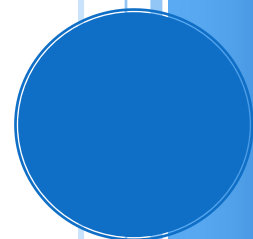


# COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

## *Understanding What the New Standards Mean for My Child*

This document gives parents a quick and easy “go to” resource of free documents and videos to learn about how Common Core State Standards raise the bar for our children. This is by no means a complete list of resources available, but rather a thoughtful collection.

Foundation for Excellence in Education  
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# COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

## OVERVIEW

Common Core State Standards are a state-led effort to establish clear, world-class educational standards for English language arts and mathematics. In 2010, 45 states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity adopted the Common Core State Standards. Click [here](#) to find out if your state has adopted the Common Core Standards.

## UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE NEW COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS MEAN FOR YOUR CHILD

The Common Core State Standards are a more rigorous set of academic standards to ensure that students are ready for college or the workforce when they graduate. Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics, create higher expectations for our students. The standards challenge students to read critically, write extensively, and solve real-world math problems at greater capacity. In short, they raise the bar for all students and will result in a more valuable education.

Common Core State Standards are benchmarked to international standards to guarantee that students are prepared to be competitive with students from other countries. In today's economy, students will have to compete in a global marketplace against students from China, Singapore, and the United Kingdom. These new standards will help states maintain America's competitive edge. They will ensure all our students are well prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to compete with their peers at home and abroad.

There are many useful resources about Common Core State Standards available for parents. For example, this [three-minute video](#), from the *Council of the Great City Schools*, explains how the Common Core State Standards will help students achieve at high levels and help them learn what they need to know to graduate prepared for college and/or a career.

The new Common Core State Standards make several important changes to past standards. These changes are called **shifts**. The charts below show the shifts that will occur in your child's English language arts and mathematics classrooms, what your child may bring home in their backpack, and what you can do to help your child. If your child's assignments do not reflect the shifts, then you may want to talk to your child's teacher.

Shifts in English Language Arts		
What's Shifting?	What to Look for in the Backpack?	What Can You Do?
Your child will now <b><u>read more non-fiction books and articles</u></b> in each grade level.	Look for your kids to have more reading assignments based on real-life events, such as biographies, articles and historical stories.	Read non-fiction books with your children. Ask them questions along the way to check understanding.

Shifts in English Language Arts		
What's Shifting?	What to Look for in the Backpack?	What Can You Do?
Reading more non-fiction books will help your child <b><u>learn about the world through reading.</u></b>	Look for your kids to bring home more fact-based books about the world. For instance, your first grader or kindergartener might read Clyde Robert Bulla's <i>A Tree is a Plant</i> or <i>My Five Senses</i> by Aliki. These books let students read and learn about science.	Know what non-fiction books are grade-level appropriate, and make sure your children have access to such books. Ask your child's teacher if you need help finding appropriate books.
Your child will <b><u>read challenging books with a critical eye.</u></b> They will be challenged to make sense of what they read and draw their own conclusions.	Your kids will have reading and writing assignments that might ask them to retell or write about key parts of a story or book. For example, your second or third grader might be asked to read Brian Floca's non-fiction book titled <i>Moonshot: The Flight of Apollo 11</i> and retell facts from the story.	Provide more challenging books for your kids to read. Show them how to dig deeper into difficult sections by asking questions about the book parts and discussing new information or information that is confusing.
When it comes to writing or retelling a story, your child will <b><u>use "evidence" gathered from the book to support what they say.</u></b>	Look for written assignments that ask your child to find evidence from concrete examples in books they have read. Using this evidence, your child will be able to support a response or conclusion. This is different from the opinion-based questions that most teachers have used in the past.	Ask your child to provide evidence in everyday discussions, disagreements, and reading assignments.
Your child will <b><u>learn how to write from what they read.</u></b>	Look for writing assignments that ask your child to make arguments in writing using evidence. For fourth and fifth graders, this might mean reading and writing about <i>The Kids Guide to Money</i> , a non-fictional book by Steve Otfinoski.	When writing, encourage your child to use evidence and details from books.
Your child will <b><u>have an increased academic vocabulary.</u></b>	Look for assignments that stretch your child's vocabulary.	Read often to your child. While reading with your child, define and discuss difficult words found in books. Also, discuss simple words, such as "great" and talk about better words with the same meaning, like excellent, extraordinary, and fantastic.

