

21ST CENTURY LEARNING

WHAT ARE THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS?



THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Every fall, high school graduates pack for college or launch their careers. Success in college and career requires critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and strong communication and technology skills. Are students ready? Reports of students in other countries outperforming U.S. students have made this question even more urgent.

The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) addressed this challenge. Working with experts from K-12 and higher education, they compared education practices across states and with other nations to learn the most effective ways to prepare students for higher education and a competitive global economy. The result was the Common Core State Standards – a description of what students should know and be able to do in English Language Arts and Math as they progress through their K-12 education in order to graduate prepared for success. The standards draw on the findings of national surveys of employers and the national College and Career Readiness Standards.

WHAT DO THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS MEAN FOR OUR CHILDREN?

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are intended to be the next step toward providing every student with a powerful education. What are the benefits of CCSS?

1. The foundation for success in the 21st century will be the ability to think critically, solve problems creatively, and to communicate and collaborate effectively. CCSS will provide opportunities for students to acquire and perfect these “21st century skills” so they can be prepared to succeed in higher education and compete in the global economy.
2. CCSS will encourage and facilitate the integration of technology into the classroom, both as a resource to support student learning and as a means of leveling the playing field by offering all students access to the world of information.
3. CCSS will replace exclusively multiple-choice assessments with more project-oriented and critical-thinking assessments that require students to use the knowledge they have acquired to demonstrate their learning.

4. CCSS defines conceptually rich standards aligned across states and on par with the high standards of nations whose students have had the greatest educational success. The new standards place more emphasis on deep understanding and real-world application.
5. CCSS focuses a coordinated, multi-state effort on preparing students for success in college and career pursuits while giving local schools and classroom teachers more support for designing strategies that will empower their students’ learning.

WHY ARE THE COMMON CORE STANDARDS NECESSARY?

Before Common Core State Standards, individual states adopted their own standards that varied widely in their content and level of rigor. Some states, like California, had very rigorous state standards. Other states had less rigorous standards. California’s standards contributed to the development of the CCSS and many authors of California’s standards also worked on the new standards. CCSS provides consistency to ensure that a high school graduate from *any* state will be ready to succeed in college.



WHO DECIDED TO ADOPT THE STANDARDS FOR CALIFORNIA?

In the fall of 2009, the NGA and the CCSSO with stakeholders from 48 states (including California), two territories, and the District of Columbia committed to develop a common set of standards in English and mathematics. The Common Core State Standards provided states like California with the latitude to make some state-specific additions to the standards, so as to serve our unique populations. States could decide whether or not to adopt the Common Core standards.

In August of 2010, the California State Board of Education formally adopted the Common Core State Standards. They are a state mandate and are funded by state legislation.

WHAT ABOUT CURRICULUM AND TEACHING METHODS?

The standards define the common knowledge and skills that most leaders in business and higher education believe all students need in order to be ready for college and career. They define basic expectations, but do not limit states or students to only those basic expectations.

State and local educators select the curriculum, books, and instructional materials. Teaching methods and lessons are determined by teachers.

Local school districts will continue to use transparent policies and committees that give parents and teachers a voice in the decision making process. The California State Board of Education's advisory committee, the Instructional Quality Commission, will ensure that curriculum, materials, and content standards align with the high expectations of the Common Core State Standards for math and English language arts, so that every student in California is guaranteed a rigorous educational experience.

WHO SUPPORTS THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS?

- California School Boards Association (CSBA)
- Association of California School Administrators (ACSA)
- California Teachers Association (CTA)
- California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA)
- California Parent Teacher Association (PTA)



“The foundation for success in the 21st century will be the ability to think critically, solve problems creatively, and to communicate and collaborate effectively. The Common Core State Standards will provide opportunities for students to acquire and perfect these 21st century skills.”



WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

California Department of Education

- www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc

California Parent Teacher Association

- www.capta.org/sections/programs/e-standards.cfm

Sonoma County Office of Education

- www.scoe.org/ccss

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