

## **Federally Funded Study: Common Core Sunk U.S. Kids' Test Scores**

*In several cases student achievement reversed under Common Core, and in every subject studied students would have been better off if states had not adopted Common Core.*

By [Joy Pullmann](#) The Federalist MAY 30, 2019

Researchers the Obama administration funded to assist Common Core's rollout [recently found](#), to their surprise, that under Common Core U.S. student achievement has sunk ([h/t Lance Izumi](#)).

“Contrary to our expectation, we found that [Common Core] had significant negative effects on 4th graders' reading achievement during the 7 years after the adoption of the new standards, and had a significant negative effect on 8th graders' math achievement 7 years after adoption based on analyses of NAEP composite scores,” the Center on Standards, Alignment, Instruction and Learning (C-SAIL) preliminary study said. “The size of these negative effects, however, was generally small.”

The study found not only lower student achievement since Common Core, but also performed data analysis suggesting students would have done better if Common Core had never existed. The achievement declines also grew worse over time, study [coauthor Mengli Song told Chalkbeat](#), an education news website: “That's a little troubling.”

Common Core is 640 pages of K-12 curriculum and testing mandates that nearly every state switched to between 2010 and 2013 under heavy federal pressure. President Obama, his education secretary Arne Duncan, and private financier Bill Gates promised the nation that overhauling what students learn and how it is measured would lead to student achievement *gains*.

It's not that teachers didn't work really hard to make Common Core succeed, either. C-SAIL's report says “More than three quarters (76%) of teachers surveyed, for example, reported having changed at least half of their classroom

instruction as a result of the CCSS, and about four out of five mathematics teachers (82%) and three out of four English teachers (72%) reported having changed more than half of their instructional materials in response to the CCSS.” Between two-thirds and three-quarters of teachers also said in surveys that they thought Common Core benefited their students, so while their perception may not match reality it doesn’t appear negative teacher attitudes obstructed Common Core either.

Teachers and schools made massive, good-faith efforts to comply with Common Core. The problem is that those changes didn’t help kids.

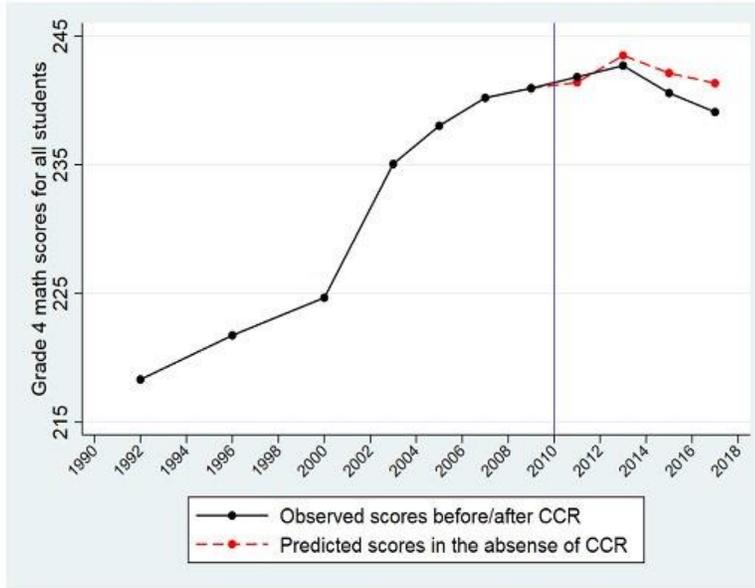
### If CC Never Happened, Kids Would Be Better Off

Last month, C-SAIL [researchers presented](#) their preliminary findings in this longitudinal study of student results from 2010 to 2017 (the latest data available). The presentation included the graphs below.

The red dotted lines indicate how the researchers estimate students would have performed if the Obama administration had not imposed Common Core on the nation in 2010. Notice that in several cases achievement *reversed* under Common Core, and in every subject studied students would have been better off if states had not adopted Common Core. The effects are small, but in several cases statistically significant, and so far we only have about four years of results for after Common Core fully moved into schools.

# Effects of CCR Standards on Grade 4 Math

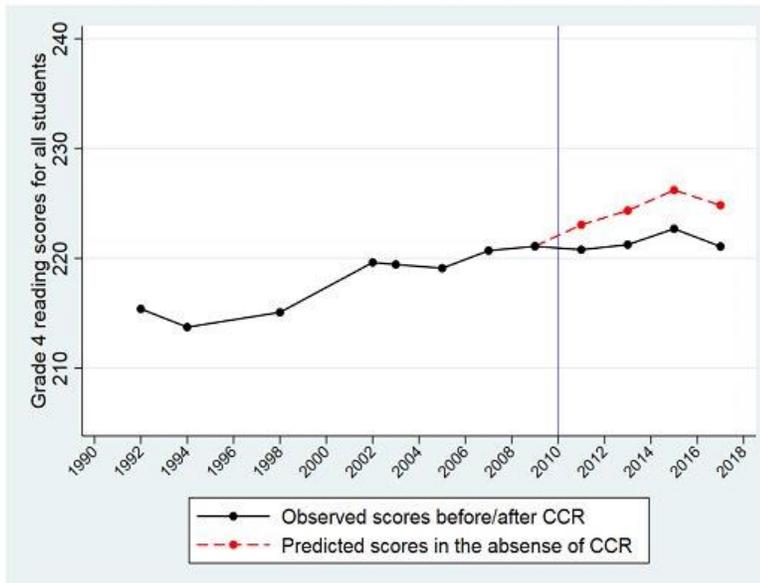
NAEP Scores for T States Identified Based on *Prior Rigor Index*



