

Questions and Answers From The Common Core State Standards Regional Forums

What accommodations are being made for students performing above grade level? What about GT? Are some school systems getting rid of GT?

The Common Core State Standards are the baseline for what students should achieve at that grade level. Students who have already mastered those standards should be provided instruction that will advance and extend their learning. How the Gifted and Talented Program is implemented in each local school system is a local decision. Model lessons aligned to the Common Core Standards are on the Blackboard Learn website, and more are being added.

How can parents view what data is collected on their children and can they opt out.

Parents may not opt out. To view the information collected, parents should contact their local school system.

Our elected officials did not vote on CCSS. What must go through the General Assembly?

The authority to adopt standards in education resides with the State Board of Education.

How can we justify the expense of CCSS? Goals 2000?

Maryland has continually adjusted its standards to meet the needs of a changing world. The CCSS are college and career-ready standards that will prepare our students for their future.

What is the PARCC assessment? When will the assessment be implemented? Are they just multiple choice?

PARCC stands for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career. These assessments are being developed by a consortium of states. The first field-testing will be done March through June of 2014. The assessments will be operational in school year 2014-2015. The assessments include selected response items (multiple choice), performance-based tasks, and writing.

How do new standards differ from old standards?

While many of the topics remain the same as the old standards, the new standards reflect shifts in both English Language Arts and mathematics:

In English Language Arts the shifts include:

1. **Building knowledge** through **content-rich nonfiction**
2. Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in **evidence from text**, both literary and informational
3. Regular practice with **complex text** and its **academic language**

In mathematics the shifts include:

1. **Focus:** Focus strongly where the standards focus.
2. **Coherence:** **Think** across grades, and **link** to major topics
3. **Rigor:** In major topics, pursue **conceptual understanding**, procedural skill and **fluency**, and **application**

Why are 20 states trying to pull out of CCSS? 24 states backing out?

Forty-five states have adopted the CCSS. There are concerns in some states around the assessments aligned to the CCSS, especially the timing and the cost of the assessments.

Is there a complete list online of readings that parents can look over?

The Common Core website is www.corestandards.org. That website includes the standards and appendices to the standards. In English Language Arts, Appendix B lists sample texts; these are examples and not intended to be exclusive. The standards do not mandate specific materials of instruction; that is the decision of the local school system.

Is it true that the National PTA received \$1M from the Gates Foundation to support CCSS?

MSDE does not have information about PTA funds; please request information from the National PTA.

How is MSDE preparing teachers?

Professional development on the CCSS has been occurring over a three year period. Educator Effectiveness Academies were held in the summers of 2011, 2012, and 2013. A team from every school in the state attended the academies. Materials from these academies are available online so that school teams can use them with all of their teachers. Webinars featuring different topics are also available to all teachers. Additionally, model units and lessons for every grade level in English Language Arts and mathematics are available online to all teachers. Other online resources are also available to teachers. These are only the opportunities provided by MSDE; local school systems also plan professional development activities.

Why did content experts in ELA and math refuse to sign-off? If you can, please provide 1 or 2 examples in math and ELA on what a student in 8th or 9th grade can expect as compared to what he/she is doing now.

As with any initiative, there will be those that disagree. There are many experts who have endorsed the CCSS, for example Dr. William McCallum from University of Arizona. At the end of these responses are examples of eighth grade mathematics and eighth English Language Arts sample assessments from PARCC and MSA.*

How did we get here that we are so bad?

The United States was once a leader in education, but we have dropped from our number one status. This is not a reflection on our students or our teachers, but rather the expectations we have for them. Many of our students complain they are bored with their studies; many students have shared that they welcome more rigorous expectations.

CCSS claims to be raising standards. Why were states required to climb on to standards before they were written?

States were not required to adopt the standards. Drafts of the standards were sent out for comment prior to their final release. Maryland adopted the Standards in June 2010, after the standards were released.

Are field trips to community college all about CCSS?

There is no connection between field trips to community colleges and CCSS. There is no connection to any field trip and the CCSS.

Is it difficult to engage large numbers of students in a class given the rigor and depth of the CCSS?

Strategies for differentiating instruction have been part of teacher training for many years. Students have different strengths and weaknesses and teachers choose a variety of strategies to meet those needs. This does not change with more rigorous standards.

What happens if we realize our students didn't meet the standard by the end of the school year?

Teachers continually assess students during the year and so if students are not "on track," teachers will be providing interventions throughout the year. Teachers will continue to work with students who are struggling, providing extra assistance and support.

What will be the scoring for the test that is replacing the MSA?

