



Common Core State Standards
An Introduction for Students



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As a student, it is important that you understand what the Common Core State Standards are about and how they will affect what you learn in the classroom and see on assessments each year. This brochure, published by **Hanover Research**, answers common questions about the Common Core, the positive changes the new standards aim to bring about in today's classrooms, and what you can expect with the transition.

Why The Common Core?

The **Common Core State Standards** (CCSS) provide uniform, clear expectations for the knowledge and skills that students should be able to demonstrate in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics at the end of each K-12 grade level. The standards will create consistent expectations for student achievement across all participating states, defining the knowledge and skills necessary for students to succeed in higher education and careers and ensuring that every student is prepared for life after high school. The Common Core supports the following outcomes:

I. College Readiness

High school graduates prepared to enter for-credit degree and certificate pathways at two-year and four-year institutions of higher education

II. Career Readiness

High school graduates prepared to enter the workforce and to compete with peers in the United States and abroad

III. Consistency and Transparency

Clear and concise standards that make expectations transparent for students and parents and that are consistent across states

IV. Equal Opportunity

Equal opportunity for a rigorous and high-quality education no matter where students live

V. Collaboration

Collaboration between states to develop educational materials, comprehensive assessments, and tools and policies to support educators and schools

About the Common Core

A voluntary program, states began to independently decide to adopt the Common Core State Standards in 2010. As of 2013, 45 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the CCSS, though implementation timelines vary.ⁱ The standards build upon the highest state standards and draw upon scholarly research and literature focused on college- and career-readiness.ⁱⁱ At its core, the CCSS structure aims to provide fewer, clearer, and higher standards to guide our nation's schools, replacing the lengthy, vague, and input-focused standards of the past.ⁱⁱⁱ Intended for all students, the standards can be adapted to fit the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities.

The standards are the product of collaboration between teachers, parents, administrators, educational researchers, and content experts. The developers chose English language arts and mathematics as the first subjects to receive Common Core alignment because these areas form the foundation for all other subjects.^{iv}

Fewer ▼

In general, standards are teachable within one year, so a single standard is not repeated across multiple grade levels.

Clearer ▼

Rather than vague or broad descriptions, the standards provide precise descriptions of expected outcomes.

Higher ▼

While not necessarily harder, the standards raise the bar in that what is stated in the standards is expected for all students every year.

English Language Arts

The English Language Arts standards define knowledge and skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. The **Reading** standards follow a staircase model, wherein students read texts of increasing complexity as they progress through the grade levels. The standards balance classic and contemporary literature with informational, non-fiction texts. The standards do not dictate specific texts that students must read, though they do stipulate that four critical content areas be covered: classic myths and stories, foundational U.S. documents, seminal works of American literature, and Shakespeare. The **Writing** standards require students to express logical arguments founded on sound reasoning and evidence. The standards require students in even the earliest grades to begin writing opinion pieces and forming evidence-based arguments and further emphasize both short and in-depth research projects. The Speaking and Listening standards require that students acquire the skills necessary to clearly present increasingly complex information and ideas. Finally, the **Language** standards outline expectations for students to expand their academic vocabulary.

Mathematics

The **K-5 standards** require that students build a solid foundation in key mathematical concepts—whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, and decimals—laying the groundwork for more advanced mathematical concepts and procedures. K-5 students must grasp procedural skills and gain conceptual understanding as to why the math works.

Having established a strong foundation in the early grades, students will be ready to tackle hands-on learning in geometry, algebra, probability, and statistics. At the next level, the **middle grades standards** demand rich preparation for the more advanced mathematics students will encounter in high school.

Finally, the **high school standards** ask students to think and reason mathematically, applying learned concepts to real-world issues and problems. The standards stress mathematical modeling and define a rigorous standard for college- and career-readiness.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Does the Common Core mean a common curriculum for all students?

A. By adopting the Common Core, educators agree to a set of learning standards, but do not agree to use a standard curriculum. A useful analogy to consider is that of a journey—the Common Core represents the destination, and the curriculum represents the map to get there. In other words, the Common Core outlines end-goals—the skills and knowledge that students must demonstrate upon completing a grade level—while allowing individual schools and teachers to determine the best path for students to follow in achieving those goals.^{vii}

Q. Will state assessments change?

A. Two groups of states—the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)—have been developing assessments aligned to the Common Core over the past several years. According to the implementation plan, students will begin taking the PARCC and SBAC assessments in participating states in the 2014-2015 school year.^{viii}

Q. What kinds of change will I see in the classroom?

A. Under the Common Core State Standards, you will see shifts in priority areas and approaches to learning:

- Greater focus on depth of learning in key areas as opposed to breadth of content
- Expectations for students to read and analyze more difficult, complex texts
- Greater emphasis on informational and expository (non-fiction) texts
- Greater expectations for early and continued development of academic vocabulary
- Clearer progression of skills within grade levels and from one grade level to the next
- More concrete connections between classroom learning and real-world problem-solving^{ix}

A resource of the New York State Education Department, engageNY, outlines specific changes that will occur:^x

IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY, STUDENTS WILL:	IN MATHEMATICS, STUDENTS WILL:
Read non-fiction and fiction in equal amounts.*	Focus on fewer topics, in greater depth.
Read to explore the world, learning science and social studies.	Master skills within and across grade levels.
Tackle challenging materials by reading closely.	Develop speed and accuracy in applying math skills.
Use evidence from selected text(s) in reading discussions.	Demonstrate knowledge of why the math works.
Use evidence to write non-fiction works.	Use mastered skills to solve real-world problems.
Expand his/her academic vocabulary.	Learn to think quickly and to solve problems.

Adapted from: "Common Core State Standards: Shifts for Students and Parents," engageNY.

*In ELA and across content areas.

i A 46th state, Minnesota, has adopted only the ELA standards.

ii "Frequently Asked Questions," Common Core State Standards Initiative, <http://www.corestandards.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions>

iii "Why the Common Core? How these Standards are Different," Student Achievement Partners, p. 5, <http://www.achievethecore.org/page/398/why-the-common-core-how-these-standards-are-different>

iv "The Common Core State Standards Initiative," Council of Chief State School Officers, http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/The_Common_Core_State_Standards_Initiative.html

v "Key Points in English Language Arts," Common Core State Standards Initiative, <http://www.corestandards.org/resources/key-points-in-english-language-arts>

vi "Key Points in Mathematics," Common Core State Standards Initiative, <http://www.corestandards.org/resources/key-points-in-mathematics>

vii McShane, M., "5 Things Every Parent Needs to Know About The Common Core," *The American*, June 15, 2013, <http://www.american.com/archive/2013/july/5-things-every-parent-needs-to-know-about-the-common-core>

viii Ibid.

ix "Common Core State Standards: Shifts for Students and Parents," engageNY, <http://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/shifts-for-students-and-parents.pdf>

x Ibid.