

Common Core FAQs

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.

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. Common standards will 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 identify the knowledge and skills their students should have so that teachers can 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 provide an accessible roadmap for our teachers, parents, and students.

What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort to establish a shared set of clear educational standards for English language arts and mathematics that states can voluntarily adopt. The standards have been informed by the best available evidence and the highest state standards across the country and globe and 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.

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.

Will more standards mean more tests?

No, for states that choose to adopt the common standards, 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 high quality tests that provide valuable feedback for students, parents, and teachers.

By what criteria are the standards being developed?

The standards are being developed by 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

What grade levels will be included in the common core state standards?

The English-language arts and math standards are for grades K-12.

How will the standards affect students with disabilities and English language learners?

Common standards will provide a greater opportunity for states to share experiences and best practices within and across states that can lead to an improved ability to best serve young people with disabilities and English language learners. Additionally, the K-12 English language arts and mathematics standards include information on application of the standards for English language learners and students with disabilities.

Why are the Common Core State Standards just for English-Language Arts and Math?

English-language arts and math were the first subjects chosen for the Common Core State Standards because these two subjects are essential skills, upon which students build skill sets in other subject areas. They are also the subjects most frequently assessed for accountability purposes.

What will these Common Core State Standards mean for students?

The standards will provide more clarity about and consistency in what is expected of student learning across the country. Until now, every state has had its own set of academic standards, meaning public education students at the same grade level in different states have been expected to achieve at different levels. This initiative will allow states to share information effectively and help 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 will not prevent different levels of achievement among students. Rather, they will ensure more consistent exposure to materials and learning experiences through curriculum, instruction, and teacher preparation among other supports for student learning. In a global economy, students must be prepared to compete with not only their American peers in the next state, but with students from around the world. These standards will help prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to globally succeed in college and careers.

How will these standards impact teachers?

The standards will 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 by the end of the year. The Common Core State Standards will 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 give students a deep understanding of the subject and the skills they need to apply their knowledge.

Will the Common Core State Standards be updated?

Yes, there will be an ongoing state-led development process that can support continuous improvement of the standards.

When will statewide assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical subjects begin?

Oklahoma is a governing state in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers Consortium. According to PARRC, the timeline for the development and implementation of assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards is:

- 2012-13 School Year: First year pilot/field testing and related research and data collection (sampling of the state - OSDE will notify which schools will participate)
- 2013-14 School Year: Second year pilot/field testing and related research and data collection (sampling of the state - OSDE will notify which schools will participate)
- 2014-15 School Year: Full operational administration of PARCC assessments
- Summer 2015: Set achievement levels, including college-ready performance levels

What can teachers and parents do to prepare themselves in the short term?

Educators should become familiar with the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. They are encouraged to participate in the district professional development sessions and district approved state professional development sessions. Additionally, they should avail themselves to the online resources available on the English/Language Arts page of the OSDE website, <http://sde.state.ok.us/Curriculum/CommonCore/default.html>. Parents may wish to view Parent Guides developed by the National PTS to familiarize themselves with Common Core State Standards. These guides can be found on their website at <http://www.pta.org/4446.htm>.

How will Broken Arrow Public Schools implement the Common Core State Standards?

Beginning Spring 2012, teachers and administrators will receive training conducted through our instructional department to provide an awareness of the standards, learn how to “unpack” the standards, how to develop proficiency scales to assess student mastery, and how to develop common assessments to determine the need for remediation or enrichment for our students.