



pennsylvania

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Common Core FAQ October 2010

When the State Board of Education adopted the Common Core Standards on July 1, 2010, it charged PDE with the responsibility to complete a full alignment study of PA Academic Standards to Common Core Standards – in terms of both content and rigor. That work would define a transition plan and provide clear direction for districts to implement Common Core Standards. The proposed three-year transition plan, concluding with full implementation of Common Core for the 2013-2014 school year, includes the development of crosswalk documents and professional development to assist districts in aligning their curriculum with the PA Common Core Standards.

Frequently asked questions concerning implementation are as follows:

Are the PA Common Core standards an exact duplicate of the posted Common Core standards (<http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>)?

PA's Common Core standards include all of the national Common Core standards verbatim; however, states may add additional statements to the standard set to incorporate any PA standards not addressed in Common Core. As analysis and alignment studies continue, there is a possibility of limited additions to the Common Core Standards in the future.

What is the status of work to date on the transition to Common Core Standards?

English language arts and mathematics educators from across the state have met for three extended sessions to accomplish the following:

- Completed an alignment study for grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 comparing content and rigor of Common Core Standards to the PA Chapter 4 grade level standards.
- Expanded the initial alignment study to include all grade levels and course standards currently available on SAS.
- Developed documents to illustrate the relationship (including gaps) between PA's current standards and the Common Core Standards.

In light of Common Core, how should districts move forward as related to writing and revising curriculum?

Districts are encouraged to continue with their curriculum review cycles and use the chart below to guide curriculum work.

TRANSITIONING TO COMMON CORE		
YEAR	DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITY	PDE RESPONSIBILITY
2010-2011	Curriculum and instruction based on the current PA Academic Standards	Common Core transition teams complete alignment study and develop PA Common Core framework.
	Spring 2011 PSSA based on current eligible content aligned to PA Standards	Continued development of Keystone Exams based on eligible content aligned to the Common Core Standards.
	Attendance at PDE/IU staff development sessions to begin transition planning	Professional development offered for districts to begin transition plans
2011-2012	Curriculum and instruction based on the current PA Academic Standards	Ongoing professional development to assist districts in creating transition plan and beginning initial efforts to align curriculum and instruction to PA Common Core standards Standards Aligned System (SAS) fully aligned to PA Common Core Standards
	Create instructional redesign cycle and begin modification of board-approved curricula in English Language Arts and Mathematics through initial study of Common Core Standards alignment documentation provided by PDE	
2012 - 2013	Continue with curriculum rewrites, with July 1, 2013, target date for full implementation of PA Common Core	Ongoing professional development to support full implementation in PA schools

What will be available to assist districts in transitioning to Common Core?

The December 2010 SAS Institute will offer sessions for educators to provide direction in transitioning from PA Standards to PA Common Core. In December, all crosswalk documents, revised Assessment Anchor materials, and supporting materials will be posted on SAS under the Clear Standards tab.

As the year progresses, IUs will receive training to share with local districts. Full implementation of Common Core is required for the 2013-14 school year. During the 2010-2011 school year, staff development sessions will be held to assist districts to begin planning while realignment/modification of curriculum may begin in 2011-2012. IUs will be poised to offer assistance to districts in planning and implementing the new standards.

In light of Common Core, how should districts move forward as related to Keystone Exams?

Adoption of the Common Core will have minimal impact, if any, on the content of the Keystone Exams. Keystone Exams Assessment Anchor and Eligible Content booklets (<http://www.pdesas.org/Assessment/Keystone>) detail the Standards, Anchors, and Eligible Content to support curriculum alignment to prepare students for success with the assessments.

Specifically, in English language arts, the alignment of the Keystone Exams to Common Core is strong, and as districts evaluate their curricula to ensure students are prepared for the Keystone literature and composition assessments, the Assessment Anchor booklets are a solid design tool from which to evaluate course content.

In mathematics, the Keystone Exams are organized around the contents of the typical Algebra I, Algebra II, and geometry courses. These course categories are independent of grade level designations and therefore fit with Common Core very well.

Will PSSA test items change as a result of adoption of Common Core standards?

There are currently no plans to alter the content of the PSSA tests.

If a district is in the midst of a curriculum rewrite in English Language Arts or Mathematics, should Common Core Standards play a role?

At this time, districts should use the revised PA Standards and the Assessment Anchors/Eligible Content, as appropriate. Also, the learning progressions developed by PDE and available in SAS should provide guidance in course development.

Those anxious to gain a sense of the focus and direction of Common Core in English Language Arts might look at the Common Core College and Career Anchor Standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language (<http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards>). Anchor Standards capture the “big ideas” in each of the four domains, and they are the standards from which all grade levels are derived.

In mathematics, it is recommended that district teams consider the Common Core K-12 Mathematical Practices Standards that overarch all of the K-12 mathematics content standards (<http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/mathematics/introduction/standards-for-mathematical-practice/>). These Mathematical Practices Standards articulate the description of the behavior of truly competent mathematics students and users. Once any curriculum design is completed, it is recommended that teams use these Mathematical Practices Standards to gain insight into the quality of their instructional strategies.

Are there any plans for Common Core Standards in science and social studies?

A draft version of national science and engineering standards has recently circulated in the science community; however, they have not been released in any draft form by the Chief Council of State School Officers (CCSSO), the sponsoring organization of the Common Core initiative.

While nothing has been announced in social studies, the National Council of Social Studies reports strong support for the project and is poised to support initiatives to develop better, deeper, and clearer standards for all states.

If a district has a specific question related to Common Core, to whom may it be directed?

Questions may be directed to PDE at ra-gradreqs@state.pa.us.