



COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Forty-five states have decided to adopt new Common Core State Standards for what students in K-12 should learn in English and mathematics. Learn more about what this means for your community.

WHAT ARE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS?

The Common Core State Standards in math and English Language Arts describe what every U.S. student should know and be able to do to be ready for success after high school, whether that student goes directly to college or to the workplace. They are broad, clear statements of the knowledge and skills students should master at every grade level from kindergarten to twelfth grade. It is up to teachers and school administrators at the state and local levels to determine how best to teach what is in the standards.

Teachers, administrators, and other experts in math and English from states across the country worked together to create the Common Core Standards. Each state had the option to adopt these common standards or maintain their own standards.

WHY ARE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS IMPORTANT?

Standards that are clear and challenging help teachers, students, and parents better understand what they should be working to achieve. Before Common Core Standards, states all had different standards, and many of these standards were neither clearly written nor ambitious enough about what students should learn. The education experts who developed the Common Core State Standards have designed them to be comparable to standards in countries whose students perform at the top of international tests.

Common Core Standards in math and English Language Arts require that students demonstrate a deeper grasp of academic content and critical thinking skills. They must also understand complex texts and master sophisticated math in critical areas such as algebra, geometry, and statistics. In most states, this means that students will have to learn to higher levels than they ever have. Students who meet these standards will be well prepared to thrive in a competitive global job market.

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WHAT COMES NEXT?

Most states that have adopted the Common Core Standards are working together to create shared tests to measure how well students have learned the content. Other Common Core states are exploring third-party tests or developing their own. The tests of Common Core content, which most states will first introduce in the 2014/15 school year, will prompt students to think critically, solve complex problems, show their work, and explain their reasoning.

Because the Common Core Standards and tests are more demanding than what most states have required so far, it is likely that fewer students will initially pass the state tests—but this does not mean that students or their schools are doing worse than they have in the past. What it means is teachers, students, and their parents will have a much more honest assessment of whether students are on track to succeed in college and careers, and it will enable teachers and schools to give struggling students the help they really need.

SEPARATING FACT FROM FICTION

Misconceptions about Common Core Standards have begun to surface. Some critics claim that these standards are an effort by the federal government to restrict states’ rights to set their own standards, that bureaucrats will control what teachers do in the classroom, and that the standards are lowering the bar for American students. Nothing could be further from the truth. Common Core Standards were created by states for states, and leaders in each state have always been free to choose whether or not they wanted to adopt them. Schools and teachers, too, have the freedom to decide how they want to teach the standards. Finally, the nonprofit Fordham Institute reviewed the standards and found that they were more rigorous than standards in 46 states and just as rigorous as standards in the remaining four. The standards are an historic opportunity to raise the quality of American schooling.

Change the Equation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, CEO-led initiative that is mobilizing the business community to improve the quality of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics learning in the United States. Since its launch in September 2010, CTEq has helped its nearly 100 members connect and align their philanthropic and advocacy efforts so that they add up to much more than the sum of their parts. CTEq’s coalition of members strives to sustain a national movement to improve PreK-12 STEM learning by leveraging and expanding its work focusing on three goals: improving philanthropy, inspiring youth, and advocating for change. www.changetheequality.org

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Learn more about the Common Core Standards.** Visit www.corestandards.org to explore the Standards, which states have adopted them, and what states are doing to implement them.
- **Help make the Common Core Standards a success in your community.** Ask your local superintendent, school board, or school principal to describe their plan for ensuring that the standards boost student learning. That plan should include:
 - A clear vision of success that the community embraces;
 - Strict deadlines for important implementation milestones, such as choosing clear curriculum tied to the Standards, intensive training and support for teachers, and support systems for students and parents; and
 - Explicit plans for publicly reporting progress towards that vision of success.

By educating yourself about Common Core State Standards, you can become a champion for strong schools in your community.

