

FAQ's

What are educational standards?

Educational standards help teachers ensure their students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful by providing clear goals for student learning.

What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort that established a single set of clear educational standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts and mathematics that states voluntarily adopt. The standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to enter credit bearing entry courses in two or four year college programs or enter the workforce. The standards are clear and concise to ensure that parents, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of the expectations in reading, writing, speaking and listening, language and mathematics in school.

Who leads the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

The nation's governors and education commissioners, through their representative organizations the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) led the development of the Common Core State Standards and continue to lead the initiative. Teachers, parents, school administrators and experts from across the country together with state leaders provided input into the development of the standards.

Why is the Common Core State Standards Initiative important?

High standards that are consistent across states provide teachers, parents, and students with a set of clear expectations that are aligned to the expectations in college and [careers](#). The standards promote equity by ensuring all students, no matter where they live, are well prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to collaborate and compete with their peers in the United States and abroad.. Unlike previous state standards, which were unique to every state in the country, the Common Core State Standards enable collaboration between states on a range of tools and policies, including:

- the development of textbooks, digital media, and other teaching materials aligned to the standards;
- and the development and implementation of common comprehensive assessment systems to measure student performance annually that will replace

existing state testing systems; and

- changes needed to help support educators and schools in teaching to the new standards.

Who was involved in the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

States across the country collaborated with teachers, researchers, and leading experts to design and develop the Common Core State Standards. Each state independently made the decision to adopt the Common Core State Standards, beginning in 2010. The federal government was NOT involved in the development of the standards. Local teachers, principals, and superintendents lead the implementation of the Common Core.

What guidance do the Common Core State Standards provide to teachers?

The Common Core State Standards are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for the knowledge and skills students need in English language arts and mathematics at each grade level to ultimately be prepared to graduate college and career ready. The standards establish what students need to learn, but they do not dictate how teachers should teach. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.

How do the Common Core State Standards compare to previous state standards?

The Common Core State Standards were written by building on the best and highest state standards in existence in the U.S., examining the expectations of other high performing countries around the world, and careful study of the research and literature available on what students need to know and be able to do to be successful in college and careers. No state in the country was asked to lower their expectations for their students in adopting the Common Core. The standards are evidence-based, aligned with college and work expectations, include rigorous content and skills, and are informed by other top performing countries. They were developed in consultation with teachers and parents from across the country so they are also realistic and practical for the classroom.

Will there be tests based on the Common Core State Standards?

Yes. States that adopted the Common Core State Standards are currently collaborating to develop common assessments that will be aligned to the standards and replace existing end of year state assessments. These assessments will be available in the 2014-2015 school year.

What is the appropriate way to cite the Common Core State Standards?

Authors: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers

Title: Common Core State Standards (insert specific content area if you are using only one)

Publisher: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, Washington D.C.

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What makes this process different from other efforts to create common standards?

This process is state-led, and has support from across the country, including CCSSO, the NGACenter, Achieve, Inc, ACT, the College Board, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the Alliance for Excellent Education, the Hunt Institute, the National Parent Teacher Association, the State Higher Education Executive Officers, the American Association of School Administrators, and the Business Roundtable.

By what criteria were the standards developed?

The Standards made careful use of a large and growing body of evidence, including:

- Scholarly research;
- Surveys on what skills are required of students entering college and workforce training programs;
- Assessment data identifying college- and career-ready performance;
- Comparisons to standards from high-performing states and nations;
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) frameworks in reading and writing for English language arts; and
- Findings from Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMSS) and other studies concluding that the traditional US mathematics curriculum must become substantially more coherent and focused in order to improve student achievement.

In particular, the following criteria guided the development of the standards:

- Alignment with expectations for college and career success;
- Clarity;

- Consistency across all states;
- Inclusion of content and the application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Improvement upon current state standards and standards of top-performing nations;
- Reality-based, for effective use in the classroom; and
- Evidence and research-based

Are the standards internationally benchmarked?

Yes. International benchmarking played a significant role in both sets of standards. In fact, the college and career ready standards include an appendix listing the evidence that was consulted in drafting the standards and the international data used in the benchmarking process is included in this appendix.

Were teachers involved in the creation of the standards?

Yes. Teachers have been a critical voice in the development of the standards. The Common Core State Standards drafting process relied on teachers and standards experts from across the country. The National Education Association (NEA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), among other organizations were instrumental in bringing together teachers to provide specific, constructive feedback on the standards.

What grade levels are included in the Common Core State Standards?

The English language arts and math standards are for grades K-12. Research from the early childhood and higher education communities also informed the development of the standards.

What does this work mean for students with disabilities and English language learners?

The Common Core State Standards give states the opportunity to share experiences and best practices, which can lead to an improved ability to serve young people with disabilities and English language learners. Additionally, the standards include information on application of the standards for these groups of students.

Why are the Common Core State Standards for just English language arts and math?

English language arts and math were the subjects chosen for the Common Core State Standards because they are areas upon which students build skill sets which are used in other subjects. They are also the subjects most frequently assessed for accountability purposes.