\*Chart adapted from EngageNY:

[http://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/parent\\_workshop\\_backpack\\_guide.pdf](http://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/parent_workshop_backpack_guide.pdf)

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## Shift in Mathematics

What's Shifting?	What to Look for in the Backpack?	What Can You Do?
Your child will <b><u>work more deeply in fewer topics</u></b> , which will ensure a richer understanding. In other words, less is more!	Look for assignments that require students to show their work and explain how they arrived at an answer.	Know what concepts are important for your child based on their grade level, and spend time working on those concepts. If you need help, ask your child's teacher what grade-level concepts your child can work on at home.
Your child will start with a strong foundation and <b><u>continue building on learning year after year</u></b> .	Look for assignments that build on one another. For example, students will focus on adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing. Once these areas are mastered, they will focus on fractions. Building on that, they will then focus on concepts to prepare them for Algebra. You should be able to see the progression in the topics they learn.	Know what concepts are important for your child based on their grade level, and spend time working on those concepts. If you need help, ask your child's teacher what grade-level concepts your child can work on at home.
Your child will <b><u>spend time practicing and memorizing math facts</u></b> .	Look for assignments that focus on memorizing and mastering basic math facts. These assignments are geared toward preparing your child for more rigorous math concepts as they progress through school. For example, students will focus on memorizing multiplication and division facts, such as $4 \times 7$ and $28 \div 4$ .	Be aware of what concepts your child struggled with last year. Support your child in those challenging areas moving forward.
Your child will <b><u>understand how and why math works. They will also be asked to talk about and prove their understanding</u></b> .	Your child will have assignments that focus on memorizing and mastering basic math facts, but your child will also have to be able to explain the "why" behind their answers.	Help your child know and memorize basic math facts, and have them explain how they got the answer.
Your child will be asked to <b><u>use math in real-world situations</u></b> .	Look for math assignments that are based on the real-world. For instance, homework for fifth graders might include adding fractions as part of a dessert recipe or using fractions to determine how much pizza friends.	Set aside time at home every day for your child to work on math. Ask your child to "do the math" that pops up in daily life.

*\*Chart adapted from EngageNY:*

[http://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/parent\\_workshop\\_backpack\\_guide.pdf](http://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/parent_workshop_backpack_guide.pdf)

## ***RESOURCES TO HELP PARENTS BETTER UNDERSTAND THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS***

*Parent Roadmaps* were developed by the *Council of the Great City Schools* to provide parents with guidance about what their children will be learning and how they can support that learning in grades K-12. These parent roadmaps for each grade level also provide three-year snapshots of progress. Snapshots show how selected standards advance from year to year so that students will be college and career ready upon their graduation from high school.

- *Parent Roadmaps to the Common Core State Standards for [English Language Arts](#)*
- *Parent Roadmaps to the Common Core State Standards for [Mathematics](#)*

*The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)* has created parent guides in response to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics. The [Parent Guides](#) include:

- Key items that children should be learning in English language arts and mathematics in each grade once the standards are fully implemented.
- Activities parents use at home to support their child's learning.
- Methods to help parents build stronger relationships with their child's teacher.
- Tips to help families plan for college and career (high school only).

## ***INSIDE THE CLASSROOM***

Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics will transform classroom instruction. Here are some videos of Common Core lessons delivered in real classrooms.

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### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS**

#### **Elementary**

1. Common Core State Standards challenge students to explore increasingly difficult text and vocabulary. The change doesn't end there; students will also learn to cite evidence from what he or she has read in classroom discussion or through writing. This [four-part video series](#) features a fifth-grade class discussing a difficult text, citing evidence from the text, and writing about what they've learned.
  2. Common Core State Standards prepare students to read more difficult text and learn more challenging vocabulary. [Watch](#) how a teacher uses a simple strategy to incorporate "college talk" in her classroom.
  3. Common Core State Standards require students to effectively communicate with peers and adults. These new expectations ask students to engage in discussions about grade-level topics and texts – expressing their ideas and building on the ideas of others. In [this lesson](#), students take notes from a text read to prepare for classroom discussions.
  4. Common Core State Standards incorporate reading, writing, listening and speaking standards into history/social science, science, and technical subjects. In [this video](#), a fifth-grade social studies lesson asks students to read text and use reading strategies to glean important facts
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from a social studies article.

### Middle/High School

1. Common Core State Standards require our students to spend a lot of time reading and considering what they have read. See [here](#) how educators are teaching to Common Core State Standards and challenging students to develop thinking skills in the classroom.
2. Common Core State Standards expect students to write original ideas, use evidence from what they have read to support their reasoning, and build and defend arguments. As always, writing isn't limited to English class. We expect our students to write in all of their subjects. In [this engineering lesson](#), students are designing an iPad case for teachers. To complete the task, students must do research and use evidence from their research to create designs. Before finishing, they must write a technical report about their design.
3. Watch [this lesson](#) to see how students create a piece of persuasive writing after reading the novel, *Of Mice and Men*. In small groups, the students first decide the message they want their audience to come away with, and then decide which pieces of evidence will be most persuasive to prove their point.
4. Here is [a lesson](#) for eight graders focusing on what makes up a persuasive paper or speech. The teacher starts the lesson by having students analyze a persuasive piece and identify the elements that make it persuasive. Then students prepare to write and present their own persuasive piece by creating an outline that includes the same elements.

