

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Regarding the Common Core Standards

### Introduction

On August 2, 2010, the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), with some additions unique to California. In this document, to distinguish between the CCSS and the enhanced set of California standards, the SBE-adopted standards are referred to as the "California Common Core Standards."

The following frequently asked questions provide answers to general questions about the Common Core Standards and they are organized into these categories:

- **Background: National Initiative for Common Core State Standards**
- **Background: California Common Core Standards**
- **Frameworks and Instructional Materials**
- **Assessment**
- **California Common Core Standards for Mathematics**
- **California Common Core Standards for English Language Arts**
- **Resources**

### Background: National Initiative for Common Core State Standards

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

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 initiative. California was one of 48 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. As of August 2010, the CCSS have been adopted by 37 states.

#### 2. What are the Common Core State Standards?

The CCSS address the content areas of English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Additionally, the common core ELA standards include literacy standards for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. These kindergarten through grade 12 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.

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

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

#### 4. Why are Common Core State Standards needed?

Presently, each state has its own set of standards, and consequently, what students are expected to learn varies 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.

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

There are many advantages for 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, are 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.

**6. How were English learner considerations addressed in the Common Core State Standards?**

Linguists and experts in English learner educational issues were involved in the development of the CCSS for English language arts. These individuals assisted in shaping the standards in general, and had a significant impact on the language and vocabulary standards. The developers of the CCSS have expressed an interest in creating English-language development (ELD) standards.

### **Background: California Common Core Standards**

**7. How were the California Common Core Standards developed?**

In anticipation of the release of the Common Core State Standards, the Governor signed Senate Bill (SB) X5 1 in January 2010. The law required that 21 representatives be appointed to the Academic Content Standards Commission (ACSC) to develop academic content standards in language arts and mathematics. Eighty-five percent of the standards recommended by the ACSC were required to be from the CCSS, and fifteen percent could be added by California to ensure the rigor of the standards.

The ACSC met for six days in June and July 2010 to develop the California Common Core Standards for English language arts and mathematics. The State Board of Education adopted the California Common Core Standards on August 2, 2010.

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

The California Common Core Standards are available on the Sacramento County Office of Education's website at <http://www.scoe.net/castandards/index.html>.

**9. Are the new California Common Core Standards as rigorous as California's existing standards?**

Yes. The ACSC was able to add up to 15% to the CCSS for each subject. Consequently, they added information to address any perceived gaps and to ensure that the rigor of California's existing standards would be maintained. To see California's additions to the CCSS, visit the SCOE website at <http://www.scoe.net/castandards/index.html> and select "ELA Common Core State Standards adopted by SBE on 8/2/10" or "Math Common Core State Standards adopted by SBE on 8/2/10." The additions are indicated in bold and underlined font.

**10. When will schools and districts be expected to implement the California Common Core Standards?**

All schools and districts should continue teaching the existing standards until the new California Common Core Standards system can be phased in. After the State Board of Education adopted the California Common Core Standards on August 2, 2010, the California Department of Education and the State Board of Education began developing a timeline and plan for implementing the Standards. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Jack O'Connell, stated that it would take two to four years to implement the standards. He added, "*The implementation plan will address curriculum frameworks, instructional materials, assessments, and accountability measures.*" Now is a good time for schools and districts to begin to familiarize themselves with the California Common Core Standards.

### **Frameworks and Instructional Materials**

**11. What is the timeline for new frameworks and instructional materials adoptions?**

In the past, California has had a cycle for revising the curriculum frameworks to incorporate new research, standards, and other appropriate information. The frameworks provide guidance about subject area content and standards implementation in the subsequent curriculum adoptions. A new schedule will be developed as the California Common Core Standards implementation plan unfolds. California's *Race to the Top* application indicated that one possible schedule for framework development and curriculum adoption might be:

- Adopt new frameworks
  - Mathematics (January 2012) and English-Language Arts (January 2014)
- Adopt new instructional materials
  - Mathematics (August 2014) and English-Language Arts (August 2016)
- New instructional materials available for schools
  - Mathematics (December 2014) and English-Language Arts (December 2016)

California will be working to identify funds to support this new work.

**12. What instructional materials should be used until new materials aligned to the California Common Core Standards are available?**

In July 2009, the adoption of instructional materials and the development of new frameworks were suspended until the 2013-14 school year (Assembly Bill X4 2). Districts have the choice to purchase materials from the most recent adoption (2008 English language arts and 2007 mathematics), or continue using materials from the previous adoption cycle to support the academic achievement of our students.

## Assessment

### 13. How will the State's assessment system change to align with the California Common Core Standards?

The California Department of Education and the State Board of Education are developing a plan for implementing the California Common Core Standards that will include changes in state assessments.

California is participating in a 26-state consortium: the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). The states in this collaborative effort will develop a set of K-12, standards-based mathematics and English language arts assessments. When implemented, the assessments will provide a common method to measure and report the performance of students.

