

What Is Common Core?

WHAT THEY ARE: Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are guidelines that act as a blueprint for what kids should be learning in Math and Language Arts for each grade level. The goal is to replace the hodgepodge of school standards that currently exist across the United States.

WHY THEY'LL HELP KIDS: The idea is to level the playing field. With universal standards, kids in a city on one side of the country will be similarly prepared for college or the workforce as kids in a small town on the other side of the country. That's not always the case today. Also, when families move, this will help create an easier transition for students.

WHAT CHANGES TO EXPECT: Math classes will cover slightly fewer concepts in a year but in more detail. The focus is on teaching kids how and why they arrived at an answer so they can apply it in the real world. Language Arts classes will focus more on nonfiction texts and expressing logical arguments. The guidelines only identify what children should learn, not how teachers should teach, so changes in class work will vary.

WHO THEY'LL IMPACT: All U.S. public school students (except those in Texas, Nebraska, Virginia and Alaska, as those states have not adopted the Common Core State Standards). Minnesota has only adopted the ELA portion. States differ in their reasons for opting out, but some think their current standards are more rigorous than CCSS.