

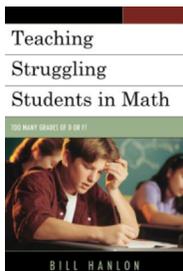
# Nevada Public Education News



## *Common Core Adoption – Learning to Read in Conflict*

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There is research being ignored by the “defenders” of the common core. An example of that is research by neuropsychologists and neuroscientists who suggest a link between handwriting and broader educational development runs deep. Yet, the common core standards only emphasize legible handwriting in kindergarten and first grade, then emphasizes keyboarding. This is in conflict with the state’s reading goals.



**The research suggests that students not only learn to read more quickly when they first learn to write by hand, but they also remain better able to generate ideas, improve critical thinking, and retain information.** In other words, it’s not just *what* we write that matters — but *how*.

The research also suggests when we commit memory to writing, memory and learning ability also seem to benefit. If we believe this research and we adopt the common core without modification, then, in fact, we are harming the students we say we want to help. We must modify the core to keep these conflicts to a minimum.

Some of our state leaders believe if they don’t acknowledge a problem, then it must not exist. We say we want students to “read”, but push our students to view 4 or 5 minute youtube type videos. This brief “watch” allows a student to do something quickly, without reading, which also doesn’t stay with them long, and the students do not get the big idea – an understanding “why” something is done a certain way – but they solved the immediate problem at the expense of understanding, long-term memory, and seeing how things are related to each other. Not to mention at the expense of using reading to learn.

As an early supporter of the common core standards, and a person who still supports them, I don’t want to defend a document that has elements that are in conflict with students’ best interests or our own state’s reading proficiency objective.

I support the common core, especially in math, because A) of the emphasis it places in understanding concepts and skills. That’s something we have emphasized locally for a long time, but since tests didn’t measure that, it was not prioritized in the classroom. B) it emphasizes

linkages in mathematics. That is, things like the Pythagorean Theorem, Distance Formula, Equation of a Circle and trig identity should all be recognized as the same formula, just written differently because they are being used in different context. These linkages increase student understanding and comfort levels and also has the added benefit of allowing teachers to review, reinforce or address deficiencies as they are introducing new concepts or skills. It makes a difference when students can see the “skip” counting they learned in primary grades is defined as an arithmetic progression later on, they have a greater tendency to “get it”. C) it places emphasis on problem solving; all these things are great.

But, there are also conflicts that do need to be resolved within the common core. In math, as an example, we have to really determine if we are more interested in students learning 4 or 5 different alternative algorithms for subtracting or are we more interested that they can subtract. Too many teachers are conflicted by the common core because state’s are not investing in professional development or providing teachers opportunity time to reflect on what they are expected to do and their practices. These alternative algorithms also have a tendency to remove parents’ ability to help their own children at home. With proper training, teachers could explain the benefit of these and help students use them when most appropriate; I typically use them to compute mentally as opposed to just learning another algorithm.

Getting back to how the common core negatively impacts students ability to learn to read more quickly, it demonstrates why students face so many obstacles in learning; adults playing politics rather than addressing the educational needs of students.

There are other standards-based issues in math with the common core. As a supporter of the common core, I believe these issues should be addressed. The core standards should be modified so the nation has high standards that benefit all students. One size fits all models just don’t succeed.