



This document includes 30 weeks' worth of messages for parents on the Common Core State Standards. The messages contain quick and easy "go to" resources and videos to learn about how Common Core State Standards raise the bar for students.

Elementary

Week Message

- | Week | Message |
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| 1 | <p>At (SCHOOL NAME), our mission is to help our students succeed. To make sure each student is prepared to thrive at the next level, we want your child to learn a year's worth of knowledge this year. To reach that goal, our school is teaching to a new set of standards. Our faculty uses curriculum to help students meet those learning standards.</p> <p>Consider it like this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ <i>Standards</i> are expectations. Sample expectation: students will know that $2+2=4$ and understand why the equation works.→ <i>Curriculum</i> is a set of materials. Our teachers use curriculum to prepare students to learn that $2+2=4$ and to understand why the equation works. <p>Standards are important for our students, educators and state. Standards help ensure every child in (STATE NAME), regardless of where they live, is learning the information necessary to succeed in future grades, college, careers and life.</p> <p>Parental Action: Click here for ways to motivate your child to learn!</p> |
| 2 | <p>Teachers and students at (SCHOOL NAME) are gearing up for the transition to Common Core State Standards. (STATE NAME) chose to join other states in developing these standards for English language arts and mathematics. Common Core State Standards are part of the goals and expectations our state has adopted for all other subject areas, like science, social studies and fine arts.</p> <p>Parental Action: Learn why Common Core State Standards are so important by watching this short video!</p> |
| 3 | <p>(SCHOOL NAME) is excited to implement Common Core State Standards for our students! Common Core State Standards are a state-led effort to establish clear, world-class educational standards for English language arts and mathematics. In 2010, (STATE NAME) and 45 other states voluntarily adopted the clearer, higher standards in these two subjects.</p> <p>At (SCHOOL NAME), we're using these new standards to ensure students graduate from</p> |

high school prepared to succeed in college or their chosen career. Common Core provides focus and clarity so everyone – parents, educators and students – understands what is expected of them. The standards challenge students to read critically, write extensively and solve real-world math problems at greater capacity. We're excited to see Common Core raise the bar for *all* students and increase the rigor of education at (SCHOOL NAME).

Parental Action: Check out the [Common Core State Standards for Math and English Language Arts](#).

- 4 Why is it important to have Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics?

Common Core State Standards are benchmarked to international standards to guarantee (STATE) prepares our students to learn and achieve in and outside of the classroom. Our students will have to compete in a global marketplace against students from China, Singapore and the United Kingdom. And with Common Core State Standards, we can prepare them to thrive.

Most of the top jobs in America today did not even exist a decade ago. These new standards will help maintain America's competitive edge, and ensure all our students are prepared with the skills and knowledge to compete with their peers at home and abroad.

- 5 While you may still be learning about Common Core State Standards, there are still plenty of ways you can help your child succeed this coming school year. To begin, check out the [Parents' Guide to Student Success](#) by the National Parent Teacher Association. This guide includes:

- Key items children should learn at each grade once Common Core English Language Arts and Math Standards are implemented.
- Activities you can use at home to support your child's learning.
- Ways to help you build stronger relationships with your child's teacher.
- Tips to help you and your child plan for college and future careers.

- 6 Here are some great resources on English language arts and math for moms, dads and anyone curious about our state's new standards. Created by the *Council of the Great City Schools*, these guides on the Common Core State Standards provide examples of what children will learn in our school, how those skills will progress into later grades, and how you can support your child's learning at home.

Parent Roadmaps for Common Core State Standards:

- [English Language Arts](#)
- [Math](#)

- 7 Parents, schools and communities expect students to be able to read literature (stories) and informational text (a science textbook). Why? Because reading literature helps students become strong thinkers (understanding the "why"), and reading informational books help students learn content (understanding the "what"). Whatever your child

chooses to pursue in the future, he or she will need to be able to understand and work with both types of texts.

The Common Core Difference: Common Core State Standards ensure students spend equal time reading and working with literature and informational books.

