

What are the Common Core State Standards?

It is the responsibility of every state to set standards that define what students are expected to learn at each grade level. New Jersey has had state standards since the 1990s, known as the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJ CCCS). Although the State Board of Education determines the academic standards, decisions regarding how the standards are taught and the instructional materials and books used to teach them are made at the local level by teachers and district leaders. The NJ CCCS include the following content areas:

- English Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Comprehensive Health and Physical Education
- World Languages
- Science
- Social Studies
- 21st-Century Life and Careers
- Technology

In 2010, New Jersey voluntarily adopted the Common Core State Standards, along with 45 other states and Washington, D.C. The standards were developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, together with teachers, curriculum content experts and higher education faculty. The Common Core replaced the previous New Jersey standards for all students in grades K-12 in English Language Arts and Mathematics. The other seven curricular areas that comprise the NJ CCCS remain unchanged.

The Common Core offers a number of advantages over our previous standards. Most importantly, they focus heavily on critical thinking skills and students' ability to read, write, speak, listen and solve "real world" problems independently. The standards were developed with the goal of ensuring all students are college and career ready by building the skills and knowledge valued by employers and higher education.¹ Additionally, the Common Core is internationally benchmarked to ensure students are academically competitive with their international peers.

To view the Common Core State Standards, please visit www.corestandards.org

New Jersey Implementation of the Common Core

The Common Core was adopted by the State Board of Education in 2010, and the state has undertaken a slow process of implementation over three years between 2011-12 and 2013-14 to allow districts and teachers to make the appropriate curriculum shifts. The standards were to be fully implemented in every classroom and school district in the 2013-14 school year.

In order to prepare educators to incorporate the new standards into their classroom practice, the NJDOE has:

- Provided more than 500 trainings across the state that have reached more than 15,000 educators.
- Developed and posted a "model curriculum" as an optional resource for educators, including "model assessment items" that can be used in quizzes or tests to check for understanding.
- Created a new, free website where New Jersey educators can access instructional materials and upload their own videos and lesson plans for other educators to share best practices, available at www.njcore.org
- In Spring 2014, NJDOE will field test the Common Core aligned Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment prior to its full implementation in 2014-15. Seventy percent of districts volunteered to participate in the field test.

¹ http://www.futurereadyproject.org/sites/frp/files/The_Common_Core_State_Standards.pdf

Facts About the Common Core

- **Adoption of the Common Core was not required by the Federal Government.** New Jersey voluntarily adopted the Common Core because it sets higher standards and is aligned with college and career readiness.
- **The Common Core is not a national curriculum that takes control from local educators.** The Common Core is a set of standards that define the skills and knowledge students must learn at each grade level. All decisions regarding curriculum, textbooks, reading lists, lesson plans, and pacing will continue to be made by local school districts.
- **The Common Core does not require collection of student biometric data.**²
- **The Common Core does not require all students to have a computer or iPad.** Schools will provide any technology needed for classroom lessons or assessments. Students will not need to bring their own devices.

Broad Support for Raising the Bar

- A poll of New Jersey educators found that two-thirds of teachers are enthusiastic about the Common Core, and 69% believe the Common Core will have a positive impact on students' ability to think critically and use reasoning skills.³
- The National Education Association (NEA), New Jersey's largest teachers' union, was involved in the development and implementation of the Common Core.⁴ The NEA has created a Tool Kit that includes additional information and resources.⁵
- The Common Core was endorsed by the College and Career Ready Task Force, which was made up of the higher education and business communities of New Jersey.⁶ The national Chamber of Commerce also supports the Common Core.⁷
- The Common Core has the support of Governor Christie⁸, President Obama, the Star Ledger Editorial Board⁹ and educators across the country.

Additional Resources

The New Jersey Resource Educator Exchange (www.njcore.org) provides Common Core aligned instructional resources. Educators can search for, download, and share instructional materials connected to the Common Core State Standards and the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, as well as access the New Jersey Model Curriculum. More information can also be found at:

- **Council of the Great City Schools Three-Minute Video:** <http://www.cgcs.org/domain/157>
- **National PTA Parents' Guide to Success:** Available through <http://www.pta.org/advocacy>
- **Achieve Common Core Resources:** <http://www.achieve.org/achieving-common-core>
- **National Education Association (NEA) Common Core Resources:** <http://www.nea.org/home/46653.htm>
- **The Hunt Institute Common Core Videos:** <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheHuntInstitute>

² <http://www.ed.gov/k-12reforms/standards>

³ <http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources/2013preview/state-nj.htm>

⁴ <http://www.nea.org/home/4665.htm>

⁵ http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/14047-CommonCore_Toolkit_14.pdf

⁶ <http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/readiness.pdf>

⁷ <http://education.uschamber.com/node/1737>

⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cxc2gTxVRoE>

⁹ http://blog.nj.com/njv_editorial_page/2013/09/lonegans_drivel_on_common_core.html#incart_river_default