

Top 10 FAQs on K-12 Implementation of Common Core

1) Q. What materials should teachers use as they spend additional time on the anchor/complex texts?

A. With the reduction of the number of texts required to be covered during each unit, teachers will have additional time to focus on the big idea and essential questions of the unit, include multiple readings of the text using close reading strategies and text dependent questions, provide time for collaborative conversations and tasks based on academic goals, and embed writing into the instructional day. Teachers will not necessarily need to find additional materials, rather, go deeper into the materials that they have to ensure higher level thinking on the required texts and application of that learning in different contexts.

Teachers are encouraged to add additional complex informational text (including articles, video clips, and primary sources) connected to the big idea and essential questions of their current unit, in order to build background knowledge or extend or enrich learning and to support students in the building content knowledge and understanding future texts.

2) Q. Can teachers substitute selections identified in the curriculum maps as anchor/complex, standard, optional, additional companion and/or read aloud?

A. The teacher/content writing teams spent substantial time determining which texts were the required anchor/complex texts. Those texts met the criteria for being considered a complex text. The anchor/complex texts include texts that are complex for multiple reasons including varying levels of meaning and purpose (density and complexity, figurative language, and purpose), structure (genre, organization, narration and text features), language conventions (standard English and variations and registers), and knowledge demands (domain-specific vocabulary and background knowledge). Teachers need to teach the anchor texts. There is some flexibility with the inclusion of the standard, optional and read aloud. However, teachers are encouraged to carefully consider how each text builds onto the big idea, answers the essential questions, and provides students with rich literacy experiences that lead to critical thinking, collaboration and writing.

3) Q. How do elementary teachers address the blue section of Open Court with the implementation of the Common Core?

There are three main sections (*Word Analysis, Writing Process Strategies, and English Language Conventions*) with corresponding sub-sections such as *Vocabulary; Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics; Spelling; Vocabulary; and Listening, Speaking, and Viewing*. Below you will find some ways in which you can integrate the Open Court blue section into your weekly instruction while still focusing on the implementation of Common Core:

English Language Conventions

The ***Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics*** section has some very important aspects. It begins with the "Teach" section and then the "Guided Practice" in reading and writing. This section points out where to find the grammar in text, which includes teaching different types of sentences including clauses (independent/dependent), fragments, run – ons. This work is reinforced in the Language Handbook, as well as, asking students to locate these types of sentences in the reading or use them in writing. In addition, there are follow-up pages in the Comprehension and Language Arts Skills workbook that can be used sparingly. The teaching of foundational skills through this established scope and sequence for grammar should still occur. As students learn the specific language conventions they should be encouraged to find examples of that specific convention during close reading of text (through teacher text-dependent questioning) and apply those conventions in their own authentic writing.

The ***Listening, Speaking, and Viewing*** section is taught once a week. Many of those opportunities to practice language can be provided to students during their structured collaborative conversations. Teachers can embed the teaching of the section into their instructional activities to make the learning more meaningful to the students.

Word Analysis Section

The **Spelling section** matches the Spelling and Vocabulary Skills workbook. The Common Core State Standards still speak to the need for students to "spell correctly". The key difference between past practice and the focus of Common Core is the need for students to understand spelling patterns and apply those patterns to reading and writing. Ongoing practice of spelling occurs in context, using resources such as the OCR Sound Spelling cards and word walls. Teachers may still choose to strategically use the Spelling and Vocabulary Skills workbook. Specific activities like *pattern study* or *word analysis strategies* are valuable when the specific skills are continually applied in the context of real reading and writing.

The **Vocabulary section** is taught once a week and reinforces what was taught in the Green Section and the vocabulary of the Red Section. This Vocabulary in the Blue Section may focus on Tier 2 (general academic/cross content words, Tier 3 (domain specific words), or morphology (prefixes, suffixes, and roots). When teaching the word analysis blue vocabulary section, choose the activities which support students in understanding the words in context and applying their words in authentic writing. Present the activities in an interactive manner for maximum student engagement and transfer. As we are transitioning to the Common Core, we encourage teachers to focus on vocabulary that students will encounter in future texts across content areas and continue to teach it in context during close reads and collaborative conversations.

Writing Process Strategies

The primary source of writing lessons should be the SAUSD Writing Binder since the binder lessons teach students **how** to write in addition to **what** to write over the course of a unit, uses mentor texts, and incorporates strategies such as Thinking Maps. It allows teachers to take longer than one week to complete key pieces of writing. The binder does reference the use of the Language Arts Handbook – which is also mentioned in the blue section.

As we transition to Common Core, more lessons, including lessons focusing on the three Common Core writing types (opinion, informational/explanatory, and narrative) with an emphasis on writing from sources, will be posted online.

4) Q. Is cursive still important with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards?

