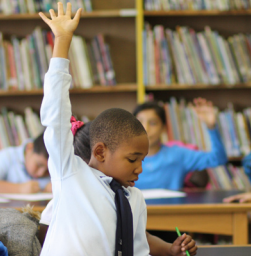
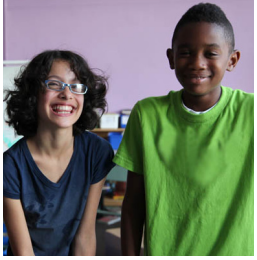



Department of Education
Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARDS

The New York City Department of Education (DOE) serves more than 1.1 million students and their families in over 1,700 schools. We are committed to providing useful information to parents and families and offering them multiple opportunities to participate in our City's public school programs and initiatives. This overview is designed to explain the Common Core Learning Standards and how they relate to your child's education.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARDS?

Learning standards describe what students should know and be able to do in each grade. Over the next few years, New York and more than 40 other states across the country will transition to a new set of learning standards called the Common Core. These new standards provide a clear picture of what students need to learn each year in order to graduate from high school ready to succeed in college and careers.

The Common Core standards were developed by educators and other experts based on research and lessons learned from top-performing countries. The standards describe the skills and knowledge our students need to succeed in a rapidly changing world, including the ability to think creatively, solve real-world problems, make effective arguments, and engage in debates.

In New York State, the Common Core includes standards for students in pre-kindergarten through grade twelve in English language arts and math. The English standards include a focus on literacy in history, science, and technical subjects—emphasizing that teachers in all subjects are responsible for teaching literacy. As schools implement these new standards, students will be asked to do significantly more writing and to read increasingly complex texts, with an emphasis on nonfiction. In math, students will take more time to understand concepts deeply, make connections between topics, and master complex ideas through hands-on learning.

To learn more about the Common Core standards nationally, visit http://corestandards.org.

WHAT DOES THE COMMON CORE MEAN FOR NEW YORK CITY STUDENTS?

The Common Core standards provide us with a powerful opportunity to develop students' critical thinking skills and push them to become lifelong learners. This year, as our schools continue to work to ensure all students achieve at high levels, students will also get the chance to engage in these new, higher standards. In 2011–12, all New York City students will complete at least one literacy assignment and one math assignment aligned to the Common Core, each as part of a larger unit of curriculum.

In literacy, students will be asked to read and analyze a piece of nonfiction writing and use evidence from the text to write opinions and arguments in response. In math, students will solve a challenging problem based on a real-world situation, exploring the reasoning behind arguments to arrive at a solution. Common Core-aligned tasks will be presented in a variety of forms so that they are accessible to all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners.

This year New York City schools are receiving support to begin transitioning to the Common Core. Through training and online resources, teachers are learning to understand the new standards and starting to adjust their classroom practice to make sure all students are on track for college and careers.

HOW WILL NEW YORK STATE TESTS CHANGE TO INCLUDE THE COMMON CORE?

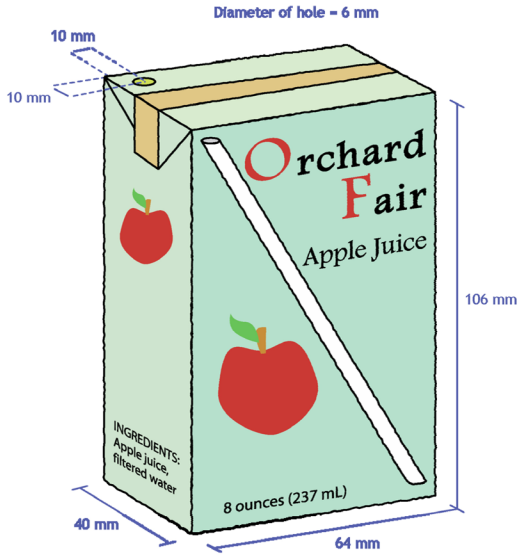
Every year, students in grades 3–8 take New York State tests in English and math to demonstrate their mastery of State standards. Beginning in the 2012–13 school year, these tests will start changing to include the Common Core standards.

