



Top 10 Things Parents Need To Know About The Common Core State Standards

Provided

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New educational standards called the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are being implemented in all Maryland public schools, beginning in the 2013-2014 school year. The CCSS are a set of consistent, high-quality academic goals in English/language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The standards define the knowledge and skills all students should master by the end of each grade level in order to graduate from high school fully prepared to enter college and the workforce. The CCSS raise the bar for student achievement and will help Maryland build a world-class education system.

Why do we need new educational standards and what do they mean for Maryland students? Here is a list of the top 10 facts about the CCSS all parents should know.

1. The goal of the CCSS is college and workforce readiness for all students.

As students progress through the grades, they will build the skills and knowledge they will need to be prepared for college-level coursework and the demands of the 21st-century workplace. Students will receive an education that leads to not only a high school diploma but also success in college, career and life after graduation.

2. States, not the federal government, led the effort to develop the CCSS.

The nation's governors and education commissioners collaborated with teachers, researchers, education experts and members of the higher education and business communities to design and develop the standards. Individual states were able to choose whether they wanted to adopt the CCSS, and to date, a total of 46 states (including Maryland) and the District of Columbia have done so.

3. The CCSS are not a curriculum and do not tell teachers how to teach.

Educational standards like CCSS provide the foundation for a curriculum, establishing what students need to learn but not dictating how the standards should be taught. In Maryland, state education experts and teachers have translated the CCSS to a new state curriculum,

which will guide instruction of the standards. Teachers will create lesson plans based on the new curriculum and tailor how they teach to the specific needs of their students. The new Maryland Common Core State Curriculum will replace the state's previous curriculum, beginning in the 2013-2014 school year.

4. Better standards call for better assessments.

New tests are being developed to measure the critical content and skills of the CCSS. Maryland is part of a consortium of states, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), working together to develop a common set of tests aligned to the CCSS. The PARCC assessments will test writing skills, as well as critical thinking and problem solving skills, in each grade. Students will take the new assessments on computers, allowing teachers to see test results quickly and adjust classroom instruction to the needs of their students.

5. The CCSS focus on 21st-century skills.

The CCSS emphasize the development of skills — such as problem solving, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity — that are vital to success in college and today's workplace. They also allow students to apply their learning to real-world situations that simulate the type of work they may do in the future.

6. The CCSS create consistent learning goals for all students regardless of where they live or go to school.

Prior to the development of the CCSS, each state developed its own educational standards and, as a result, expectations for student learning have varied widely from state to state. With the CCSS, parents can be assured their children are learning the same rigorous academic standards as other students across Maryland and across the country. Having consistent standards also provides students, parents and teachers with a clear understanding of what students should be learning in each grade level.

7. CCSS are aligned to college and workplace expectations.

The CCSS reflect the knowledge and skills most valued by employers and higher education. Leaders in the higher education and business communities played a valuable role in the development of the CCSS — providing insight on the learning most needed by students entering college and the workforce. Students who master the standards will be on track to graduate from high school fully prepared for their next steps.

8. CCSS are benchmarked against academic standards from the world's top-performing countries.

Maryland's education system has been ranked number one in the nation for five years in a row, but in today's global economy, competition for jobs comes not just from across the country but also from around the globe. Students must be prepared with the skills and knowledge to compete with their peers here at home as well as students from around the world. Development of the CCSS was informed by the academic standards from a number of high-achieving countries such as Japan and Singapore.

9. The CCSS call for changes in learning for ELA and mathematics.

In ELA, students will read more complex nonfiction and fiction texts. They will learn to create written arguments using evidence from multiple texts and to gather evidence to defend their opinions. In middle and high school, students will apply their literacy skills to mathematics, science, social studies and technical subjects — learning to read and write well in all subjects.

In mathematics, students will develop a foundation of mathematical skills and learning from kindergarten through 12th grade, creating the building blocks to understand why and how math works in the real world. Students will still memorize math facts but they will also be asked to show their understanding by explaining in writing how they solved math problems.

10. The CCSS delve deeper into core concepts.

The CCSS ask teachers and students to dig deeper into the core skills and concepts at each grade level, focusing on the most important topics that students need to know. Teachers will have more time to cover subjects in greater detail and help students master critical skills and develop a deeper understanding of key concepts.

The clearly defined goals of the CCSS allow families and teachers to work together to help students succeed. Parents can continue to play an active role in their children's education by communicating with their teachers and monitoring their children's academic progress at home.

To learn more about the CCSS, visit www.marylandpublicschools.org or www.corestandards.org

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I support the common core standards without reservation. I moved 14 times growing up and had four high schools (the last being Severna Park) - resulting in a tangle of curricula and outcomes that did not match up. The only thing that helped was that I was in AP classes that had some degree of national outcome goals. It just makes sense that curricula should revisit core learning on a regular basis. It brings real-world relevance to students as well. For very advanced students who are taking high school subjects in Middle School, they have to go back and "relearn" for the SAT. The SAT is algebra based and yet many students sitting for the exam haven't been exposed to it for years.

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Be cautious despite the seemingly good and benign goals. It is disheartening and worrisome to see that a parent was bullied at a public forum when he tried to get an answer to his question regarding Common Core (see news story about Howard Co parent who was removed from a Common Core meeting). Fervently guard your right to question and free speech; question everything no matter how pretty it is presented. Parents have the best interest and intentions for their children. Parents are their child's very first teacher. Parents are the best advocates for their children. Parents will pay attention to the long term effect of changes to education. I also wonder how valid Maryland's Educational Ranking of #1 is (see Severna Park Voice commentary <http://www.severnaparkvoice.com/politics-opinion/we-must-fix-problems-our-school-system#.UkR6k1rHcks>). Statistics can be used in various ways and can prove your point no matter how bad the data. Stay alert, stay informed, and keep questioning. Here are other links to check out: <http://www.wbal.com/article/100835/88/template-story/Lowery-Responds-To-Common-Core-Critics>. Listen to the audio from Cindy Sharretts. See also <http://www.wbal.com/article/101414/88/template-story/-Jimmy-Mathis-Common-Core>.

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