

Guilford County Schools students and teachers started using new **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** for the 2012-2013 school year. CCSS replaces the North Carolina Standard Course of Study as a clear way to understand what students are expected to learn, so parents and teachers know how to help them reach those goals. The standards were created using feedback from thousands of K-12 teachers and experts in education and are being used by 46 states and the District of Columbia.

Here are the most-common questions, and answers, about CCSS:

1. WHY DO WE NEED COMMON CORE EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS?

We need standards to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. Common standards will help ensure that students are receiving a high-quality education, no matter what school they attend, across the United States. Using the same standards across the country will also provide a greater opportunity for educators to share experiences and best practices that will improve our ability to best serve the needs of students.

2. HOW DO THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS DIFFER FROM THE PREVIOUS NORTH CAROLINA STANDARD COURSE OF STUDY?

The CCSS provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers.

3. WHY IS THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE IMPORTANT?

These standards are a first step toward ensuring our children are getting the best possible education, no matter where they live. The CCSS enables participating states to work together to:

- Make expectations for students clear to parents, teachers, and the general public;
- Encourage the development of textbooks, digital media, and other teaching materials aligned to the standards;
- Develop and implement comprehensive assessment systems to measure student performance against the CCSS. These will replace the existing testing systems that too often are inconsistent, burdensome and confusing, and
- Evaluate policy changes needed to help students and educators meet the standards.

4. WILL MORE STANDARDS MEAN MORE TESTS?

No. States that choose to adopt these CCSS will be able to pool information and resources to develop a shared set of high-quality tests to better evaluate student progress. The goal is not to have more tests, but to have smarter and better tests that help students, parents, and teachers.



Go to our website,
www.gcsnc.com.
Click on the Parents tab,
then Current Parents, then
the Common Core link.

5. HOW ARE THE ASSESSMENTS CHANGING?

The state assessments have been modified to assess the CCSS in a number of ways. The state assessments will have a combination of multiple choice and constructed-response questions. The mathematics assessments will include sections for students to use calculators, as well as areas where calculators are not permitted. You can find more specific information about the North Carolina assessments at: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/acre/assessment/online/>.

6. HOW HAS GCS PREPARED TEACHERS FOR THE CHANGE?

During the 2011-12 school year, GCS trained all district math and English language-arts teachers. Teacher leaders and administrators worked with curriculum specialists to create units and resources using a model that connects standards, instruction and assessment. During 2012-13, teachers new to the district will participate in online professional development.

7. HOW WILL STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND TEACHERS BENEFIT FROM COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS?

The standards do not tell teachers specifically how to teach, but they do help teachers figure out the knowledge and skills their students should have. This allows teachers to tailor lessons and environments to best fit their classrooms. Standards also help students and parents by setting clear and realistic goals for success. Standards are a first step – a key building block – in providing our young people with a high-quality education that will prepare them for success in college and work. Of course, standards are not the only thing that is needed for our children's success, but they do provide a road map for our teachers, parents, and students.

8. WHERE DO I LEARN MORE?

Go to our website, www.gcsnc.com. Click on the Parents tab, then Current Parents, then the Common Core link.