By the 2014–15 school year, State tests will look very different from the tests students take now. New York is working with a group of 23 other states to develop tests that require students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills through a new kind of question, known as a performance task. Rather than filling in bubbles to answer multiple-choice questions, students will be asked to demonstrate that they understand the concepts they have learned and can apply them—often in unfamiliar, real-world situations. Performance tasks will require students to think critically while engaging in extended writing assignments and solving problems with multiple steps.

The following is a sample performance task:

The Straw and the Juice Box

A company that sells juice in small cartons like the one shown below has a problem. The straight straw attached to the outside of each carton keeps getting lost inside.



Use mathematics to explore and describe the nature and cause of the problem faced by the company.

Investigate how the problem could be fixed.

Create a report for the company describing as many different solutions to the straw-and-juice-box problem as possible.

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HOW CAN I SUPPORT THE COMMON CORE STANDARDS AT HOME?

Student progress is a shared priority for teachers, principals, and families. We will be working together as a City over the next several years to help all students master the Common Core standards. Your feedback and support will be critical to our success.

To learn more about the Common Core in New York City schools and how you can support your student at home, ask your child's teacher or visit our Common Core Library at http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/CommonCoreLibrary/FamilyResources.

LEARN MORE

- Log in to ARIS Parent Link—visit: https://arisparentlink.org/parentlink.
- Get your copy of the NYC Family Guide and learn useful tips to keep your child on track for success—visit: http://schools.nyc.gov/ParentsFamilies.
- Talk with other parents about the new standards for teaching and learning.
- View the National PTA's *Parents' Guide to Student Success* —visit: http://www.pta.org/4446.htm.

It is the policy of the Department of Education of the City of New York not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, citizenship/immigration status, age, disability, marital status, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity/expression in its educational programs and activities, and to maintain an environment free of sexual harassment, as required by law.

Department of Education
Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

The Common Core Standards in New York City
Frequently Asked Questions

Last updated: October 26, 2011

These questions were collected in response to conversations with parents and Community Education Councils across the City. This document will continue to be updated to answer additional questions. If you have an immediate question, please contact your school.

1. GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q: What are the Common Core State standards?

Q: How were the Common Core standards developed? How were they adopted in New York State?

Q: Will the Common Core standards tell teachers exactly what to teach and how to teach it?

Q: Where can I access additional information about the Common Core standards? What can I do to help my child meet the higher bar set by the Common Core standards?

2. THE COMMON CORE STANDARDS IN NEW YORK CITY

Q: What do the Common Core standards mean for New York City students in 2011-12?

Q: How will the New York City Department of Education support schools and teachers in implementing the new standards?

Q: Our schools continue to face budget cuts. Why are we spending time and money now on the Common Core standards?

3. ASSESSMENTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Q: How will New York State tests change to include the Common Core?

1. GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q: What are the Common Core State standards?

A: Over the next few years, New York and more than 40 other states across the country will transition to a new set of learning standards. These new standards are called the Common Core. These new standards provide a clear picture of what students need to learn each year in order to graduate from high school ready to succeed in college and careers.

The Common Core standards were developed by educators and other educational experts. They are based on research and lessons learned from top-performing countries. The standards describe the skills and knowledge all students need to succeed in a rapidly changing world, including the ability to think creatively, solve real-world problems, make effective arguments, and engage in debates.

In New York State, the Common Core include standards for students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts and math. The English standards include a focus on literacy in history, science, and technical subjects. They emphasize that teachers in all subjects are responsible for teaching literacy. As schools implement these new standards, students will be asked to do significantly more writing and to read increasingly complex texts, with an emphasis on nonfiction. In math, students will take more time to understand concepts deeply, make connections between topics, and master complex ideas through hands-on learning.

Visit Core Standards (http://corestandards.org) to learn more about the Common Core standards nationally.

Note: To be clear, the Common Core standards are not national standards. The Common Core standards are the result of a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association, and states made independent decisions whether to adopt the standards.