Are there plans to develop common standards in other areas in the future?

CCSSO and NGA are not leading the development of standards in other academic content areas. Below is information on efforts of other organizations to develop standards in other academic subjects.

- Science: In a process managed by Achieve, with the help of the National Research Council, the National Science Teachers Association, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, states are developing the Next Generation Science Standards. More information about this effort can be found [here](#).
- World Languages: The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages published an alignment of the National Standards for Learning Languages with the ELA Common Core State Standards. More information about this effort can be found [here](#).
- Arts: The National Coalition for Core Arts Standards is leading the revision of the National Standards for Arts Education. More information about this effort can be found [here](#).

What do the Common Core State Standards mean for students?

The standards provide clarity and consistency in what is expected of student learning across the country. This initiative helps provide all students with an equal opportunity for an education, regardless of where they live. The Common Core State Standards will not prevent different levels of achievement among students, but they will ensure more consistent exposure to materials and learning experiences through curriculum, instruction, and teacher preparation among other supports for student learning.

How does the Common Core State Standards impact teachers?

The Common CSS impacts teachers by:

- Providing goals and benchmarks to ensure students are achieving certain skills and knowledge by the end of each year;
- Helping colleges and professional development programs better prepare teachers;

- Providing the opportunity for teachers to be involved in the development of assessments linked to these top-quality standards;
- Allowing states to develop and provide better assessments that more accurately measure whether or not students have learned what was taught; and
- Guiding educators toward curricula and teaching strategies that will give students a deep understanding of the subject and the skills they need to apply their knowledge.

Who will manage the Common Core State Standards Initiative in the future?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative was and will remain a state-led effort. In addition to supporting effective implementation of the Common Core State Standards, NGA and CCSSO are committed to developing a long-term sustainability structure with leadership from governors, chief state school officers, and other state policymakers. There will be an ongoing state-led development process that can support continuous improvement of the standards.

Will common assessments be developed?

Two consortia of states are developing common assessments – the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). These state-led consortia on assessment are grounded in the following principles:

- Allow for comparison across students, schools, districts, states and nations;
- Create economies of scale;
- Provide information and support more effective teaching and learning; and
- Prepare students for college and careers.

Will CCSSO and NGA be creating common instructional materials and curricula?

States that have adopted the standards may choose to work together to develop instructional materials and curricula. As states join together to adopt the same Common Core State Standards, publishers of instructional materials and experienced educators will develop new resources around these shared standards.

Does the federal government play a role in standards implementation?

The federal government had no role in the development of the Common Core State Standards and will not have a role in their implementation. The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort that is not part of No Child Left Behind and adoption of the standards is in no way mandatory.

Do these standards incorporate both content and skills?

Yes.

In English language arts, the Common Core State Standards require certain critical content for all students, including:

- Classic myths and stories from around the world;
- America’s Founding Documents;
- Foundational American literature: and
- Shakespeare.

The remaining crucial decisions about what content should be taught are left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the Common Core State Standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

In Mathematics, the Common Core State Standards lay a solid foundation in:

- whole numbers;
- addition;
- subtraction;
- multiplication;
- division:
- fractions; and
- decimals.

Taken together, these elements support a student’s ability to learn and apply more demanding math concepts and procedures. The middle school and high school standards call on students to practice applying mathematical ways of thinking to real world issues and challenges; they prepare students to think and

reason mathematically.

How complex are the texts suggested by the English language arts standards?

The Common Core State Standards create a staircase of increasing text complexity, so that students are expected to both develop their skills and apply them to more and more complex texts. For example, the English language arts standards suggest “Grapes of Wrath” as a text that would be appropriate for 9th or 10th grade readers. For more information, please see Appendix A and the Supplement to Appendix A.

Do the English language arts standards include a reading list or any other reference to content?

The Common Core State Standards include sample texts that demonstrate the level of text complexity appropriate for the grade level and compatible with the learning demands set out in the standards. The exemplars of high quality texts at each grade level provide a rich set of possibilities and have been very well received. This ensures teachers have the flexibility to make their own decisions about what texts to use, while providing an excellent reference point when selecting their texts.

What type of texts are recommended for the English language arts standards?

The Common Core State Standards require certain critical content for all students. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening. English teachers will still teach their students literature as well as literary non-fiction. However, because college and career readiness overwhelming focuses on complex texts outside of literature, these standards also ensure students are being prepared to read, write, and research across the curriculum, including in history and science.

Do the math standards cover all the key math topics in the proper sequence?

The mathematical progressions presented in the Common Core State Standards are coherent and based on evidence. Part of the problem with having 50 different sets of state standards is that different states cover different topics at different grade levels. Coming to consensus guarantees that from the viewpoint of any given state, topics will move up or down in the grade level sequence. This is unavoidable. What is important to keep in mind is that the progression in the Common Core State Standards is mathematically coherent and leads to

college and career readiness at an internationally competitive level.