

Curriculum reView



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Launching the Common Core

About the Standards

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts, to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce.

The NGA Center and CCSSO received initial feedback on the draft standards from national organizations representing, but not limited to, teachers, postsecondary educators (including community colleges), civil rights groups, English language learners, and students with disabilities. Following the initial round of feedback, the draft standards were opened for public comment, receiving nearly 10,000 responses.

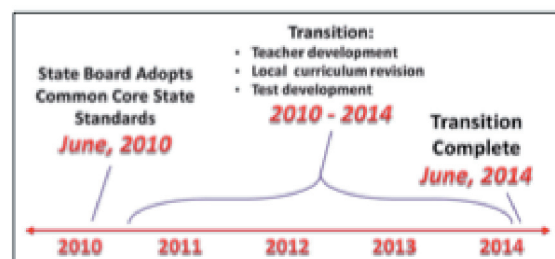
The standards are informed by the highest, most effective models from states across the country and countries around the world, and provide teachers and parents with a common understanding of what students are expected to

learn. Consistent standards will provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live.

These standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs. The standards:

- Are aligned with college and work expectations;
- Are clear, understandable and consistent;
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- Are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- Are evidence-based.

Common Core State Standards Implementation Timeline for Oklahoma Public Schools



Superintendent Paul Hurst explains the Common Core State Standards at the 2011 Opening Convocation. (Steve Lindley)

Process

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort, launched more than a year ago by state leaders, including governors and state commissioners of education from 48 states, 2 territories and the District of Columbia, through their membership in the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

The process used to write the standards ensured they were informed by:

- The best state standards;
- The experience of teachers, content experts, states and leading thinkers; and
- Feedback from the general public.

To write the standards, the NGA Center and CCSSO brought together content experts, teachers, researchers and others.

The standards have been divided into two categories:

- College and career readiness standards, which address what students are expected to learn when they have graduated from high school; and
- K-12 standards, which address expectations for elementary through high school.

The NGA Center and CCSSO received nearly 10,000 comments on the standards during two public comment periods. Comments, many of which helped shape the final version of the standards, came from teachers, parents, school administrators and other citizens concerned with education policy.

- The draft college and career ready graduation standards were released for public comment in September 2009; and
- The draft K-12 standards were released for public comment in March 2010.
- The final standards were released in June 2010.

An advisory group has provided advice and guidance to shape the initiative. Members of this group include experts from Achieve, Inc., ACT, the College Board, the National Association of State Boards of Education and the State Higher Education Executive Officers.



Frequently Asked Questions

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.

Why do we need educational standards?

We need standards to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. Common standards will help ensure that students are receiving a high quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state. Common standards will provide a greater opportunity to share experiences and best practices within and across states that will improve our ability to best serve the needs of students.

Standards do not tell teachers how to teach, but they do help teachers figure out the knowledge and skills their students should have so that teachers can build the best lessons and environments for their classrooms. Standards also help students and parents by setting clear and realistic goals for success. Standards are a first step – a key building block – in providing our young people with a high-quality education that will prepare them for success in college and work. Of course, standards are not the only thing that is needed for our children's success, but they provide an accessible roadmap for our teachers, parents, and students.

How are educational standards determined now?

Each state has its own process for developing, adopting, and implementing standards. As a result, what students are expected to learn can vary widely from state to state.

Is having common standards the first step toward nationalizing education?

No. The Common Core State Standards are part of a state-led effort to give all students the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. The federal government was not involved in the development of the standards. Individual states choose whether or not to adopt these standards.

What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort to establish a shared set of clear educational standards for English language arts and mathematics that states can voluntarily adopt. The standards have been informed by the best available evidence and the highest state standards across the country and globe and designed by a diverse group of teachers, experts, parents, and school administrators, so they reflect both our aspirations for our children and the realities of the classroom. These standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to go to college or enter the workforce and that parents, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. The standards are benchmarked to international standards to guarantee that our students are competitive in the emerging global marketplace.

Why is the Common Core State Standards Initiative important?

We want to make sure that every child across the country is given the tools they need to succeed. High standards that are consistent across states provide teachers, parents, and students with a set of clear expectations that everyone can work toward together. This will ensure that we maintain America's competitive edge, so that all of our students are well prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to compete with not only their peers here at home, but with students from around the world.