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## MATHEMATICS

### Elementary

1. You may see your kindergartner or first grader doing math that their older brother or sister did in third or fourth grade. Why? Because students need to master these skills earlier – and with good teaching, they will be able to. Look at this lesson with first graders and all the different ways they count to 100. The focus of [this lesson](#) is a deeper understanding of “why” their answers are correct and the math “rule” that supports their answer.
2. Common Core State Standards expect students to not just “get” the answer, but understand “why” the answer is correct. In this [fourth-grade division lesson](#), a teacher uses class discussions to show her students that understanding the answer is just as important as the answer itself.
3. Common Core State Standards require students to know fractions inside and out. In-depth knowledge of fractions will help students in future, more advanced math classes. In [this lesson](#), students participate in a hands-on activity that uses objects to teach fractions, a more abstract concept. Students are asked to represent fractions in different ways.

### Middle/High School

1. Common Core State Standards expect students to be able to apply all they have learned from kindergarten on. In other words, the expectations for sixth or ninth or twelfth grade math build on the skills students have mastered in each earlier grade. In this lesson, students study statistics in order to determine which historical baseball legend they would want to add to

their team. Students are encouraged to make decisions based on statistical evidence. This lesson gives students the opportunity to compare data and graphical representations and draw their own conclusions.

2. Common Core State Standards for Math require students to know fractions inside and out. In-depth knowledge of fractions will help students in future, more advanced math classes. In this lesson students participate in a hands-on activity that uses objects to teach fractions, a more abstract concept. Students are asked to represent fractions in different ways.
3. This is a creative lesson designed to teach eight-grade students how to graph linear equations in a unique and fun way. The teacher creates a graph using her classroom floor and the students serve as the points on the graph. Through the lesson, students are able to visualize mistakes in their graphs, correct mistakes on their own and receive immediate feedback on their graphs.

For more video lessons aligned to Common Core State Standards, visit the [Teaching Channel](#).

### ***HOW WILL CLASSROOM ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS BE DIFFERENT?***

The Common Core State Standards require students to problem solve to figure out real-world math problems. They also expect students to think more about what they've read and to be able to respond to more in-depth questions. Here are just a few examples of the type of assessment questions or classroom assignments that would have been presented under past expectations compared to Common Core State Standards expectations.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Elementary	<p>Here is one example of how the Common Core State Standards would assess rounding to the nearest hundred compared to past standards.</p> <p><u>Under past standards</u>, students would be asked to round a number to the nearest hundred. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Round 9,149 to the nearest hundred.</li> </ul> <p><u>Under the Common Core State Standards</u>, student would be asked the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When rounded to the nearest hundred, the number of seats in a baseball stadium is 9,100. What is the greatest number of seats that could be in this stadium? Explain how you know.<sup>i</sup></li> </ul>
Middle School	<p><u>Under the past standards</u>, a student would have to answer the following question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A bird flew 20 miles in 100 minutes at constant speed. At that speed, how long would it take the bird to fly 6 miles?</li> </ul> <p><i>*This question requires one calculation using a formula.</i></p> <p><u>Under the Common Core State Standards</u>, a student may have to answer the following question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A bird flew 20 miles in 100 minutes at constant speed. At that speed: (a) how long would it take the bird to fly 6 miles? (b) How far would the bird fly in 15 minutes? (c) How fast is the bird flying in miles per hour? (d) What is the</li> </ul>

bird's pace in minutes per mile?

*\*This question requires a series of calculations and reasoning. It completely measures if students understand the formula as a way to calculate rates.*

High School

Using past standards, a math question might ask:

- If  $3(y-1) = 8$ , then what is  $y$ ?

*\*This question is an example of solving equations as a series of mechanical steps.*

Under the Common Core State Standards, this question would be:

- **What are two different equations with the same solution as  $3(y-1) = 8$ ?**

*\*This question is an example of solving equations as a process of reasoning. Students need to think about what they are doing – not just use what they've memorized.*

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Elementary

After students read a story about bats:

- Under past expectations, a student would have to answer the following questions:
  - Do vampire bats drink human blood?
  - What is different about bats when compared to other mammals?

*\*The first question is answered with a simple yes or no, and the second one expects the student to point out one trait that a bat has that is different than most mammals.*

- Under Common Core State Standards, a student would have to respond to the following task:
  - Compare and contrast the most important points and key details in *Bats!* and *Bats: Creatures of the Night* and report findings in writing clearly and comprehensively using evidence from the two texts.

*\*In this task, the student will have to demonstrate a deep understanding of both texts to be able to find the main points, compare and contrast them, and then orally present them to the class.*

Middle School

Here is an example of an assessment task for students under Common Core State Standards.

