

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Parents across Oregon want to know more about the Common Core State Standards. Below, you will find some frequently asked questions and answers about the standards. It will be updated over time. Please contact your child's teacher or principal to learn more about your school's work with the Common Core.

**Q: What are the Common Core State Standards?**

**A:** The Common Core State Standards show what students in Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade should know and be able to do in English language arts and mathematics. The standards will help all students across the State learn the same skills. This will make sure that they are ready for college and careers. The standards include changes, or "shifts," in how teachers teach to help children succeed in the topics and skills that matter most. The standards are designed to help all young people get prepared for college and careers.

**Q. Does having common standards mean everyone will learn less?**

**A.** No. The Common Core State Standards have been built from some of the best standards gathered from States across the country, as well as from other nations and extensive research on what's needed to succeed in jobs and higher education. The Common Core standards ask teachers and students to dig deeper into the core skills and concepts for each grade level. This means that students will learn much *more* about *fewer* topics. It also means that teachers will have more time to cover subjects in greater detail. This gives students an opportunity to really understand what is being taught.

**Q. Do the standards tell teachers how to teach?**

**A.** No. They are a tool to help teachers prepare the best classroom lessons and activities. The standards also help students and parents by showing them what it takes to be successful in each grade level. They are an important roadmap for teachers, students and parents.

**Q: How were the standards developed?**

**A:** Forty-six states brought together experts, teachers and researchers to write the Common Core State Standards, along with almost 10,000 comments and suggestions, including many from Oregon teachers and parents. Oregon adopted them in 2010. The standards are well-matched for our classrooms and will help our students learn more. Please visit <http://corestandards.org/the-standards> to read the full set of standards.

**Q. Will this mean new tests?**

**A.** Yes. The Common Core State Standards will have different, and better, tests that provide more accurate information about what your student knows and can do. Starting in the 2013-14 school year, some Oregon students will take a field test of these new assessments. All students will be assessed on these new tests – known as the Smarter Balanced assessment – starting in the 2014-15 school year.

**Q. Will these new tests be harder?**

**A.** The new standards are more rigorous and at first, the new tests may seem more difficult. This is normal. The new tests will go beyond asking students to fill in multiple choice questions and will provide a more authentic assessment of what your child knows and can do. Over time, students and teachers will adjust to the new process and expectations. It is likely that student test scores will drop in the first few years of the new tests as students and teachers adjust to the new standards. However, the tests are an important tool for improving student achievement. The new tests will help principals and teachers identify those students who might need extra support to successfully move on to the next grade level

**Q. What does this work mean for students with disabilities and English language learners?**

**A.** The standards will help teachers have more time to cover subjects in greater detail. This gives students an opportunity to really understand what is being taught. There is a clear guide for applying the standards to English language learners and students with disabilities. Also, all states will be working together to constantly improve upon these issues. This will result in a strong support system for all learners.

**Q. What will the Common Core State Standards mean for students across the country?**

**A.** The standards set clear expectations for student learning across the country. In the past, every state had its own set of different academic standards. This meant that U.S. students were learning different skills and concepts at different rates. The Common Core State Standards give *all* students an equal opportunity to learn the same high standards. This leads to a greater chance of success in college, career and life.

**Q: If standards are raised, is it more likely that students will drop out of school?**

**A: No,** it is not more likely that students will drop out of school. Research points out that many factors come together to cause a student to drop out of school. Research also shows that students want to be challenged more in school. For example, 7 in 10 young people who had dropped out said they were not motivated or inspired to work hard in high school. Two-thirds of the dropouts said they would have worked harder if more was demanded of them (such as with higher academic expectations, more studying and more homework).<sup>1</sup>

**Q: Is the adoption of common core standards in English language arts and mathematics going to limit student access to other subject areas, such as the arts or career and technical education?**

**A:** No. Oregon understands the importance that all subjects have in preparing students for success beyond high school. Graduating well-rounded students is important for the state's future. The clearer standards of the Common Core will actually help teachers integrate learning across subject areas. This means that students will be given lessons that bring together mathematics, science, social studies, English language arts and other subjects.

**Q: Do the Common Core State Standards penalize students in low-performing schools by creating unrealistically high expectations?**

**A:** No. All too often, students in low performing schools today are held to lower expectations. Oregon has adopted the Common Core State Standards so that *all* students receive an excellent education.

