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I want to thank you for the opportunity to share with you today my experiences working with CCSS. I am speaking to you today not only as an educator, but also as a grandmother and an aunt. I have a grandson, step granddaughter and two little nieces who are or soon will be making their way in our public schools. I want these citizens of tomorrow and caretakers of myself in my older age to have the opportunity to go into the world equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to become responsible human beings, responsible citizens and lead happy productive lives. They are one of the reasons I support these new standards, but not just for my children, but all are our children.

Having been in education a few years I have developed a wait and see attitude about new initiatives. I too have been guilty of a “this too shall pass” stance. So I did not immediately jump on the CCSS bandwagon. I knew we needed new standards. We had taken on a huge project in NW at our Co-op with all our district schools to “unpack” our previous standards and work on curriculum alignment. National leaders and ADE literacy leaders assisted us in this project. During this project it became abundantly clear that our state standards needed to be revised. As I studied the CCSS ELA/Literacy standards I found them to be very good. Though my work with the state committee where we deconstructed the standards I gained a greater understanding and appreciation for the standards.

While many of our previous standards are covered by the CCSS, one of the major differences in the CCSS is the literacy standard for History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. One of the early misconceptions concerning these literacy standards was that they replace the content standards. That is not true, the CCSS supplement, not supplant the content standards. Research shows that each discipline requires specific reading and writing skills. The intent of these standards is to enable students to better learn the content of their discipline using the reading and writing skills addressed in the CCSS. Dr. Timothy Shanahan renowned professor and researcher at the

University of Chicago is responsible for much of what we know today about disciplinary literacy. He and his wife Cynthia conducted research with content area teachers and experts in the various fields to identify the reading and writing skills used in the various disciplines. Dr. Shanahan was an advisor to the writing of the ELA standards and worked with the team actually writing the literacy standards for the content areas. Dr. Shanahan assured me in an email last week that the standards the team wrote were reviewed and past thru the hands of many educators before they were finalized. There has been some push back from content teachers fearing that they were being asked to teach something that was not part of their content. But as we have worked with teachers they have begun to understand how valuable these literacy skills are to their students in mastering the content of their discipline. It is a fact that many teachers were not prepared to teach their students these reading and writing skills they need to better learn the content. Many teachers require professional development in this area.

Another area of concern is the confusion regarding the role of fiction and literature in the Common Core State Standards. The confusion stems from the fact that the Standards call for increasingly large amounts of informational text to be read, and the *mistaken belief* that this means that literature and fiction should take a back seat in the secondary ELA classroom. I just mentioned that the CCSS ELA/Literacy apply not only to ELA but also to History/Social Studies, Science and the Technical Subjects, just about everyone else. By high school, the Standards require that 70 percent of what students read be informational text, but the bulk of that percentage will be carried by non-ELA disciplines that do not study fictional texts. Stories, drama, poetry, and other literature account for the majority of reading that students will do in the high school ELA classroom.

The Standards could not be clearer: ELA classrooms must focus on literature -- that is not negotiable, but a requirement of high school ELA. On page 5 of the Standards -- where the distinction between literature and informational text is introduced -- there is an explicit statement regarding the balance of texts relative to the disciplines covered by the Standards. On this page you will find a chart illustrating this requirement. This chart was developed in accordance with NAEP's growing emphasis on informational text in the higher grades. In the

standards you will see references to NAEP, The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas. For example CCSS RL6.9 specifically mentions stories and poems, historical novels and fantasy stories. CCSS RL9-10.6 specifically requires literature from outside the United States. CCSS RL11-12.7 requires the reading of stories, dramas and poems and must include one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist. CCSS RL 11-12.9 requires the study of foundational works of American Literature.

As you know the standards include 10 anchor standards for reading and 10 for writing. These anchor standards reflect the skills and knowledge students should possess at the end of their k-12 experience. Each standard is broken down to grade level or grade band specifics. One of the reading standards puts more emphasis on understanding and evaluating the argument and specific claim in a text. ***College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard 8 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.*** The requirements of this standard are spelled out in greater detail at each grade level. While I don't believe any one standard is more important than any other standard, I find Standard 8 to be very powerful considering the world we live in today. Our students now live in a world of easy and instant access to information. They are bombarded with information on television, the Internet and many other types of media. Social media has become a vehicle for sharing information and many times it is more misinformation than information. Never before has our country been more bipartisan. The news you hear on one channel is completely different from the report on the same topic on another. You read one web site for information and then the next site contains totally contradictory information. How do you know what is the truth? Being able to read and detect an author's bias, recognizing the argument being made, accessing the validity and credibility of the argument is an essential skill that students must possess in order to understand controversial issues and make informed decisions. One of the goals of

public education is to provide an educated citizenry. Standard 8 and others will help us to do this.

I have included for you the results of a short informal survey I conducted with instructional facilitators in NW Arkansas. Some of the respondents also teach classes as well as their work as instructional facilitators. I have included the responses I received from them. I did not edit them. You see them exactly as they were written.

I have spent much time the last few days investing my time in researching some of the assertions I heard made at the last meeting and also some of the myths (many of them on social media) that in spite of much evidence to the contrary still exist today. I included a document for you containing links to information on two of these misconceptions, lack of literature in secondary classes and data mining. Yesterday morning, too late to include on the document I provided for you, I was sent a link to a white paper on Kentucky's success at implementing the standards. This document recognizing that turmoil still exist concerning if they should keep the standards, 3 key requirements for CCSS success, Communication, Alignment and Support were identified by successful schools. I can provide you with this link if you would like. While attempting to verify the contents of this report I was directed to Center on Education Policy at George Washington University. On their web site under the heading Common Core, you will find a Compendium of Research on the Common Core State Standards released in Feb. 2015. Key findings from some of the studies I found particularly interesting deal with the public's perception of the CCSS. The majority of respondents were in favor of common standards across the nation but the label CCSS may be toxic, and support for the standards or no support for the standards fall along party lines. I urge you to go to that web site and look at those studies. I apologize for not having this for you earlier. I will provide you with the link to these studies if you would like. You have a huge and very important job to do here. You are to be commended for your willingness to serve on this council. I urge to allow us to stay the course with these standards. I believe these standards are in the best interest of our students and our state. Mistakes have been made in communicating these standards to our stakeholders. But we have had standards in Arkansas for many years, as well as standardized testing. Not much interest was ever shown in the standards prior to the

present so I don't believe anyone was prepared for the backlash that has occurred. Many more mistakes will be made along the way, but we will figure out what is best for our students. We have great teachers and administrators in our state. We can count on them to make these standards work for our children. Thank you.