You have read three texts describing Amelia Earhart. All three include the claim that Earhart was a brave, courageous person. The three texts are:

- “Biography of Amelia Earhart”
- “Earhart's Final Resting Place Believed Found”
- “Amelia Earhart's Life and Disappearance”

Consider the argument each author uses to demonstrate Earhart's bravery. Write an essay that analyzes the strength of the arguments about Earhart's bravery in at least two of the texts. Remember to use textual evidence to support your ideas.<sup>ii</sup>



High  
School

Here's an example of an assessment task under Common Core State Standards.

Use what you have learned from reading “Daedalus and Icarus” by Ovid and “To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Triumph” by Anne Sexton to write an essay that provides an analysis of how Sexton transforms “Daedalus and Icarus.”

As a starting point, you may want to consider what is emphasized, absent, or different in the two texts, but feel free to develop your own focus for analysis. Develop your essay by providing textual evidence from both texts. Be sure to follow the conventions of standard English.<sup>iii</sup>

## ***HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD AT HOME?***

### **English Language Arts**

#### ***Parent Tips:***

- Ask your child specific questions about what they read.
- Encourage your child to read, write, and speak about nonfiction text such as newspapers, magazines, and biographies.
- Encourage your child to research topics of interest and read series that relate to a central topic.
- Have your child follow step-by-step instructions or a set of directions in order to accomplish a task, such as building a sandcastle or operating a game.

Created by a national community of top teachers, *LearnZillion* is a website with thousands of high-quality Common Core resources to help prepare your child for the Common Core. Digital learning is a great way for your child to get practice in at home. Here are a few Common Core English Language Arts lessons your child can access and benefit from right from the comfort of your own home.

- [This video lesson](#) helps students better understand the plot of a lengthy poem, a skill that can be really tricky.
- [This video lesson](#) helps students read a non-fiction text applying what they already know about the topic, and revising their thinking based on the new information learned from the text.

There are many more lessons like this on [LearnZillion](#). There are even lessons for math too!

### **Mathematics**

#### ***Parent Tips:***

- Help your child practice addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts.
- Encourage your child to not give up while solving problems, to build stamina and develop their critical thinking skills. Don't give the answers – instead, ask your child to think of different ways to solve problems.
- Have your child draw the math they were thinking in their head and discuss it out loud.
- Have child apply math knowledge to a real-world scenario at home, such as doubling a recipe or calculating the area of a room.

*Khan Academy* is an organization that provides educational resources for anyone anywhere completely free of charge. This website offers tremendous resources to help teachers and parents

improve student learning. Digital learning offers some great ways for your child to get practice in at home and prepare to succeed under Common Core State Standards in Math.

- Need lessons on adding and subtracting positive and negative whole numbers? Start [here!](#)
- Need lessons on multiplying and dividing positive and negative whole numbers? Start [here!](#)
- Need lessons on fractions? Start [here!](#)
- Need lessons on applying mathematical reasoning in the real-world? Start [here!](#)

There are many more math lessons provided by [Khan Academy](#), but this should get you and your child started.

## ***HOW WILL MY CHILD BE ASSESSED UNDER COMMON CORE?***

Two testing consortiums were formed to create online assessments for the Common Core State Standards.

- 1) ***Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC)*** is a group of states working together to develop Common Core aligned K-12 assessments in English and math. These assessments are designed to help prepare all students to graduate from high school college and career ready.
- 2) ***Smarter Balanced Assessment*** is a state-led consortium developing assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics. These assessments are designed to help prepare all students to graduate from high school college and career ready.

Some benefits of PARCC and Smarter Balanced are:

- ***Students*** will know if they are on track to graduate ready for college and careers.
- ***Teachers*** will have assessment results available to guide learning and instruction.
- ***Parents*** will receive clear and timely information about the progress of their children.
- ***States*** will receive valid results that are comparable across the member states.

There are also other testing companies in the process of creating Common Core aligned assessments for states' use. PARCC and Smarter Balanced, along with these, will provide many assessment options allowing states to select the assessment that best meets their needs.

To find out what assessment your state will choose to administer, contact your state's education department.

***TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS***, click [here](#) for the official Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics.

<sup>i</sup> Example from the Dana Center Site, elementary math: [http://www.ccsstoolbox.com/parcc/PARCCPrototype\\_main.html](http://www.ccsstoolbox.com/parcc/PARCCPrototype_main.html)

<sup>ii</sup> Example from PARCC Online ELA grade 7: <http://parconline.org/samples/english-language-artsliteracy/grade-7-prose-constructed-response-research-simulation-task-o>

<sup>iii</sup> Example from PARCC Online ELA grade 10: <http://parconline.org/samples/english-language-artsliteracy/grade-10-prose-constructed-response%E2%80%94sample-1-literary-analysis>