's concerns and apprehensions. In doing so, you are expressing empathy and establishing the emotional connection needed to build the trust that is required for deeper and more meaningful conversations.

In most cases, you can establish this type of emotional connection rather quickly. For highly-charged topics, you may need to spend more time acknowledging concerns. This is especially true when your audience has been materially affected by the issue in some way (such as parents who have struggled with helping their kids with their math homework).

## 3. Prepare for Potential Misperceptions

Preparing for potential misperceptions requires determining what those misperceptions might be, and developing research-based counterarguments that acknowledge the fears driving the misperceptions. It is not about countering arguments - it is about exposing them to the message before they have a chance to hear the misperception. In that way you “inoculate” them against potential misperceptions that they may hear at some point.

To be clear, this is not about shielding your audience from alternative perspectives—it is about equipping them with information that will help them have powerful, meaningful, and productive conversations with folks who may hold misperceptions associated with academic standards.

#### 4. Connect Your Audience's Values to Your Solution

Once you have established an emotional connection with your audience, and prepared them for potential misperceptions, you need to lay out the rationale for the ideas you are trying to move forward. To do so, you need to connect the description of your solution to your audience's values and lived experiences. In this way, you are helping them understand how your proposal will bring their values to life.

It is important when sharing your solution to always stay at that level of values, and not get in the weeds with details about how you are going to make it work. People quickly lose interest and will tune out of the conversation. Keep it high-level, and your audience will stick with you.

#### 5. Establish Context and Credibility

In order to truly connect to your audience, it can't just be about them. To establish a personal connection you need to share about yourself: who you are, why you personally care, and what you are doing to make things happen. Otherwise your content risks coming across as empty rhetoric.

#### 6. Avoid Conflict and Confusion

Another important consideration when connecting with your audience is ensuring that you set off the right emotional cues based on the existing ideas and images that people already hold in their minds. For example, think about the imagery that comes to mind when you hear the term "poor kids." Now think about what comes to mind when you hear the term "kids who have felt the pangs of hunger." Pretty different, right? When connecting with your audience, it is important that you use the words and phrases that activate the parts of their neural networks that are sympathetic to and supportive of the topic at hand.

For example, many teachers immediately bristle at the term "accountability" because of all of the political baggage that comes along with it. Simply avoiding this word and using another in its place can prevent teachers from shutting down when you are in conversation with them.

# This toolkit was lovingly created by a dedicated group of changemakers

## About 100Kin10

100Kin10 unites 200+ of the nation’s top academic institutions, nonprofits, foundations, companies, and government agencies to train and retain 100,000 excellent STEM teachers by 2021. 100Kin10 offers partners the vision and resources to amplify their work, accelerate their collective efforts, and educate the next generation of innovators and problem solvers. For more information, go to <http://100Kin10.org> or email [info@100Kin10.org](mailto:info@100Kin10.org).

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## About BYO projects

Founded by Yasmin Fodil, BYO is a collective of strategists, designers, technologists, and copywriters who come together to create services, experiences, and materials that solve public problems. This work results in the creation of engagement strategies, training sessions, workshops, informational materials, toolkits, and more. Learn more at [byoprojects.com](http://byoprojects.com).

## About the co-investing partners

Over 20 100Kin10 partners and allies jointly invested to bring this toolkit to life, including:

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