These standards are a common sense first step toward ensuring our children are getting the best possible education no matter where they live. Of course, standards cannot single-handedly improve the quality of our nation's education system, but they do give educators shared goals and expectations for their students. For example, the common core state standards will enable participating states to work together to:

- Make expectations for students clear to parents, teachers, and the general public;
- Encourage the development of textbooks, digital media, and other teaching materials aligned to the standards;
- Develop and implement comprehensive assessment systems to measure student performance against the common core state standards that will replace the existing testing systems that too often are inconsistent, burdensome and confusing; and
- Evaluate policy changes needed to help students and educators meet the standards.

Who is leading the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

Parents, teachers, school administrators and experts from across the country together with state leaders, through their membership in the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) are leading the effort to develop a common core of state standards. In addition, CCSSO and the NGA Center have provided public comment periods for everyone to submit feedback on the draft standards documents. Those comments have been incorporated into the final standards.

How will states adopt the common core state standards?

The process of state standards adoption depends on the laws of each state. Some states are adopting the standards through their state boards of education, while others are adopting them through their state legislatures.

Will the common core state standards keep local teachers from deciding what or how to teach?

No. The Common Core State Standards are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents and others will decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms. Local teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards will continue to make decisions about curriculum and how their school systems are operated.

Were teachers involved in the creation of the standards?

Yes. Teachers have been a critical voice in the development of the standards. 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 have been instrumental in bringing together teachers to provide specific, constructive feedback on the standards. We encourage teachers and practitioners to submit comments and feedback on the standards through the web site corestandards.org.

Does having common standards lead to dumbing down the standards across the board?

Not at all. The Common Core State Standards have been built from the best and highest state standards in the country. They 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. Far from looking for the "lowest common denominator," these standards are designed to ensure that all students, regardless of where they live, are learning what they need to know to graduate from high school ready for college or a career.

Will more standards mean more tests?

No. For states that choose to adopt these common standards, having one set of standards will make it easier for states to pool information and resources to develop a shared set of high-quality tests to better evaluate student progress. The goal is not to have more tests, but to have smarter and better tests that help students, parents, and teachers.

Process

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

This process is different because it is state-led, and has the support of educators across the country as well as prominent education, business, and state leaders' organizations, including CCSSO, the NGA Center, 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.

Are these national standards?

The federal government was NOT involved in the development of the standards. This has been a state-led and driven initiative from the beginning. States will voluntarily adopt the standards based on the timelines and context in their state.



Who or what entity determines the common core state standards?

CCSSO and the NGA Center led the standards' development process in consultation with teachers, parents, experts and administrators. To ensure that this process is open, inclusive, and rigorous, several working groups and committees have been formed. They include the:

- Standards Development Work Group – responsible for determining and writing the common core state standards..
- Feedback Group – provides information backed by research to inform the standards development process by offering expert input on draft documents.
- Validation Committee – nominated by states and national organizations and selected by a group of 12 governors and chiefs who hold leadership positions at NGA Center and CCSSO. These independent, national education experts will review the common core state standards to ensure they meet the development criteria.

By what criteria are the standards being developed?

The standards are being developed by the following criteria:

- Aligned with expectations for college and career success
- Clear, so that educators and parents know what they need to do to help students learn
- Consistent across all states, so that students are not taught to a lower standard just because of where they live
- Include both content and the application of knowledge through high-order skills
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards and standards of top-performing nations
- Realistic, for effective use in the classroom
- Informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society
- Evidence and research-based criteria have been set by states, through their national organizations CCSSO and the NGA Center.

What grade levels will be 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 have also informed the development of the standards.

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

Common standards will provide a greater opportunity for states to share experiences and best practices within and across states that can lead to an improved ability to best serve young people with disabilities and English language learners. Additionally, the K-12 English language arts and mathematics standards include information on application of the standards for English language learners and students with disabilities.

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

English-language arts and math were the first subjects chosen for the common core state standards because these two subjects are skills, upon which students build skill sets in other subject areas. They are also the subjects most frequently assessed for accountability purposes. Of course, other subject areas are critical to young people's education and their success in college and careers. Once the English-language arts and math standards are developed, CCSSO and NGA Center, on behalf of the states, may develop common core in additional subject areas.

