

The Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards were developed collaboratively and involved 48 states, hundreds of experts, and thousands of educators.

- Led by the National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers, 48 states and Washington, D.C., along with teachers, content experts, and higher education faculty who sat on writing and review committees were involved in their development.
- Over 10,000 stakeholders, many of whom were educators, provided feedback before the final standards were validated by an expert committee and released in June 2010.
- To date, over 40 states and D.C. have adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in mathematics and English/language arts (ELA) and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects as their state standards in those subjects, to be fully implemented by the 2014-2015 school year.
- The significant promise of the CCSS initiative is not just the development of standards, but what is possible now that a critical mass of states have adopted the standards: states have already come to collaborate on common assessments and model curricular and instructional materials.
- In addition, the fact that they are common ensures all students are held to the same expectations, regardless of zip code, mitigating challenges with student and teacher mobility.
- By nearly a two-to-one margin, voters believe it is "better for all states to have the same standards at each grade level in math and English so students across the country have to meet the same expectations" (62 percent) rather than for states to have "their own standards reflecting their own priorities" (35 percent).¹

The Common Core State Standards are anchored in the goal of ensuring all students graduate ready for college and careers, and reflect the knowledge and skills most valued by employers and higher education.

- According to research by the Fordham Foundation, the K-12 Common Core in ELA and math are clearer and more rigorous than today's ELA standards in 37 states and today's math standards in 39 states. In 33 of those states, the Common Core scores higher than both the ELA and math standards.²
- The Common Core represents a baseline of the academic knowledge and skills that all students need to pursue college and careers. They are aligned to college and career ready expectations; as students master the standards they will find themselves on track to graduating fully prepared for their next steps.
- We cannot successfully prepare students for college and careers unless we set the right expectations and goals. While standards alone are no silver bullet, they do provide the necessary foundation for local decisions around curriculum, assessments, and instruction.
- The CCSS also are internationally benchmarked against academic standards from the highest performing countries, such as Singapore and Japan.

¹ Achieve (2010). *Achieving the Possible: What Americans Think about the College- and Career-Ready Agenda*.
<http://www.achieve.org/AchievingthePossible>

² Byrd, Sheila et al. (July 2010). *The State of State Standards--and the Common Core--in 2010*.
<http://www.edexcellence.net/publications-issues/publications/the-state-of-state.html>

Key Advances in the Common Core Mathematics Standards

In mathematics, the first major advancement is around how they are organized. The Common Core State Standards emphasize **coherence** at each grade level – making connections across content and between content and mathematical practices in order to promote deeper learning. In addition, the standards **focus** on key topics at each grade level to allow educators and students to go deeper into the content.

The standards also emphasize **progressions** across grades, with the end of progression calling for **fluency** – or the ability to perform calculations or solve problems quickly and accurately.

The Common Core also include **Standards for Mathematical Practice**, which describe mathematical “habits of mind,” and aim to foster reasoning, problem solving, modeling, decision making, and engagement among students. These eight standards connect with content standards in each grade.

Key Advances in the Common Core English/Language Arts and Literacy Standards

In reading, the major advances are the shift away from literature-focused standards to a **balance of literature and informational texts**, reflecting college and career ready expectations. There is also a greater focus on **text complexity** and at what level students should be reading.

In writing, there is a strong emphasis on **argument and informative/explanatory writing**, along with an emphasis on writing about sources or using evidence to inform an argument.

The Common Core also include **speaking and listening** expectations, including a focus on formal and informal talk, which can be done through presentations and group work. The language standards put an emphasis on general academic and domain-specific vocabulary.

A final major shift in the Common Core Standards from most current academic standards is that they **address reading, writing, and literacy across the curriculum**, and include literacy standards for science, social studies, and technical subjects. These standards complement rather than replace content standards in those subjects and are the responsibility of teachers in those specific disciplines, making literacy a shared responsibility across educators.

To read the Common Core State Standards and get more information about them, go to www.corestandards.org.