- 8 The Common Core State Standards for Math establish the milestones students need to reach at each level in order to succeed in the next grade and, eventually, graduate ready for college or a career. The new standards also make sure your child can both do *and* understand math. Understanding the “why” behind addition or subtraction will help students accomplish more than just passing a test. It will equip them with the tools needed to continue building knowledge and understanding – not just from one grade to the next, but for the rest of their lives.

The Common Core Difference: (STATE NAME) adopted Common Core State Standards for Math in elementary school because they provide a strong foundation for students to learn algebra, geometry, and advanced math in later grades.

- 9 As your child moves from grade to grade, the material he or she reads will become increasingly complex. (STATE NAME) students are bright and eager to learn. The Common Core State Standards expect our students to be able to read harder material in earlier grades. By introducing more complex books earlier on, students will have an easier time transitioning to reading and learning from more difficult books in higher grades.

The Common Core Difference: The book *Sarah Plain and Tall* was typically read by fourth grade level students. Common Core standards expect second- or third-grade students to be able to read and understand this story.

- 10 **The Common Core State Standards were developed by teachers and education experts and based on:**

- The best research on what kids need to know and when they need to learn it.
- What kids need to know to succeed in college and future careers.
- The standards of top performing countries.

- 11 Just like you take your child’s temperature throughout the day when he or she is sick, teachers at (SCHOOL NAME) measure your child’s learning progress throughout the year. Homework, in-class writing assignments, classroom discussion, quizzes and end of unit tests help teachers determine if your child has mastered necessary skills and content. These learning checkups also help teachers decide which material the class needs to review.

This process is especially important with Common Core because the new standards’ goal is to ensure our students master a concept from top to bottom. Instead of spending one chapter or a few weeks on fractions, your child may spend months on the subject. Why? Because the techniques learned to master fractions are fundamental to understanding and

conquering more advanced math concepts.

Parental Action: Ask your child's teacher if there is any content or skill your child is struggling to master at school. Find out what you can do at home to help your child conquer those areas.

- 12 We want our students to be strong, thoughtful readers, and the new Common Core State Standards require our school's students to spend a lot of time reading and considering what they have read.

A Common Core Lesson Worth Viewing!

In [this lesson](#), students are asked to come up with questions and find their own answers in the book. See how educators are teaching to Common Core State Standards and challenging students to develop thinking skills in the classroom.

Parental Action: Wondering what you can do to help your child at home? When your child reads, ask general questions about the book. Challenge your son or daughter to provide proof from the book to support their response.

- 13 One of the best ways for a teacher to check if students understand a concept – even in math – is to have them write about it. In order to write about something, you must spend time thinking about it. This takes time, effort and lots of practice. Under the new Common Core State Standards, (STATE) students will write more than they have in the past.

Parental Action: Want to help your child become a better writer? [Here](#) are some helpful tips to get you started!

- 14 As a parent, you likely dread book reports more than any other English language arts assignment. Lucky for you, Common Core State Standards are changing the rules for English assignments. These standards expect students to do more than just describe the characters of a book and summarize the story. Our teachers' goal is to ensure students understand *why* characters make the choices they do and grasp the full impact of those decisions. If your child can successfully demonstrate that, then teachers know he or she has mastered the skill.

Here is an example of what your child could be asked to do instead of a book report:

Elementary:

Instead of simply listing what each pig used to construct his house in the story of *The Three Little Pigs*, teachers would ask more of your child. Under the new standards, students would have to think about *why* the pigs chose those specific materials to build their houses. While it is important to be able to retell a story, it's even better to be able to form logical conclusions and opinions about the story's events and to use the story itself to support their opinion.*

Middle and High School:

Instead of asking the student to pick the character in a novel they think is the hero, your child may be asked to use evidence from several novels they have read to agree or disagree with this statement: “The best way to understand the character of a society is to examine the character of the men and women that the society chooses as its heroes or its role models.”*

*View source [here](#).

- 15 Looking for some more examples to show how the new Common Core State Standards differ from past state standards? Check out these [side-by-side comparisons of old standards versus Common Core State Standards](#).

