

Shifting to Common Core Math

A Question and Answer Guide for Parents and Community Members

Q. What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative?

A. The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort that established a single set of clear educational standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts and mathematics that states voluntarily adopt. The standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to enter two or four year college programs without having to take remedial classes or enter the workforce. The standards are clear and concise to ensure that parents, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of the expectations in reading, writing, speaking and listening, language and mathematics in school.

Q. Are the standards internationally competitive?

A. Yes. International benchmarking played a significant role in both sets of standards. In fact, the college- and career-ready standards include an appendix listing the evidence that was consulted in drafting the standards and the international data used in the benchmarking process.

Q. What do the Common Core State Standards mean for students?

A. The standards provide clarity and consistency in what is expected of student learning across the country. This initiative helps provide all students with an equal opportunity for an education, regardless of where they live. The Common Core State Standards will provide for different levels of achievement among students, while ensuring more consistent exposure to materials and learning experiences through curriculum, instruction, and teacher preparation.

Q. What is the new common core math sequence?

A.

- K–6 Math
- Middle School
 - Math 7
 - Math 8 (acceleration assessment at end of course)
- High School
 - Integrated Math 1*
 - Integrated Math 2
 - Integrated Math 3 (acceleration assessment at end of course)
 - Trig-Pre Calculus*
 - AP Calculus or Statistics

An asterisk (*) denotes a course where accelerated students may move ahead. In the past students have skipped classes, and as a result missed learning important concepts. With the

new sequence students will learn all concepts, and accelerated students can test to advance in the sequence by demonstrating they have mastered the necessary skills. This has switched from between grades 6–7 to between grades 8–9. Integrated Math 1 topics are being used for enrichment during Math 7–8 to ensure that students have a solid foundation to support acceleration. Students will have another chance to accelerate after Integrated Math 3.

Q. Do all students need challenging mathematics curriculum in high school?

A. Yes! Mathematics in high school is the “gatekeeper” that can open doors to great opportunities. In fact, studies have reported the highest level of math taken in high school is the best indicator of earning a degree, staying in a two year college, or entry-level of pay in jobs not requiring a college degree, *regardless of* ethnicity, income, or parent’s education level.

Q. What happened to Algebra, is it still a State requirement for graduation?

A. Algebra is still required by the State of California. The new integrated math sequence meets that requirement. Now the Algebra concepts will be taught in 7th and 8th grade math as well as integrated math 1. Those concepts are then reinforced in integrated math 2 and 3.

Q. What was different with the way I learned math in school?

A. Arithmetic skills, although important, are no longer enough. To succeed in tomorrow’s world students must understand algebra, geometry, statistics, and probability. Business and industry are demanding employees who can:

- solve real world problems
- explain their thinking
- analyze data
- use technology

Q. How can I help my child at home?

A. The concepts the students are studying are listed in the charts on the district web page. These charts show the standards for which students must reach proficiency by the end of the course. If you have questions regarding these standards or what students are studying during a particular unit, call or email the classroom teacher. They will be happy to help. Here are some questions to ask your children when they come to you for support:

- What is the problem you are working on?
- What are the instructions or directions?
- Where do you think you should begin?
- Is there anything you already know that can help you with this problem?
- Can you find similar problems in your text or notes from today’s lesson?
- Can you tell me where you are stuck?
- Can you draw a picture or diagram of the problem?

Q. Will my child be able to take Calculus in high school?

A. After 8th grade math students will take an assessment and if they demonstrate the necessary proficiencies will advance to Integrated Math 2 their freshman year. This advanced sequence

will allow students the opportunity to take college level math (commonly referred to as Advanced Placement or AP) during their high school years. Another opportunity exists at the completion of Integrated Math 3 for students to demonstrate the necessary proficiencies to enter directly into the Calculus course. Students may also access other accredited coursework by speaking with the high school counselors and completing an alternative coursework contract in order to advance at a faster pace at the high school level. Parents are encouraged to review the math standards at each grade level to review the areas that will be assessed for proficiency.

Q. I am nervous about this shift...am I missing something?

A. You will feel some shifts... *and that's a good thing!* It is true that Common Core should cause some shifting in what school looks and feels like. In other words, you will see your children doing more than finding answers and completing tasks. Instead, you will hear them reasoning, you will see them working through more complex problems, and you will enjoy watching them read both fiction and non-fiction.