

## Frequently Asked Questions about the Common Core State Standards

### *What are educational standards?*

Educational standards are the learning goals for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Educational standards help teachers ensure their students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful, while also helping parents understand what is expected of their children.

### *What is the Common Core?*

State education chiefs and governors in 48 states came together to develop the Common Core, a set of clear college- and career-ready standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. Today, 43 states have voluntarily adopted and are working to implement the standards, which are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to take credit bearing introductory courses in two- or four-year college programs or enter the workforce.

### *Who led the development of the Common Core State Standards?*

The nation's governors and education commissioners, through their representative organizations, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), led the development of the Common Core State Standards and continue to lead the initiative. Teachers, parents, school administrators, and experts from across the country, together with state leaders, provided input into the development of the standards.

The actual implementation of the Common Core, including how the standards are taught, the curriculum developed, and the materials used to support teachers as they help students reach the standards, is led entirely at the state and local levels.

### *Were teachers involved in the creation of the standards?*

Yes, teachers have been a critical voice in the development of the standards. The Common Core drafting process relied on teachers and standards experts from across the country. 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, were instrumental in bringing together teachers to provide specific, constructive feedback on the standards.

### *Why are the Common Core State Standards important?*

High standards that are consistent across states provide teachers, parents, and students with a set of clear expectations to ensure that all students have the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life upon graduation from high school, regardless of where they live. These standards are aligned to the expectations of colleges, workforce training programs, and employers. The standards promote equity by ensuring all students are well prepared to collaborate and compete with their peers in the United States and abroad. Unlike previous state standards, which varied widely from state to state, the Common Core enables collaboration among states on a range of tools and policies.

### *Who was involved in the development of the Common Core State Standards?*

States across the country collaborated with teachers, researchers, and leading experts to design and develop the Common Core State Standards. Each state independently made the decision to adopt the Common Core. Local teachers, principals, and superintendents lead the implementation of the Common Core in their states. The federal government was not involved in the development of the standards.

### *How do the Common Core State Standards compare to previous state education standards?*

The Common Core was developed by building on the best state standards in the United States; examining the expectations of other high-performing countries around the world; and carefully studying the research and literature available on what students need to know and be able to do to be successful in college, career, and life. No state was asked to lower their expectations for students in adopting the Common Core. The evidence-based

standards were developed in consultation with teachers and parents from across the country, so they are also realistic and practical for the classroom.

The following criteria guided the development of the standards:

- Alignment with expectations for college and career success
- Clarity
- Consistency across all states
- Inclusion of content and the application of knowledge through high-order skills
- Improvement upon current state standards and standards of top-performing nations
- Reality-based for effective use in the classroom
- Evidence- and research-based

*What grade levels are included in the Common Core State Standards?*

The English language arts and math standards are for grades K-12. (Massachusetts included Pre-Kindergarten in its curriculum frameworks.) Research from the early childhood and higher education communities also informed the development of the standards.

*What do the Common Core State Standards mean for students?*

Today's students are preparing to enter a world in which colleges and businesses are demanding more than ever before. To ensure all students are prepared for success after graduation, the Common Core establishes a set of clear, consistent guidelines for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level in math and English language arts.

*How do the Common Core State Standards impact teachers?*

The standards impact teachers by:

- Providing them with consistent goals and benchmarks to ensure students are progressing on a path for success in college, career, and life
- Providing them with consistent expectations for students who move into their districts and classrooms from other states
- Providing them the opportunity to collaborate with teachers across the country as they develop curricula, materials, and assessments linked to high-quality standards
- Helping colleges and professional development programs better prepare teachers

*Do the standards tell teachers what to teach?*

Teachers know best about what works in the classroom. That is why these standards establish what students need to learn, but do not dictate how teachers should teach. Instead, schools and teachers decide how best to help students reach the standards.

*Are there data collection requirements associated with the Common Core State Standards?*

No. Implementing the Common Core State Standards does not require data collection. Standards define expectations for what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade. The means of assessing students and the data that result from those assessments are up to the discretion of each state and are separate and unique from the Common Core.

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