PARCC has identified five performance level descriptors for the assessment. See http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCCCRDPolicyandPLDs_FINAL_0.pdf

Is it true that ELA CC that the work group had only 24 on it with none that were English teachers or professors?

The CCSS drafting process relied on teachers and standards experts from across the country. In addition, there were many state experts that came together to create the process of standard setting. For more information, see www.corestandards.org

How are writing skills going to be presented to older kids who are accustomed to MSA style?

Writing standards are not new to Maryland. The writing process has been a component of the English curriculum since the Voluntary State Curriculum was introduced in 2002. The primary shift in writing is that instruction will focus on three types of writing: argument, explanatory, and narrative. Emphasis will be placed on citing evidence from text when constructing an argument or explanation. How instruction is delivered continues to be the decision of the classroom teacher and local school system.

How will Maryland maintain #1; what are we doing in Maryland?

No one can provide guarantees on a rating. However, Maryland educators are committed to meeting the needs of every student. Our state leaders, educators, parents, and partners have shown a commitment to providing Maryland students with an excellent education. The CCSS have increased our expectations for our students so that they can compete in a global economy.

How do we know these standards are the right ones?

The CCSS have made careful use of a large and growing body of evidence. The evidence base includes scholarly research; surveys on what skills are required of students entering college and workforce training programs; assessment data identifying college and career ready performance; and comparisons to standards from high-performing states and nations.

What about the contents in addition to ELA and math?

Maryland standards for the other disciplines remain. In 2013, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted the Next Generation Science Standards. All standards may be found on www.mdk12.org.

What can parents do to help?

The best way for parents to find out how to support their child is to talk with your child's teachers. Parents may also find information at <https://msde.blackboard.com> under parent resources.

Will 504 plans change?

The adoption of new standards does not address 504 plans, nor does it address IEPs. Those plans are written by school teams based on student need.

Can you speak to the criticism about moving away from literature and to middle school math including algebra?

Literature is still a major focus in the English Language Arts classroom. When looking at the balance of literary and informational text students read, the entire school day is considered. In social studies, science, health, and other content areas, students are reading informational text. In English, students will study literature, and literary non-fiction such as essays, memoirs, and autobiographies. In middle school, the math standards include a mastery of the foundations students will need for advanced mathematics; those standards include expressions and equations, and the number system. Students who are prepared for algebra in middle school may still take algebra in middle school.

If CCSS is about performance/standards/tests, how do you incorporate curriculum?

Standards form the foundation for a curriculum. While Maryland has adopted the CCSS, each local school system develops its own curriculum. That is, local school systems choose the materials of instruction that will be used in their classrooms, and they determine strategies and activities to be used in classrooms. While all Maryland students will take the PARCC assessments beginning in 2014-2015, classroom assessments such as quizzes and unit tests are still decided by the local school systems.

My first grade sons have 1.5 hours of homework. Is that the result of CC? Sons have more test-is that a result of CC?

The amount of homework and the number of tests is a local school system decision.

Is there a replacement for MMSR?

Start Strong: Maryland's Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System will be implemented beginning 2014-2015. During the fall of 2014, public school Kindergarten teachers will begin collecting performance data on each of their students using the Kindergarten Readiness Profile. This data will be collected through the use of selected response items, performance tasks, and observational rubrics. Beginning in the winter of 2015, Kindergarten and prekindergarten teachers can begin using formative assessment tasks in order to collect additional developmental performance data for each student's Learner Profile that will assist teachers in planning instruction and interventions appropriate for each student.

Did USDE incentivize MD to implement the Common Core?

Maryland adopted the CC in June 2010, before Maryland was awarded their Race to the Top grant.

How long before we know CC can be determined a success or needs to be overhauled?

We will begin to analyze student achievement as soon as possible. Education is a journey; Maryland will always be looking at areas where improvements may be made.

How do you fold art and gym into the CC?

Maryland has standards for the fine arts and physical education. The literacy standards cross all disciplines and so when appropriate, they are integrated into all content areas.

Will time for application be taken away?

The CCSS place greater emphasis on applying skills and knowledge to real world situations. Because the standards are more focused, there may be more time for application.

How would a non-science math class incorporate more STEM?

STEM is a trans-disciplinary approach to learning, not necessarily integrating science, technology, engineering and mathematics at one time. Performance tasks in math could include incorporating technology and problem-solving practices.

Why is it college and career ready and not college or career ready? This would give those options.

The CCSS are designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to enter college or workforce training programs without the need for remediation.

The CCSS are held as copyright by private interests. Do you see this as a problem?

Maryland has adopted the standards. We have developed resources that are aligned to the standards for Maryland educators and have had no problem in doing so.

