

Common Core State Standards Overview



Why did Florida join other states in adopting the Common Core State Standards?

On July 27, 2010, the Florida State Board of Education, in a unanimous and unified vote, approved the adoption of the Common Core State Standards for English/Language Arts and Mathematics. This move strengthened Florida's curriculum standards for these critical subjects and laid the groundwork for the comparison of our state's academic progress with our nation and the world. These new Common Core State Standards are not only rigorous, but they pave the way for a substantial increase in the college and career readiness of our students. (DOE Press Release, July 27, 2010)

What does this mean to parents?

In K-5, students will be working with less fictional and more informational materials. In literature there will be more of a balance between fictional and factual stories. The emphasis on factual information means that science and social studies are taking a more prominent role during the school day. Parents should also notice students doing significantly more reading and writing across all content areas, including the arts. Students will be asked to discuss, write about, judge and explain the things they have read. Age appropriate learning projects will also be an important part of instruction.

In grades 6-12, students will learn Science, Social Studies and other subjects by close and careful examination of the text and other sources of information. Rather than only referring to the text, students will be expected to demonstrate deep and substantive learning from what they have read. They will write and talk about what they have learned and design projects that demonstrate understanding of what they have learned. They will research topics and use evidence to support their writing and oral presentations. Incorporating reading, writing, speaking, listening and language skills in content classes is a requirement of the Literacy Standards for History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects. Additionally, general math literacy practices will be found throughout the curriculum. The use and understanding of comparative statistical data, charts, graphs and other math-related information sources will be integrated in these grades.

In K-12 math classes, students will be asked to analyze information, make sense of problems and persevere in solving them, apply mathematical concepts to real-world problems, and test the validity of their answers. They will also be asked to talk and write about their thinking, construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others. This mathematical way of thinking is the foundation of the Standards of Mathematical Practice.

In summary, parents should see students reading, writing and "creating" at each grade level and in each course. Students will be involved in presenting projects that incorporate research and



application of knowledge, as well as creative and critical thinking skills. Much of the work may be digitally based and students will be using a variety of resources -- no longer tied to a single text. Informational texts will receive greater emphasis and students will be constantly challenged to research and defend conclusions. Students will be able to learn, think about and use information. As students apply these skills, I anticipate very lively dinner table discussions in our St. Johns County households, as students strive to find out “why” at every level of their learning.

What will these Common Core State Standards mean for students?

From a general perspective, the standards provide more clarity and consistency in what is expected of student learning across the country. Before the Common Core State Standards, every state had its own set of academic standards, meaning public education students at the same grade level in each state were expected to achieve different goals at different levels. States and districts may still have expectations that go beyond the Common Core State Standards, as will be the case in our school district. However, the Common Core State Standards will serve as the framework within which our local effort operates. This will allow states to share information effectively and help to provide all students with an equal opportunity for an education that will prepare them to go to college or enter the workforce, regardless of where they live. Common standards do not prevent different levels of achievement among students, but they do ensure more consistent exposure to materials and learning experiences through curriculum, instruction, and teacher preparation. In a global economy, students must be prepared to compete with not only their American peers in the next state, but also with students from around the world. These standards help prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and careers.

More specifically, as mentioned before, students will be expected to apply what they learn through hands-on projects and presentations. Students will be expected to read, write and demonstrate critical thinking skills in all subjects. Students will conduct research, support conclusions with evidence and demonstrate speaking and listening skills at every grade level and in each subject. Understanding “why” will be more important than rote memorization. Reading and writing about complex factual materials with the goal of not only knowing a set of facts, but being able to think about and use information, will be a universal expectation. A student can expect to be engaged in the learning process with feedback to and from teachers being an important part of the learning process. In short, students will read, write, think deeply, create, present, work collaboratively with other students and their teachers to ensure that they graduate able to connect and use information in real-world situations that will prepare them for both work and/or college.



How will these standards impact teachers?

The standards provide important goals for teachers to ensure they are preparing students for success in college and the workforce. They will help teachers develop and implement effective strategies for their students by providing benchmarks for skills and knowledge that their students should have mastered by the end of the year. The Common Core State Standards help colleges and professional development programs better prepare teachers, provide the opportunity for teachers to be involved in the development of assessments linked to these top-quality standards, allow states to develop and provide better assessments that more accurately measure whether or not students have learned what was taught and guide educators toward curricula and teaching strategies that will expose students to a deeper understanding of the subject and the skills they need to apply their knowledge.

