



Common Core State Standards FAQs

What are educational standards?

Educational standards help teachers ensure their students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful by providing clear goals and expectations for student learning.

Why do we need educational standards?

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 students are receiving a high quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state. Common standards will provide a greater opportunity to share experiences and best practices within and across states that will improve our ability to best serve the needs of all students. Standards also help students and parents by setting clear and realistic goals for success. Standards are a first step – a key building block – in providing our young people with a high-quality education that will prepare them for success in college and work. Of course, standards are not the only thing necessary for our children’s success, but they provide an accessible roadmap for our teachers, parents, students and communities.

What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort to establish a single set of clear educational standards for English-language arts and mathematics that states can share and voluntarily adopt. The standards have been informed by the best available evidence and the highest state standards across the country and globe and designed by a diverse group of teachers, experts, parents, and school administrators, so they reflect both our aspirations for our children and the realities of the classroom. These standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to go to college or enter the workforce and that parents, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. The standards are benchmarked to international standards to guarantee that our students are competitive in the emerging global marketplace.

Why is the Common Core State Standards Initiative important?

We want to make sure that every child across the country is given the tools they need to succeed. High standards that are consistent across states provide teachers, parents, and students with a set of clear expectations that everyone can work toward together. This will ensure that we maintain America’s competitive edge, so that all of our students are well prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to compete with not only their peers here at home, but with students from around the world.

Who is leading the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

Parents, teachers, school administrators and experts from across the country together with state leaders, through their membership in the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) are leading the effort to develop a common core of state standards.

Will the common core state standards keep local teachers from deciding what or how to teach?

No. Common core standards are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents and others will decide *how* the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms. Local teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards will continue to make decisions about curriculum and how their school systems are operated.

Were teachers involved in the creation of the standards?

Yes. Teachers have been a critical voice in the development of the standards. The National Education Association (NEA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), among other organizations have been instrumental in bringing together teachers to provide specific, constructive feedback on the standards.

Process

What makes this process different from other efforts to create common standards?

This process is different because it is state-led, and has the support of educators across the country as well as prominent education, business, and state leaders' organizations, including CCSSO, the NGA Center, Achieve, Inc, ACT, the College Board, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the Alliance for Excellent Education, the Hunt Institute, the National Parent Teacher Association, the State Higher Education Executive Officers, the American Association of School Administrators, and the Business Roundtable.

Who or what entity determines the common core state standards?

CCSSO and the NGA Center have been leading the standards development process in consultation with teachers, parents, experts and administrators. To ensure that this process was open, inclusive, and rigorous, several working groups and committees were formed. They included the:

- Standards Development Work Group - responsible for determining and writing the common core state standards.
- Feedback Group - provided information backed by research to inform the standards development process by offering expert input on draft documents.
- Validation Committee – nominated by states and national organizations and selected by a group of 12 governors and chiefs who hold leadership positions at NGA Center and CCSSO. These independent, national education experts reviewed the common core state standards to ensure they met the development criteria.

Members of the work and feedback group are listed on the site www.corestandards.org.

By what criteria were standards being developed?

The standards were developed using the following criteria:

- Aligned with expectations for college and career success
- Clear, so that educators and parents know what they need to do to help students learn
- Consistent across all states, so that students are not taught to a lower standard just because of where they live
- Include both content *and* the application of knowledge through high-order skills
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards and standards of top-performing nations
- Realistic, for effective use in the classroom
- Informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society
- Evidence and research -based

Why are the common core state standards for just English-language arts and math and what are the grade levels? Are there plans to develop common standards in other areas in the future?

The English-language arts and math standards are for grades K-12. English-language arts and math were the first subjects chosen for the common core state standards because these two subjects are skills, upon which students build skill sets in other subject areas. They are also the subjects most frequently assessed for accountability purposes. Now that the English-language arts and math standards are developed, CCSSO and

NGA Center, on behalf of the states, plan to develop a common core of standards in science and potentially additional subject areas. Research from the early childhood and higher education communities have also informed the development of the standards.

Implementation and Future Work

What will these common core state standards mean for students?

The standards will provide more clarity and consistency in what is expected of student learning across the country. Currently, every state has its own set of academic standards, meaning public education students at the same grade level in each state may be expected to achieve different content at different levels. This initiative will allow states to share information effectively and help provide all students with an equal opportunity for an education that will prepare them to be successful in college or enter the workforce, regardless of where they live. Common standards will not prevent different levels of achievement among students, but they will ensure more consistent exposure to materials and learning experiences through curriculum, instruction, and teacher preparation. In a global economy, students must be prepared to compete with not only their American peers in the next state, but with students from around the world. These standards will not mean more tests. Having one set of standards will make it easier for states to pool information and resources to develop a shared set of high-quality tests to better evaluate student progress. The goal is not to have more tests, but to have better tests that help inform students, parents, teachers and communities.

How will these standards impact teachers?

The standards will provide clear goals and expectations for student learning so that teachers can ensure they are preparing students for success in college and the workforce. They will help teachers develop and implement effective strategies for their students by providing benchmarks for skills and knowledge that their students should have by the end of the year. The common core state standards will help colleges and professional development programs better prepare teachers; provide the opportunity for teachers to be involved in the development of assessments linked to these top-quality standards; allow states to develop and provide better assessments that more accurately measure whether or not students have learned what was taught; and guide educators toward curricula and teaching strategies that will give students a deep understanding of the subject and the skills they need to apply their knowledge.

Will common assessments be developed?

Like adoption of common core standards, it will be up to the states: Illinois has joined with other states to voluntarily to develop a common assessment system, based on the common core state standards. A state-led consortium on assessment would be grounded in the following principles: allow for comparison across students, schools, districts, states and nations; create economies of scale; provide information and support more effective teaching and learning; and prepare students for college and careers.

(Edited from Common Core Standards Initiative FAQ)