



Ohio's New Learning Standards Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

General Questions

Q: What are Ohio's New Learning Standards?

A: In 2010, the Ohio State Board of Education incorporated the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English and state-developed standards in science and social studies into the state's New Learning Standards. The standards are learning goals for the knowledge and skills all young Ohioans need to succeed in our competitive economy.

Q: What are the Common Core State Standards?

A: The Common Core State Standards, incorporated into Ohio's New Learning Standards by Ohio's State Board of Education in 2010, establish clear expectations about what students should know and be able to do when completing each grade, K-12, in mathematics and English Language Arts. They are essential to preparing our children for success in college, careers, and life.

Q: What subjects are included in Common Core State Standards?

A: Common Core State Standards focus solely on mathematics and English Language Arts. Ohio's New Learning Standards, of which the Common Core mathematics and English standards are just a part, also incorporate science, social studies and other subject areas.

Q: Are the Common Core State Standards the same thing as curriculum?

A: No, standards are different than curriculum; standards represent expectations for what students should know and be able to do, and curriculum is a road map teachers use to meet those goals or expectations. Ohio law specifies that districts, schools, and teachers determine the curriculum, through textbooks, lesson plans, literary texts, and other instructional materials created and selected by teachers and districts.

Curriculum and instruction will continue to be local decisions, as those closest to our students are best positioned to know how to support their learning. Ohio's New Learning Standards will remain under the full control of our state—the federal government will have no authority to intrude by changing the standards, dictating curriculum, or violating the privacy rights of our students.

Q: How will the standards be measured? Will we have new assessments in Ohio?

A: Yes, we will have new assessments, and initial test scores will very likely show a temporary decline under Ohio's next generation of assessments. Ohio's New Learning Standards, including the Common Core State Standards, reflect a real-world view of what students need to know. These new standards are more challenging than those currently being taught in Ohio. Stated another way, we know our achievement in Ohio needs to improve significantly, and when the new tests are given, they will show this need for improvement.

Q: Why did Ohio adopt the Common Core?

A: By including Common Core State Standards in Ohio's New Learning Standards, the state is ensuring that our children are challenged by real-life expectations, and that they master the knowledge and skills necessary for success in college and career. In an increasingly competitive global marketplace, Ohio has set its new standards high enough to assure our students succeed after high school.

Q: How will Ohio's children benefit from the Common Core State Standards?

A: The new standards focus on developing students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and writing skills—real-world skills that students need to be successful in today's workforce. In addition, Ohio's new standards focus on a deeper understanding of materials, not just basic memorization and test-taking skills. The new standards are also clear and focused, allowing teachers to explore fewer topics in more depth with students, rather than skimming the surface of numerous topics to prepare students for tests.

Q: Are the standards developmentally appropriate for our youngest learners?

A: Understanding a child's learning and development is critical to both families and educators. The standards were developed with significant input from K-3 teachers and early childhood professionals and have been deemed appropriate for our youngest learners by educators and early childhood organizations in Ohio and across the country.

While the development of academic skills is essential to a strong start for Ohio's youngest learners, we must take a comprehensive view of their educations. In addition to academic skills, Ohio's teachers are encouraged to focus on a child's social and emotional well-being, and physical and motor development. These standards, coupled with the Ohio's Entry Early Learning and Development Standards, will ensure our youngest learners are on a successful path.

In addition, Ohio's New Kindergarten Readiness Assessment will give kindergarten teachers a comprehensive picture of a child's learning and development at kindergarten entry, pinpointing where each child is in physical well-being and motor development, language and literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and social skills.

Q: Who led the development of the Common Core State Standards?

A: The nation's governors and education commissioners, through their representative organizations the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), led the development of the Common Core State Standards and continue to lead the initiative. Teachers (including many from Ohio), parents, school administrators, and experts from across the country provided significant input into the development and revisions of the standards.

These Standards Ensure Local Control

Q: Isn't the Common Core an unconstitutional intrusion of states' rights?

A: No, it is not. These standards are not a federal mandate, and in fact, the Ohio State Board of Education voluntarily adopted them in 2010 and can withdraw from them at any point.

