



CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION STEERING COMMITTEE

A Committee of the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association

Frequently Asked Questions Common Core State Standards CCSS

1. What are the Common Core State Standards?

The CCSS are educational standards that determine what students in grades K-12 should know and be able to do in English Language Arts and Mathematics. They are designed to increase rigor and provide clarity and consistency to prepare every student for success in college and the workforce. A copy of the CCSS for English Language Arts and Mathematics can be found on the California Department of Education website at cde.ca.gov.

2. Why do we need the CCSS?

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 all students are receiving a high quality education from school to school and state to state. Common standards will provide a greater opportunity for schools and districts across the nation to share resources and practices to best serve the needs of all students.

3. Who was involved in the development of the CCSS?

The development of the CCSS was a voluntary, state-led effort coordinated by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association for Best Practices, with nearly every state in the country contributing to their development. Collaborative groups including parents, teachers, school administrators, professional organizations, and experts from across the country provided input. Other supporting partners include National PTA, The National Association of State Boards of Education, The Alliance for Excellent Education, The American Association of School Administrators, The Business Roundtable, Achieve, ACT, and the College Board.

4. Are the standards a new national curriculum?

The federal government has not been involved in initiating or developing the CCSS. States voluntarily adopted the standards. The standards do not dictate the details of academic curriculum; they only provide clear expectations for what each student must know to leave school prepared for college and career. In most schools, the curriculum is determined by the local school district.

5. Do they tell teachers what to teach?

The CCSS only set the goal to create students who are college and career ready; they do not tell teachers “what” or “how” to teach. The CCSS are a tool to help teachers prepare the best classroom lessons and activities. The standards also help students and parents understand the new set of expectations to be successful in each grade level. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.

6. How do the CCSS compare to the current California State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards have been designed from the best and highest state standards in the country. The state standards of California and Massachusetts greatly aided in the development of the CCSS. Many of the authors of California’s standards also worked on the new standards. California has also added or enhanced up to 15% of the standards in Mathematics and 8% of the standards in English Language Arts in order to clarify the existing standards and maintain the rigor of the current California standards.

7. Will expectations of my child change?

All students deserve a world-class education that prepares them for college, careers and life. The best way to prepare students is to ensure they graduate with a strong foundation in the core academic areas that will leave all doors open in the future. The CCSS provide that strong foundation. Students will learn from lessons based on the new standards, however changes and expectations for students will be made gradually. In English Language Arts, students will read a balance of non-fiction and literary text at each grade level and will write using evidence gathered from text to inform or make an argument. In Mathematics, students will work more deeply in fewer topics and use math in real-world situations. The new CCSS expectations prepare students for meaningful participation in the global economy.

8. How will the CCSS create a shift in teaching and learning in California schools?

Instruction will begin to shift in both English Language Arts and Mathematics with students probing more deeply into subject matter, engaging in higher level reasoning, and applying their knowledge to real world situations and problem solving. Educators will receive training on how to write modules or lesson units that will help students attain the new standards.

9. Is there a plan to develop standards in other areas?

English Language Arts and Mathematics 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. States are developing the Next Generation Science Standards and it is expected that other content areas will follow with new or revised standards.

10. Will the CCSS mean more standardized tests?

The Common Core State Standards will not mean more tests. However, there will be different tests. Our current testing system in the U.S. is composed of mainly multiple choice questions with only one correct answer. The Smarter Balanced Assessments are being developed by a state-led consortium creating a new generation of performance tests that require students to apply knowledge and demonstrate an ability to solve complex problems in both English Language Arts and Mathematics. These tests are aligned to the CCSS and will be administered online in grades 3-8 and 11 to measure progress toward college and career readiness. Students will begin to take the new Smarter Balanced Assessments during the 2014-2015 school year. You can learn more about California's participation in the SBAC at cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalanced.asp

11. When will schools and districts be expected to implement the CCSS?

The *Common Core State Standards Systems Implementation Plan for California*, approved by The State Board of Education in March 2012, identifies major phases and activities involved in the transition to the CCSS. It serves as a blueprint that districts and schools may use to develop a CCSS implementation plan. District and school timelines will be based on local needs and resources.

12. What can I do to learn more about the CCSS?

Parents can talk to their child's teacher and other educators about the new standards and what is expected of their child at each grade level. Web resources are available and have been designed to inform and support parents during the transition to the Common Core State Standards.

Business and community leaders can follow state and local implementation processes as the work unfolds, utilize available web resources, and meet with local superintendents and principals about forming partnerships with the business community to support students to become better prepared for the workforce.

