

Frequently Asked Questions about the Common Core State Standards

Q: What are the Common Core State Standards?

A: The Common State Standards (CCSS) are a set of shared K-12 learning expectations for students in English-language arts and mathematics. The standards are the result of a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governor's Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The CCSS for grades K-12 were developed in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders including content experts, state education leaders, teachers, school administrators, and parents. The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn in K-12 math and English language arts. 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. The CCSS supports the college and career ready expectations of Oregon's new graduation requirements.

Q: Why does Oregon need common educational content standards?

A: Today, each state has its own process for developing, adopting, and implementing standards. As a result, what students are expected to learn can vary widely from state to state. We know that our graduates will compete for jobs with students from other states and countries with more rigorous standards. Common standards help ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in postsecondary 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 serve the needs of students.

Q: Will the Common Core State Standards limit flexibility to tailor instruction to individual students?

A: No. The Common Core State Standards are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents, and others will decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms. Local teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards will continue to make decisions about curriculum and how their school systems are operated. Standards help teachers figure out the knowledge and skills their students should have so that teachers can build the best lessons for their classrooms.

Q: What are some ways Oregon will benefit from common educational content standards?

A: The CCSS will

- Help prepare students in Oregon and in the nation with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and careers
- Allow states to align curricula to internationally benchmarked standards
- Allow for more focused pre-service education and professional development
- Create potential economies of scale for curriculum, instructional resources, and assessment
- Help students who move between states
- Help evaluate policies that affect student achievement across states
- Help prepare students in Oregon and in the nation to compete for good jobs in a knowledge-based economy.

Q: Will the new Common Core State Standards replace Oregon's existing academic content standards for mathematics and English language arts?

A: Yes. These two new sets of standards will **replace** Oregon's current standards in English language arts and mathematics. While the new standards are similar to Oregon's current standards, some content has been shifted to ensure college and career readiness at the end of high school.

Q: The Common Core State Standards are more rigorous than existing state standards. Will it be harder for schools to meet state and federal requirements?

A: Parents, students, and teachers should understand that lower scores will not mean students know less than they did the year before or that they are somehow “doing worse in school.” The new standards require a higher level of mastery of information and concepts and this higher bar will impact student scores, at least initially. Communities must recognize that it will take time for students to catch up to these more rigorous standards.

Q: What is ODE doing to help schools transition to the Common Core Standards?

A: ODE has

- Convened a CCSS Stewardship Team comprised of educators, administrators, and education stakeholders to develop a comprehensive implementation timeline, plan, and identify resources for instruction and assessment.
- Helped to establish the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) that will build a CCSS common assessment for the partner states to be implemented in school year 2014-2015.
- Provided mathematics teachers with an annotated crosswalk table (<http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=3211>) that compares the CCSS to the current Oregon mathematics standards, illustrating what content has moved to different grade levels.
- Provided English language arts *and* subject-area teachers with the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework (<http://www.ode.state.or.us/go/literacyframework>) that supports implementation of the CCSS in English language arts and all other subjects. A number of states are using Oregon’s Framework for this purpose.
- Completed two new sections of the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework: a Writing section comparable to Reading and an extensive Reading professional development portal for coaches and teachers.
- Provided Strand 4 Oregon DATA Project training featuring implementation of the Reading and Writing CCSS and Essential Skills using the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework.
- Collaborated with other states to provide educators with a variety of tools and resources, including shared curriculum. Collaboration is ongoing.

Q: How will the economies of scale benefit Oregon in implementing the CCSS?

A: The economies of scale that the CCSS will bring will save our state money in these ways:

- Oregon will no longer need to revise and update English language arts and mathematics standards on its own.
- Instructional resources designed to support the CCSS can be *shared* among the states.
- SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium partner states will *share* the costs of developing and implementing a common assessment.
- Assessment resources including formative assessments will be *shared* among the SMARTER Balanced consortium.
- It is anticipated that textbooks and curriculum materials may be *shared* through open source environments.
- A **Joint Taskforce on Mathematics** that includes members from all major mathematics education organizations plans to provide a CCSS implementation website to *share* tools and resources for teachers.
- A **Common Core Curriculum Mapping Project** funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has designed and *shared* CCSS English language arts curriculum maps for districts.

Q: When will students begin to see these changes in the classroom?

A: Students could begin seeing Common Core content as soon as next school year (2011-12). Districts will first need to work with teachers to make sure everyone understands the knowledge and skills contained within each learning expectation. Teachers at each grade level need to understand what new content they are responsible for teaching at their grade-level and what is no longer in their grade-level. While many of Oregon’s existing Academic Content Standards align to CCSS, some content is introduced in earlier grades in CCSS.

Q: What is the CCSS common assessment?

A: States adopting the CCSS will implement a student assessment system aligned with the CCSS for mathematics and English language arts beginning in the 2014-15 school year.

- Along with 30 other states, Oregon is a member of the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) (www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/) which has formed to create an historic assessment system.
- The common assessment is a natural continuation of the work already underway in Oregon and builds on our current assessment system and the work of the Oregon DATA Project.
- By partnering with other states, Oregon will be able to leverage resources, share expertise, and produce a system that will meet the needs and expectations of Oregon students and teachers.
- Until the common assessment is designed, piloted, and implemented, however, ODE will continue using the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) to assess students in math, reading, and writing. Oregon will continue to assess science and social science using OAKS until CCSS are developed for those content areas.

Q: What will be included in the new assessment?

A: The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) is developing an assessment with three major components: (1) a summative assessment; (2) an interim assessment; and (3) formative assessments and tools.

Summative Assessments:

- Include computer adaptive selected response (multiple choice), constructed response, and performance tasks;
- Produce composite content area scores, based on the computer-adaptive items and performance tasks;
- Will be administered in the last 12 weeks of the year in grades 3–8 and high school for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Students will have two opportunities during this testing window.

Interim Assessments:

- Optional computer adaptive assessments and performance tasks, administered at locally determined intervals;
- Designed to provide actionable information about student progress;
- Based on publicly released items and tasks;
- Grounded in learning progressions across grades and how college and career-readiness emerge over time.

Formative Tools and Processes:

- Provides resources to inform teachers about student progress toward achieving the CCSS;
- Will be used by teachers and students to monitor a student’s learning needs, check for misconceptions, and/or to provide evidence of progress toward learning goals.

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Oregon Common Core

[www.ode.state.or.us/go/common
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**SMARTER Balanced
Assessment Consortium**

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