Will these standards incorporate both content and skills?

Both content and skills are important and have been incorporated in the common core state standards. One of the criteria by which the standards will be evaluated is whether or not they include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order thinking skills.

Implementation and Future Work

What will these common core state standards mean for students?

The standards will provide more clarity about and consistency in what is expected of student learning across the country. Until now, every state has had its own set of academic standards, meaning public education students at the same grade level in different states have been expected to achieve at different levels. This initiative will allow states to share information effectively and help provide all students with an equal opportunity for an education that will prepare them to go to college or enter the workforce, regardless of where they live. Common standards will not prevent different levels of achievement among students. Rather, they will ensure more consistent exposure to materials and learning experiences through curriculum, instruction, and teacher preparation among other supports for student learning. In a global economy, students must be prepared to compete with not only their American peers in the next state, but with students from around the world. These standards will help prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and careers.

How will these standards impact teachers?

The standards will provide important goals for teachers to ensure they are preparing students for success in college and the workforce. They will help teachers develop and implement effective strategies for their students by providing benchmarks for skills and knowledge that their students should have by the end of the year. The common core state standards will help colleges and professional development programs better prepare teachers; provide the opportunity for teachers to be involved in the development of assessments linked to these top-quality standards; allow states to develop and provide better assessments that more accurately measure whether or not students have learned what was taught; and guide 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.

Will the Common Core State Standards be updated?

Yes. There will be an ongoing state-led development process that can support continuous improvement of the standards.

Will common assessments be developed?

Like adoption of common core standards, it will be up to the states: some states plan to come together voluntarily to develop a common assessment system, based on the common core state standards. A state-led consortium on assessment would be 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 Center be playing a role in the implementation process, such as creating common instructional materials and curricula?

The release of the final Common Core State Standards marks a historic moment in time. However, the NGA Center and CCSSO recognize that state adoption of the Common Core does not signify the conclusion of standards work. States that have adopted the Common Core must now turn their attention to the critical work of ensuring that implementation of the standards is carried out thoughtfully. To that end, the NGA Center and CCSSO are committed to assisting state policymakers in the following ways:

- Developing a State Policymaker Guide to Implementation of the Common Core State Standards, which will provide state policymakers with the key areas that require attention and work as states transition to the standards;
- Convening organizations to facilitate conversations about the standards' implementation so states, districts and teachers have the tools they need and providing opportunities for groups with similar activities to collaborate;
- Planning and implementing the future governance structure of the Common Core State Standards Initiative; and
- Convening the publishing community to ensure that high quality materials aligned with the standards are created.

What is the role of the federal government in standards implementation?

The federal government has had no role in the development of the common core state standards and will not have a role in their implementation. However, the federal government will have the opportunity to support states as they begin adopting the standards. For example, the federal government can

- Support this effort through a range of tiered incentives, such as providing states with greater flexibility in the use of existing federal funds, supporting a revised state accountability structure, and offering financial support for states to implement the standards.
- Provide long-term financial support for the development and implementation of common assessments, teacher and principal professional development, and research to help continually improve the common core state standards over time.

Revise and align existing federal education laws with the lessons learned from the best of what works in other nations and from research.

Myths vs. Facts

Myths About Content and Quality: General

Myth: Adopting common standards will bring all states' standards down to the lowest common denominator, which means states with high standards, such as Massachusetts, will be taking a step backwards if they adopt the Standards.

Fact: The Standards are designed to build upon the most advanced current thinking about preparing all students for success in college and their careers. This will result in moving even the best state standards to the next level. In fact, since this work began, there has been an explicit agreement that no state would lower its standards. The Standards were informed by the best in the country, the highest international standards, and evidence and expertise about educational outcomes. We need college and career ready standards because even in high-performing states – students are graduating and passing all the required tests and still require remediation in their postsecondary work.

Myth: The Standards are not internationally benchmarked.

Fact: 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 consulted in the benchmarking process is included in this appendix. More evidence from international sources will be presented together with the final draft.

Myth: The Standards only include skills and do not address the importance of content knowledge.

