

Parent's Backpack Guide to Common Core State Standards



TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN—8TH GRADE: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATHEMATICS

In 2010 California adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to make sure that all children succeed once they graduate from high school. This guide is designed to help you understand how the standards will affect your child, what changes you will see and what you can do at home to help your children in the classroom.

Why Are the Common Core State Standards Important?

The Common Core State Standards are important because they will help all children – no matter who they are – learn the same skills. They create clear expectations for what your child should know and be able to do in key areas: **reading, writing, speaking and listening, language and mathematics**. If you know what these expectations are, then you can work with the teacher and help your child prepare.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA)

The new Common Core State Standards make several important changes to current standards. These changes are called shifts. The chart below shows what these shifts change, what you might see in your child's backpack as a result of those shifts, and what you can do to help your child.

What's Shifting?	What to Look for in the Backpack?	What Can You Do?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will now read more non-fiction in each grade level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for your kids to have more reading assignments based on real-life events, such as biographies, articles and historical stories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read non-fiction books with your children. Find ways to make reading fun and exciting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading more non-fiction texts will help your child learn about the world through reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for more fact-based books about the world. For instance, your 1st grade child or Kindergartener might read Clyde Robert Bulla's <i>A Tree is a Plant</i>. This book lets students read and learn about science. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know what non-fiction books are grade-level appropriate and make sure your children have access to such books.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will read challenging texts very closely, so they can make sense of what they read and draw their own conclusions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for more reading and writing assignments that might ask your child to retell or write about key parts of a story or book. For example, your 2nd or 3rd grade child might be asked to read aloud Faith D'Aluisio's non-fiction book titled <i>What the World Eats</i> and retell facts from the story. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide more challenging texts for your kids to read within their reading level. Show them how to dig deeper into difficult pieces.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When it comes to writing or retelling a story, your child will use "evidence" gathered from the text to support what they say. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for written assignments that ask your child to draw on concrete examples from the text that serve as evidence. Evidence means examples from the book that your child will use to support a response or conclusion. This is different from the opinion questions that have been used in the past. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask your child to provide evidence in everyday discussions and disagreements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will learn how to write from what they read. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for writing assignments that ask your child to make arguments using evidence. For 4th and 5th grade children, this might mean reading and writing about <i>The Kids Guide to Money</i>, a non-fiction book by Steve Otfinoski. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage writing at home. Write together using evidence and details.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will have an increased academic vocabulary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for assignments that stretch your child's vocabulary and teach them that "language is power." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read and discuss what you're reading with your children daily, using the language appropriate to the content.

MATHEMATICS

To improve student learning, the new Common Core State Standards are different from the old ones. These changes are called shifts. The chart below shows what is shifting, what you might see in your child's backpack as a result of those shifts, and what you can do to help your child.

What's Shifting?	What to Look for in the Backpack?	What Can You Do?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will <u>work more deeply in fewer topics</u>, which will ensure full understanding. (Less is more!) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for assignments that center on fewer topics and involve modeling and problem solving using structured approach (graphic organizers). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know what concepts are important for children based on their grade level and spend time working on those concepts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will <u>keep building on learning year after year</u>, starting with a strong foundation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for assignments that build on one another. For example, students will focus on adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing. Once these areas are mastered, they will focus on fractions and then build on fractions to algebra. You should be able to see the progression in the topics they learn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of what concepts your child struggled with last year and support your child in those challenge areas as you move forward.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will <u>spend time practicing and memorizing math facts</u>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for assignments that focus on memorizing and mastering basic math facts, which are important for success in more advanced math problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help your child know and memorize basic math facts. Provide time every day for your child to work on math at home.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will <u>understand why the math works and be asked to talk about and prove their understanding</u>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for assignments that require students to <u>show their work</u> and <u>explain</u> how they arrived at an answer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage your child to show their work and reasoning. Ask your student thought-provoking questions related to the topic.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will now be asked to <u>use math in real-world situations</u>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for math assignments that are based on the real world. For instance, homework for 5th grade students might include adding fractions as part of a dessert recipe or determining how much pizza friends ate based on fractions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask your child to "do the math" that pops up in daily life.

Many of the assignments your students will be completing this year may be done in a journal that will remain in class.

THE SMARTER BALANCED ASSESSMENT

The Smarter Balanced Assessment System will give parents and students accurate and actionable information about what students are learning. Because these assessments are computer adaptive, they will also provide better information about the needs and successes of individual students.

These next-generation assessments in English-Language Arts and Mathematics for grades 3-8 and 11 will assess student mastery of the Common Core State Standards. This new assessment tool will provide parents, students, and teachers with a clear window on whether students are on track to graduate high school and ready for college and the workplace. These assessments, beginning in 2014-2015 school year, will be administered online and go beyond multiple choice questions to include performance tasks that allow students to demonstrate research, writing, and analytical skills.

To see sample test items from the new Smarter Balanced assessment, please visit:

www.smarterbalanced.org/sample-items-and-performance-tasks

For more information on the Smarter Balanced Assessment System, please visit:

www.smarterbalanced.org or contact your school principal.