ES: 1-year effect = 0.01; 3-year effect = -0.03; 5-year effect = -0.05; 7-year effect = -0.07

# Effects of CCR Standards on Grade 4 Reading

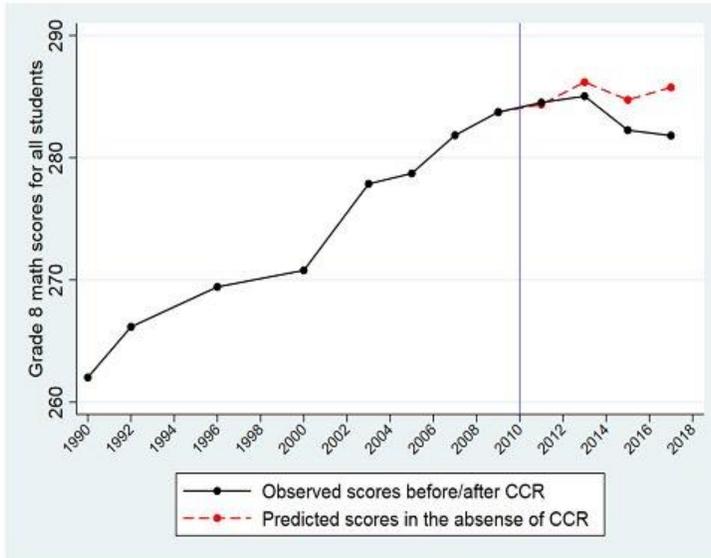
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ES: 1-year effect = -0.06\* (p < .05); 3-year effect = -0.08\* (p < .05);  
5-year effect = -0.10<sup>†</sup> (p < .10); 7-year effect = -0.10\* (p < .05)

# Effects of CCR Standards on Grade 8 Math

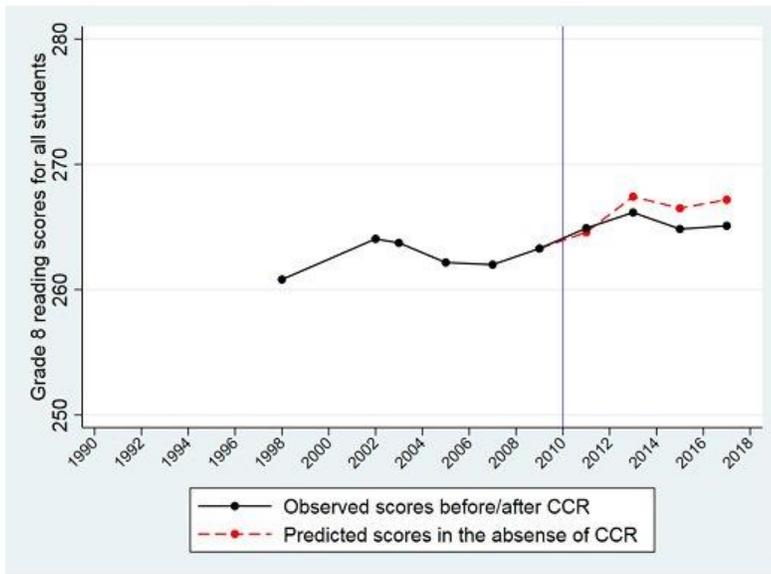
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# Effects of CCR Standards on Grade 8 Reading

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Every state except four adopted Common Core between 2009 and 2013, and even those four shifted their curriculum and tests closer to Common Core. So to

compare results, the researchers grouped those whose curriculum mandates were more similar to Common Core before it existed, then compared their results post-Common Core to those of states who used curriculum mandates less like Common Core beforehand. Since there is no real control group available of non-Common Core states, then, this is about the best information we're likely able to get.

These preliminary results are from one of four studies the C-SAIL [received \\$10 million from taxpayers](#) to conduct. The federal grant ends next year, which means researchers are nearing their final results. C-SAIL's [staff and advisory board](#) includes several well-known Common Core advocates.

### We Could Have Predicted This (and Some Did)

C-SAIL's is not the only study to find that Common Core has likely caused American students to learn less. The [Pioneer Institute published dozens of studies](#) by highly qualified authors arguing that was likely, all before Common Core had fully moved into place. They were ignored and even derided because they were providing independent research contradicting the Washington DC and [long-standing American bipartisan groupthink](#) that has driven U.S. education into the ground in the past half-century.

