COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

"…what students are expected to know and be able to do."

On August 2, 2010, the California State Board of Education (SBE) voted unanimously to adopt new standards for both mathematics and English-language arts. The new standards are rigorous, research-based, and designed to prepare every student for success in college and the workforce. The standards are internationally benchmarked to ensure that our students are able to compete with students around the globe.

The Common Core State Standards

In 2009, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) committed to developing a set of standards that would help prepare students for success in college and career. The first step in this process was the development of the College and Career Readiness standards. These later became the foundation for the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a voluntary, state-led effort coordinated by the CCSSO and NGA to establish clear and consistent education standards. Parents, educators, content experts, researchers, national organizations, and community groups from forty-eight states, two territories, and the District of Columbia all participated in the development of the standards.

The CCSS were developed for English-language arts and mathematics, kindergarten through grade twelve. They were built upon the best state standards; the experiences of teachers, content experts, and leading thinkers; and feedback from the general public.

California and the Common Core

Senate Bill 1 from the fifth Extraordinary Session (SB X5 1) established the Academic Content Standards Commission (ACSC) to develop academic content standards in language arts and mathematics. At least 85 percent of the standards were to consist of the CCSS with up to 15 percent additional material as recommended by the commission. SB X5 1 stated that California must:

> Ensure the rigor of the state's reading, writing, and mathematics academic content standards, curricula, and assessments is maintained so that all high school graduates are prepared for college and careers by establishing a process to adopt new standards based on the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

At the same time, SB X5 1 directed the SBE to accept or reject the recommendations of the ACSC by August 2, 2010.

The ACSC convened during the summer of 2010 to evaluate the CCSS for rigor and alignment to California standards. They inserted words, phrases, and select California standards in their entirety to maintain California's high expectations for students.

On July 15, 2010, the commission recommended that the SBE adopt the CCSS as amended. The SBE voted unanimously to adopt the recommendations of the ACSC on August 2, 2010.

English-Language Arts-Highlights of the CCSS

The CCSS for English-language arts are divided into four strands: reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. The standards are organized by grade level for kindergarten through grade eight and by grade span for high school.

For kindergarten through grade five, the reading standards include foundational skills that foster students' understanding and working knowledge of concepts of print, the alphabetic principle, and other basic conventions of the English language.

Standards for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects provide additional specificity about the application of reading and writing standards to subject area content.

At each grade level and grade span, the reading strand includes standards for both literature and informational text. Literature encompasses a broad range of cultures, periods, and genres (e.g., stories, folktales, fantasy, realistic fiction, drama, poetry). Informational texts include biographies and autobiographies; writings about history-social sciences, science, and the arts; technical texts; and digital sources.

The writing standards call for students to write for a variety of purposes and to use technology to produce and publish their writing. Students are expected to write in varied genres, building mastery in a range of skills and applications.

Vocabulary acquisition and practice are threaded throughout the four strands, reflecting current research on how students best learn new words. Both writing and collaborative conversations about grade level topics and text provide students opportunities to practice using new vocabulary.

Students learn to express ideas, work together, and listen carefully to integrate and evaluate information. Skills are not learned in isolation, but in connection with reading and analyzing grade-level texts and topics. Technology is used to gather and present information.

Mathematics-Highlights of the CCSS

The mathematics standards for kindergarten through grade eight are organized by domain. Students in kindergarten through grade five are expected to achieve mastery in whole numbers arithmetic (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) and to develop a strong conceptual understanding and procedural skill with fractions–critical foundations for the learning of algebra. The standards for grades six and seven extend work with fractions and develop concepts such as rational numbers and proportional relationships.

The CCSS are consistent with the goal that all students succeed in Algebra 1. Students who master the content and skills through grade seven will be well-prepared for algebra in grade eight. Recognizing that all students must continue their study of mathematics, the CCSS moves students forward with grade eight standards that prepare them for higher math, include Algebra 1.

The high school standards identify the mathematics that all students should study to be college and career ready. The standards are organized by conceptual categories: number and quantity, algebra, functions, modeling, geometry, and statistics and probability. In addition, the CCSS include standards for Algebra 1, Calculus, and Advanced Placement Probability and Statistics.

Across grade levels and content areas, the CCSS are designed to balance the development of conceptual understandings with the acquisition of procedural skills. Students are expected to apply mathematical ways of thinking to real world issues and challenges, to construct sound mathematical arguments, and to be precise in their mathematical communications.

Next Steps

Although California's 1997 academic standards for English-language arts and mathematics share many similarities in content and design with the new CCSS, it will take several years to implement the new standards. Proposed timelines and an implementation plan for new curriculum frameworks, instructional materials adoptions, professional development, and assessment based on the new standards will be presented to the SBE for approval later this year and are contingent upon legislative action and funding.