### 14. When will the new assessments be administered?

The California Department of Education and the State Board of Education are developing the California Common Core Standards implementation plan. This plan will provide details about how the transition process will be phased in over several years. The new assessments developed by PARCC are expected to be ready for states to administer by the 2014-2015 school year. Piloting and field-testing will occur during the years that precede 2014-2015.

### 15. Where can I find information about the PARCC assessment plans?

Information about the PARCC assessment consortium can be found online at: <http://www.achieve.org/files/CCSS&Assessments.pdf>.

## California Common Core Standards for Mathematics

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

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 options available for eighth grade students.

### 17. How are the California Common Core Standards for mathematics organized?

There are grade-level standards for kindergarten through eighth grade, a set of standards for Algebra 1, and conceptual cluster standards for grades nine to twelve (e.g., number and quantity, algebra, functions, modeling, geometry, and statistics and probability). The standards for kindergarten through eighth grade are categorized by standard, domain, and cluster.

### 18. What options do the California Common Core Standards provide for eighth grade students?

The goal is for eighth grade students to successfully complete Algebra 1. However, because not all eighth grade students have the necessary prerequisite skills for Algebra 1, there will be two options for students. Eighth grade California Common Core Standards will be provided to students who are not yet ready for algebra, and the other students will learn the Algebra 1 standards. Each set of standards is designed to prepare students for college

and careers. The standards for kindergarten through seventh grade were augmented to prepare eighth grade students for either set of standards.

**19. What is the content of the California Common Core Standards for Algebra I?**

The new Algebra I standards are a combination of standards from the eighth grade common core, the Algebra content cluster, and California's existing Algebra I standards.

**20. California was able to add up to 15% to the Common Core State Standards. What does that include for mathematics?**

California added information to the Common Core State Standards for mathematics to address perceived gaps and to ensure that the rigor of California's existing standards would be maintained. For example, California's standards for "calculus" and "advanced placement probability and statistics" were added to the California Common Core Standards. In grades two and five, standards were added to the domain of "Operations and Algebraic Thinking." Substantial sections were added to existing clusters such as "High School Algebra-Seeing Structure in Expression," and "Grade 6 - the number system." In other instances, some language was added to existing standards such as in the Grade 2 Measurement and Data domain, "working with time and money" cluster, standards #7 and #8, and the Grade 4 Geometry domain, standard #2.

The California Common Core Standards for mathematics (including the 15%) are posted on the SCOE website at <http://www.scoe.net/castandards/index.html>. Select "Math Common Core State Standards, adopted by SBE on 8/2/10." The additions are indicated in bold and underlined font.

## California Common Core Standards for English Language Arts

**21. How are California's existing English language arts standards and the new California Common Core Standards similar?**

The content and the organization of California's current standards and the new California Common Core Standards are very similar. For example, the existing ELA standards are organized into four categories called domains (e.g., reading, writing, listening and speaking, and written and oral English-language conventions). The California Common Core Standards are similarly organized into four groups called strands: (1) reading, (2) writing, (3) speaking and listening, and (4) language.

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

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.

**23. California was able to add up to 15% to the CCSS. What does that include for English language arts?**

California added information to the Common Core State Standards for English language arts to address perceived gaps and to ensure that the rigor of California's existing standards would be maintained. Some examples include the following additions: "formal

presentations” in the Speaking and Listening strand (grades 1-12); “penmanship” in the Language strand (grades 2-4); “career and consumer documents” in the Writing strand (grade 8); and “analysis of text features in informational text” in the Reading for Informational Text strand (grades 6-12). Additionally, there are minor insertions of specific words to enhance the standards (e.g., “archetypes” and “thesis”).

The California Common Core Standards for English language arts (including the 15%) are posted on the SCOE website at <http://www.scoe.net/castandards/index.html>. Select “ELA Common Core State Standards, adopted by SBE on 8/2/10.” The additions are indicated in bold and underlined font.

**24. Which teachers will be implementing the California Common Core Standards for ELA?**

There are grade-level ELA standards for kindergarten through grade eight, and sets of standards for grades 9-10 and 11-12. Depending upon the setting, the classroom teacher or English language-arts teacher will implement these standards.

Additionally, the California Common Core Standards for ELA include literacy standards for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. For kindergarten through fifth grade, the literacy standards are embedded into the ELA standards. For grades six through twelve, there is a separate set of literacy standards. The responsibility for implementing the literacy standards in grades six through twelve is expected to be shared between the ELA teachers and the teachers in other content areas. The literacy standards complement the content standards in those disciplines.

**25. Where can districts find assistance to orient their staff to information about the new California Common Core Standards?**

The Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE) has prepared resources and training packages to help district leaders understand the content and issues related to the California Common Core Standards. Information may be found on the SCOE website at <http://www.scoe.net/castandards/index.html> or by calling (916) 228-2402.

## Web Links

- SCOE Information and Support for the Common Core Standards  
<http://www.scoe.net/castandards/index.html>
- National Initiative for the Common Core State Standards  
<http://www.corestandards.org>
- PARCC Assessment  
<http://www.achieve.org/files/CCSS&Assessments.pdf>