



Tests and assessments

We all make on-going assessments in the process of a day when we answer questions for ourselves such as, "Is there enough gas in the tank to drive home?" and "Are there enough ingredients to make a recipe?" To improve student achievement, students must clearly understand what they are supposed to learn and where they are along the way to learning it.

On-going formative assessments provide feedback to students and teachers during the teaching and learning process. Formative assessments include teacher questioning, discussions, learning activities, conferences, interviews and student reflections. Based on feedback from these activities, teachers might change their instruction in mid-course.

In addition to formative assessments, teachers will give benchmark tests throughout the year to make sure students are on track.

State end-of-grade and end-of-course testing will continue. Eventually these summative assessments will be offered online.



Parent resources

Students, parents and teachers will share the same expectations for student learning across much of the country once the Common Core State Standards are in place. We already have tools, however, that can be used in parent-teacher conversations.

Individual student reports on state test results are packed with scores and indicators about a student's academic achievement. N.C. School Report Cards report school and district performance. By partnering with teachers to discuss student and school achievement, we are contributing to our children's education.

For more information on how you can support your child's education, visit www.ncpta.org or these Web sites:

Common Core State Standards
www.ncpta.org/parent

Graduation requirements
www.ncpublicschools.org/gradrequirements/

K-12 standards in science and other subjects
www.ncpublicschools.org/acre/standards/

State test results for students
www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/

N.C. School Report Cards
www.ncreportcards.org/

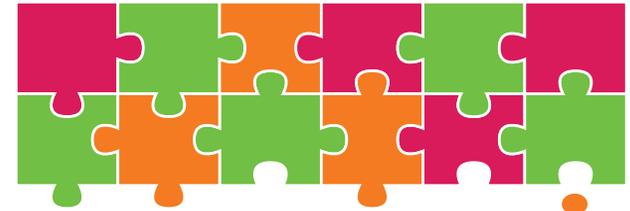
Contact North Carolina PTA

3501 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh, NC 27612-4934

email: office@ncpta.org

phone: (919) 787-0534

toll free in NC: (800) 255-0417



Common Core State Standards in North Carolina for Middle Schools

We all want our children to succeed in learning.

At home, we can tell when our children are learning to take care of themselves and to take more responsibility for daily living activities.

As parents, we look at our children's grades and observe how happy or frustrated they seem to determine their success in school. Often we don't know where to turn to find out if they are learning what they are supposed to know.

And what do students really need to know in this competitive, 21st century, global economy? In June 2010, the N.C. State Board of Education took a major step in setting clear, consistent academic expectations for our students by adopting the Common Core State Standards.



What are the Common Core State Standards?

These standards describe what students are supposed to know from kindergarten through 12th grade. They define the reading, writing and math knowledge and skills needed at each grade level. Each year builds on the next so that by high school graduation, young people are prepared to go to college or to enter the workplace.

These are high standards based on research, comparisons with other countries, and input from teachers, school administrators, parents, college entrance test developers, policymakers and business leaders.

These standards offer consistent expectations for student learning across much of the nation. As a result, school transitions after family moves across district or state lines should be much easier for everyone. Over 40 states and the District of Columbia are expected to adopt these standards by the end of 2010. The standards will be in place in each North Carolina classroom beginning in the 2012-2013 school year.

Defining high, consistent standards for learning isn't a new idea. North Carolina schools operate under the *N.C. Standard Course of Study*. The *N.C. Standard Course of Study* sets standards for the major academic subjects in each grade. There have been criticisms, however, that the standards are too broad and unclear, that teachers rush



through the material, and that students sometimes learn just enough to get by on the next test.

In a response to demands for change, the N.C. State Board of Education adopted new graduation requirements in 2009 and the N.C. Department of Public Instruction began to redefine the *N.C. Standard Course of Study*.

Now what?

Common Core State Standards along with an effective classroom curriculum and improved teaching will help raise our students' achievement. Training for North Carolina's 100,000 teachers and 2,400 principals will prepare them to teach and lead based on the new standards. (The N.C. Standard Course of Study will be in place for 2010-2011 and 2011-2012.)

In addition to moving to Common Core State Standards in reading, writing and math, the N.C. Department of Public Instruction has begun to revise K-12 standards and tests in all of the other academic subjects such as science and social studies.

Language arts

The Common Core State Standards set goals for student mastery in language arts. The study of language arts includes reading, writing, speaking and listening. Language arts expectations are established for each grade across all subjects including science, history, social studies and technical subjects. Vocabulary words such as *lava, carburetor, legislature, circumference and aorta* are just a few examples of how language arts expectations can have an impact on a variety of academic subjects.

The standards include examples of appropriate books for students to read at each grade level in literature and informational texts. Teachers will choose the reading assignments for their students using the examples as a guide. At the top of the next panel are some suggested reading examples for grades 6-8.

Just as an example, the document you are reading right now would be at the 7th or 8th grade reading level according to the standards.

EXAMPLE BOOK	READING
<i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> by Madeleine L'Engle	literature
<i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i> by Mark Twain	literature
<i>Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad</i> by Ann Petry	informational
<i>Math Trek: Adventures in the Math Zone</i> by Ivars Peterson and Nancy Henderson	informational

Language arts standards include expectations for students to develop their writing. Most of today's middle and high school students focus on narrative writing. Writing about opinions, beliefs and personal experiences is narrative writing. In college or the workplace, however, most writing focuses on informing and explaining. So, the standards emphasize writing to inform and explain and writing arguments to support claims in addition to narrative writing.

Math

The math standards emphasize that every student can be good in math. With a solid K-5 math foundation, students will learn and apply more demanding math concepts and procedures in middle and high school. Students who have mastered the standards through the 7th grade will be well prepared for algebra in 8th grade. Below is an example of a math standard for 6th grade.

6TH GRADE: Understand ratio concepts and use ratio reasoning to solve problems.

FOR EXAMPLE:

The ratio of wings to beaks in the bird house at the zoo was 2:1, because for every 2 wings there was 1 beak.