Fact: The Standards recognize that both content and skills are important.

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

In Mathematics, the 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. The Standards set a rigorous definition of college and career readiness, not by piling topic upon topic, but by demanding that students develop a depth of understanding and ability to apply mathematics to novel situations, as college students and employees regularly do.

Myth: The Standards suggest teaching "Grapes of Wrath" to second graders.

Fact: The ELA Standards suggest "Grapes of Wrath" as a text that would be appropriate for 9th or 10th grade readers. Evidence shows that the complexity of texts students are reading today does not match what is demanded in college and the workplace, creating a gap between what high school students can do and

what they need to be able to do. 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.

Myth: The Standards are just vague descriptions of skills; they don't include a reading list or any other similar reference to content.

Fact: The Standards do 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 provides teachers with the flexibility to make their own decisions about what texts to use – while providing an excellent reference point when selecting their texts.

Myth: English teachers will be asked to teach science and social studies reading materials.

Fact: With the Common Core ELA Standards, English teachers will still teach their students literature as well as literary non-fiction. However, because college and career readiness overwhelmingly 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. These goals can be achieved by ensuring that teachers in other disciplines are also focusing on reading and writing to build knowledge within their subject areas.

Myth: The Standards don't have enough emphasis on fiction/literature.

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

Myths About Content and Quality: Math

Myth: The Standards do not prepare or require students to learn Algebra in the 8th grade, as many states' current standards do.

Fact: The Standards do accommodate and prepare students for Algebra 1 in 8th grade, by including the prerequisites for this course in grades K-7. Students who master the K-7 material will be able to take Algebra 1 in 8th grade. At the same time, grade 8 standards are also included; these include rigorous algebra and will transition students effectively into a full Algebra 1 course.

Myth: Key math topics are missing or appear in the wrong grade.

Fact: The mathematical progressions presented in the common core are coherent and based on evidence.

Part of the problem with having 50 different sets of state standards is that today, 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.

Myths About Content and Quality: English-language arts

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Myths About Process

Myth: No teachers were involved in writing the Standards.

Fact: The common core state standards drafting process relied on teachers and standards experts from across the country. In addition, there were many state experts that came together to create the most thoughtful and transparent process of standard setting. This was only made possible by many states working together.

Myth: The Standards are not research or evidence based.

Fact: The Standards have made careful use of a large and growing body of evidence. The evidence base includes scholarly research; surveys on what skills are required of students entering college and workforce training programs; assessment data

identifying college and career ready performance; and comparisons to standards from high performing states and nations.

In English language arts, the Standards build on the firm foundation of the NAEP frameworks in Reading and Writing, which draw on extensive scholarly research and evidence.

In Mathematics, the Standards draw on conclusions from TIMSS and other studies of high performing countries that the traditional US mathematics curriculum must become substantially more coherent and focused in order to improve student achievement, addressing the problem of a curriculum that is “a mile wide and an inch deep.”

Myths About Implementation

Myth: The Standards tell teachers what to teach.

Fact: The best understanding of what works in the classroom comes from the teachers who are in them. That’s why these standards will establish what students need to learn, but they will not dictate how teachers should teach. Instead, schools and teachers will decide how best to help students reach the standards.

Myth: The Standards will be implemented through No Child Left Behind (NCLB) - signifying that the federal government will be leading them.

Fact: 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. States began the work to create clear, consistent standards before the Recovery Act or the Elementary and Secondary Education Act blueprint was released because this work is being driven by the needs of the states, not the federal government.

The NGA Center and CCSSO are offering support by developing a State Policymaker Guide to Implementation, facilitating opportunities for collaboration among organizations working on implementation, planning the future governance structure of the standards, and convening the publishing community to ensure that high quality materials aligned with the standards are created.

Myth: These Standards amount to a national curriculum for our schools.

Fact: The Standards are not a curriculum. They are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents and others will decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.

Common Core Resources

www.corestandards.org

www.commoncore.org

www.parcconline.org

www.commoncoretools.wordpress.com

www.sde.ok.us

Have you joined the Common Core .pc Learning
Community?

<http://www.putnamcityschools.org/.pc>

On your worst day, you may be a child’s best hope!

~Larry Bell