

Study supports move toward common math standards

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A new study analyzing the previous math standards of each state provides strong support for adoption of common standards, which U.S. students desperately need to keep pace with their counterparts around the globe, a Michigan State University scholar argues.

Forty-six states are implementing the Common Core [math](#) and reading standards, which nonetheless have come under fire recently by some researchers and would-be politicians.

But William Schmidt, MSU Distinguished Professor of statistics and education, said the Common Core is a world-class set of standards. In his study, published in the journal *Educational Researcher*, Schmidt found that states whose previous standards were most similar to the Common Core performed better on a national math test in 2009.

"We can't yet prove anything about the Common Core standards because they're just now being implemented, but if we look back we find that those states that were closest to the Common Core on average did better on the 2009 NAEP test (National Assessment of Educational Progress)," Schmidt said.

"This is another strong piece of evidence that we are moving in the right direction."

The study also found that some states previously had Common Core-worthy criteria – such as requiring eighth-graders to understand and

apply the Pythagorean Theorem – but essentially let the students and teachers off the hook by having low proficiency standards. Michigan, for example, had high standards but low proficiency guidelines – students could pass the standard math test by scoring less than 40 percent.

Common Core addresses that deficiency with a set of standard proficiency guidelines slated to go into effect with the 2014-15 school year, Schmidt said.

Schmidt's research refutes a Brookings Institute study that suggested Common Core will have no effect on student performance. But that study, Schmidt said, relied on opinion-based ratings whereas his is a statistical analysis relying on coded-based data.

Some [political candidates](#) in Michigan and elsewhere around the nation have criticized the Common Core as federal meddling into state education matters – despite the fact that the Common Core was developed by a coalition of state leaders including the governors.

Beyond the ideological attacks, Schmidt said the Common Core represents a great opportunity for U.S. students to become competitive in the global economy.

"This is probably the best chance we've had to improve America's mathematics education in 50 years if not more," Schmidt said. "We finally have standards that are comparable to what the top-achieving countries have. It would be foolish for Michigan or any other state to pull back now."

Provided by Michigan State University

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