Similar to a doctor/patient or lawyer/client relationship, how will the data collected from the teacher/student and parent relationship be protected?

The laws and regulations guarding student privacy have not changed. FERPA regulations are still in place. FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974) is federal legislation in the United States that protects the privacy of students' personally identifiable information (PII). The act applies to all educational institutions that receive federal funds.

FERPA states that parents of students under 18, or eligible students (students over 18, or those who have matriculated to an educational institution above high school) be allowed to view and propose amendments to their educational records. The act also mandates that schools must obtain written permission from parents or eligible students in order to release a student's PII.

CCSS sets my child backwards. My child has been complaining about the CC subjects.

Parents should continue to work with their child's teachers when the child expresses concern about their schoolwork.

Is CC putting the cart before the horse? No matter what standards are in place, children will be overlooked because of large classroom sizes.

Guidelines for class size are the decision of the local school system, and should be addressed there. The standards identify the goals: what students need to know and be able to do to be prepared for college and careers. It is critical to identify the goals.

CCSS have replaced the Maryland State Standards. How should a possible decrease in Maryland scores be communicated to our parent community?

Whenever there is a transition to new standards, changes should be expected. As we transition to the new standards and new assessments, we will need to establish a new baseline on which to measure our growth. This is not the first time this has occurred in Maryland or in other states across the nation.

How will CCSS prepare ESOL (ELL) learners for career/college? What additional resources are available to support ELL students and schools?

The strategies used to prepare ELL learners will continue to be used with new standards. Model units and lessons include suggested supports for ELL and students with disabilities.

How is Prince George's County Public Schools calculated among all MD counties as deemed #1 in the nation? Where is PG County placed among all MD counties? If PG County is ranked near the bottom would the CCSS model help balance the knowledge among counties?

The standards identify what students should know and be able to do; CCSS are more rigorous than our earlier standards. These are for all students across Maryland.

CC tests on computers (pre-K) and be effective when keyboarding is not a part of the curriculum in all schools?

The assessments on CCSS do not begin until grade 3. Maryland has technology standards for all students that include keyboarding skills.

CC is billed as a "world class education program" based on the most advanced current thinking. What has our education been based on prior to this? Wouldn't promoting dynamic charter schools across the country instead of another "one size fits all" approach, since charter schools using a myriad approach have proven so successful?

Previous standards have been based on the best thinking at that time. The CCSS have been internationally benchmarked. The standards do not promote a "one size fits all" approach to education; the strategies and materials remain local decisions. Maryland has opportunities for Charter Schools. The results produced by charter schools range greatly.

What percentage of 2013 graduates of high school in MD were college and career ready?

Data for the graduating class of 2013 will be available after January 2014. The new assessments will provide more information on college and career readiness.

Dallas Dance (BCPS) said "We are building the plane as we fly it." Why is MSDE implementing a program without a clear plan and without objective goals?

MSDE worked with every school team in the state to develop transition plans beginning in 2011. Each local school system had the autonomy to craft that transition plan.

Please explain how the CCSS will be introduced to Montessori schools.

MSDE does not have authority over non-public schools and the standards they use. However, MSDE does meet regularly with non-public schools and shares information on the CCSS.

A large part of CC is differentiated teaching. I have watched years of TAG in the regular classroom and very few teachers, very few can do that well. Why is CC any different? How will CC address the need to have “tracks” – I think there are kids who learn at different speeds?

CCSS do not address pedagogy. CCSS only identify what all students need to know and be able to do. They are core standards; they do not limit what is taught or how instruction may be expanded. Instructional strategies, groupings, and how gifted and talented programs are structured remain the decision of the local school systems.

Why did you wait until full implementation to inform the parents and the taxpayers of this system?

In 2011, regional meetings were scheduled and held; these were advertised through each local school system. Local school systems have also held meetings, as well.

With nearly 35% of the States who have adopted CCSS making motions towards the rejecting the standards, it is wise for Maryland families to gamble with our children’s education by moving so swiftly to implement the CC?

Maryland believes that preparing its students for college and careers in a global economy is a wise decision.

Aligning the SAT and other tests to CCSS will affect even private and home schools. How does this contribute to school choice?

The goal of the standards is to prepare students to be college and career ready. The SAT is used as a means to determine how prepared students are for college. The two should be aligned.

There is a theme of “collaboration” woven throughout the standards. How might that compromise individuality in our children.

While it is important for students to learn to collaborate and work in groups because it is often required in the work place, the standards do not suggest all activities be collaborative. There should be many opportunities for individual expression.