Q: Isn't it true that the federal government will eventually take over ownership of the Common Core State Standards?

A: No, that is incorrect. The federal government will not govern the Common Core State Standards. The initiative was and will remain a state-led effort. The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers are committed to developing a long-term governance structure with leadership from governors, chief state school officers, and other state policymakers.

Q: Does Ohio's adoption of these Standards amount to a national curriculum for our schools?

A: These standards are not a curriculum. They 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.

Q: Isn't the Common Core part of a plan by the federal government and President Obama to take over our schools?

A: No, the Common Core State Standards were developed by the states. They were endorsed and embraced by the Department of Education, which recognized the exemplary product achieved by the states working together. In 2009, Ohio's General Assembly called on the State Board of Education to revise and improve its academic content standards and set higher expectations for our students. The Board consequently combined the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English Language Arts with state-developed standards in science and social studies in 2010.

Q: Aren't the Common Core State Standards imposing President Obama's curriculum on our state, complete with textbooks and lesson plans?

A: No. Ohio's New Learning Standards, which include the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and mathematics, spell out what students should know and be able to do across grades and subjects. They were developed by Ohio and other states, not the federal government. Standards *do not* dictate what textbooks and programs local boards of education adopt. They do not tell teachers how to teach their students. By Ohio law, the State Board of Education adopts standards and local district boards of education adopt their own local curriculum and make all decisions about textbooks and instructional resources.

Q: I heard that Ohio adopted the Common Core State Standards before they were even finished. Why are we doing things without any public support?

A: What you've heard is a myth. There was a great deal of public discussion and opportunity for comment on the Standards. Specifically, the Common Core State Standard drafts were released for public comment in September 2009, and a subsequent round of draft standards was shared with the public in March 2010. The Ohio Department of Education posted the standards on its website and conducted 18 meetings around the state in March and April of that year for the public to ask questions about the Standards. And the standards were also presented to Ohio's House and Senate education committees in May 2010. The Common Core State standards were finalized on June 2, 2010 and subsequently adopted by Ohio's State Board of Education on June 18, 2010.

Q. Isn't it true that the standards were passed without a time for the public to give their feedback?

A: Thousands of teachers, parents, school administrators, and experts from across the country (including Ohio) provided significant input into the development and revisions of the standards through a very public process. Ohio was the first state in the nation to hold regional public awareness and input meetings across the state. The standards went through several iterations and each time there was a public comment period that included suggestions from Ohio educators and parents. Five regional meetings were held from March 22-26, 2010, with more than 500 people in attendance.

Q. I heard that the standards are copyrighted and cannot be modified by the states. Is that true?

A. It is true that the standards are copyrighted. However, the copyrights are necessary in order to protect states and local control: the copyrights prove that the federal government did not write and does not own or control the standards and they also protect the rights of the states who developed them. In addition, it protects states from having standards sold to them (by publishers) and makes it impossible for people to change the standards and say it is the Common Core. The states maintain full control over their standards.

These Standards Are High Quality

Q: Won't the Common Core "dumb down" education in Ohio?

A: Ohio's New Learning Standards are more challenging than Ohio's old standards and focus on more critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Data clearly demonstrate that Ohio's previous standards were not adequately preparing students for college, career, or the military. The below data points strongly illustrate this point.

- Eighty-three percent of Ohio fourth graders passed the state's reading exam in 2011. That same year, just 27 percent passed the National Assessment of Educational Progress reading test (aka, The Nation's Report Card). In math, the difference was 78 percent versus 38 percent.
 - Thirty-one percent of Ohio graduates (class of 2013) who took the ACT met *none* of the college-ready benchmarks, indicating they will likely struggle in entry-level college courses.
 - Nationally, more than one in five high school graduates do not meet the minimum academic standard required for Army enlistment, as measured by the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT).
 - Forty-one percent of Ohio public high school graduates attending an in-state, public college require remedial, non-credit-bearing mathematics or English courses.
- More importantly, the standards are minimum expectations, and school districts can and should move beyond them to further challenge our students.

