

How will the new Common Core Standards impact your high school student? Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are educational standards?

Educational standards define the knowledge and skills students should have at each grade level. California first adopted a set of standards in 1997 and then adopted the Common Core Standards in 2010.

2. How are Common Core Standards different than the 1997 standards?

The 1997 standards were unique to California and were so extensive that they were impossible to teach with fidelity. The Common Core Standards have been adopted by 45 states and while they are not perfect, they are clearer and more concise. These standards are evidence-based, aligned with other top-performing countries, and are more realistic and practical for the classroom. Common Core Standards are rigorous and emphasize depth of instruction.

3. Will TUHSD curriculum change in response to Common Core?

Our teachers used the Mathematics and English Language Arts Common Core Standards as the basis for the development of “Program Goals.” The “Program Goals” were collaboratively created by all district teachers and they define what students should know or be able to do as the result of taking a course or series of courses. In other words, our teachers have spent the last two years working together to ensure that our rigorous curriculum is aligned with the new Common Core Standards.

4. Will “Program Goals” be made available to parents and students?

Yes. The first draft of the Program Goals was made public at a recent Board of Trustees meeting. Some departments are working on final edits of their program goals and then they will be posted on the district and school websites shortly.

5. What is different in Common Core in English and literacy skills?

The Common Core includes several shifts from the previous standards, including:

- A balance between reading informational and literary texts
- Student engagement in rich and rigorous evidence-based conversation about the texts they read
- Emphasis on the use of evidence from sources to inform or make an argument
- Focus on constantly building vocabulary that is used across grades and courses

6. What is different in Common Core in Mathematics?

There are also shifts in the area of mathematics which include:

- Deeper instruction in essential skills
- Connection of learning across grades to build on ideas previously learned
- Building understanding of the ideas behind the math as opposed to “just getting the answer right”
- Application of math to real world problems

7. How will state testing change to measure Common Core?

With the implementation of Common Core, our students will no longer take the paper and pencil, multiple-choice STAR tests. The new testing system will be computerized and adaptive, which means that all tests will be taken on a computer or tablet, and the test will automatically adjust to the skill level of the student. The types of questions on the new tests, which will start in 2014, are also quite different:

- **Selected-response items** - resemble a traditional multiple choice question.
- **Technology-enhanced items** - capitalize on the computerized test to collect evidence through a non-traditional response type, such as editing text or drawing an object.
- **Constructed-response items** - prompt students to produce a text or numerical response to a question.
- **Performance tasks** - measure a student’s ability to integrate knowledge and skills across multiple standards--a key component of college and career readiness. Performance tasks will be used to better measure capacities such as depth of understanding, research skills, and complex analysis, which cannot be adequately assessed with selected- or constructed-response items.

For more information about CA Common Core Standards:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/>

For more information about Smarter Balanced Assessments including sample test questions:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/smarterbalanced.asp>