Strengthening business through
effective investments in children and youth

ReadyNation

KEEPING MICHIGAN COMPETITIVE

The Michigan Common Core State Standards for English and Mathematics and Aligned Assessments are Crucial to Our State's Economic Success

Michigan is currently experiencing a shortage of workers with the skills businesses need. The jobs of the future increasingly require some education past high school; twice as many job openings in Michigan are for workers with at least some college education compared to those with a high school education or less. Altogether **by 2020, 70 percent of Michigan jobs will require some postsecondary education, yet only 37 percent of Michigan's working age population currently has this level of education.**[1] With nearly a quarter of youth in Michigan not graduating from high school on time and many more not going on to college, our state could be faced with a pressing skills gap in the years to come.[2]



The Michigan CCSS reflect businesses' needs for highly skilled workers who are able to think critically, solve complex problems and communicate effectively.

The deficiencies go beyond those related to specific occupations. **Michigan business leaders are also concerned about the lack of "soft skills" – communication, collaboration and critical thinking – required for virtually any occupation in today's global marketplace.** According to a survey by the American Management Association, three out of four executives believe that soft skills will become even more important in the next three to five years because of global competition and the pace of change in the business environment.[3]

The Michigan Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a rigorous set of educational standards for English language arts and mathematics for K-12 education that reflect businesses' needs for a highly skilled workforce that has mastered core academic content, and is able to think critically, solve complex problems and communicate effectively (i.e. deeper learning skills). **The CCSS establish the content and skills that children must learn at each grade level, but they do *not* tell teachers how to teach, nor do they specify a curriculum**; these important decisions remain under teacher, local or state control. The Michigan CCSS for English and mathematics were developed by teachers, researchers and other experts and adopted by the State Board of Education in 2010 and implemented starting in the 2011-2012 school year.[4] They are based on the national Common Core State Standards, which were developed and led by the nation's governors and chief state school officers, and have been voluntarily adopted by 43 states.[5]

However, to have an impact on student outcomes, there must also be accountability. Standards must be accompanied by an assessment based on the standards, as well as a system for reporting results. This will allow teachers to determine students' understanding of concepts and then adjust teaching to increase understanding. The data from these assessments will also help educators identify and share educational practices that work with other schools and districts. **Without aligned assessments, there will remain considerable confusion about how Michigan students are performing.** For example, in 2009, 77 percent of fourth graders in Michigan scored proficient or higher on the state test, while only 30 percent scored that high on the Nation's Report Card.[6] Michigan started piloting the assessments aligned to the standards in the spring of 2013, and they will be implemented statewide in the spring of 2016.[7]

The Michigan CCSS for English and mathematics and the aligned assessments will not magically turn things around overnight. But **having high standards and accountability through aligned assessments is the first step towards developing the skilled workforce our businesses need today and into the future.**

Endnotes

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ReadyNation is a membership organization of business leaders that operates under the umbrella of the non-profit Council For A Strong America.

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