- 16 As our school transitions to Common Core State Standards, you’ll likely notice significant changes. You may see your kindergartner or first grader doing math that their older brother or sister learned in third or fourth grade. Why? Our students need to master these fundamental skills earlier, and with our school’s great teachers, they will be able to.

A Common Core Lesson Worth Viewing!

Watch [this lesson](#) to see how first graders find different ways to count to 100. Through the lesson, students understand why their answers are correct *and* learn the necessary math rule.

- 17 Sometimes when students are in the midst of a challenging math task, these questions arise: “Why do I need to know this? Will I ever use this when I grow up?” Even though they may not realize it, as adults use math skills all the time in everyday life. It might not look like dividing big numbers into small numbers, but you do use the thinking behind that process more than you know.

A Common Core Lesson Worth Viewing!

In this [fourth-grade division lesson](#), a teacher uses class discussion to show that understanding the answer is as important as the answer itself.

Understanding why things work helps in the real-world math situations adults experience every day!

Parental Action: Wondering what you can do to help your child at home? Ask your child questions and review his or her homework to see whether your child understands the *why* behind the answer.

- 18 Common Core State Standards are different from most past state standards, and homework assignments will look just as different. As a parent, you can use this [guide from EngageNY](#) to learn about new types of homework assignments to expect. The site also offers suggestions for how to help your child learn at home.

19 Curious about how the Common Core Math Standards differ from past state standards? Check out this example:

- Under the old standards, a math question might ask:
Tina had 10 balloons. She gave seven away. How many balloons did she have?
- Under the Common Core State Standards, this question would be:
Tina’s Diner has one small table that can seat four people. Tina’s Diner also has one large table that can seat double that amount. Fifteen people came in at lunch time. How many people did not get a seat?

*View source [here](#).

20 Under the new Common Core State Standards, we expect more from our students. (SCHOOL NAME) teachers will challenge students to explore increasingly more difficult books and vocabulary. The change doesn’t end there. Your child will also learn to cite evidence from what he or she has read in classroom discussion or through writing.

A Common Core Lesson Worth Viewing!

Check out this [four-part video series](#) from The Teaching Channel to see a fifth-grade class discuss a difficult book, cite evidence from the book to respond to questions, and write about what they have learned.

21 As (STATE NAME) transitions to Common Core, teachers at (SCHOOL NAME) will make major shifts in how they teach. For example, in math:

- Teachers will focus deeply on only the concepts that are most important for success in future grades, college and careers. This approach ensures students can learn the most important concepts at an in-depth level and that teachers won’t have to race to cover “everything in the textbook.”
- Students will be expected to do simple calculations automatically, so teachers will have to ensure their students have memorized math facts such as multiplication and division facts.
- Students will learn more than a trick to get the answer right on a test. They will also learn *why* their answer is correct.

Parental Action: Here are some tips on how you can help your child with math at home:

1. Help your child master addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.
2. Encourage your child not to give up while solving problems. Don’t give your child the answers – ask your child to think of different ways to solve problems.
3. Have your child show the steps in their math process and discuss it out loud.
4. Have your child apply his or her math knowledge to a real-world scenario at home, such as doubling a recipe, measuring house hold objects or calculating the area of a room.

22

Teachers in (SCHOOL NAME) will make major shifts in how they teach to align with new Common Core State Standards. For example, in English language arts:

- Students will read both informational books and literature in all classrooms.
- Students will build knowledge about the world through books rather than only through the teacher.
- Students will read high-quality and more difficult books at an earlier grade.
- Students will engage in rich conversations about the books they are reading, using what they have read to support their arguments.
- Students will write using evidence from what they've read to support their reasoning and to build and defend arguments.
- Students will constantly build their vocabulary through what they read.

Parental Action: Reading is so important for every subject. Here are some tips on how you can help your child become a better reader:

1. Encourage your child to read, write and speak about nonfiction books, such as newspapers, magazines and biographies.
2. Encourage your child to use technology to research topics that interest them and to read several different stories that relate to a central topic.
3. Have your child follow step-by-step instructions or a set of directions in order to accomplish a task, such as baking a cake or operating a toy or game.