Q: How were the Common Core standards developed? How were they adopted in New York State?

A: The National Governors Association brought together a group of content experts, teachers, researchers, and others to develop the Common Core standards. The group released drafts of the standards for public feedback in 2009 and 2010. Teachers, parents, and others submitted almost 10,000 comments on the draft standards. Based on that feedback, the standards were

revised, and the final standards were released in June 2010. The full set of final standards can be found on the Common Core State Standards Initiative Web site (http://corestandards.org/the-standards).

Each state decided independently whether to adopt the final full set of standards. States that adopted the standards then had the option to add a limited number of additional standards.

The New York State Board of Regents adopted the Common Core State Standards on July 19, 2010. To ensure the standards reflected New York State priorities, the State Education Department established groups of educators to review the standards for each subject. These groups recommended additional standards for New York. These recommendations were then reviewed by the Board of Regents and shared for public feedback. In January 2011, New York State adopted the New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards, which included the recommended additions to the standards for English language arts and math, as well as a new set of standards for pre-kindergarten. The full text of these standards can be found on the State Education Department Web site (http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/common_core_standards).

Q: Will the Common Core standards tell teachers exactly what to teach and how to teach it?

A: No. The Common Core standards are a clear set of expectations for the knowledge and skills all students need to graduate from high school ready for college and careers. Teachers will decide how to meet these standards and will be responsible for all decisions about curriculum. Teachers will continue to develop lesson plans and deliver instruction to meet the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.

Q: Where can I access additional information about the Common Core standards? What can I do to help my child meet the higher bar set by the Common Core standards?

A: We are continuing to develop resources to help families understand and support these standards at home. A summary of key differences between current New York State standards and the Common Core standards, information on college and career readiness, sample student work, and additional resources are currently available on the Common Core Library (http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/CommonCoreLibrary). More resources will become available as we work on implementing the standards over the next few years.

Additional Common Core-related resources, including videos and interviews with New York State Education Commissioner John King and David Coleman, one of the authors of the Common Core standards, can be found on EngageNY (http://engageny.org), a State Education Department Web site. Videos showing some of the work happening in New York City schools are available on the Teaching Channel Web site (http://teachingchannel.org/videos). You can also find grade-level guides to supporting learning at home on the National Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) Web site (http://www.pta.org/common_core_state_standards.asp).

2. THE COMMON CORE STANDARDS IN NEW YORK CITY

Q: What do the Common Core standards mean for New York City students in 2011-12?

The Common Core standards provide us with a powerful opportunity to develop students' critical thinking skills and push them to become lifelong learners. In 2011-12, as our schools continue to work to ensure all students achieve at high levels, students will also get the chance to engage in these new, higher standards. All New York City students will complete at least one literacy assignment and one math assignment aligned to the Common Core, each as part of a larger unit of curriculum.

In literacy, students will be asked to read and analyze a piece of nonfiction writing and use evidence from the text to write opinions and arguments in response. In math, students will solve a challenging problem based on a real-world situation, exploring the reasoning behind arguments to arrive at a solution. Common Core-aligned assignments will be presented in a variety of forms so that they are accessible to all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners.

In 2011-12, New York City schools are receiving support to begin transitioning to the Common Core. Through training and online resources, teachers are learning to understand the new standards and starting to adjust their classroom practice to make sure all students are on track for college and career readiness.

Q: How will the New York City Department of Education support schools and teachers in implementing the new standards?

A: The New York City Department of Education (DOE) is committed to supporting schools and teachers in shifting gradually to the Common Core standards. Already, the DOE has been recognized as a leader nationally in taking steps to prepare all stakeholders for implementing the standards. We have three years to prepare for full adoption, and we have a thoughtful plan in place for integration.

All NYC public schools receive their primary instructional and operational support from a team of about 15 staff members called a Children First Network. Each network team provides expert instructional coaching and technical assistance for a group of schools: they offer training and coaching for principals and teachers, share instructional resources to meet each school's needs, and help schools across the network collaborate with each other. In addition, network teams help schools deliver effective services to students with disabilities and English language learners. Because the same team supports each school in all of these different areas, principals can feel confident that every decision will be made strategically, with the school's instructional goals in mind.

