

Follow-Up Questions and Additional Common Core Resources

I. General Questions

How can parents know what the actual new standards are for his/her child?

There are parent guides to the new Illinois standards broken down by grade level, K-12, available in both English and Spanish:

http://www.isbe.net/common_core/htmls/resources.htm?col5=open#CollapsiblePanel5

Are the Common Core limited to English Language Arts and Math?

According to the Illinois State Board of Education:

“Illinois adopted the common core standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and Math in June of 2010. Illinois continues to have educational standards for early childhood, fine arts, foreign language, physical development and health, science, social emotional, and social science. The common core for English Language Arts and Math are now incorporated into the full set of Illinois Learning Standards.”

For more information, see: http://www.isbe.net/common_core/pdf/ccs_faq.pdf

Are the standards applicable only for the public school system? Will charters, magnets and private schools be held to the standards as well?

The Common Core State Standards are applicable to all public schools in Illinois, that includes magnets and charter schools. Below is a perspective on the applicability of Common Core State Standards to private schools and home schools:

<http://www.hslda.org/commoncore/topic7.aspx>

Is there funding connected to Common Core? Is this why Illinois is not opting out of common core?

The Illinois State Board of Education provides the following information regarding the cost for implementing the Common Core:

- Illinois education budget proposal can be found at <http://www.isbe.net/budget/FY14/FY14-budget-request.pdf>
- You will note that there is not a line devoted to Common Core implementation.
- The adoption of common standards among states may, in fact, result in cost savings, given that states will be able to share curriculum materials, items on state tests, etc. The estimated cost of testing aligned to the Common Core approximates Illinois' current expenditures.
- Illinois education budget has been reduced by nearly \$900 million since Fiscal Year 2009, and the state's contribution for education is ranked the lowest of all 50 states. Accessed September 24, 2014: http://www.isbe.net/common_core/htmls/facts-vs-myth.htm

There is controversy on the role of the federal government's Race to the Top Initiative and the new standards. An article from U.S. News and World Report commented on the politics of the standards as follows:

“While the government did not explicitly name Common Core – or any other set of standards, for that matter – those who agreed to implement Common Core automatically qualified for Race to the Top cash. Some states, such as Virginia and Texas, however, opted to write their own standards rather than adopt Common Core. In doing so, both states were still eligible to apply for Race to the Top funds, although Texas did not submit an application, and Virginia was not awarded any money.”

Accessed October 13, 2014: <http://www.usnews.com/news/special-reports/a-guide-to-common-core/articles/2014/03/06/the-politics-of-common-core>

In a much different perspective in a commentary provided by the Washington Post:

“States did not have to adopt Common Core to be eligible to compete for Race to the Top funding. Common Core proponents explain that Race to the Top was a competitive grant with different criteria whereby states could earn points in different categories. In fact, only a very small portion of the overall application (just 4 percent to 12 percent, depending on how strictly you read it) was related to “higher standards.” States that adopted Common Core got credit for implementing standards, but states that did not want to adopt Common Core could choose to adopt other high standards if they were endorsed by the state’s higher education community.”

Accessed October 13, 2014: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/wp/2014/06/11/more-common-core-silliness/>

Illinois rationale for adopting the Common Core from the Illinois State Board of Education:

“Illinois joined more than 40 states in a collaborative effort to raise learning standards and improve college and career readiness for all students, regardless of where they live. The new Common Core State Standards establish clear expectations for what students should learn in English language arts and mathematics at each grade level. The standards are high, clear, and uniform to ensure that students are prepared for success in college and the workforce.

By emphasizing depth over breadth, the Common Core ensures that students have comprehensive understanding of key concepts. Illinois adopted the Common Core in 2010 and teachers and administrators across the state are fully implementing the new standards during the 2013-14 school year. Many schools have already begun to incorporate elements of the new learning standards into their curricula. The Common Core determines what educators should teach, not how they should teach. Teachers will continue to have the freedom to tailor lesson plans to the individual needs of their students. The Common Core’s higher standards and emphasis on applying knowledge

to real world situations will better prepare Illinois students for the challenges facing them after high school graduation.”

Accessed September 24, 2014: http://isbe.net/common_core/default.htm

II. Parent and Teacher Supports

How can parents reinforce common core expectations at home with their children?

Refer to the Forum’s reference guide in your packet.

Also, refer to the parent guides available in English and Spanish on the website of the Illinois State Board of Education:

http://www.isbe.net/common_core/htmls/resources.htm?col5=open#CollapsiblePanel5

How do we as parents know if our children are meeting the new standards?

