

Frequently Asked Questions or Myths about Common Core State Standards

1. What are common core state standards?

The Common Core State Standards initiative is a state-led effort to establish clearer, higher and more consistent and rigorous academic standards in the subjects of English and math that states can voluntarily adopt.

Common Core State Standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to enter college or the workforce; and that parents, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.

2. How are standards different from curriculum?

Standards are the guidelines, but the multitude of ways students are taught and how they learn represent curriculum. Teachers have the freedom to use a variety of methods in their toolbox to teach students. Curriculum decisions, including which textbook and programs to use, are made by local districts. Instructional decisions regarding student progress throughout the year are made in the classroom.

3. Who made the decision to adopt common core state standards in Arkansas?

States had academic standards in place before the development of the Common Core State Standards. This new initiative is merely a shared effort to dramatically raise those standards to better prepare students. Each state has its own specific process for adopting new standards.

Common Core standards are not federal standards. States led the development of the standards. Each state followed its own specific constitutional, legislative or administrative processes to adopt these standards as its own. This included consulting with principals, teachers, parents and other stakeholders.

4. Do state-adopted common core standards mean the federal government decides what is being taught in our school?

No. The states still retain complete control over academic standards and what is being taught in schools. The federal government has no say in what is being taught in your child's school. The adoption of standards was a state decision backed by many conservative governors who are on the front lines of preventing federal overreach in education.

5. Why does my student have to learn to work a math problem in different ways?

Common Core math standards emphasize conceptual understanding, procedural skills, fluency, and application. All students need both conceptual and procedural knowledge related to a mathematical topic, and they need to understand how the two types of knowledge are connected in order to apply that knowledge. In the past, instruction has focused on procedures in math (the how) but most students did not have conceptual understanding (the why). Common core uses multiple ways to solve problems in order to push students to those higher levels of understanding. When students are tested, they will be allowed to use the strategy that works best for them, unless the question is specific towards a certain strategy.