In 2011-12, the DOE hired additional instructional coaches for every network teams to provide increased support for schools and teachers. These instructional coaches will be partnering with principals and other key leaders in each school to plan how to integrate the Common Core standards as a multi-year process.

In addition, the DOE is partnering with the teachers' and school administrators' unions, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and the Council of School Supervisors & Administrators (CSA), respectively, on training teachers and administrators. The DOE is also working with key external partners, including community based organizations, to provide additional support. At the beginning of the 2011-12 school year, the DOE, UFT, and CSA agreed to add an additional day of professional development to help familiarize staff with the standards. In addition, extensive training guides and resources for teachers are available on the Common Core Library (http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/CommonCoreLibrary).

Q: Our schools continue to face budget cuts. Why are we spending time and money now on the Common Core standards?

A: We recognize the challenges that budget cuts create for our schools, teachers, and students. We also know that we cannot afford to wait until the economy improves to prepare all New York City students to graduate from high school ready for college and careers. Much of the work around the Common Core standards will be done with previously allocated funding. Additional efforts are being funded with money awarded to New York State from the federal government's Race to the Top program and from private philanthropic contributions, including funds from the GE Foundation.

As we work with limited resources, we have to focus on strategies that will have the greatest impact. The most important relationship we can influence is between the teacher and the student, and the Common Core standards provide a framework for teaching and learning to meet the rigorous demands of the 21st century. These higher standards require that all students in every borough, regardless of income, receive an education that prepares them for college and careers. We also know that it will take the work of the whole City—families, teachers, schools, communities, and businesses—to prepare all students to be citizens who can compete in the global economy. That's why we are engaging in this conversation now. There is no time to wait.

3. ASSESSMENTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Q: How will New York State tests change to include the Common Core?

A: Every year, students in grades 3-8 take New York State tests in English and math to demonstrate their mastery of State standards. Beginning in the 2012-13 school year, these tests will start changing to include the Common Core standards.

By the 2014-15 school year, New York State tests will look very different from the tests students take now. New York State is working with a group of more than 20 states to develop tests that require students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills through a new kind of question, known as a performance task. Rather than filling in bubbles to answer multiple-choice questions, students will be asked to demonstrate that they understand the concepts they have learned and can apply them—often in unfamiliar, real-world situations. Performance tasks will

require students to think critically while engaging in extended writing assignments and solving problems with multiple steps.

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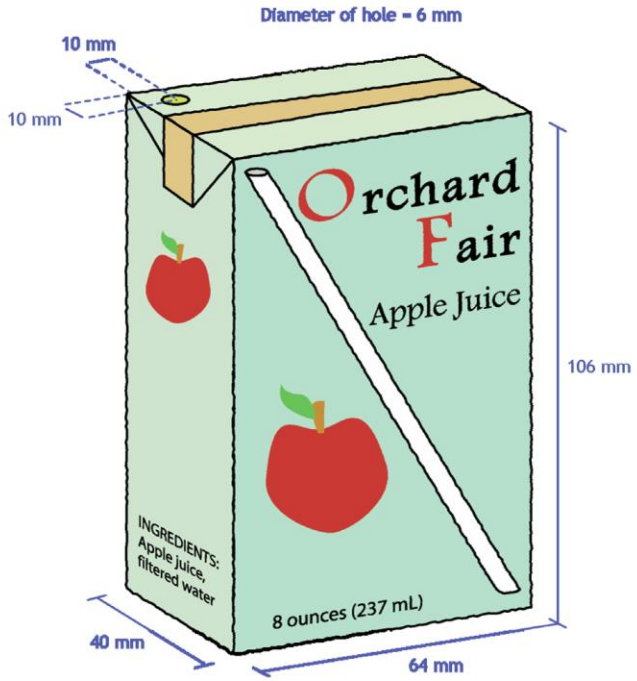

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