

# 13 Things to Know about Common Core State Standards in North Carolina

- 1** The **Common Core** is a set of standards for what students should learn and be able to do in **mathematics and English language arts** from kindergarten through 12th grade.
- 2** The **Common Core State Standards** are North Carolina's **Standard Course of Study** in **mathematics and English language arts**. The State Board of Education approved the new standards for our state in 2010. Following two years of professional development for curriculum specialists, teachers and principals, the new standards were implemented in all North Carolina classrooms in 2012-13.
- 3** **Teachers participated** in the development and selection of the Common Core State Standards, and **the public provided feedback** before these new standards were selected.
- 4** The **Common Core State Standards** grew out of conversation beginning more than five years ago **between state superintendents from across the country and governors** from many states. Many of these state leaders felt that it made sense to work together on standards for student learning in these two important subjects that are taught everywhere. As a result, the National Governors Association and Chief State School Officers worked with top experts in these subjects and in education to create the new standards. **The US Department of Education endorsed the standards after the states developed them.**
- 5** Having common standards in these two fundamental subjects means that publishers of textbooks and other learning resources will not need to create different textbooks to match each state's course of study. The **goal is for textbooks and other materials to be better and richer as a result.**
- 6** The Common Core will help students be competitive nationally when they graduate from high school and attend college or universities, and **it allows students who may have to move during their K-12 education to quickly fit into the academic program wherever they go. For military families, this is especially helpful.** The schools operated by the Department of Defense are participating in the Common Core.
- 7** The **Common Core State Standards** are more rigorous than North Carolina's earlier standards. As a result, new student assessments in mathematics and English language arts have been developed by North Carolina educators and are being given for the first time during the 2012-13 school year. **These more rigorous standards mean that student test scores overall likely will drop in the first year they are given. This is a normal pattern any time a state increases expectations** for students and has happened before in North Carolina when standards were raised.  
  
This type of scenario is often seen in sports. For example, highly competitive marathon runners in the early 1900s posted times of about 2 hours 45 minutes for the men's marathon races. But, by the mid-1950s, that time would not have been highly competitive. The best runners were posting times of approximately 2 hours 15 minutes. Today, that time for the very best runners is only a few minutes over 2 hours. The standard for elite performance has gone up.



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The new academic standards in mathematics provide a clear focus of content that must be mastered at each grade level, K-8. High School Standards specify the mathematics all students should study to be college and career ready. They are organized by the following **conceptual categories or themes: Number and Quantity, Algebra, Functions, Modeling, Geometry, and Statistics and Data. Equally important are the Standards for Mathematical Practice, describing the behaviors or 'habits of mind' of mathematically-proficient students.**

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The new academic standards in **English language arts are organized by four skill categories:**

- **Reading (Informational and Literary)**
  - **Includes Reading Foundational Skills for K-5 students**
- **Writing**
- **Speaking and Listening**
- **Language**

Students build their skills from kindergarten through high school to prepare them to be good readers, writers, speakers/presenters and listeners who use language appropriately for the task at hand. The new standards provide more opportunities for students to practice language arts skills in other subject areas and to focus more attention on reading material that is technical or non-fiction. Of course, literary text continues to be important in student learning. This aligns with the kind of reading and comprehension that students will be expected to have mastered in the workplace.

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**Having organized standards for student learning in North Carolina is not a new idea. Our state has had a *Standard Course of Study* for more than 50 years.** In subjects other than mathematics and English language arts, North Carolina teachers, university professors and business leaders have worked together to develop Essential Standards. Together each subject's set of Essential Standards and the Common Core State Standards make up North Carolina's *Standard Course of Study*, which is available free of charge online at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/>.

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**Implementing the new *Standard Course of Study* is no more expensive than implementing other past revisions to the state's *Standard Course of Study*.** What is different this time is that the State Board of Education chose to implement new standards in every subject at every grade in the same year. In the past, a few subjects were revised or replaced each year, and over time, the entire *Standard Course of Study* was updated a few subjects at a time. Costs for implementation include new textbooks and other resources, professional development for teachers and new assessments for students. Federal Race to the Top grant funds are available to offset some of these costs in North Carolina.

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The Common Core English language arts standards leave the decisions about the selection of literary and non-fiction texts for students up to school districts and local educators. **The standards contain no required reading list for teachers,** just suggestions of works that encompass a diverse catalogue of informational and literary text.

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The Common Core State Standards provide a rigorous level of standards for student learning in math and English language arts, and **local school districts still can accelerate learning opportunities for students who are academically gifted.** North Carolina's *Standard Course of Study* has always allowed for this flexibility to meet students' needs.