**Glossary:**

- Shift – A change in how teachers teach and how students learn
- Text – Any written work
- Non-fiction – Texts about real-life events or facts
- Evidence – Bits of proof from the text
- Arguments – How students convince someone of something
- Judgment – A student's conclusion about what they have read
- Focus – Learning more on fewer topics
- Speed and Accuracy – How quickly a student can solve math problems correctly

**Sources:**

- Common Core State Standards Initiative: <http://www.corestandards.org/>
- Council of Great City Schools: <http://www.cgcs.org>
- Common Core Oregon: [www.ode.state.or.us/go/commoncore](http://www.ode.state.or.us/go/commoncore)
- National PTA: <http://pta.org>

<sup>1</sup> *State Enterprise: The Great City Schools' Perspective of High School Dropouts*, March 2006



## Working *with* the "Shifts"

### What Parents Can Do to Help their Children Learn

The Common Core State Standards ask teachers to make 12 major "shifts" or (changes) in their classrooms – six shifts in English language arts and six shifts in Mathematics. These changes may be tough at first as students and teachers adjust to higher expectations.

As a parent, you can help and learn more by talking with your child about what they are learning. Ask open-ended questions about what they learned in school each day, read their homework and attend school events to learn about what their teachers expect.

This document explains some of the ways that your child's classroom is changing and how you can help; for more information, check out [www.ode.state.or.us/go/commoncore](http://www.ode.state.or.us/go/commoncore).

#### THE 12 SHIFTS

English Language Arts/Literacy	Mathematics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read as much non-fiction as fiction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build skills across grade levels</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about the world by reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn more about less</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read more challenging material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use math facts easily</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk about reading using "<i>evidence</i>"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think fast AND solve problems</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write about texts using "<i>evidence</i>"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Really know it, really do it</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know more vocab words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use math in the real world</li> </ul>

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS/LITERACY: EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS & IDEAS FOR PARENTS**

What's the shift?	What will students have to do?	What can parents do to help?
Read as much fiction as non-fiction	Read more non-fiction	Supply more non-fiction texts
	Understand how non-fiction is written and put together	Read non-fiction books aloud or with your child
	Enjoy and discuss the details of non-fiction	Have fun with non-fiction in front of your child
Learn about the world by reading	Learn more about science and social studies through reading	Supply series of texts on topics that interest your child
	Use "primary source" documents	Find books that explain how things work and why
	Get smarter through the use of texts	Discuss non-fiction texts and their ideas
Read more challenging material	Re-read until they understand	Know what is grade-level appropriate
	Read books both at and above their comfort level	Provide challenging texts as well as books they can read easily
	Handle frustration	Read challenging books with your child
	Keep pushing to improve	Show that challenging books are worth reading
Talk about reading using evidence	Find evidence to support their arguments	Talk about texts
	Form judgments and opinions	Demand evidence in everyday discussions and disagreements
	Discuss what the author is thinking	Read aloud or read the same book as your child and discuss
	Make predictions about what will happen next	Discuss predictions
Write about text using evidence	Make arguments in writing using evidence	Encourage writing at home
	Compare multiple texts in writing	Write "books" together using evidence and detail
	Learn to write well	Review samples of exemplar student writing
Know more vocab words	Learn the words they will need to use in college and career	Read often and constantly with young children
	Strengthen academic vocabulary.	Read multiple books on the same topic
		Talk to your children, read to them, listen to them, sing with them, make up silly rhymes and word games

## MATHEMATICS: EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS & IDEAS FOR PARENTS

What's the shift?	What will students have to do?	What can parents do to help?
Build skills across grade levels	Keep building on learning year after year	Be aware of what your child struggled with last year and how that will effect ongoing learning
		Advocate for your child
		Ensure that support is given for "gap" skills, such as negative numbers, fractions, etc.
Learn more about less	Spend more time on fewer concepts	Know what the priority work is for your child at their grade level
Use math facts easily	Go more in-depth on each concept	Spend time with your child on priority work
		Ask your child's teacher for reports on your child's progress on priority work
Think fast AND solve problems	Spend time practicing by doing lots of problems on the same idea	Push children to know, understand and memorize basic math facts
		Know all of the fluencies your child should have
		Prioritize learning the fluencies your child finds most difficult
Really know it, really do it	Make the math work, and understand why it does	Ask questions and review homework to see whether your child understands <i>why</i> as well as <i>what</i> the answer is.
	Talk about why the math works	Advocate for the time your child needs to learn key math skills
	Prove that they know why and how the math works	Provide time for your child to work on math skills at home
Use math in the real world	Apply math in real world situations	Ask your child to do the math that comes up in daily life
	Know which math skills to use for which situation	