Q: Will the Common Core State Standards bring all states' standards down to the lowest common denominator, which means states with higher standards, such as Massachusetts, will be taking a step backward if they adopt them?

A: No, there is an explicit agreement to prevent that. And for all but a handful of states, including Ohio, the Common Core State Standards will be a major step forward in challenging and motivating our children.

Q: Isn't it true that although the Common Core claims to prepare all children for college, the college they talk about is a non-selective community college and not a four-year university?

A: No, it is not. These standards are rigorous and evidence-based, and are aligned with college and workforce expectations. They are designed to ensure that students graduate high school prepared to enter credit-bearing courses in either two or four-year institutions.

Q: I've heard that the Common Core State Standards will do nothing to help our children compete in our competitive economy. Is that true?

A: No, it is not. These standards are more challenging than Ohio's old standards and will help our children compete globally. The new standards focus on developing critical-thinking, problem-solving, and writing skills. These are all real-world skills that students need to be successful in today's workforce.

Q: I've heard that the Common Core State Standards are not internationally benchmarked. Is that true?

A: International benchmarking played a significant role in the development of these standards. In fact, these college and career ready standards include an appendix listing the evidence that was consulted in drafting the standards, and the international data consulted in the benchmarking process is included in the appendix. That's how we know the standards, when met, will prepare our children to succeed.

Q: How can we use standards that are not researched or evidence-based to teach our children?

A: These standards are researched and evidenced-based. The standards have made careful use of a large and growing body of evidence. The evidence base includes scholarly research, surveys on what skills are required of students entering college and workforce training programs, assessment data identifying college-and career-ready performance, and comparisons to standards from high-performing states and nations.

Q: Won't the standards emphasize a narrow set of skills at the expense of content and knowledge?

A: No. The standards recognize that both content and skills are important. In English Language Arts, the standards require certain critical content for all students, including: classic myths and stories from around the world; America's founding documents; foundational American literature; and Shakespeare. Appropriately, the remaining crucial decisions about what content should be taught are left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

In mathematics, the standards lay a solid foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, and decimals. Taken together, these elements support a student's ability to learn and apply more demanding math concepts and procedures. The middle school and high school standards call on students to practice applying mathematical ways of thinking to real world issues and challenges; they prepare students to think and reason mathematically. The standards set a rigorous definition of college and career readiness, not by piling topic upon topic, but by demanding that students develop a depth of understanding and ability to apply mathematics to novel situations, as college students and employees regularly do.

Q: Isn't it true the standards don't have enough emphasis on fiction/literature?

A: The standards require certain critical content for all students, including: classic myths and stories from around the world; America's founding documents; foundational American literature; and Shakespeare. Appropriately, the remaining crucial decisions about what content should be taught are left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Q: Isn't it true the standards are just a vague descriptions of skills, and that they don't include a reading list or any other similar reference to content?

A: It is true that there is no book or reading list, because local teachers make those choices. The standards do, however, include sample texts that demonstrate the level of text complexity appropriate for the grade level and that are compatible with the learning demands set out in the standards. The exemplars of high-quality texts at each grade level provide a rich set of possibilities and have been very well received. This provides districts with the flexibility to make their own decisions about what texts to use—while providing an excellent reference point when selecting their texts.

Q: I've heard that English teachers will be asked to teach science and social studies reading materials. Is this true?

A: English teachers will still teach their students literature as well as literary non-fiction. However, because college- and-career readiness overwhelmingly focuses on complex texts outside of literature, the standards also ensure students are being prepared to read, write, and research across the curriculum, including in history and science. This goal can be achieved by ensuring that teachers in other disciplines are also focusing on reading and writing to build knowledge within their subject areas.

Q: Isn't it true that the standards do not prepare or require students to learn Algebra in the 8th grade, as many states' current standards do?

A: The standards do accommodate and prepare students for Algebra 1 in 8th grade, by including the prerequisites for this course in grades K–7. Students who master the K–7 material will be able to take Algebra 1 in 8th grade. At the same time, grade 8 standards are also included; these include rigorous algebra and will transition students effectively into a full Algebra 1 course.

