New Jersey Department of Education

Educational Partnerships

Parent Academy for Student Success (PASS)

Common Core State Standards for Parents and Families: Overview

What is an Academic Standard?

Academic standards describe the knowledge and skills a student needs to acquire by the end of each school year and upon completion of a K-12 public school education.

What are the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) identify the specific skills and knowledge that all students are expected to learn, know, and be able to do in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The New Jersey State Board of Education adopted the CCSS in 2010 and implemented a four-year timeline for educators to learn and begin to adapt their own lesson plans and curriculum.

Today, jobs require new ways of thinking and using technology. The CCSS will help schools design lessons and other learning experiences to focus on deeper, richer learning that will prepare students for the 21st century workforce.

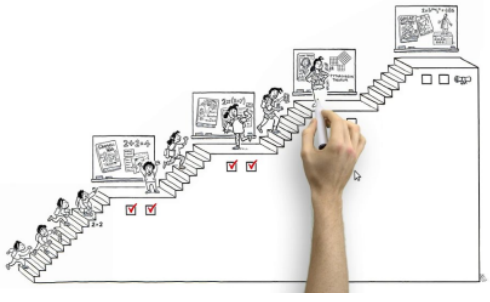
Did New Jersey have state standards prior to the Common Core State Standards?

Yes. Since the 1990s New Jersey has had state standards for teaching and student learning in nine subject areas, known as the Core Curriculum Content Standards (English language arts (ELA); mathematics; science; social studies; technology; 21st century life and careers; comprehensive health and physical education; visual and performing arts; and world languages). The New Jersey State Board of Education voluntarily adopted the CCSS to replace the previous ELA and mathematics standards.

What do the CCSS mean for student learning and achievement?

The skills and knowledge outlined in the CCSS will help your child grow from one grade to the next by focusing on authentic learning experiences. We don't know what tomorrow's jobs will be, but we do know that the future depends on a strong workforce in which critical thinking and problem-solving skills can be applied in any context. The CCSS for ELA and mathematics were updated so that your child is encouraged to think deeply, collaborate with peers, and show their work and their thought process in arriving at an answer. This will prepare them for success at work or when they enroll in college. To search for information and examples organized by subject and grade, visit the New Jersey Educator Resource Exchange.

Watch a 3-minute video that explains how the Common Core State Standards will help students achieve at high levels and learn what they need to know to get to graduation and beyond. http://www.cgcs.org/domain/33 (English and Spanish)



What are some benefits of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?

The CCSS better prepare students to succeed in college course work and future employment. The standards:

- Set clear and consistent learning goals for every student.
- Utilize the knowledge and experience of teachers, the higher education and business communities, academic content experts, leading education researchers, and the public.
- Focus on students' critical thinking skills and students' ability to solve real-world problems rather than just memorize facts.
- Are based on state and international student learning standards that reflect the expectations of postsecondary job training programs and credit-bearing, entry level courses in two- and four-year colleges.

Do the Common Core State Standards determine what and how teachers teach?

No. The standards are not a limited program of study or a specific set of courses. In New Jersey, local school districts and educators have the responsibility to develop lessons and materials that will help ensure that students in their classrooms meet the learning expectations in the CCSS.

The standards can be taught in many different ways to meet the needs of all students, including students with special needs. Therefore, lesson plans are still in the hands of districts, schools, and teachers so that they can design lessons that include strategies to engage all students in learning.

The CCSS do not limit the knowledge and skills needed for quality teaching; all decisions regarding lesson plans, textbooks, and materials continue to be made at the local level.

What do the CCSS look like in the classroom?

If you visit your child's classroom, you may not see straight rows of desks facing the teacher who stands in the front of the room and does most of the talking. Instead you might find that the room is arranged with tables and groups of chairs so that students can interact with each other and the teacher can move from table to table.

In a Common Core classroom, teaching and learning focus on critical thinking skills and students' ability to read, write, speak, listen, and solve "real world" problems.

This allows students to learn and perform in an environment similar to what they will experience in their future work environment.

You might also see students moving around the room sharing information and asking questions. Unlike in the past, you may not see students memorizing lists of items, but rather using multiple methods to obtain and remember information. The CCSS emphasize teaching students *how* to find information and analyze, apply, and explain it. Students are responsible for learning to solve authentic, real-world problems. You will see that teachers put an emphasis on assisting students in explaining their answers to problems and questions.

Of course, there are quiet times in the classroom, but there is interaction in the Common Core classroom as well. Students have discussion groups and perform team-based activities to discover and share information. You will see inclusive classrooms where students with special needs are working with their peers to solve problems in many different ways. Learning with the CCSS is personalized. The CCSS let students practice the skills that they will need when they move on to the next grade or graduate from high school.

Learn more about the standards at http://njcore.org/resources/portal/18242 and corestandards.org.