



REAL LEARNING FOR REAL LIFE

Frequently Asked Questions: Common Core Overview

What are the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards, or “Common Core,” are academic learning goals for grades K-12 in math and English language arts. Common Core sets goals or standards that focus on deeper understanding of basic subjects in order to better prepare students for success in college, work, and life. Common Core is part of Washington’s K-12 State Learning Standards and were adopted in 2011.

What’s the difference between the Common Core standards and curriculum?

Common Core is a set of clear learning standards that communicate shared goals and expectations for the knowledge and skills students should have at every grade level. Learning standards are different from curriculum or lesson plans. While the Common Core sets high expectations for what students should know, it does not set a lesson plan or tell teachers how to teach.

A curriculum is made up of teaching and learning materials that teachers use to help construct their day-to-day lesson plans and instruction. With the Common Core, teachers will still create lesson plans and tailor instruction to meet the needs of individual students in their classrooms.

Who developed the Common Core?

The Common Core was created by states, for states. Hundreds of teachers, education researchers, mathematicians, and other experts across the country collaborated in developing the Common Core, with state governors and state schools chiefs both in leading roles since 2009. Hundreds of educators from Washington State provided input to this process.

How will the Common Core improve the quality of our education?

1. **Master the material.** The Common Core standards are designed to ensure real understanding. The materials go deeper into fewer topics, so kids master the material instead of just memorizing. Learning is more hands-on with a focus on what students will use in real life.
2. **Building blocks for critical thinking.** The Common Core standards emphasize learning fundamentals so students truly understand basic concepts and can use them as the building blocks for critical thinking.
3. **Teacher collaboration.** Teachers across the nation will be able to collaborate and learn from each other because other states are using the same high standards. Teachers will also have more time to teach the ideas and concepts that matter most, which moves the focus from test scores back to student learning.
4. **Consistent, high expectations for all students.** Before Common Core, what counted as grade-level work in one state might be less than average in another state. Common Core provides a consistent set of learning standards and expectations so we can truly know how students are doing in school, no matter where they live.

Will my local schools and teachers still have control over curriculum and other local decisions?

Yes, the Common Core is a set of standards that provides a framework for what students should know at each grade level. How those standards are taught is up to Washington’s 295 school districts and more than 2,000 individual schools. Teachers in each school and district will have the flexibility and control to set the curriculum that best meets the needs of their students.

How does the Common Core support a stronger economy?

- 1. We live in a global economy and a mobile society.** For example, military families move frequently between states, technology professionals are extremely mobile, and Washington competes not just with other states but with other nations. With the Common Core, we can be sure that our students are learning the skills they need to be prepared for the global economy.
- 2. Building the critical skills students need in the job market.** As of 2013, Washington had 25,000 unfilled jobs for highly skilled workers — and that number is projected to grow to 50,000 by 2017. Our state has jobs, but lacks qualified applicants. Common Core focuses on real-world skills that students need to get a job and be competitive in the workplace.

What is the timeline for using the Common Core in Washington schools?

The state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has been working together with schools, districts and teachers on a transition plan — including implementation guides, local and regional supports, teacher training and resources — since 2011. The Common Core standards were fully implemented in Washington schools in the 2013-14 school year. In 2014-15, students will take new tests in math and English language arts that are aligned to the Common Core standards and are designed to be a better measure of what students know and understand.

Here's the timeline:

2010	OSPI and the State Board of Education review existing learning standards and conduct a cost-benefit analysis of adopting the Common Core.
July 2011	The Common Core State Standards were officially adopted by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.
2012 - 2014	OSPI provides toolkits to teachers, districts and administrators to begin implementation. New tests are piloted for math and English language arts.
2013	OSPI, professional educator organizations, and education advocates work together to build public awareness and support for the Common Core.
2013-2014 (and ongoing)	Common Core standards were fully rolled out to every school district to set high expectations for every student in math and English language arts.
2014-2015	Common Core standards are fully implemented and new exams in math and English language arts are rolled out to better measure student knowledge and establish a baseline for the future.

Do parents and teachers support the Common Core?

Yes, 68% of Washington parents, teachers and people like you support Common Core (February 2015 poll by Washington STEM), and 76% agree that common learning standards in English and math across the nation will better prepare students college, work and life (May 2014 poll by DHM Research for Partnership for Learning).

Can I talk my child's teacher about Common Core?

Yes, talking to your child's teacher is the best way to stay involved in their education. Talk to the teacher, learn about your child's learning expectations, and help create a learning plan for them to succeed. Teachers in Washington support the Common Core, are receiving on-going training and are working very hard to implement the more rigorous standards.