Parents can communicate with their child’s teacher to determine how he/she is meeting the new standards. Parents can serve as important partners in reinforcing educational lessons at home. For more resources for parents see:

http://www.isbe.net/common_core/htmls/resources.htm?col5=open#CollapsiblePanel5

Also, refer to the Forum’s guiding questions in your packet.

How are the Chicago Public Schools training/supporting teachers to implement the Common Core?

In 2011 CPS rolled out a voluntary early adopter program to train lead staff and administrators on the new standards. Currently, networks are providing Common Core State Standard-specific training.

Chicago public schools provides the following website specific to Common Core:

<http://www.cps.edu/commoncore/Pages/Commoncore.aspx>

Curriculum maps and other resources for teachers can be found at:

<http://www.cps.edu/COMMONCORE/Pages/Teacher.aspx>

How prepared are our teachers for the new standards? How do teachers feel about the Common Core?

Provided is a short list of results from a survey conducted with classroom teachers and school leaders across Illinois about the implementation of the new standards. Among many factors, it rates “readiness” for Common Core implementation at 66.9%:

http://www.isbe.net/common_core/pdf/ata glance.pdf

(Accessed September 24, 2014)

What professional development resources are available for teachers to meet Common Core:

Illinois has developed The Professional Learning Series (PLS) which is a repository for professional development resources and tools to assist with the various aspects of

common core implementation. There are more than fifty topics with over two hundred associated strategies, tools, and support materials.

For more information: http://isbe.net/common_core/pls/default.htm

Will the Common Core standards determine what or how educators will teach?

The Illinois State Board of Education provides the following information:

“No. The standards are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents and others will decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms. Local teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards will continue to make decisions about curriculum and how their school systems are operated.”

For more information visit: http://www.isbe.net/common_core/pdf/ccs_faq.pdf

III. Assessment accommodations for special education and ELLs

General information on accessibility features for the aligned assessments to the Common Core: <http://www.isbe.net/assessment/pdfs/parcc/parcc-resource-guide.pdf>

Brochure on accommodations for children with special needs:

<http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/Parent%20PARCC%20Brochure%20for%20Students%20with%20Disabilities.pdf>

Brochure on accommodations for ELLs in English:

<http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/Parent%20PARCC%20Brochure%20for%20English%20Learners.pdf>

Brochure on accommodations for ELLs in Spanish:

<http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/Espanol%20Parent%20Brochure%20for%20English%20Learner.pdf>

Will assessments on language development be separate from the Common Core aligned assessments?

Assessments on students English language development are conducted separately from the Common Core aligned assessments in English language arts and Math. The standards that guide English language development, however, have been recently amplified so as to align to the new standards. For more information on this process: <http://wida.us/get.aspx?id=540>

How much time will be given for the assessments? How will time be handled for children with special needs or ELLs?

Estimated times for the English Language Arts and Math Exams provided below:

Grade 3:

English/language arts: 4¾ hours

Math: 5 hours
Total: 9 ¾ hours

Grades 4-5:
English/language arts: 5 hours
Math: 5 hours
Total: 10 hours

Grades 6-8:
English/language arts: 5 ¾ hours
Math: 5 hours
Total: 10 ¾ hours

Grades 9-11:
English/language arts: 5¾ hours
Math (Algebra I, Geometry, Integrated Math 1 or Integrated Math 2): 5 ⅓ hours
Math (Algebra II or Integrated Math 3): 5 ½ hours
Total: 11 to 11¼ hours

[Source: http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2014/09/common-core_assessment_group_revises_testing_time.html]

For ELLs, the accommodation literature indicates they will be provided extended time. For students with special needs, a time accommodation will be determined according to their Individual Education Plan (IEP). For more information refer to the brochures on accommodations for special education and ELLs listed above.

The Illinois State Board of Education provides the following answer to the question:
“How will the standards impact ELL and special education?”

It is also beyond the scope of the Standards to define the full range of supports appropriate for English language learners and for students with special needs. At the same time, all students must have the opportunity to learn and meet the same high standards if they are to access the knowledge and skills necessary in their post-school lives.

The Standards should be read as allowing for the widest possible range of students to participate fully from the outset, along with appropriate accommodations to ensure maximum participation of students with special education needs. No set of grade-specific standards can fully reflect the great variety in abilities, needs, learning rates, and achievement levels of students in any given classroom. However, the Standards do provide clear signposts along the way to the goal of college and career readiness for all students. The new standards will help teachers continue to develop and implement effective strategies for their students by providing benchmarks for skills and knowledge that their students should have by the end of the year.”

