

## Common Core Standards

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1. What are the educational standards?
2. Why do we need educational standards?
3. How are educational standards determined now?
4. Is having common standards the first step toward nationalizing education?
5. What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative?
6. Why is the Common Core State Standards Initiative important?
7. Who is leading the Common Core State Standards Initiative?
8. How will states adopt the Common Core State Standards?
9. Will the Common Core State Standards keep local teachers from deciding what or how to teach?
10. Were teachers involved in the creation of the standards?
11. Does having common standards lead to dumbing down the standards across the board?
12. Will more standards mean more tests?

1. 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 for student learning.

2. Why do we need educational standards?

We need standards to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in post-secondary 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. They will also 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 students.

Standards do not tell teachers how to teach, but they do help teachers figure out the knowledge and skills their students should have in order to build the best lessons and environments for their classrooms. 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 that is needed for our children's success, but they do provide an accessible roadmap for our teachers, parents, and students.

3. How are educational standards determined now?

Today, each state has its own process for developing, adopting, and implementing standards. As a result, what students are expected to learn can vary widely from state to state.

4. Is having common standards the first step toward nationalizing education?

No. The Common Core Standards are part of a state-led effort to give all students the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. The federal government has not been involved in the

development of the standards. Individual states will choose whether or not to adopt these standards.

5. What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) 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 standards across the country and globe. They were 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.

6. Why is the Common Core State Standards Initiative important?

We want to make sure that children across the country are 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 so that everyone can work toward together. This will ensure 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 also with students around the world, maintaining America's competitive edge.

These standards are a common sense first step toward ensuring our children are getting the best possible education no matter where they live.

Of course, standards cannot single-handedly improve the quality of our nation's education system, but they do give educators shared goals and expectations for their students. For example, the standards will enable participating states to work together to:

- Make expectations for students clear to parents, teachers, and the general public;
- Encourage the development of textbooks, digital media, and other teaching materials aligned to the standards;
- Develop and implement comprehensive assessment systems to measure student performance against the Common Core State Standards that will replace the existing testing systems that too often are inconsistent, burdensome and confusing; and
- Evaluate policy changes needed to help students and educators meet the standards.

7. 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), have led the effort to develop a common core of state standards.

In addition, CCSSO and the NGA Center have provided public comment periods for all

stakeholders to submit feedback on the draft standards documents. Those comments were incorporated into the final standards.

8. How will states adopt the Common Core State Standards?

The process of state standards adoption depends on the laws of each state. Some states will adopt the standards through their state boards of education, while others will adopt them through their state legislatures.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. Does having common standards lead to dumbing down the standards across the board?

Not at all. The Common Core Standards have been built from the best and highest state standards in the country. They are evidence-based, aligned with college and work expectations, include rigorous content and skills, and are informed by other top performing countries. They were developed in consultation with teachers and parents from across the country so they are also realistic and practical for the classroom. Far from looking for the “lowest common denominator,” these standards are designed to ensure that all students, regardless of where they live, are learning what they need to know to graduate from high school ready for college or a career.

12. Will more standards mean more tests?

No. 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 smarter and better tests that help students, parents, and teachers.