

1. What Is Common Core?

The Common Core is a new set of national standards that set high quality academic expectations in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics and should learn at the end of each grade level, from kindergarten to twelfth grade. This is the first national effort to adopt standards that are consistent across the country. Historically, education has been a state responsibility and each state could determine what students needed to learn to earn a diploma.

Now, the Common Core Standards aim to create consistent educational goals across the country to better prepare students for college and careers. The Standards put more focus on skills such as writing, problem solving, research and critical thinking to bring our students more inline with what students across the world are learning.

2. Who Came Up With The Standards?

The National Governors Association and The Council of Chief State School Officers. These groups worked with teachers, researchers and experts to develop the standards. It is important to know that the Common Core is not a curriculum and does not dictate how the standards are taught in the classroom. Some states, however, such as New York, have provided curriculum materials that are optional for local districts.

There is another group, The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), working to come up with a national assessment that will be fully implemented in the 2015-2016 school year.

3. Why Are States Doing This?

Political and business leaders have long been concerned that United States schools are not adequately preparing students with skills they need to succeed in the twenty-first century workplace and the global economy. International testing data shows that the United States lags behind other countries and that classroom competition now eventually turns into competition for jobs.

The Standards create equity across districts and give parents a uniform tool to hold schools and districts accountable. The Standards also make it easier for educators to share resources and collaborate because everyone is working toward the same standards.

4. How Many States Have Adopted The Common Core?

Forty-Six states and The District of Columbia have adopted the Common Core Standards.

5. How Are Common Core Standards Different?

Along with being consistent across state lines, the Common Core Standards were designated to be more rigorous and relevant to the real world. Students will learn

some material in earlier grades than in the past. There will be more writing across the curriculum and students will work through more complex multi-step math problems.

6. **How Does This Relate To Testing?**

States have been required to administer annual standardized tests in reading and math since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 went into full effect. New York implemented that law's testing requirements in 2006. Prior to that, New York students only took standardized tests in those subjects in the fourth and eighth grades. No Child Left Behind required the state to expand these tests to students in third through eighth grades as well as in certain high school grades. No Child Left Behind also required a science exam at certain grade levels. Under the Common Core, students still must take tests in their grade levels and eventually there will be additional tests in high school. New York is reviewing its Regents exams to make sure that schools are not duplicating the tests.

7. **Does Common Core Have An Impact On My Child's Teacher Evaluation?**

Yes. State mandated tests do factor into 20 percent of a teacher's evaluation under APPR. The other 80 percent is driven by locally developed tests and observations.

8. **What Is All The Controversy About?**

There have been numerous concerns about the implementation of the Common Core. Some critics worry that it has led to more testing, although state leaders (Commissioner King) say that is not the case. Many local school districts did add their own local standardized tests as part of the teacher evaluation system (APPR) but the state did not require them to do that.

Other critics worry about the increased difficulty of the Standards and the demands that they place on students and teachers. There have been other concerns that the state is rolling out the Standards too fast and that schools and teachers have not had enough time to prepare for the implementation. New York was one of the first states to simultaneously roll out the Standards and the tests that go with them.

9. **How Can Parents Help?**

It is imperative that parents continue to be supportive of their children and communicate with their son's or daughter's teachers. This collaborative relationship will make the transition to the Common Core a smoother one. The following websites will also provide parents with additional information pertaining to the Common Core: www.Corestandards.org, www.Engageny.org/common_core, and the Parents Guide to Common Core can be found on the District website at www.bufsd.org.