

# Common Core State Standards Overview

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## What They Are and Why They Matter

The reality is stark: today's students simply aren't keeping pace with the expectations of the world around them. There are persistent and dramatic achievement gaps in our country's education system. And college remediation rates are dire, creating a generation of learners that are unprepared to perform and unlikely thrive. They need smarter standards and sharper tools to prepare them for the demands of the 21st century.

Luckily, through a remarkable and collaborative effort, the Common Core State Standards were born. They were forged as a promise for consistent, shared and rigorous education standards for all students: a promise devoted to student growth and success, built upon strengths and lessons learned and grounded in research and evidence.

The Common Core Standards were designed with great care—by states, for states—as a result of an unprecedented collaboration between governors and state education chiefs.

One of the goals of the process was to produce a set of fewer, clearer and higher standards. It was crucial that any standards must be consistent, relevant and—above all—teachable in the classroom. As such, the standards must cover only those areas that are critical for student success.

The Common Core Standards are informed by the content, rigor and organization of standards of high-performing countries and states so that all students are prepared to succeed in a global economy and society. The inclusion of all types of learners was also a priority, with writers selecting language intended to make the standards documents accessible to different learners.

To be clear, standards are not curriculum. The Common Core initiative is about developing a set of standards that are common across states. While the curriculum could become more consistent from state to state based on the commonality of the standards, there are—however—multiple ways to teach these standards, and multiple approaches to help students and educators achieve their academic goals.

## The Standards Development Process

To develop these standards, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) worked with representatives from participating states, a wide range of educators, content experts, researchers, national organizations, and community groups. These final standards reflect the invaluable feedback from the general public, teachers, parents, business leaders, states, and content area experts and are informed by the standards of other high performing nations.

The college and career readiness standards were first developed in the summer of 2009 and—based on these standards—K-12 learning progressions developed. After multiple rounds of feedback from states, teachers, researchers, higher education, and the general public, the final Common Core State Standards were released on June 2, 2010.

The standards development process has incorporated the best practices and research from across the nation and the world. As new research is conducted, the implementation of the common core standards is evaluated, with the intent of revising the standards on a set review cycle.

The Common Core Standards themselves are:

- Aligned with college and work expectations
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills
- Are focused and coherent
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards
- Informed by top-performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society
- Ensure that standards are evidence and/or research-based
- State led: coordinated by NGA Center and CCSSO

Currently, every state has its own set of academic standards, meaning public education students in each state are learning to different levels. All students must be prepared to compete with not only their American peers in the next state, but with students from around the world

## **Standards For English Language Arts & Literacy In History/ Social Studies, Science, And Technical Subjects**

These standards—built on the best standards work of the states—align with college and career readiness and maintain focus on what matters most to achieve these goals. They provide an integrated model of literacy with media requirements blended throughout. These standards are broken up into three main sections—K–5 (cross-disciplinary), 6–12 English Language Arts, and 6–12 Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects—and four strands—Reading (including Reading Foundational Skills), Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language.

College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards feature broad expectations consistent across grades and content areas and are based on evidence about college and workforce training expectations. K–12 standards employ grade-specific end-of-year expectations and are a developmentally appropriate, cumulative progression of skills and understandings aligned with one-to-one correspondence with CCR standards.

## **Reading**

Reading comprehension standards for reading literature and informational texts feature strong and growing across-the-curriculum emphasis on a student’s ability to read and comprehend informational texts. The range of reading and level of text complexity employs a “staircase” of growing text complexity across grades using high-quality literature and informational texts in a range of genres and subgenres.

## **Reading Foundational Skills**

- Print concepts (K–1)
- Phonological awareness (K–1)
- Phonics and word recognition (K–5)
- Fluency (K–5)

## **Writing and Language**

The standards feature strong and growing across-the-curriculum emphasis on students writing arguments and informative/explanatory texts, all aligned with the NAEP Writing framework. Other crucial aspects include:

- Developing and strengthening writing
- Using technology to produce and enhance writing
- Engaging in research and writing about sources
- Writing routinely over various time frames
- Formal sharing of information and concepts, including through the use of technology
- Using standard English in formal writing and speaking
- Using language effectively and recognizing language varieties

- Determining word meanings and word nuances
- Acquiring general academic and domain-specific words and phrases

The Common Core Standards don't define how teachers should teach, or all that can or should be taught. They also don't speak to the interventions needed for students well below grade level, or the nature of advanced work beyond the core. To be effective in improving education and getting all students ready for college, workforce training, and life in general, the Common Core Standards must be partnered with a content-rich curriculum and robust assessments, both aligned to the Standards.

## Mathematics

The standards for mathematical content carry across all grade levels. Content standards define what students should understand and be able to do, clusters are groups of related standards, and domains are larger groups that progress across grades. The K-8 standards are presented by grade level and are organized into domains that progress over several grades. High school standards are presented by conceptual theme (Number & Quantity, Algebra, Functions, Modeling, Geometry, Statistics & Probability).

The standards begin with extending the counting sequence, understanding place value, and using place value understanding and properties of operations to add and subtract. Next, students represent and solve problems involving addition and subtraction and work to understand and apply properties of operations and the relationship between addition and subtraction.

In grades 3-6, students develop an understanding of fractions as numbers, build fractions from unit fractions by applying and extending previous understandings of operations on whole numbers, understand decimal notation for fractions, and compare decimal fractions. Students then develop understanding of statistical variability, leading up to algebra in grade 8, where students explore properties of operations, similarity, ratio and proportional relationships, rational number system, as well as:

- Work with radicals and integer exponents
- Understand the connections between proportional relationships, lines, and linear equations
- Analyze and solve linear equations and pairs of simultaneous linear equations
- Define, evaluate, and compare functions
- Use functions to model relationships between quantities.

In high school, the mathematical standards grapple with conceptual themes such as:

- Number and Quantity
- Algebra
- Functions
- Modeling
- Geometry
- Statistics and Probability

The Common Core Standards focus on key topics at each grade level and coherent progressions across grade levels. They are a balance of concepts and skills, with content standards that require both conceptual understanding and procedural fluency. In terms of mathematical practices, they foster reasoning while constructing an ambitious yet achievable bridge toward college- and career-readiness.

These Standards are not business as usual. They are a rallying cry, a dynamic next step. It's time for states to work together to build on lessons learned from two decades of standards based reforms, and to recognize that standards are not just promises made to our children, but promises we intend to keep.