

Top 10 FAQs on K-12 Implementation of Common Core

1) Q. Why is Santa Ana developing professional development modules?

A. The implementation of the Common Core involves all teachers in the development of students as critical, analytic thinkers and collaborators. To support the development of foundational pedagogical knowledge across all grade spans and content areas, the district is developing three professional development modules in the areas of text complexity, collaborative conversations and development of academic language.

2) Q. How were the topics for the professional development modules decided?

A. Through our work with national partners and due to the importance of text complexity to address two of three instructional shifts, we chose text complexity for the first professional development module. The topics of the remaining two modules came from teacher input. During our summer pilot of the units of study, teachers frequently mentioned that students needed to learn how to collaborate effectively and also stated a teacher need for protocols and routines to support student learning through collaborative conversations. In addition, teachers asked that the District address the significant language development needs of our students through a module in academic language development.

3) Q. How is Santa Ana Unified balancing the implementation of the Common Core Standards with the former California State Standards that are currently assessed?

A. When we look at the school districts, like New York and Chicago, that have been implementing the Common Core for several years now, we see that their students are progressively improving on performance based assessments and multiple choice assessments simultaneously. Their work has shown that if a student is able to demonstrate their deep learning on rigorous performance based assessments then they will be equally successful on multiple-choice questions that require less application of skills and knowledge.

In addition, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Torlakson, released a dozen recommendations called "Recommendations for Transitioning California to a Future Assessment System" to be approved by the state legislature. If approved, many current STAR assessments would be suspended during the 2013-2014 school year including Grade 2 ELA and Math, Grade 8 History-Social Science, Grade 9 ELA, Grade 10 ELA, Grade 11 U.S. History, Algebra I (for grades 9-11), Algebra II (for grades 9-11), General Mathematics (grade 9), Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, Physics, and World History.

4) Q. Where can I find research on the effectiveness of our partners including West Ed and Silicon Valley Math Initiative?

A. If you wish to see research on some of our partners, you can go to the District website, click on the **Common Core State Standards** tab in the left margin, click on **Partners** below, and then look over to the right under **Partner Articles** and click on the title of your choice to open the file. In addition to QTEL materials, there are also math-based articles from the Silicon Valley Math Initiative. Additional research can be found on our partners websites through the links provided.

5) Q. What is the purpose of developing units of study?

A. There are six key reasons that Santa Ana is developing units of study:

1. Providing teachers with a context in which to use multiple effective strategies throughout the K-12 continuum including Thinking Maps, GATE-depth and complexity icons, GLAD strategies, and language and content objectives
2. Providing teachers with a positive, initial experience with the Common Core
3. Providing teachers an exemplar of effective Common Core instruction
4. Providing a shared experience/focus amongst the staff at each grade level or identified course
5. Encourage the use of common instructional language throughout the K-12 continuum
6. Highlight the three instructional shifts in both literacy and mathematics

6) Q. Who will support the teachers as they implement the units of study?

A. Teachers will be supported by CLAS teachers from their content area, TOSAs, district curriculum specialists, site administration and district administration during the implementation process. Site administration will ensure that teachers in need of additional support are provided resources to support effective implementation (for example: demonstration lessons, peer coaching, assistance with planning or additional materials).

7) Q. What will the unit of study implementation look like at the end of the year?

A. The writing teams will complete the first draft of the units of study. The draft will be provided to department chairs and classroom teachers for feedback in the month of March for elementary and high school and mid April for intermediate school. The writing teams will pilot specific strategies and/or lessons within the units of study. Other classroom teachers are encouraged to try out the strategies, as well, and provide feedback prior to the final revisions. Final revisions of the units of study will be completed by mid April for elementary and high school and late April for intermediate school so that teachers can be trained on the units of study. Teachers will have several options to choose from to receive training including after school staff development or half-day release (with district provided subs).

K-1 teachers will implement the unit of study in early May since they do not administer the CST. All other teachers in the identified grades and courses will implement the units of study after administering the CST.

8) Q. Will all teachers be expected to write units of study like the ones being developed by the writing teams?

A. No, teachers on the writing teams are provided additional professional development to ensure the ability to write units of study that are consistent with our theoretical framework and our identified instructional shifts. We encourage any teacher that would like to be part of the process to join the summer development team.

9) Q. How will the writing of IEP goals change with the implementation of the Common Core?

A. The CCSS brings a welcomed challenge of higher standards and higher performance for all students, including those with disabilities. The new standards and instructional shifts will directly impact the content of the Individual Education Program (IEP). Though we are not incorporating the writing of CCSS standards in our IEPs until the time of their statewide implementation in 2013, we are diligently preparing our teachers for the instructional shifts and related scaffolds, accommodations and modifications that are required in the instruction of our students with disabilities. One very exciting endeavor includes SAUSD's creation of supplemental curriculum referred to as Unit of Study Appendices. Our Unit of Study Appendices include additional materials and assessments intended to meet the needs of our students with disabilities, a majority of whom are English learners. Furthermore, we are in the process of exploring how the Smarter Balance Assessment will assist teachers in the selection and measurement of grade level goals.

10) Q. How can I find out more information about the Common Core?

A. Go to our Common Core website. You will find it on the SAUSD's home page on the left hand side. On the website, you will find videos, presentations and pamphlets that will provide you further information.