The standards empower teachers and provide flexibility to develop more creative content in their own classroom. Teachers will use engaging methodologies such as Project-Based Learning, Close Reading, Comprehension Instructional Sequence, Socratic Seminars, and other techniques proven to produce the highest levels of student learning. More complex and mostly factual readings will be used, as opposed to a greater number of more general materials. There will be more emphasis on critical thinking and analysis rather than rote memory and "teaching to the test." An emphasis will be placed on formative assessment, so that real time assistance can be offered to students who have not mastered a set of standards, and the results will guide the teacher's instruction. The use of grading rubrics tied to specific learning goals will make expectations clear to both students and parents. Opportunities for students to listen, speak, and present will be built into every course.

What happened to the Florida's Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) that are currently used?

Content area Common Core State Standards exist for only English/Language Arts and Math, which means the NGSSS will remain the content standards in all other subjects. However, the Common Core Literacy Standards, which reference speaking, listening, thinking and other universal skills, will apply to all subjects. This will also be true of a set of Common Core Standards of Mathematical Practice, which are not subject-area based but serve as a foundation for the use of math skills in all content areas. The math and literacy standards address how students acquire, think about, use, and communicate information. In subjects other than Language Arts and Math, the content will be NGSSS, but how the content is learned and used will be impacted by the Common Core Literacy Standards and the Standards of Mathematical Practice.

In 2011-2012, the SJCS D implemented the Common Core State Standards in kindergarten and first grade. District schools may implement the Language Arts and Math Common Core State Standards in their entirety or phase them in with full implementation occurring no later than the 2014-2015 school year. The Common Core Literacy Standards and the Standards of



Mathematical Practice must be fully implemented during the 2012-2013 school year. Each school has developed its own implementation plan as part of a Florida Department of Education workshop conducted during the summer of 2012. These plans, which can be revised as needed, will be the basis of Common Core implementation at each individual school site.

All Common Core State Standards will be fully implemented and assessed at all grade levels by 2014-2015. Florida's timeline for implementation of the Common Core State Standards for English/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical subjects is available at Florida's Common Core State Standards Implementation Timeline: <http://www.fldoe.org/parcc/pdf/ImplementationTimeline.pdf>.

You can view the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards and the Common Core State Standards for Math and Language Arts at <http://floridastandards.org>. In addition, a list of endorsing partners and statements of support for the Common Core initiative can be found at www.corestandards.org.

Will we still have the FCAT?

The state is finalizing plans for how the Common Core State Standards will be assessed. FCAT may be revised, used in combination with or even replaced by a set of nationally developed exams. The Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) exams are in development, and we should know more about them within a few months. What is known is that the standards will be assessed during the 2014-2015 school year.

Although much of FCAT will be replaced by assessments that will be used nationally, nothing related to the implementation of the Common Core State Standards or assessments will result in any changes to sharing private student information and data as regulated under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

How do the Common Core State Standards apply to students with disabilities and English Language Learners?

The Common Core State Standards articulate rigorous grade-level expectations in the areas of Mathematics and English/Language Arts. These standards identify the knowledge and skills students need in order to be successful in college and careers.

Students with disabilities – like all students – must be challenged to excel within the general curriculum and prepared for success in their post-school lives, including college and/or careers. These common standards provide a historic opportunity to improve access to rigorous academic content standards for students with disabilities. The continued development research-based instructional practices and a focus on their effective implementation will improve access to Mathematics and English/Language Arts standards for all students, including those with disabilities.



In order for students with disabilities to meet high academic standards and to fully demonstrate their conceptual and procedural knowledge and skills in mathematics, reading, writing, speaking and listening, their instruction must incorporate support and accommodations, including:

- Support- and related-services designed to meet the unique needs of these students and to enable their access to the general education curriculum.
- An Individualized Education Program (IEP) that includes annual goals aligned with and chosen to facilitate attainment of grade-level academic standards.
- Teachers and specialized instructional support personnel who are prepared and qualified to deliver high-quality, evidence-based, individualized instruction and support services.

Common standards will provide a greater opportunity to share experiences and best practices within and across states that can lead to an improved ability to best serve English language learners, as well as students with disabilities. A goal of the Common Core State Standards is promoting a culture of high expectations for all students.

The Common Core State Standards were created by teachers, parents and education experts from across the country. The National PTA organization has developed *The Parents' Guide to Student Success* in response to the transition to Common Core State Standards. There is a guide for each grade level, K-8, and high school. The guide includes:

- Key items that children should be learning in English/Language Arts and Mathematics in each grade when the Common Core State Standards are fully implemented
- Activities that parents can do at home to support their children's learning
- Methods of helping parents build stronger relationships with their child's teacher
- Tips for planning college and career (high school only)

You can find *The Parents' Guide to Student Success* at <http://www.pta.org/4446.htm>.