Q: I've looked at the Common Core State Standards and it seems that key math topics are missing or appear in the wrong grade. Have you seen this?

A: The mathematical progressions presented in the Common Core are coherent and based on evidence. Part of the problem with having 50 different sets of state standards is that today, different states cover different topics at different grade levels. Coming to consensus guarantees that from the viewpoint of any given state, topics will move up or down in the grade level sequence. This is unavoidable. What is important to keep in mind is that the progression in the Common Core State Standards is mathematically coherent and leads to college and career readiness at an internationally competitive level.

Q. I have heard that the standards forbid remediation at the college level. Is that true?

A. No, that is incorrect. The standards were created to better prepare our students for college so that if they do choose to attend, remediation will not be necessary. If a student still requires remediation, it is absolutely allowed.

These Standards Will Benefit Teachers

Q: How will the Common Core affect teaching in Ohio?

A: The Common Core Standards will present exciting new challenges and possibilities for educators across the state. Although there is alignment between Ohio's former standards and the Common Core, Ohio's New Learning Standards require a deeper engagement with a smaller number of standards than the state currently requires. Specifically, students will be required to master more critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Recognizing the new depth to which Common Core subject areas must be taught, teachers and school and district leaders will need to receive comprehensive training on implementation of the standards to develop a deep understanding of what they require. When implemented, the standards will lift the teaching profession to new heights.

Q: I've heard the standards dictate to teachers what they can teach our children. Is that true?

A: No, it is not. The best understanding of what works in the classroom comes from the teachers who are in them. That's why these standards will establish *what* students need to learn, but they will not dictate *how* teachers should teach. Instead, schools and teachers will decide how best to help students reach the standards, just as they do now.

Q: Doesn't the Common Core take away teacher flexibility to teach in the most effective way?

A: Under the Common Core, teachers will have *more flexibility* than before. With fewer and clearer standards to teach, teachers can spend more time ensuring that every student understands the material. And local educators will still make decisions about curriculum, textbooks, reading passages, and other instructional materials.

Q: Isn't it true that teachers were not involved in the writing of these standards?

A: The Common Core State Standards drafting process relied on educators, including many Ohio teachers, and standards experts from across the country. In addition, there were many state experts that came together to create the most thoughtful and transparent process of standard setting. In addition, thousands of teachers in Ohio and across the country provided comments and edits for the various revisions of the standards. This was only made possible by many states working together.

Q: My neighbor has said that teachers oppose the Common Core. Is that true?

A: The American Federation of Teachers reports that 75 percent of its members support the Common Core. And a spring 2013 survey of Ohio superintendents, conducted by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, found that seven in ten Ohio district superintendents consider the Common Core an initiative that will lead to *fundamental improvement* to Ohio's K-12 education system. It should be noted, however, that while teachers support the Common Core, they will need comprehensive and sustained support and training to successfully implement the standards across Ohio.

These Standards Do Not Threaten Our Privacy

Q: Isn't it true that as part of the Common Core, the federal government will collect more than 300 data elements about you and your children?

A: No, this is not true. The Common Core State Standards do not include new requirements for the government to collect data on you or your children. School districts and the state of Ohio already collect data on students, but that data is aggregated for the federal government, after stripping out students' personal information, and that data collection doesn't change whether states adopt Common Core or not. In fact, Ohio has some of the most stringent guidelines in the country on the collection of student data, and expressly forbids sharing student-specific data with the federal government.

Q: Isn't it true that the federal government requires the state to maintain a database on every child from Pre-K to workforce and encourages the collection of more than 400 data points to track everything about our children and families?

A: No, this statement is false. States, including Ohio, collect a limited amount of student-level information that is commensurate with state-level responsibilities. Personal, identifiable information about an individual student is protected under state law and the federal privacy law known as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy ACT (FERPA).

Q: I heard that even though the federal government is not allowed to maintain a national database of student data, they are evading this law by requiring the states to collect data and then forward it to them to be used by federal agencies and private foundations. Is that true?