What guarantees do parents have that the requirements for further growth will not become increasingly over-reaching each and every year?

The assessments are based on the standards. There is an expectation that students will grow in their skills and knowledge as determined by the coherence within the standards

As it’s written, in 2014-2015 students in grade 9 will take the PARCC assessment for English and again in 10th and 11th grade. Are we saying that the same students will be tested for three years or they will have the opportunity for retake? Similar to HSA?

There is an English PARCC assessment for every grade in 9th, 10th, and, 11th grade. PARCC is offering retakes for all of their assessments. Maryland will need to determine for which assessments they will offer the retakes.

Aren't CCSS too broad and vague for teachers to use instructionally, whereas the VSC was more detailed and broke standards into functional concepts for teachers to teach? Is this why the VSC is still accessible online?

The old standards are available online because 2013-2014 is the first year that the CCSS is being fully implemented and also because MSA aligns to the old standards. Maryland has developed a Maryland College and Career Ready Standards Curriculum Framework for both English Language Arts and mathematics. These frameworks break down each standard into essential skills and knowledge. These documents may be found online at www.mdk12.org, or <https://msde.blackboard.com>

Aren't CCSS requiring teachers to teach at a level too far above many students' abilities without allowing teachers to meet students where they are with foundation teaching that students may not have mastered in previous years?

Teachers have always had to differentiate for students' needs and that does not change with new standards. The CCSS do increase expectations for our students, and many of our teachers are already reporting that their students are rising to the challenge.

Teachers will be teaching students to discern a good idea from a bad idea; does this extend to political philosophy?

The social studies standards have not changed; classroom teachers choose the instructional strategies to teach their content.

In elementary school, why has the methodology changed for teaching subtraction and addition? Why the change from simplistic methods to the complex?

The teaching strategies are the choice of the classroom teacher. What the math standards do require is that students understand topics at a deeper conceptual level. Students need to go beyond memorizing formulas and algorithms, and understand why they use certain procedures.

According to the Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, only "...white, suburban mothers" object to the CC program. In MD, do you see this particular group of parents as being the primary objectors to CC?

No.

Did Calvert County Public Schools take any RTTT funds/grants? If so, how much?

Calvert County did receive a little over \$800,000 of the state's RTTT funds that are spread over four years.

MSA is going away – what is the state’s plan of action for the HSA graduation requirements?

There are four assessments required for high school graduation. Government and Biology will remain the same. It is anticipated that the PARCC Algebra I and the PARCC English 10 assessments will replace the current Algebra/Data Analysis and English 10 assessments.

Are there still “paths” available for vo-tech career readiness? I’m still going to need a plumber and electrician in the future...

The career training programs will still be available. Check with your local school system for their offerings.

Where can I find side-by-side comparisons of the old standards and the new standards?

Maryland educators developed the Maryland Common Core Curriculum Frameworks (that can be found on www.mdk12.org, or <https://msde.blackboard.com>). This document identifies the standards by grade, including the essential skills and knowledge required to master the standard. There is also an indication as to whether the standard is aligned with the former standards. While many of the topics remain the same as the former standards, there are some shifts.

In English Language Arts the shifts include:

4. **Building knowledge** through **content-rich nonfiction**
5. Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in **evidence from text**, both literary and informational
6. Regular practice with **complex text** and its **academic language**

In mathematics the shifts include:

4. **Focus:** Focus strongly where the standards focus.
5. **Coherence:** **Think** across grades, and **link** to major topics
6. **Rigor:** In major topics, pursue **conceptual understanding**, procedural skill and **fluency**, and **application**

How are the AP classes and Honors classes affected?

AP classes are not affected. Honors classes that include English Language Arts and mathematics content (English 9, 10, and 11), and Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II should be aligned to the CCSS.

As a junior at Calvert High School, I have had and still do have teachers that don’t teach. They pass out midterm review guides without instructions, or without even speaking. How are we going to ensure teachers will do their best with common core when they aren’t doing their best now?

Discussions pertaining to individual educator performance should be addressed within the district.

How will the changes being put in place affect the current high school seniors?

The graduation requirements for the class of 2014 have not changed.

Though we had heard about the strengths of the CC and the opportunities it presents to our children, what are the weaknesses of the program and threats they may present?

There are always challenges with any transition. Continuous professional learning for educators is a constant need; finding avenues of communication to reach parents and other stakeholders is also challenging. As Maryland educators implement the new standards, information on the strengths and challenges will be identified and addressed.

Where is the proof that CCSS bring the education of our children up to the standards of the highest education coming out of other countries?

On the Common Core website (www.corestandards.org) there is an international benchmarking report that was done as part of the research base for the development of the standards.