23

With Common Core State Standards, teachers at (SCHOOL NAME) will expect your child to think more about readings and to respond to in-depth questions about the books.

The Common Core Difference:

Under old expectations, a student might be asked these questions after reading a story about bats:

- Do vampire bats drink human blood?*
- What is different about bats when compared to other mammals?***

**Answered with a simple yes or no answer.*

****Expects students to identify a single trait distinguishing bats from other mammals.*

Under Common Core State Standards, a student would have to respond to the following task after reading about bats:

- Compare and contrast the most important points and key details in the books *Bats!* and *Bats: Creatures of the Night*. Verbally report findings clearly and comprehensively to classmates using evidence from the two books.*

**In this task, the student will have to have a deep understanding of both books to be able to find the main points, compare and contrast them, and then orally present them to the class.*

24

Under the Common Core State Standards, *all* (SCHOOL NAME) teachers will work toward developing your child's reading and writing skills. Our school's new literacy standards incorporate reading, writing, and speaking into all areas – history and social science,

technical subjects, and science to name a few.

A Common Core Lesson Worth Viewing!

To understand and discuss subject area content, students must be able to read, write, speak, and listen in the language of that field. In [this video](#), a fifth-grade social studies lesson asks students to read a social studies article and use reading strategies to identify important facts.

25 Using Common Core State Standards, (SCHOOL NAME) will prepare students to communicate with peers and adults. These new expectations ask students to engage in discussions about grade-level topics and books – expressing their ideas and building on the ideas of others. Our teachers will help equip your child to:

- Be prepared for the discussion. This means reading or studying the required material in advance.
- Draw on his or her preparation and existing knowledge to explore ideas and discuss the topic.
- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in a respectful way, listening carefully to others, speaking one at a time about the topics and books under discussion).
- Ask strategic questions to confirm comprehension, stay on topic, and link comments to others’ remarks.
- Explain his or her own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

A Common Core Lesson Worth Viewing!

Watch [this lesson](#) to see how students use notes from a text to prepare for classroom discussions.

26 (SCHOOL NAME) teachers are using Common Core State Standards to prepare your child to read more difficult books and learn more challenging vocabulary. This process spans all grade levels, with teachers constantly building students’ vocabulary skills as they progress through school.

A Common Core Lesson Worth Viewing!

Watch how [this teacher](#) uses a simple strategy to incorporate “college talk” in her classroom.

27 The Common Core State Standards challenge students to figure out real-world math problems by problem solving.

The Common Core Difference:

Rounding to the Nearest Hundred

Under past standards, students would be asked to round a number to the nearest hundred:

- Round 9,149 to the nearest hundred.

Under the Common Core State Standards, student would be asked the following:

- When rounded to the nearest hundred, the number of seats in a baseball stadium is 9,100. What is the greatest number of seats that could be in this stadium? Explain how you know.*

**[Click here](#) to view this example's source.*

28 At (SCHOOL NAME), we are excited to see Common Core State Standards inspire our students to read more challenging books. To find books your child can read during the summer months, check out this [Common Core aligned Summer Recommended Reading List!](#)

29 Today's technology-driven world offers tremendous resources to help teachers *and* parents improve student learning. Digital learning offers some great ways for your child to get practice in at home and prepare to succeed under Common Core State Standards in Math.

Parental Action: Explore these [Khan Academy](#) digital math lessons with your child from the comfort of your own home:

- [Addition and Subtraction](#)
- [Multiplication and Division](#)
- [Fractions](#)
- [Applying Math Reasoning](#)

30 Today's technology-driven world offers tremendous resources to help teachers *and* parents improve student learning. Digital learning offers some great ways for your child to get practice in at home and prepare to succeed under Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts.

Parental Action: Check out these digital Common Core English Language Arts lessons from [LearnZillion](#), a website that provides free online lessons for you and your child :

- Learn to [summarize the plot of a lengthy poem](#) by examining the details of each stanza.
- Learn to [revise your thinking based on new information](#) learned from a book.

There are many more lessons like this on LearnZillion. (There are even lessons for math too!) I encourage you to check them out.