

Common Core State Standards—*Content-Specific Analysis*

- Standards are the skills and knowledge young people need to be successful in college and at work. Today, we have different academic standards in every state, and too many states have standards that are not at a level that would prepare student for college or careers.
- College and career readiness means the ability to enter into a postsecondary school without remediation or the ability to enter a job that would provide a livable wage as defined by the Department of Labor.
- The *Common Core State Standards* are designed to provide consistent learning goals for all students, regardless of where they live, and allow parents and teachers to more effectively help all students achieve at those goals.
- The *Standards* drafting process relied on standards experts from across the country. In addition, many state experts participated in review and comment periods to create the most thoughtful and transparent process. This was only made possible by many states working together.
- The goal from the outset was to apply the most advanced, current thinking on how to prepare young people for success in college and in their careers to move even the best state standards to the next level. So while they certainly were informed by the best standards in the country, these common core standards reflect evidence and expertise.
- Unfortunately, young people – even in high-performing states – are graduating and passing all the required tests, and still require remediation in their postsecondary work, which is why the common core standards are anchored in preparing young people for college and career success.
- For example, most of today's high school students master narrative writing, which includes expressing opinions, beliefs, and personal experiences. That's a form of writing rarely required in the workplace or at college.
- Because of the type of writing needed in the workplace and college, the English-language arts *Standards* put a greater emphasis on writing arguments. And because college and career readiness overwhelming focuses on complex texts outside of literature, these standards also ensure students are reading, writing, and researching in history and science, in addition to literature.
- Also, evidence shows that the complexity of texts students are reading today does not match what is demanded in college and the workplace, creating a gap between what high school students can do and what they need to be able to do. The common core standards create a staircase of increasing text complexity, so that students are expected to both develop their skills and apply them to more and more complex texts.
- In math, the teaching practices of high-performing countries and the National Research Council's Early Math Panel report indicate that it is important to focus on arithmetic in early grades – in part, because it takes time to master it.

- The *Common Core State Standards* for math require a level of mastery in mathematics unlike any current system of standards. For example, nine laws of arithmetic underlie algebra – no current set of standards even shows what they are, but the *Standards* make them the building blocks, building the foundation that students will need to successfully master algebra.
- In addition, the *Standards* commit to teaching mathematics in a real world context – a way that you might apply the approach/reasoning to problems that aren't presented as math problems.
- The high school *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.
- The *Common Core State Standards* also address a problem identified by the National Mathematics Panel and international benchmarking studies: Today's math textbooks are overloaded, fragmented, sometimes incoherent, and lacking in presentation of concepts.
- In the common core standards, the mathematical progressions are careful and coherent, which will make it easier to develop better textbooks. Textbooks in high-performing Singapore are not only more focused than U.S. textbooks, they also present the concepts that underlie the skills.
- The best understanding of what works in education comes from the ground up. That's why the *Standards* are being developed by the states – not the federal government –and they will incorporate the best and highest of the current state standards.
- And 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*.