There is well-documented proof that a child's brain is incapable of doing specific things at a certain age as the brain develops. One of these things is abstract thinking. What do you say in response to the presentations that child psychologists have made indicating their concerns over the amount/increase in stress, depression, anger and self-doubt we are seeing in younger elementary aged children that are simply unable to complete school work that is beyond what their developing brain is able to understand?

We are in the first year of implementation and so it is unclear how this research has already been done. Many of our early childhood and primary teachers are reporting their students are doing well with the new standards. The study of neuroscience and our understandings of how we learn continue to grow. Educators modify their practices as new information becomes available.

How do we as parents (the primary educators of our children) remove the CCSS from our schools? There is ample evidence that CC doesn't promote critical thinking skills, which is so necessary for an excellent education.

The State Board of Education has the authority to adopt standards. This is the first full year of implementation and so it is unclear how ample evidence would have been collected. CCSS address both foundational skills, as well as critical thinking skills.

Will the county be reviewing textbooks being used for accuracy (especially history textbooks)? Will the county be reviewing the books recommended for English/Reading and only approving the ones that are appropriate? Are civics' lessons going to be how government really works and not the way liberals think it should work?

The choice of materials of instruction resides with the local school systems. CCSS does not recommend specific materials, or the use of online resources over print materials; those are local decisions. The use of pre-printed packets is also a local decision.

Why are students being punished (grade-wise) for using proven mathematical algorithms instead of new CC weird tricks?

Students will continue to learn algorithms, but they should also have an understanding as to how those algorithms were developed. Grading policies are the decision of the local school systems.

Why continue with a curriculum that upsets parents and students here and across the country?

The Maryland College and Career Ready Standards were chosen because they will prepare our students for their futures. The curriculum based on those standards is developed by the local school systems.

Why are the teachers “controlled facilitators” now and what does that mean?

Teachers still prepare and deliver instruction using strategies that they believe best meet the needs of their students. Teachers also facilitate discussions and inquiry for their students when it is appropriate.

I had an experience where an honors algebra II teacher recently gave a group review test to students...end up doing most of the work, which would carry along the student with the lower average.

Grouping, grading, and assignments decisions are not part of the CCSS. These are decisions made in the local school system and should be addressed there.

In the metro area, Virginia is the only state that did not take on this curriculum? Why is that?

Virginia has adopted its own college and career-ready standards. Their state agencies could best answer this question.

Can you describe exactly what work skills and college readiness will be taught and in what manner they will be taught? Are the skills laid out and/or marked in such a manner to be taught in each specific grade level?

The standards are by grade level in English Language Arts. In mathematics they are designated by grade level until high school where they are identified by the course: Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II. The manner in which content is taught is the decision of the teacher and the local school system. Maryland educators analyzed the standards and identified essential skills and knowledge for each standard; these documents are the Maryland Common Core Curriculum Frameworks. They can be found online at www.mdk12.org, or <https://msde.blackboard.com>

Would those on the panel be glad to place their own children in a school that has implemented this curriculum? Do any of those on the panel have school-aged children in public schools in Maryland?

This was asked at the Calvert County Forum and some of the panelists stated that they did, indeed, have children in Maryland public schools.

Is there an alternative for students that are not prepared for the standards at a particular grade level? For example, what happens if a student fails common core math 6? Do they just go on to the next math?

Classroom teachers have always had to differentiate instruction for students at various levels. Intervention and extension to lessons are part of what teachers do. Promotion policies remain the decision of the local school system.

Will AP classes still be offered?

Yes

If our students are supposed to compete with students from India and China, why is CC pushing Algebra I from 8th to 9th grade? What is happening to Calculus I and II?

Common Core is not pushing algebra from 8th to 9th grade. Students should take advanced mathematics when they are prepared to do so. Calculus will still be taught.

Justify the use of barbed wire fences to prevent people from leaving the settlement areas (question posed to 7th graders in social studies class).

The question does not come from the CCSS. In the CCSS, when writing an argument, making a claim or answering a question, students are expected to justify their answers with evidence.

*The following are links to the specific information requested in this question.

Eighth grade mathematics sample PARCC item

http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/ccss/ccssfsg/8th_grade_PARCC_math.pdf

Eighth grade mathematics item on MSA

http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/ccss/ccssfsg/8th_grade_math_MSA.pdf

Eighth grade MSA sample English Language Arts items

http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/ccss/ccssfsg/8th_grade_MSA_ELA.pdf

PARCC Grade 8 ELA Sample Items

http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/ccss/ccssfsg/PARCC_Grade_8_ELA.pdf

