



**Working together
for our children**

Dear Parents,

Until now, each state has had its own set of student learning standards. Instruction has varied greatly from district to district, and even from school to school. That's why New York State PTA and NYSUT support the concept of Common Core Standards: The goal is to provide a clear, consistent "core" of standards for all children.

COMMON CORE



1 What are the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association. The goal of the CCSS is to provide a single set of clear and consistent educational standards in math and English language arts that states can share and voluntarily adopt. A total of 45 states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted the Common Core State Standards.



2 Why do we need new standards?

Until now, every state had its own standards and different expectations of student performance. Common standards will help ensure that all students are receiving a high quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state. Common Core standards can provide parents with clear expectations for what children should know and be able to do

when they graduate high school or advance to a particular grade level. Common Core standards provide consistency for parents and students during transitions and allow parents to continue to support student learning regardless of changes in ZIP code. In addition, evidence-based standards will more effectively prepare American students to keep up with their peers around the world.



3 What does Common Core look like in the classroom?

Common Core standards are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what students need to learn, but they will not dictate how teachers should teach. Common Core standards are not curriculum. Teachers and schools will continue to devise curriculum, including 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 curriculum decisions.



Were teachers and parents involved in the creation of the standards?

Yes. Parents and teachers have been a critical voice in the development of the standards. The National PTA, National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, National Council of Teachers of English and other organizations have been instrumental in bringing

together teachers to provide specific, constructive feedback since the standards were first released in 2010.

WHY NOW?

Different standards across states

Student mobility, military families

THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS:

Prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and work

Provide educators, parents and students with clear, focused standards or guideposts

Set consistent expectations, regardless of a student's ZIP code

Include both knowledge and the application of subject area

Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards and standards of top-performing nations

Are based on real-world application

Are evidence- and research-based, with guidance on topics to include, when to introduce content, and coherence/focus



What's happening here in New York?

New York's Board of Regents adopted the P-12 Common Core Learning Standards in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics in January 2011. The standards focus on a deeper level of subject comprehension and set clear expectations for learning. New York teachers were involved in the review process and recommended the state approve additional standards.

recognize and identify coins by their names and values.

The Pre-Kindergarten Foundation standards will serve as a resource guide for pre-K providers, offering a template for professional development and a framework with pre-K instructional activities. The primary purpose of the pre-K standards is to ensure that all students, including children with disabilities and English language learners have rich early learning experiences that prepare them for success in school. Both PTA and NYSUT, however, oppose pre-K-2 standardized testing, except for diagnostic purposes.



Did New York add anything?

Yes, in 2011, the Board of Regents approved recommended additions to the Common Core State Standards, including prekindergarten standards for both ELA/Literacy and math. Additions to the ELA/Literacy Common Core included an 11th standard, "Responding to Literature," and grade-level expectations for student inquiry, culture and diversity.

Math additions included two specific grade-level standards. Kindergartners must develop an understanding of ordinal numbers (first through 10th) and first-graders must be able to

Key ELA shifts

Read as much non-fiction as fiction

Learn about the world by reading

Read more challenging material closely

Discuss reading using evidence

Write non-fiction using evidence

Increase academic vocabulary



Source: EngageNY.org



What's new for ELA?

Non-fiction makes up the majority of required reading in high school, college and the workplace. Since informational text is harder for students to understand than narrative text, more instructional time is needed to practice. The recommended time spent on literary texts to informational texts at the elementary level is 50/50; at the middle level is 45/55 and at the high school level is 30/70.

An emphasis on reading, writing and speaking based on evidence is another shift. This became part of the Common Core Learning Standards because most college and workplace writing requires evidence, being able to take a position or inform others through citing evidence.

The shift to regular practice with complex texts and academic language occurred because research showed that there is a gap in the difficulty of what students read by the end of high school and what they are required to read in both college and careers.

TIP: Look for “word problems” in real life. Have your child double or halve a recipe. Figure out how much soil is needed for a garden by measuring the length, width and depth.

Key math shifts

Focus: Learn more about fewer, key topics

Coherence: Build skills within and across grades

Rigor: Develop speed and accuracy

Really know it, really do it

Use it in the real world

Think fast AND solve problems

Source: EngageNY.org

For all of these shifts, the emphasis is on reading more complex texts. The features of complex text include density of information, multiple and/or subtle themes and purposes, unfamiliar settings or events, complex sentences, uncommon vocabulary, longer paragraphs and a text structure that is less narrative.



