

The Common Core State Standards

What Every K-2 Parent Needs to Know about the Common Core

The Common Core State Standards were developed by states and written by educators and education experts, including teachers from our state, to provide a consistent, clear and challenging set of learning expectations for all students. Why? These standards raise the bar for student expectations at each grade level and ensure classroom learning builds on the prior year's learning and prepares students for the next year.

Our state adopted the standards in 2010, and our educators have been transitioning to the Common Core standards ever since. While our state Board of Education adopts standards for our schools, it's up to our districts and teachers to develop their lesson plans and decide on curricular materials. That's why it's important to ask your child's teachers, principals and school officials about their preparation and planning for this school year.

These standards are in place to make sure your child advances through school and beyond with the essential knowledge and skills needed to succeed. Years from now, our young students will go on to graduate ready for college or their chosen career path because these stronger standards lay the foundation for their success.

In the Classroom

You may see a shift in what your child is learning in their grade level this year. Changes in classroom instruction focus on developing students' critical thinking and communication skills, as well as helping students understand how classroom learning relates to the real world. Student-led and small group work is emphasized to foster strong communication and collaboration skills. And just as important, these standards will encourage deeper understanding of concepts, leading your child to be more engaged with his or her own learning—asking more questions, making connections to other disciplines, and understanding the “why” and the “how” in addition to the “what.”

The chart below identifies the main instructional changes in English language arts and mathematics, and provides guidance for how each shift looks in the classroom.

Instructional Shift	In the Classroom
ELA – Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction	Reading and writing on real-life events, such as historical events, science, biographies and news articles
ELA – Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and fictional	Students should be able to point out facts and information in a text to support their opinions or answers. Prompts such as, “how do you know that?” or “where did you find that information?” should be used when reviewing work.
ELA – Regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary	Students should read texts that focus on building a strong vocabulary and understanding words that appear across content-areas or with multiple meanings. For instance, when reviewing a class reading assignment, explain the meaning of a new word and encourage students to use the word in classroom discussion or at home.
Math – Focus	Students should understand the logic and processes of addition and subtraction, including problem solving and place value.
Math – Coherence	Collaboration among all grade level teachers should be encouraged to build on the foundations set in previous grades and expectations of later grade levels. In addition, students should understand how different math topics relate to others.
Math – Rigor	Students should show all of their work and explain their process for arriving at an answer. Instruction should place an emphasis on applying addition and subtraction skills to real-life situations, such as adding two groups of cookies together to make a dozen cookies.

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Be sure to ask your child's teacher what his or her plans are for lessons and how you can help reinforce classroom learning when helping your child at home. While every classroom will learn skills and knowledge through different lessons, here's a look at what¹ you can expect your K-2 student to know and do by the end of the school year:

Kindergarten

- Naming and printing letters, and matching them with sounds
- Comparing character experiences in stories
- Understanding how to use question words (who, what, when, where, why, and how) in discussions
- Using drawing, writing, and speaking to describe an event
- Participating in classroom discussions and following the designated rules
- Adding and subtracting small numbers quickly and correctly
- Naming shapes accurately, regardless of their orientation
- Using diagrams and word problems to practice addition and subtraction
- Comparing groups of objects to determine which is greater

First Grade

- Using phonics and word analysis skills to determine unfamiliar words in reading
- Gathering facts from different sources
- Practicing structure of writing short stories or essays
- Participating in group discussions and responding to questions or comments from others
- Identifying word meanings from context clues
- Learning to make clearer distinctions between synonyms
- Using addition and subtraction in comparison problems
- Understanding place value with two-digit numbers
- Measuring lengths of objects
- Making composite shapes by joining other shapes

Second Grade

- Paying attention to details in stories to answer the 5 W's and H questions
- Determining morals or lessons of stories
- Determining the meaning of a word through prefixes or suffixes
- Writing stories with event sequences and clarity
- Practicing sentence structure by expanding or arranging sentences
- Expanding group discussion with new information
- Solving challenging addition and subtraction word problems
- Building and analyzing 2-D and 3-D objects to learn volume and area
- Understanding place value with three-digit numbers
- Solving lengthy addition and subtraction word problem