

## The Common Core State Standards

### *What Every Grade 6-8 Parent Needs to Know about the Common Core*

The Common Core State Standards were developed by states and written by educators and education experts, including teachers from our state, to provide a consistent, clear and challenging set of learning expectations for all students. Why? These standards raise the bar for student expectations at each grade level and ensure classroom learning builds on the prior year's learning and prepares students for the next year. As students advance through middle school to high school, these standards focus on equipping students with the knowledge and skills they'll need to graduate and succeed in college or their chosen career path.

Our state adopted the standards in 2010, and our educators have been transitioning to the Common Core standards ever since. While our state Board of Education adopts standards for our schools, it's up to our districts and teachers to develop their lesson plans and decide on curricular materials. That's why it's important to ask your child's teachers, principals and school officials about their preparation and planning for this school year.

#### In the Classroom

You may see a shift in what your child is learning in their grade level this year. Changes in classroom instruction focus on developing students' critical thinking and communication skills, as well as helping students understand how classroom learning relates to the real world. Student-led and small group work is emphasized to foster strong communication and collaboration skills, which are critical to their success in subsequent grades and everyday life. And just as important, these standards will encourage deeper understanding of concepts, leading your child to be more engaged with his or her own learning—asking more questions, basing arguments on evidence, making connections to other disciplines, and understanding the “why” and the “how” in addition to the “what.”

The chart below identifies the main instructional changes in English language arts and mathematics, and provides guidance about how each shift looks in the classroom.

Instructional Shift	In the Classroom
ELA – Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction	Reading and writing on real-life events, such as historical events, science, biographies and news articles
ELA – Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and fictional	Students should be able to point out facts and information in a text to support their opinions or answers. Prompts such as, “how do you know that?” or “where did you find that information?” should be used in class discussions.
ELA – Regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary	Students should read texts that focus on building a strong vocabulary and understanding words that appear across content-areas or with multiple meanings. For instance, when reviewing a class reading assignment, explain the meaning of a new word and encourage students to use the word in classroom discussion.
Math – Focus	Students should understand the logic and processes of addition and subtraction, including problem solving and place value.
Math – Coherence	Collaboration among all grade level teachers should be encouraged to build on the foundations set in previous grades and expectations of later grade levels. In addition, students should understand how different math topics relate to others.
Math – Rigor	Students should show all of their work and explain their process for arriving at an answer. Instruction should place an emphasis on ratios and proportional reasoning, early expressions and equations, arithmetic of rational numbers, linear algebra and linear functions.

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Be sure to ask your child's teacher what his or her plans are for lessons and how you can help reinforce classroom learning when helping your child at home. While every classroom will learn skills and knowledge through different lessons, here's a look at what<sup>1</sup> you can expect your 6-8 student to know and do by the end of the school year:

#### Sixth Grade

- Analyzing how chapters of a book, scenes of a play, or stanzas of a poem fit into the overall structure of the piece
- Gaining knowledge from materials that make extensive use of elaborate diagrams and data to convey information
- Writing arguments that provide clear reasons and relevant evidence using credible sources
- Reviewing and paraphrasing key ideas and multiple perspectives of a speaker
- Understanding ratios and rates, and solving problems involving proportional relationships
- Dividing fractions and solving related word problems
- Using positive and negative numbers together to describe quantities and understanding the ordering and absolute values of positive and negative numbers
- Understanding the process of solving simple equations

#### Seventh Grade

- Citing several sources of specific evidence from a piece when offering an oral or written analysis of a book, essay, article, or play
- Analyzing works of fiction to see how events advance the plot and how setting shapes the characters
- Determining an author's point of view or purpose in a nonfiction work and analyzing how the author takes a position different from other authors
- Conducting research in response to a specific question by drawing on evidence from several credible literary or informational sources to support an analysis or reflection
- Solving percent math problems
- Adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing positive and negative numbers, and solving related word problems

#### Eighth Grade

- Analyzing where materials on the same topic disagree on matters of fact, interpretation, or point of view
- Learning how authors support their ideas through word choice, sentence and paragraph structure, and other methods
- Analyzing the purpose of information presented in diverse media (e.g. print, TV, web)
- Interpreting figures of speech (e.g. irony, puns) and developing a large vocabulary of general academic words and phrases
- Understanding slope and relating linear equations in two variable to lines in the coordinate plane
- Understanding functions as rules that assign a unique output number to each input number; using linear functions to model relationships
- Analyzing statistical relationships by using a best-fit line (a straight line that models an association between two quantities)