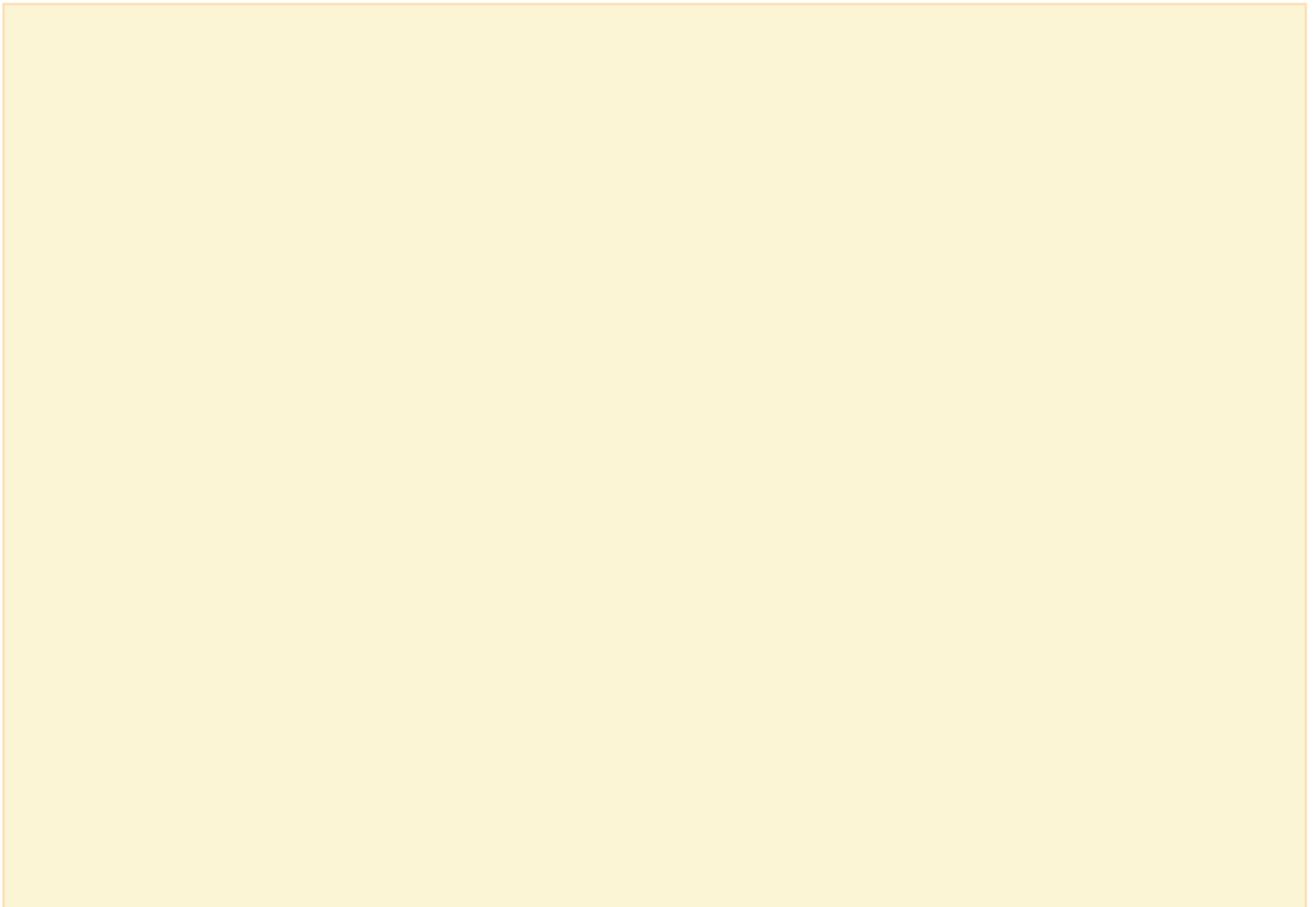
What's new for math?

In math, instructional shifts focus on fewer, more central standards, building core understandings and linking mathematical concepts to real-world skills. In developing the shifts in mathematics, the designers of the standards moved

away from what has been termed the “a mile wide and an inch deep” approach to mathematics instruction in the United States.

The Common Core Learning Standards for mathematics stress conceptual understanding of key ideas and organizing principles of mathematics such as place value or the laws of arithmetic. The standards are designed to allow students to progress through mathematics in a coherent way, building skills within and across grades.

The Common Core defines what students should be able to do in mathematics through



choice questions but also to open-ended items where they must show their work. ELA content will be based on non-fiction and original texts such as speeches or letters where students will be required to draw conclusions and support those conclusions with evidence from these sources. Math content will be more complex with students being challenged to solve multi-step problems and real-life applications.

Beginning in 2014, new math and English Regents exams in high school will be aligned to the Common Core. Current plans for 2015 include the expected availability of multi-state tests designed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). While the New York Board of Regents has not yet decided if the state will adopt PARCC assessments or how they would be used, New York is a governing member of this 25-state consortium and will be influential in the development of these tests. Finally, the Regents expect that future assessment of Common Core skills will be computer-based. This transition could begin as early as the spring of 2015.

Schools and individual educators are held accountable using student test performance combined with additional measures such as classroom observation. Currently, 20 percent of each

educator's performance is based on growth in student test scores on state assessments. An additional 20 percent is based on local test results.

Where student tests are not available or not applicable, student performance is measured using locally developed student learning objectives, or SLO's. The final 60 percent of an educator's evaluation is measured using classroom observation and other evidence of teacher or principal performance. Local measures of student performance and SLO's are developed collaboratively by school districts and local unions and approved by the State Education Department.

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What are the challenges ahead?

While most educators support the Common Core, issues related to instructional implementation, student testing and the use of test results have introduced debate about the potential benefits of Common Core.

Implementation: Any major change takes time, attention to sequence of activities and opportunity to use experience to improve. New standards require development of new curriculum, new instructional methods, new materials and other resources. Extensive professional development will be required. Successful implementation will always be “a work in progress.”

Read a combination of fiction and non-fiction aloud or with your child. Look for subjects that interest your child — from sports heroes to dinosaurs. Select more difficult passages over time.

Read more informational texts including newspapers, magazines,

Resources

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