

What are the Standards?

You may notice some differences in your student's assignments and homework this year. In fact you should see your child reading, writing, and using critical thinking skills across all content areas. There may be fewer worksheets with repeated problems and more emphasis on real world applications or alternative solutions and reasoning in math classrooms. Your child may be reading or writing about civics in his/her language arts class; or writing a paper, reading and summarizing an article, or comparing two different articles for his/her social studies class. A goal at every grade level will be for students to express themselves in various group settings, in written form, and with technology supported presentations. These changes are part of our State's transition to the Common Core State Standards which are designed to better prepare our graduates for postsecondary success.

The Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) were the foundation for student learning and assessment in Florida until July 27, 2010, when the Florida State Board of Education approved the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English/Language Arts and Mathematics. The CCSS were developed with input from the general public, teachers, parents, business leaders, states, and content area experts. The English/Language Arts and Mathematics Standards represent a set of expectations for student knowledge and skills that high school graduates need to master to succeed in college and careers.

In 2011-2012, the CCSS will be fully implemented in kindergarten. The Content Area Literacy Standards which expand text complexity, quality and range of text for students will be fully implemented in K-12 and the Literacy Standards in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects will be implemented for grades 6-12. All CCSS will be fully implemented and assessed at all grade levels by 2014-2015. Florida's timeline for implementation of the CCSS for Mathematics, English/Language Arts, and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects is available at Florida's CCSS Implementation Timeline: <http://www.fldoe.org/parcc/pdf/ImplementationTimeline.pdf> (2nd slide).

You can view the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards at: www.fldoe.org/bii/curriculum/sss/ and the Common Core State Standards (national site) at: www.corestandards.org. The Florida Department of Education also has information specific to Florida at: http://www.floridastandards.org/Standards/Common_Core_Standards.aspx.

The major design goals of the CCSS were to:

- align with college and work expectations
- include rigorous content *and* application of knowledge through high-order skills
- build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards
- maintain focus on what matters most for readiness

There are three main sections in the CCSS for English/Language Arts:

- K-5 (cross disciplinary)
- 6-12 English/Language Arts
- 6-12 Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects

The integration of literacy in content areas includes:

- reading
- writing
- speaking and listening
- language

The CCSS for Mathematics define what students should understand and be able to do in their study of mathematics. One hallmark of mathematical understanding is the ability to justify, in a way appropriate to the student's maturity, *why* a particular mathematical statement is true or where a mathematical rule comes from. There is a world of difference between a student who can summon a mnemonic device to expand a product and a student who can explain where the mnemonic comes from. The student who can explain the rule understands the mathematics, and may have a better chance to succeed at a less familiar task.

The CCSS for Mathematics includes Standards for Mathematical Practice. These standards describe varieties of expertise that mathematics educators at all levels should seek to develop in their students:

- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them
- Reason abstractly and quantitatively – make sense of quantities and their relationships in problems
- Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others – develop alternative solutions to problems
- Model with mathematics – apply what they know to solve problems arising in everyday life
- Use appropriate tools strategically – pencil and paper, models, a ruler, protractor, calculator, spreadsheet or software
- Attend to precision – definitions, symbols, units of measure
- Look for and make use of structure – discern a pattern
- Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning – look for shortcuts, evaluate the reasonableness of results

The CCSS were created by teachers, parents and education experts from across the country. The National PTA organization has developed *The Parents' Guide to Student Success* in response to the transition to CCSS. There is a guide for each grade level, K-8, and high school. The guide includes:

- key items that children should be learning in English language arts and mathematics in each grade when the CCSS are fully implemented
- activities that parents can do at home to support their children's learning
- methods of helping parents build stronger relationships with their child's teacher
- tips for planning college and career (high school only)

You can find *The Parents' Guide to Student Success* at <http://www.pta.org/4446.htm>