A: The focus of the Common Core State Standards is to ensure that students are college and career ready. With an increased emphasis on the use of technology to effectively communicate with others, we must consider the instructional time needed to teach cursive. Upon adoption of the Common Core State Standards, each state had to adopt the standards as written. However, each state was able to add on up to 15% additional standards that they felt were important to their state and student population. California, along with four other states, chose to include handwriting in the Common Core State Additional Standards. For second grade, the Language 1(g) standard states that students should be able to “create readable documents with legible print.” For third grade, the Language 1(j) standard states that students should be able to “write legibly in cursive or joined italics allowing margins and correct spacing between letters in a word and words in a sentence.” Therefore, we will continue to teach the mechanics of handwriting within the school day. Understanding that handwriting practice can be done fairly easily for most students independently, handwriting practice should be done as homework instead of taking up instructional time.

5) Q. How will the benchmark assessments change?

A. Teacher leaders, department chairs and curriculum committees have been assisting with the restructuring of the benchmark assessments through the development of the blueprints and the selection of the assessment items. Grades 3-12 and secondary content areas, that previously had benchmarks, will have a reduced number of benchmarks that contain selected response questions and one extended response item.

6) Q. Will teachers be required to score the extended response items?


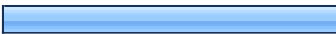



A. As SAUSD transitions to SBAC aligned assessments, it is important to require our students to demonstrate their learning through both multiple choice and extended response items. Teachers in grades 2-12 will be asked to score the extended response items. To support the process and maintain the focus on how the assessments guide our instructional program, teachers will be provided release time to be trained on the extended response rubrics, calibrate with their grade level/content area teams and score the extended response items for each benchmark period.

7) Q. When will teachers have access to the benchmark blueprints?






A. Elementary teachers will have access to their benchmark blueprints by Friday, October 4, 2013. Secondary teachers will have access to their benchmark blueprints by Friday, October 18, 2013. The blueprints will be available on both the Common Core website and the content area websites. The blueprints will also be available through the CLAS teachers and department chairs.

8) Q. What were the results of the Spring 2013 Secondary Unit Training Survey?

A. The secondary survey results have been used to make changes to upcoming units of study. The survey results showed differing degrees of feedback according to content area. The overall results showed that majority of secondary teachers felt that their students were actively engaged during the unit implementation and that they received effective support during the implementation of the unit of study.

10. Based on my observations, students were actively engaged during the unit implementation.			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree		12.4%	17
Agree		54.7%	75
Unsure		11.7%	16
Disagree		16.8%	23
Strongly disagree		4.4%	6
answered question			137
skipped question			5

12. Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of support you received during the CCSS unit implementation?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Very effective		11.5%	16
Effective		51.8%	72
Unsure		18.7%	26
Ineffective		11.5%	16
Did not request support		6.5%	9
	if you marked "unsure" or "ineffective," please explain.		26
	answered question		139
	skipped question		3

The feedback also highlighted areas of revision including the need to revise the time allotted for each daily lesson and for the entire unit and identify ways to personalize the professional development to recognize the diverse needs of the teachers.

9) Q. Many schools in Santa Ana had a decline in CST scores. Is this related to the Common Core unit implementation?

A. Many school sites did show a small variance of 1-2% on the CST scores for 2012-2013 school year. There was no evidence that the decline in scores was related to the implementation of the Common Core. The first unit of study for elementary was implemented just prior to, during, and shortly after the first benchmark. The first benchmark scores were consistent with the previous year's scores and did not indicate any decline in scores. The second unit of study for elementary was implemented after the CST, and therefore, would not have changed the outcome of the CSTs.

At the secondary level, all units of study were implemented after the CST and would not have affected scores. In addition, the drop in scores varied by school and was not consistent with the content areas in which we implemented units of study. In some cases, schools showed progress where we implemented the Common Core units of study. In other cases, some schools showed declines in scores in content areas in which we did not implement the Common Core State Standards. For the past several years, Santa Ana has seen a tremendous increase in CST scores. We are confident that an increase in student achievement will continue in future years.

10) Q. How should teachers implement CCSS while still teaching the standards which will be tested on the CSTs?

A. For the most part, any student who participates in a strong CCSS program/curriculum will be well prepared for the CST. The exception lies in discrete skills such as "Using underlining, quotation marks, or italics to identify titles of documents" (3rd grade ELA example). For instances such as this, teachers should note the CST-related skills and integrate the instruction and practice of these skills in the context of rich reading and writing, by drawing students attention to the target feature within text during reading and then having students apply the feature/skill in their own writing.

For the content areas, Science and Social Science, there is an understanding that the focus should be on providing multiple opportunities for students to critically read, write, speak, listen, research and analyze documents and data. These skills will positively impact students abilities to achieve on high stakes assessments.