



# Common Core State Standards

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Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are an updated set of academic standards that have been developed with the intention of unifying learning expectations for students across all states.

CCSS bring strong advantages to students in California and in the United States. First, by unifying the expectations, assessments of educational quality and the federal funding that is based on such assessment will be more equitable. Second, students throughout the United States will be in a better position to compete with students throughout the world for university admission and for jobs in a global market. Finally, these standards define kindergarten through twelfth grade learning that will ensure that students are well prepared for post-secondary education and careers.

EGUSD has a multi-year implementation plan in place that includes professional development for teachers and staff, outreach to parents and information for the community.

## **Q. What is the national initiative for Common Core State Standards?**

A. The Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) coordinated the state-led Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative. California was one of 46 states that participated in this effort. Because the standards were developed by states in collaboration with one another, they provide common expectations for what students are expected to learn. The final set of CCSS was released in June 2010.

## **Q. What are the Common Core State Standards?**

A. The CCSS address the content areas of English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The common core ELA standards include literacy standards for history/social studies, science and technical subjects. These kindergarten through 12th grade standards provide a progression of knowledge and skills that prepare students to graduate from high school and be ready for college and careers. The standards are research-based and internationally benchmarked.

## **Q. Where can I find information about the national initiative for Common Core State Standards?**

A. Information about the national initiative for Common Core State Standards is available at: <http://www.corestandards.org/>.

## **Q. Why are Common Core State Standards needed?**

A. In the past, each state had its own set of standards, and consequently, what students were expected to learn varied from state to state. The initiative is an effort to set a clear and consistent progression of K-12 standards that will

prepare students for success in college and their careers. The CCSS articulate the same expectations for all students, regardless of where they live.

## **Q. What are some of the advantages of having Common Core State Standards?**

A. There are many advantages in adopting the Common Core State Standards. This effort provides opportunities to collaborate with other states, reduces costs by pooling resources and articulates internationally benchmarked expectations for student performance. The English language arts and mathematics content standards, which were adopted by California in 1997, were considered to be among the most rigorous in the United States. The CCSS Initiative provided the opportunity to reexamine California's standards against international benchmarks and the standards of other states. The new CCSS are rigorous, internationally benchmarked, and will prepare students to experience future success in college and careers.

## **Q. How were English Learner (EL) considerations addressed in the Common Core State Standards?**

A. Linguists and experts in EL educational issues were involved in the development of the CCSS for ELA. These individuals assisted in shaping the standards in general, and had a significant impact on the language and vocabulary standards. In recognition of the need for new English language development standards to clarify what knowledge, skills and abilities are needed to help ELs engage with and master next generation standards, including college and career readiness standards, Assembly Bill 124 was enacted. This bill required that the state's current California's English Language Development Standards (CA ELD Standards) be updated, revised, and aligned with by grade level to the state's ELA standards.

In November 2012, the California State Board of Education adopted new English Language Development Standards that are aligned to California's Common Core State Standards for ELA and address English language and literacy skills ELs need in key content areas.

## **Q. Where can I find the adopted California Common Core Standards?**

A. On EGUSD's CCSS website at <http://blogs.egusd.net/ccss/about-ccss/standards/>.

## **Q. How are California's existing mathematics standards and the new California Common Core Standards different?**

A. There are more similarities between California's existing mathematics standards and the new California Common Core Standards than there are differences. Some differences include: a shift in the grade level for some skills, the

organization of the standards, and an emphasis on the intellectual behaviors and habits of mind that are used by mathematicians and scientists. These are known as the Standards for Mathematical Practice.

**Q. Are there differences between California's existing English language arts standards and the new California Common Core Standards?**

A. Yes. For example, the California Common Core Standards are anchored in the College and Career Readiness standards. The California Common Core Standards focus to a greater extent on text complexity, address reading and writing across the curriculum, emphasize informational text, and focus on writing arguments and drawing evidence from sources. The California Common Core Standards build on California's existing standards in reading foundations.

**Q. How are Common Core State Standards different from what is currently being taught?**

A. Common Core Standards are more similar to the previous standards than they are different. The differences are that some standards are taught at different grade levels than in the past. There is also more of an emphasis on learning concepts in depth and to mastery rather than covering a little bit of information about a large number of standards.

**Q. What are some examples of how Common Core State Standards will impact my child's education?**

A. In English Language Arts, one example is that, over time, students will be able to read, comprehend, and analyze more sophisticated text. A teacher may encourage your child to choose books that are written at a more challenging level. Also, you may notice more frequent writing assignments. This includes more writing within core subjects of science and history/social science.

In mathematics, parents may see their students making drawings or models to illustrate or demonstrate their solutions to problems. While the learning of math facts (for instance, "times tables") is still important, students will spend more time working through a solution to a "real-life" problem rather than repeatedly practicing the same type of problem. (A "real-life" problem might involve designing alternative shapes for a rabbit pen enclosure if given a limited amount of fencing.)

**Q. How is this going to help my child?**

A. These new standards will improve your child's writing and math skills. They will be more prepared for high stake tests such as SATs and ACTs and the expectations of college and career. These standards are better aligned with international expectations, helping your child be ready to compete in a 21st century global marketplace.

**Q. How is EGUSD Implementing the Common Core State Standards?**

A. The Elk Grove Unified School District is committed to making the transition to the CCSS as smooth as possible for students and teachers. The with that in mind, the District chose to transition over a two-year period in order to give ample time for the transition.

EGUSD's implementation of the CCSS began this school year at elementary schools with mathematics in grades K-2 and ELA in grades 3-6. In 2013-2014, elementary schools will add ELA in grades K-2 and mathematics in grades 3-6. At the middle and high schools, in 2013-2014, the CCSS mathematics and ELA standards (including literacy standards for science and history/social sciences) will be taught at all grade levels.

**Q. What can parents do to help their child?**

A. For English Language Arts parents can encourage their students to read more, especially non-fiction or informational (e.g., newspaper articles, hobby articles, biographies, historical accounts, etc). Ask them to read to you out loud. Talk to them about what they read.

For mathematics, invite your student to show you what they learned in class today. Have them work out problems in front of you, talking you through what they are doing, step by step. Ask them if they can explain why they use these steps. Try to help them see connections between the math they are learning and real life problems. Show them how and when you are using math similar to what they are learning.

**Q. What are Smarter Balanced Assessments?**

A. Smarter Balanced Assessments are part of an overall testing system called the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). The Smarter Balanced Assessments are computer-based tests that will replace the former paper-based, multiple-choice assessments in English language arts/literacy and math.

The tests are an academic check-up, designed to give teachers feedback they need to improve instruction and the tools to improve teaching and learning. The assessments will use computer adaptive technology to provide more accurate information about individual student performance. And because the tests are taken online, information will be available to teachers, schools, and school districts on a timely basis so it can be used to help students learn.

Student testing dates are school specific and may vary some site to site. For information on your student's SBAC test dates, contact your student's school.



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