A: No, this is not true. The federal government does not have access to the student-level information housed in state data systems. The federal government can only collect aggregate-level student data, and the states are prohibited from reporting information that would make it possible to identify an individual student. The Common Core State Standards are *not* a tool for federal data collection and do not authorize student data sharing between states or with the federal government.

Q: I heard that the Common Core will require Ohio to share personal, identifiable student data with the federal government. Is this true?

A: No. By Ohio law, any information tying students to their educational data cannot be legally shared or released to anyone without parental consent. Ohio has some of the most stringent student data protection laws in the country, and the Common Core does not change how the data are collected or shared.

Other Questions

Q: People are saying the new standards are completely unrealistic for students to meet. Is that true?

A: Ohio's New Learning Standards are challenging, but they place reasonable expectations on students and are designed to prepare them for success after high school, whatever they choose to do. Here are two examples of what the standards look like:

Math: Know number names and the count sequence (Kindergarten)

1. Count to 100 by ones and by tens.
2. Count forward beginning from a given number within the known sequence (instead of having to begin at 1).

Reading: Key Ideas and Details (Fourth Grade)

1. Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
2. Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.
3. Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

In short, these standards will certainly be challenging at first, but that's a direct response to parents who want to see their children challenged and motivated in school and prepared to succeed in life.

Q: Why are the Common Core State Standards important for my children?

A: Critical thinking and problem solving are essential for our children to be prepared for success in life—whatever their aspirations may be. These new standards challenge our children to think deeply and prepare them to graduate with the knowledge and skills that last well beyond a test.

Q: Why are the Common Core State Standards important for parents?

A: Parents can feel confident in their children's futures because Ohio's standards are designed with future success in mind—they prepare students to leave high school ready for a job or college study—without needing remedial course work.

Furthermore, these standards help parents support what their children are learning because expectations at each grade level are clear. When parents clearly understand what their children need to know, they can better support learning at home.

Q: Why are the Common Core State Standards important for teachers?

A: These standards empower and enable teachers to challenge and motivate their students. For years, teachers were asked to cover a variety of concepts, but had no time or freedom to teach in depth. The Common Core focuses on fewer topics, which gives teachers the flexibility to ensure ALL students fully grasp the material and to challenge advanced students.

Furthermore, because Ohio is using standards that are shared across many states, teachers from around the country can collaborate and innovate—developing new ways to make sure real learning is taking place in their classrooms. This means that teachers can be creative and not teach to a test.

Q: Why are the Common Core State Standards important for employers?

A: Employers are looking for candidates who bring a competitive edge to companies. These new standards ensure students have practical experience applying math, reading, and writing skills to real-world scenarios, and this helps employers to hire qualified young people. Sophisticated skills form the core of a great leader. The Common Core State Standards emphasize the ability to effectively collaborate, communicate, and tackle challenges in teams, and this helps our state to grow future leaders.

Q: Would there be any negative impact if Ohio withdrew from the Common Core at this point?

A: Yes, we would be returning to worse standards and expectations for our children. It would seriously demoralize the education community which has worked hard for three years to prepare for these standards and which has become enthusiastic about implementing them. And, the millions of dollars that have been spent to implement these standards and the three years of teacher training already invested would be wasted.

Q: Doesn't the adoption of the Common Core fundamentally and negatively affect school choice in Ohio?

A: No, it does not. Parents will continue to have a variety of public and private options, and will be armed with better data about the performance of those education choices.

Q: Does the adoption and implementation of these standards affect home schooling?

A: No, the adoption and implementation of these standards does not affect the right or ability of parents to home school their children, or for that matter prescribe the manner in which parents would home school their children.

Q: Did you know SAT testing is being structured to conform to the Common Core? Wouldn't this mean that home schoolers, private schools, and charter schools will have to conform to the Common Core as well?

A: No, it does not. The SAT is just one exam that students can take to measure college readiness, and it is not a required exam in Ohio. In fact, in this state most students take the ACT, with only a small minority choosing to take the SAT.