



EQUAL EDUCATION FOR ALL

Picture two fourth-graders, one in rural Georgia and the other in suburban Massachusetts: They both dream of attending college and becoming an astronaut or an Internet entrepreneur. Do they both have the same head start toward reaching their goals? Probably not. But thanks to a new movement, that may soon change.

What it is: The Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI). The initiative promotes a national set of grade-by-grade educational benchmarks for math and English. This may sound a lot like No Child Left Behind, but it differs in two important ways. First, the federal law allows states to set their own standards—which is exactly why they (and student performance) vary so widely across the country. Second, adopting the CCSSI protocol would be voluntary, and if complied with, consistent nationwide.

Why it's important: "We believe children should have access to equal education no matter what their zip code is," says Ben Peck, senior

state advocacy strategist for the National PTA, which has launched a major effort with parents to push for the new standards. Plus, CCSSI will more effectively prepare American students to keep up with their peers around the world.

What you can do: The initiative is currently gathering public feedback on the proposed standards; the Council of Chief State School Officers (a CCSSI sponsor) urges parents to read about them and share their thoughts at Corestandards.org. Then join with your school's PTA to contact state officials and encourage them to adopt the standards. Go to PTA.org and click on "Public Policy" for more info. —Marisa Cohen

March's Mom of the Moment

Why we're celebrating her: When Myrdin Thompson's oldest son, Seth, transferred schools in fourth grade, one of the first things she noticed was that it didn't have a playground. Refusing to simply stand by, Thompson led the charge to apply for a grant from KaBoom! (a nonprofit dedicated to creating play spaces). When she won it, Thompson then rallied the entire community to donate the additional \$50,000 needed to get it built. But that's not the only reason she impressed us. When Thompson's not at PTA board meetings, writing her education blog, or lobbying legislators, you can find her volunteering at the Clothing Assistance Program, which helps families in need.

What motivates her: "We have many parents in our district whose struggle to make ends meet supersedes everything else, including taking a large role in their children's school. But when one child goes home with no prospect of dinner, that impacts the whole class. I have the ability to advocate for those families, and hopefully, the result will be a better education for all our children."

Her advice for getting started: "When you have a concern, make a phone call. Post the thought on a forum. Speak at a school-board meeting. You might learn you're not the only one who's worried. And that's how change starts. With one voice."

Know a mover and shaker in your school community? Tell us her story at Parenting.com/momcongress.

M.O.M. Myrdin Thompson, mom of Seth, 11, Jonah, 8, and Finn, 4. She's the District PTA president for the Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky and oversees nearly 49,000 members.



Land a DC trip!

If you haven't applied yet for the first annual Mom Congress on Education and Learning in Washington, DC, you've still got time! Participants will receive round-trip airfare, plus a two-night hotel stay for the conference, May 2 to 4, 2010. Find all the details on how to apply at Parenting.com/momcongress.