



## PA STANDARDS and COMMON CORE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. What are Common Core Standards?

Currently, each state has its own academic standards – meaning that students across the country are learning at different levels. While Pennsylvania’s academic standards are among the nation’s strongest, Common Core Standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics will raise academic expectations nationwide, improve equity, and ensure that all students are prepared for college and career in core subjects.

This initiative is being led by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA), with participation of the overwhelming majority of states. The main goals for this consortium are to create standards that are “research and evidence-based, aligned with college and work expectations, include rigorous content and skills and are internationally benchmarked.” The Common Core will result in grade-level standards in ELA and Mathematics, tied to college and career ready targets. A public draft of the grade-level standards was released in March 2010.

### 2. What process will Pennsylvania use for adoption of the Common Core Standards?

Along with the other 48 states, two territories, and DC, Pennsylvania has agreed that the Common Core will represent at least 85% of academic standards in reading and math. The State Board of Education plans to adopt Common Core Standards in ELA and Mathematics conditioned on two assumptions: (1) the State Board will be provided ample opportunity to conduct a thorough and public vetting of the Common Core that will support successful implementation; and (2) Common Core will be no less rigorous than the revised state-level standards the State Board was in the process of adopting.

### 3. How does the rigor of the Common Core Standards (CC) compare to the PA Academic Standards?

Upon release of the final draft of the College and Career Ready (CCR) Standards, PA completed a preliminary study to measure degree of alignment. The results of that study showed a very strong alignment of CCR Standards to reading and mathematics standards at the high school level.

With the release of the Common Core K-12 framework, the State Board has commissioned the University of Pittsburgh and educators from across the Commonwealth to perform an independent study to compare Common Core with the state’s existing standards framework in reading and math. Using Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) framework, the April 2010 study and subsequent report to be released in May will define the degree of alignment of CC Standards against the related PA Standards.

The results of this study will be presented at a public meeting of the Board and posted on its website. Subsequently, the Board’s Academic Standards Committee will hold a series of public roundtables across the Commonwealth to gather feedback on the Common Core and suggestions for successful implementation should the Board elect to adopt the Common Core. In addition, the Board will invite written comment from education stakeholders, policymakers, and the public. Any action on adoption would likely occur during the summer or fall of 2010, and be preceded by two weeks of written public notice.

### 4. Are the Common Core Standards focused just on high school curriculum across the disciplines - or will they impact elementary and middle school curriculum too?

If adopted by the State Board, Common Core Standards would impact K-12. Last fall, the CCSSO and NGA released College and Career Readiness Standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA). From those standards flow the K-8 and high school Mathematics Standards and the K-12 English Language Arts Standards.

**5. Are all eleven existing standards sets addressed in the Common Core Standards?**

The Common Core Standards currently in draft form are those for English Language Arts (K-12) and Mathematics, (K-8 and conceptual categories for high school, including algebra and geometry). Plans are underway for Common Core Standards in other core subjects, but nothing is available at this time.

**6. When will PA transition to Common Core?**

Should the State Board adopt Common Core, PDE will be prepared to roll out a transition plan, including a standard-to-standard analysis, Assessment Anchor and Eligible Content analysis, and a Curriculum Framework review. PDE will communicate the timeline and provide information for educators to assist in understanding the transition process and its implications.

**7. If adopted, how will CC affect the PA Anchors?**

As the alignment study data becomes available, standards teams will be created to “dig into” the details of the alignment and link the new standards to the Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content. It is anticipated that Anchors and Eligible Content will generally remain intact.

**8. If we are considering curriculum revisions this summer, should we use the PA Standards, Common Core (CC) Standards, or both? Or should we wait until the new CC Standards are available?**

The PA Standards construct is a solid design and while the language of the standards may change, the content should remain fairly constant. Using the PA Standards and SAS’s Curriculum Framework should produce a good product.

**9. How will the structure of the Core Standards compare to current structure of the PA Standards?**

PDE will ensure a smooth transition from PA to Common Core Standards. That may include a document formatted in like manner to the current PA Standards and displaying the PA Standards as indicators to support the Common Core Standards

**10. How will the adoption of the Common Core Standards influence the current content and development of the Standards Aligned System (SAS)?**

SAS’s Curriculum Framework is built upon current PA Standards. The framework is a dynamic one, and as changes to the framework are required – whether triggered by Common Core or other factors - they will occur. Common Core will not affect SAS development; rather, development will continue, as we believe Common Core will support SAS initiatives.

**11. How will the adoption of the CC affect 4-Sight, PSSA, and the Keystone Exams?**

It is anticipated that there will be significant alignment between the PA and Common Core standards. Every effort will be made to ensure that the alignment of the standards to the Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content is maintained. As more information becomes available, PDE will inform state educators.

**12. How will PDE assist districts in transitioning to Common Core? How can districts, IUs, and other educational agencies collaborate with PDE to ease the transition?**

Drawing on data from the alignment study, feedback from the State Board roundtables, and other avenues of communication, PDE will develop and publicize a detailed transition plan. Part of the transition plan will include direction to districts as they utilize SAS, develop new courses, and align curricula to Common Core. PDE will provide a timeline for transition and host workshops to aid districts.

PDE welcomes assistance and will seek out personnel to participate in work sessions to complete the alignments, host informative sessions for districts, and provide feedback as the transition occurs.

**13. Where can I go for additional information?**

PDE will continue to provide updates on its website. In addition, the Common Core website ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)), maintained by Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors Association, provides information regarding the standards review and validation process; work and feedback group members; as well as drafts of the standards, summaries, and presentations.