

Common Core State Standards

Colorado is one of 45 states that have adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Math and English Language Arts. All other districts in Colorado and those in other CCSS states, will be implementing the Common Core in the 2013-14 school year. The CCSS are evidence-based, aligned with college and work expectations and include rigorous content and skills.

What is the Common Core Initiative?

The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy.

Are these federal standards?

No. The CCSS were not developed by the federal government. 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) are leading the effort to develop a common core of state standards. 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.

Why do we need common standards between different states?

There are a number of reasons, but first and foremost, districts, schools, parents and community members now will be able to judge how students are doing in meeting world class standards in academics. Having one set of common standards will make it easier for states to evaluate student progress (between those that choose to adopt) through higher quality tests. The goal is not to have more tests, but to have smarter and better tests that help students, parents, and teachers. The common core state standards will enable participating states to work together to:

- Raise expectations for all students
- 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 which 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.

Why English-Language Arts and Math?

English-language arts and math were the first subjects chosen for the common core state standards because these two subject areas establish the foundation upon which students build their skill sets in other subject areas. They are also the subjects most frequently assessed for accountability purposes.

The standards have been developed with the following criteria:

- Aligned with expectations for college and career success
- Clear, so that educators and parents know what they need to do to help students learn
- Consistent across all states, so that students are not taught to a lower standard just because of where they live
- Include both content and the application of knowledge through high-order skills

- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards and standards of top-performing nations
- Realistic, for effective use in the classroom
- Informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society
- Evidence and research-based criteria have been set by states, through their national organizations Council of Chief State School Officers and the NGA Center.

There are four strands in the English-Language Arts subject area:

- Reading (including Reading Foundational Skills)
- Writing
- Speaking and Listening
- Language

Math changes and benefits

Studies of mathematics education in high-performing countries have pointed to the conclusion that the mathematics curriculum in the United States must become substantially more focused and coherent in order to improve mathematics achievement in this country. To deliver on the promise of common standards, the standards must address the problem of a curriculum that is “a mile wide and an inch deep.” These standards are a substantial answer to that challenge. [Here](#) is an example of changes from the old Colorado Model Content Standards to the new Common Core Standards.

What the standards do NOT define:

- How teachers should teach
- All that can or should be taught
- The nature of advanced work beyond the core
- The interventions needed for students well below grade level
- The full range of support for English language learners and students with special needs
- Everything needed to be college and career ready

How will we know if students are meeting the new Common Core State Standards?

Beginning in 2015, Colorado’s state assessment, TCAP, will be replaced by the national PARCC assessment, which was developed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, a partnership of 23 states, including Colorado.

Because the new CCSS and the new PARCC test will be different from the old Colorado Model Content Standards and currently used TCAP tests, we won’t be able to directly compare the new scores with the old, and it may appear at first that scores have dropped. This is a brand-new system, however, with a new way of scoring. The first year results will establish a baseline from which to compare subsequent years going forward to show how students are doing on the new assessments.