



The Common Core State Standards and Teachers

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) provide a practical way to prepare children for the challenges of a constantly changing world – by learning step-by-step the real-world skills they need for career and college.

Despite the state's budget problems, California must move forward now so that all children – no matter where they come from or where they live – receive a world-class education that's consistent from school to school, and graduate ready to contribute to the future of our state and our country.

California is putting these standards to work, using them as the foundation for remodeling our education system. The standards keep the best of what we have, but replace outdated ways of learning with a clear focus on the key knowledge and skills students need, and provide teachers the time to teach them well.

A Shift in Teaching and Learning**Shifts in English Language Arts (ELA)**

These apply to content area (social studies, science, and technical subject) teachers as well as to English teachers.

- 1) Building knowledge through **content-rich nonfiction** and **informational texts** in addition to literature
- 2) Reading and writing grounded in **evidence from the text**
- 3) Regular practice with **complex text** and its **academic vocabulary** (words like commit and synthesize)

Shifts in Mathematics

- 1) **Focus:** 2–4 critical areas focused on deeply in each grade
- 2) **Coherence:** Concepts logically connected from one grade to the next and linked to other major topics within the grade
- 3) **Rigor:** Fluency with arithmetic, application of knowledge to real world situations, and deep understanding of mathematical concepts

What About New Assessments?

California is a governing member of the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) one of two federally funded consortia developing new assessments aligned to the CCSS. There are opportunities for teachers to be involved in the development of the new assessments. You may learn more about the new assessments and subscribe to the California Department of Education SBAC listserv at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalanced.asp>. Additionally, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Torlakson, is consulting with specific stakeholder groups in developing recommendations for the reauthorization of the statewide pupil assessment system, which includes a plan for transitioning to a system of high-quality assessments.

Transitioning to the CCSS: What Teachers Can Do Now

Although CCSS-aligned summative assessments will not be fully operational until the 2014–15 school year, we can begin to make changes to instruction that will prepare students for the CCSS while helping them succeed on current state assessments. For a smooth transition to the new standards, teachers can:

- **Review and understand** how the new standards are similar to and different from California's 1997 content standards
- **Inform colleagues and parents** that there are new standards in ELA and math
- **Meet with your grade levels, departments, and school leadership team** to discuss how your district and school is transitioning to the CCSS
- **Begin to review CURRENT instructional materials and curriculum** for alignment to the CCSS
- **Assess your professional learning needs** and seek out and participate in activities that will support your professional learning

English language arts (ELA) instruction:

- Clarify with colleagues the implications for teaching **more informational text** and determine common strategies for implementation across the grade levels
- Incorporate into instruction more **text-dependent questions** that require students to read a text closely to determine what it says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it
- Have students read more **non-fiction** and **complex texts**
- Focus writing instruction substantially on **writing to inform and structure an argument**, not only writing stories

Mathematics:

- Discuss the **mathematical practices** with colleagues and discuss what evidence of student demonstrations of these practices might inform your instructional designs and activities
- Focus instruction more on the **few key topics** emphasized in each grade in the standards
- Emphasize **problem-solving** and **real-world application**

Resources for Teachers

The following Web resources provide the most current information from the California Department of Education (CDE) Web Site and are continuously updated. The first reference is the main CDE CCSS Web Page which includes the *Common Core State Standards Systems Implementation Plan for California*, the Significant Milestones Timeline, and a “Learn More” section that provides additional links to audience specific information.

California Department of Education CCSS Web Page: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/>

Resources for Educators: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/educators.asp#educatorresources>

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium Information:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalanced.asp>

The first Common Core State Standards Professional Learning Module developed through AB 250 has been released. (As you know, AB 250 requires the California Department of Education to oversee the development of free, online professional learning modules that support educators in delivering curriculum aligned to the CCSS to all pupils.) The first module, *Overview of the Common Core State Standards for California Educators*, has been posted at: <http://myboe.org/portal/default/Content/Viewer/Content?action=2&scId=306588>

Future modules will address these topics:

Mathematics: Kindergarten through Grade Eight Learning Progressions

English Language Arts: Writing to Inform, Argue, and Analyze

Assessment Literacy

Content Literacy in History/Social Studies, Kindergarten through Grade Five

English Learners, English Language Development Standards, and the CCSS

Mathematics: Kindergarten through Grade Twelve Standards for Mathematical Practice

English Language Arts: Informational Text—Reading

Content Literacy for Science

Content Literacy for Technical Subjects

Discussion-based Classrooms

More information about AB 250 Professional Learning Modules can be found at the link below:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/ccsplm.asp>