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## **Two-Thirds of Teachers Say Reading, Math Focus Crowding Out Other Core Academic Subjects**

### ***New Common Core Research Highlights Growing Impact of a Narrow Curriculum in U.S. Public Schools***

WASHINGTON, DC (December 8, 2011) – With the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era coming to an end and federal and state policymakers preparing for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), new research reveals that two-thirds of educators in the nation’s K-12 public schools believe that an overemphasis on English-language arts and mathematics has resulted in denying students a proper focus on other core academic subjects, such as social studies, science, foreign languages, and the arts.

Conducted by the Farkas Duffett Research (FDR) Group on behalf of Common Core, the research is based on a survey of 1,001 third through 12<sup>th</sup> grade public school teachers that gathered data about teacher behavior and classroom practice. The research was funded by the Ford Foundation and the American Federation of Teachers. A full study based on this research will be released in 2012.

“During the past decade, our public schools have focused – almost exclusively – on reading and math instruction, hoping to fulfill the latest in federal mandates,” said Lynne Munson, President and Executive Director of Common Core. “NCLB clearly identifies our ‘core curriculum’ as reading, math, science, social studies, and even the arts. But in our efforts to meet AYP, we have abandoned many of these core subjects in pursuit of higher reading and math scores. As a result, we are denying our students the complete education they deserve and the law demands.”

The Common Core/FDR Group survey found:

- Two-thirds (66%) said that academic subjects other than reading and math “get crowded out by extra attention being paid to math or language arts”
- Math (55%) and language arts (54%) are the only two subjects getting more attention, according to most teachers
- In sharp contrast, about half of those surveyed said art (51%) and music (48%) get less attention, with 40% saying the same for foreign language, 36% for social studies, and 27% for science
- 77% of teachers who believe math and language arts crowd out other subjects say this happens across the full student body, with 21% saying it is targeted to struggling students
- The vast majority (81%) of elementary school teachers report other subjects are getting crowded out by extra attention to math or language arts
- About half (51%) of elementary school teachers say struggling students get extra help in math or language arts by getting pulled out of other classes, with the most likely subjects for pull out being social studies (48%) and science (40%)
- Among all teachers who say crowding out is taking place in their schools, virtually all (93%) believe that this is largely driven by state tests
- Almost two out of three teachers (65%) say they have “had to skip important topics in [my] subject in order to cover the required curriculum”

“According to most teachers, schools are narrowing curriculum, shifting instructional time and resources toward math and language arts and away from subjects such as art, music, foreign language, and social studies,” the survey found. Additionally, “most of the teachers surveyed believe that state tests in math and language arts drive curriculum narrowing. They say that the testing regimen has penetrated school culture and caused vast changes in day-to-day teaching,” the survey continued.

“America’s teachers have spoken clearly in this survey,” Munson said. “Our increased focus on only math and reading is coming at the expense of other academic subjects. Narrowing is happening throughout the grades but the problem is acute in the elementary grades, with 81 percent of teachers reporting narrowing. It is unbelievable to think that we’re denying even our youngest students the benefits, and excitement, of learning science, social studies, the arts, music, and foreign languages.”

### **About Common Core**

Established in 2007, [Common Core](http://www.commoncore.org/) (<http://www.commoncore.org/>) is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization formed to promote content-rich liberal arts education in America’s K–12 schools. Common Core believes that a child who graduates

from high school without an understanding of culture, the arts, history, literature, civics, and language has in fact been left behind. To improve education in America, Common Core creates curriculum tools and also promotes programs, policies, and initiatives at the local, state, and federal levels that provide students with challenging, rigorous instruction in the full range of liberal arts and sciences. Common Core is not affiliated with the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

Common Core's trustees are Erik Berg, a second grade public school teacher in Boston; Barbara Byrd-Bennett, chief academic and accountability officer of the Detroit Public Schools; Antonia Cortese, former secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of Teachers; Pascal Forgione, Jr., executive director of the Educational Testing Service's Center on K-12 Assessment and Performance Management; Lorraine Griffith, a public school teacher in Asheville, North Carolina; Jason Griffiths, headmaster of the Brooklyn Latin School; Joy Hakim, author of *A History of Us* and *The Story of Science*; Bill Honig, former superintendent of public instruction for the state of California; Carol Jago, high school teacher and former president of the National Council of Teachers of English; Richard Kessler, dean of Mannes College The New School for Music; Lynne Munson, president and executive director of Common Core; and Juan Rangel, CEO of Chicago-based United Neighborhood Organization.

The Farkas Duffett Research Group ([www.thefdrgroup.com](http://www.thefdrgroup.com)) is an opinion research firm that partners with foundations and other nonprofits to help them understand how key groups and the general public feel about their initiatives. The FDR Group's expertise is in conducting focus groups, surveys, and program evaluations designed to provoke fresh thinking.

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