Accessed September 24, 2014: http://www.isbe.net/common_core/pdf/ccs_faq.pdf

IV. State Support

How many states are on board with the Common Core?

There were at one point 46 states who adopted the standards. It is now estimated around 40 states.

V. International benchmarks

How will the results from the new tests be compared internationally?

It is not clear how international comparisons will be conducted. According to the national Common Core website, international standards were highly influential in the creation of the new standards:

“Standards from top-performing countries played a significant role in the development of the math and English language arts/literacy standards. In fact, the college- and career-ready standards provide an appendix listing the evidence that was consulted in drafting the standards, including the international standards that were consulted in the development process.”

Accessed September 25, 2014: <http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/myths-vs-facts/>

VI. Common Core Controversy

Why has the new standards been so controversial?

There is ongoing debate about the Common Core with varying perspectives about its opportunities and challenges. Below is a small sampling of commentaries/articles that exhibit some of those views:

- Critique of its approach to reading:
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/02/29/22yatvin.h31.html>
- Challenges posed to preschools:
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/12/07/13prek_ep.h31.html
- Pro-stance that this will prevent the dumbing down of Illinois education:
<http://www.suntimes.com/news/otherviews/29949209-452/let-common-core-flourish-in-illinois.html#.VCHjZ3x0zIU>
- Varying views on the role of the federal government and Common Core in public education:
<http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/bill-gates-common-core-schools/2014/03/16/id/559804/>

VII. Common Core and College Readiness

The Illinois State Board of Education provides the following answer to the question: How is College and Career Readiness addressed in the common core standards?

“The standards lay out a vision of what it means to be a literate person in the twenty-first century. The descriptions that follow are not standards themselves but instead offer a portrait of students who meet the standards set out in the common core. As students

advance through the grades and master the standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language, they are able to exhibit with increasing fullness and regularity these capacities of the literate individual.

They demonstrate independence.

Students can, without significant scaffolding, comprehend and evaluate complex texts across a range of types and disciplines, and they can construct effective arguments and convey intricate or multifaceted information. Likewise, students are able independently to discern a speaker's key points, request clarification, and ask relevant questions. They build on others' ideas, articulate their own ideas, and confirm they have been understood. Without prompting, they demonstrate command of standard English and acquire and use a wide-ranging vocabulary.

They build strong content knowledge.

Students establish a base of knowledge across a wide range of subject matter by engaging with works of quality and substance. They become proficient in new areas through research and study. They read purposefully and listen attentively to gain both general knowledge and discipline-specific expertise. They refine and share their knowledge through writing and speaking.

They respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline. Students adapt their communication in relation to audience, task, purpose, and discipline. They set and adjust purpose for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use as warranted by the task. They appreciate nuances, such as how the composition of an audience should affect tone when speaking and how the connotations of words affect meaning. They also know that different disciplines call for different types of evidence (e.g., documentary evidence in history, experimental evidence in science).

They comprehend as well as critique.

Students are engaged and open-minded—but discerning—readers and listeners. They work diligently to understand precisely what an author or speaker is saying, but they also question an author's or speaker's assumptions and premises and assess the veracity of claims and the soundness of reasoning.

They value evidence.

Students cite specific evidence when offering an oral or written interpretation of a text. They use relevant evidence when supporting their own points in writing and speaking, making their reasoning clear to the reader or listener, and they constructively evaluate others' use of evidence.

They use technology and digital media strategically and capably.

Students employ technology thoughtfully to enhance their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use. They tailor their searches online to acquire useful information efficiently, and they integrate what they learn using technology with what they learn offline. They are familiar with the strengths and limitations of various technological tools and mediums and can select and use those best suited to their communication goals.

They come to understand other perspectives and cultures.

Students appreciate that the twenty-first-century classroom and workplace are settings in which people from often widely divergent cultures and who represent diverse experiences and perspectives must learn and work together. Students actively seek to

understand other perspectives and cultures through reading and listening, and they are able to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds. They evaluate other points of view critically and constructively. Through reading great classic and contemporary works of literature representative of a variety of periods, cultures, and worldviews, students can vicariously inhabit worlds and have experiences much different than their own.”

Accessed September 24, 2014: http://www.isbe.net/common_core/pdf/ccs_faq.pdf