

Overview: Common Core State Standards

Beginning with the 2013-14 school year, the Wilton Public Schools will implement the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and English language arts. The standards will have an effect on instruction for students in grades K-12. Following is some background information about the Common Core initiative, including information about changes to our curriculum. More in-depth information can be found on the Common Core website, www.corestandards.org.

What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is an attempt to establish a uniform curriculum for students nationwide in grades K-12. The initiative was conceptualized by the [National Governor's Association](http://www.nagov.org), who worked with a panel of educators and curriculum experts to develop uniform standards intended to “define the knowledge and skills that students should have to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic courses and in workforce training programs.

At present, the Common Core standards have been adopted by 45 state legislatures. The State of Connecticut adopted the standards in 2010, and all districts must have a standards-focused curriculum in place beginning with the 2013-2014 school year.

What part of the curriculum will be affected?

Common Core education standards have been developed for English language arts and mathematics. Emphasis is on critical thinking and analysis, and in both English and math, students will be required to master fewer concepts, but will have a deeper understanding of those concepts. Students will also see a more “blended” approach to instruction, in which reading and writing skills will play a role in math instruction, and math concepts will be integrated into English instruction.

- Common Core standards for English language arts include:
 - Greater emphasis on informational text
 - Development of an “academic” vocabulary
 - Close reading of increasingly complex text
 - Ability to learn through text dependent questioning

- Common Core standards for Mathematics include:
 - Application of mathematical ways of thinking to real world issues
 - Major emphasis in early grades on development of number concepts
 - Mastery of operations
 - Progression of learning beginning in Kindergarten of algebraic thinking, number operations and system, geometry, and statistics
 - Emphasis at higher grades on mathematical modeling

How will introduction of CCSS change the way English and Math are taught currently?

A central premise of the Common Core standards is to foster creative thinking and reason in all students, and to instill 21st Century learning skills. The Wilton Public Schools, through our Vision for Teaching and Learning, prioritized these objectives several years ago. We believe our students are already leaving the Wilton schools well prepared to pursue post-secondary education or to enter the workforce.

Although we will not have to make major changes to *what* we are teaching, we will need to adjust *how* some of our instruction is taught. In 2012 for example, the district adopted the Math in Focus, or “Singapore Math” program. Math in Focus takes a “mastery” approach to concepts that is closely aligned with Common Core best practices.

The Common Core initiative was a factor in our decision to implement full day kindergarten beginning with the 2013-14 school year. Our kindergarten staff felt that the quantity of instruction mandated by the Common Core necessitated the additional hours of instruction.

How will students be assessed on Common Core standards?

The State Department of Education is currently developing student assessments of learning that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. As of May 2013, a final assessment model has not been finalized.

Where can I learn more about the Common Core standards?

Many resources are available for individuals who wish to learn more about the Common Core State Standards Initiative:

Connecticut State Department of Education:

<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=322592>

Connecticut Education Association:

<http://www.cea.org/commoncore>

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education:

www.cabe.org

Common Core State Standards Initiative

<http://www.corestandards.org>

National Governors Association

<http://www.nga.org/cms/home/nga-center-for-best-practices/center-issues/page-edu-issues/col2-content/main-content-list/common-core-state-standards.html>