But even establishment researchers who cared more about data than narratives — the precious few — were skeptical early on. Notably, the left-leaning Brookings Institute published several relatively early analyses [suggesting, then demonstrating](#), that Common Core was at best not going to benefit American kids. There were earlier warning signs, too, of U.S. student achievement drops after Common Core, and on a variety of tests. Former U.S. Department of Education official Ze'ev Wurman, for example, [wrote in 2015](#):

*The recent 2015 NAEP [Nation's Report Card national] results showed a first ever significant decline of 2-3 points – about a quarter of a grade-level worth – in mathematics at both grades 4 and 8, and in grade 4 reading. [The decline was broad and deep in most states](#) with just a handful of exceptions, and even formerly excellent*

states like Massachusetts were not immune. But NAEP scores are only the most recent sign of decline.

The ACT scores have been stagnant in the last couple of years, but they show a slight decline since 2009.

The SAT scores stayed level since 2007, until they dropped this year on both verbal and math.

AP course taking in AB and BC calculus has been rising steadily over the years, yet the number of students who scored a passing grade this year – 3 and above – has plateaued in BC calculus and actually declined in AB calculus for many demographic groups.

Further, Common Core eliminated teaching of Algebra in many middle schools in states where they were adopted. Supporters argued that they will offer acceleration to Common Core's slowed-down progression, where needed. Yet recent NAEP data shows that nationally, teaching Algebra in grade 8 dropped from 33 percent to 29 percent, the first drop in ten years.

In 2017, I wrote about U.S. students' performance sliding post-Common Core on a well-known international test:

International test results released this week show U.S. students losing ground on yet another measure in the Common Core era, reading test results for fourth graders. On the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, a comparison given every five years in 58 countries, U.S. fourth graders dropped from 556 in 2011 to 549 in 2016, out of 1,000 possible points.

This caused the United States to drop from fifth on the international comparison to 13th, even though the decline was within the margin of error (i.e., not statistically significant). The decline was even more pronounced among the lowest-performing American students. On this test, U.S. students have made no statistically significant improvement since 2001.

In 2018, I wrote about SAT and ACT college entrance exam results post-Common Core:

*ACT scores released earlier this month show that students' math achievement is [at a 20-year low](#). The latest English ACT scores are slightly down since 2007, and students' readiness for college-level English was at its lowest level since ACT's creators began measuring that item, in 2002. Students' preparedness for college-level math is at its lowest point since 2004.*

*SAT scores also dropped post-Common Core until it fully implemented a new version tailored for Common Core. How convenient. Even after the test was overhauled to match Common Core, average test scores [increased by 0.7 percent](#) in the most recent results. It represents [almost no difference](#) to pre-Common Core results, and the public can't know exactly how the scores were recentered and altered, either.*

Research shows that student achievement is directly linked with state and national economic health. Students' performance on math tests "is a strong predictor of the state's growth rate in GDP" per person, finds [a 2016 Harvard University study](#). It found that improving U.S. students' math achievement to just the "basic" level on the Nation's Report Card could boost the U.S. economy by trillions of dollars long term. So Common Core may have cost the U.S. economy by depressing American kids' math skills below what they would have been if states had refused to adopt Common Core.

### U.S. Education: Elevating Incompetence [Since 1965](#)

C-SAIL Co-director Morgan Polikoff, a widely media-quoted Common Core proponent, told Chalkbeat about his center's results that "the challenges in studying whether the Common Core worked are steep. 'I think that this question is more or less impossible to answer,' he said." Back in 2015, Common Core math coauthor Jason Zimba [said something similar](#) about his own work.

Bill Gates also [admitted the same thing](#) years after he used his mega billions and elevated social position to convince and fund the Obama administration to muscle Common Core into schools. [Quote](#): "It would be great if our education stuff worked, but that we won't know for probably a decade." Obama is still considered a "scandal-less" president despite his

administration's linchpin efforts in forcing this scam on American families, teachers, and kids.

Look, Common Core [cost taxpayers billions of dollars](#), teachers and students millions of hours, and possibly the U.S. economy and plenty of student achievement. People who say "We have no idea whether something that cost billions of dollars and hours of teacher and student time will work" should lose all credibility and never be allowed near any position of power over other people's children.

Instead, they fail upward. Dozens of people who created and pushed Common Core are [laughing all the way to the bank](#), having cashed in their positions on the project for massive resumes and salaries. Dozens, if not hundreds, of vocal Common Core aiders and abettors hold positions of power throughout state education agencies, the U.S. Department of Education, education media and foundations, and teachers' colleges nationwide. Is anyone ever going to [drain this swamp](#)?

*Joy Pullmann is executive editor of The Federalist, mother of five children, and author of "[The Education Invasion: How Common Core Fights Parents for Control of American Kids](#)," from Encounter Books. Her [latest ebook](#) is a list of more than 200 recommended classic books for children ages 3-7 and their parents. Find her on Twitter [@JoyPullmann](#).*