

A PARENT'S GUIDE

(Adapted from National PTA)



What are the Common Core State Standards?

The goal of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is to provide a single set of clear and consistent educational standards in math and English language arts that states can share and voluntarily adopt. A total of 45 states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted the Common Core State Standards.



Why do we need new standards?

Until now, every state had its own standards and different expectations of student performance.

- Common standards will help ensure that all students are receiving a high quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state.
- Common Core standards can provide parents with clear expectations for what children should know and be able to do when they graduate high school or advance to a particular grade level.
- Common Core standards provide consistency for parents and students during transitions and allow parents to continue to support student learning regardless of changes in ZIP code.

In addition, evidence based standards will more effectively prepare American students to keep up with their peers around the world.



What does Common Core look like in the classroom?

Common Core standards are not curriculum. Common Core standards are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what students need to learn, but they will not dictate how teachers should teach. Teachers and schools will continue to devise curriculum, including lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.



How were the Common Core State Standards reviewed?

Parents and teachers have been a critical voice in the development of the standards. The National PTA, National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, National Council of Teachers of English and other organizations have been instrumental in bringing together teachers to provide specific, constructive feedback since the standards were first released.



The Common Core State Standards:

- Include both knowledge and the application of subject area
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards and standards of top-performing nations
- Are based on real-world application
- Are evidence- and research-based, with guidance on topics to include, when to introduce content, and coherence/focus

Why now?

- Different standards across states
- Student mobility, military families
- Global competition
- Today's jobs require different skills



English Language Arts Changes:

Non-fiction makes up the majority of required reading in high school, college and the workplace. Since informational text is harder for students to understand than narrative text, more instructional time is needed to practice. The recommended time spent on Literary Texts/Informational Texts:

- Elementary 50/50
- Middle School 45/55
- High School 30/70

An emphasis on reading, writing and speaking based on evidence is another shift. This became part of the Common Core Standards because most college and workplace writing requires evidence,

being able to take a position or inform others through citing evidence.

The emphasis is on reading more complex texts. The features of complex text include density of information, multiple and/or subtle themes and purposes, unfamiliar settings or events, complex sentences, uncommon vocabulary, longer paragraphs and a text structure that is less narrative.



Mathematics Changes:

In math, instructional shifts focus on fewer, more central standards, building core understandings and linking mathematical concepts to real-world skills. In developing the shifts in mathematics, the designers of the standards moved away from what has been termed the “mile wide and an inch deep” approach to mathematics instruction in the United States.

The consistent application of math is focused around the 8 Mathematical Practices that are taught kindergarten through grade 12.

- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them
- Reason abstractly and quantitatively
- Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others
- Model with mathematics
- Use appropriate tools strategically
- Attend to precision
- Look for and make use of structure
- Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning

The Common Core defines what students should be able to do in mathematics through grade-specific standards, emphasizing speed, accuracy and real-life problem-solving skills.



Will state tests be different?

The new assessments are different from past tests, with students responding to open-ended questions where they must show their work as well as answer multiple choice questions. In addition to the content of the test changing, the medium in

which the students will take the test has changed as well. Instead of using pencils and paper to record their answers, students will now take both the ELA and Math assessments on a computer or tablet. The ELA content will be based on non-fiction and original texts, such as speeches or letters. Students will be required to draw and support conclusions with evidence from these sources. Math will require students to solve problems but also writing to justify and support their answers.



What can Parents do to help?

- Read a combination of fiction and non-fiction aloud or with your child. Look for subjects that interest your child — from sports heroes to dinosaurs. Select more difficult passages over time.
- Read more informational texts including newspapers, magazines, technical manuals, science and social studies articles and books.
- Talk with your child and have him or her explain things in complete sentences.
- Encourage writing at home.
- Encourage a good work ethic.
- Help your children know/memorize basic math facts.
- Discuss and “do” real life math with your children. Look for “word problems” in real life.
- Let your children see you read and “do” math.
- Discuss with your children their performance in school and what they are learning.
- Talk about tests with your child and be positive and encouraging.
- Talk with your child’s teacher(s) about his or her performance in school.
- Talk with your children about the importance of graduating from high school and preparing for college and career success.