

Top 10 FAQs on K-12 Implementation of Common Core

1) Q. How many units of study will the teachers be implementing during the 2013-2014 school year?

A. All elementary teachers will be implementing three units of study during the 2013-2014 school year. The three units will include the two units of study that they implemented during the 2012-2013 school year (modified based on teacher feedback) and the unit of study that the teacher writing teams developed during the summer for the 2013-2014 school year. All intermediate and high school teachers, in the identified courses, will be implementing two units of study, which includes the unit of study they implemented after the CST and the additional unit of study that the content writing teams developed this summer. In addition, some courses such as 7th grade Math, 6th grade Social Science, 7th grade Social Science, 6th grade Science, 8th grade Science, and Chemistry will implement one unit of study, which was developed by the summer writing teams.

2) Q. Secondary teachers frequently teach more than one course. For example they may teach both Algebra I and Geometry or they may teach both ELA Grade 7 and ELA Grade 8. In these cases, do secondary teachers have to teach all of the units of study for all of the courses they teach?

A. No. Secondary teachers, in the identified core courses, should teach at least one unit of study. They may choose in which course that they would like to implement the unit of study. Teachers are encouraged to teach additional units of study so that students have high levels of learning with the Common Core State Standards. Signing up for the training will ensure the content curriculum specialists have sufficient materials to support all teachers.

3) Q. To ensure that K-5 teachers have the time to go deeply into the texts/reading selections, the curriculum maps have reduced the number of required texts. What should teachers do with the Green Section of Open Court during that time?

A. K-5 teachers need to continue with the scope and sequence found in the Green Section including phonemic awareness, phonics and word analysis. Although the phonics and word analysis sections contain some vocabulary from the selections, teachers will continue to move through the Green Section as it appears in Open Court. As these skills build upon each other, it is critical that the scope and sequence is followed. Therefore, no Green Section lessons should be omitted or lengthened. Even with selections not taught during the Red Section, the focus should support the application of grade level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words both in isolation and in text.

4) Q. What is the purpose of the Big Idea and Essential Questions in the curriculum maps?

A. The purpose of the Big Idea is to frame learning for understandings that develop over time. The Big Idea addresses a universal theme that transfers and connects to prior and future learning in multiple content areas. Within the unit, the texts connect with both the Big idea and the Essential Questions. Although there is some flexibility on adapting the Big Idea and Essential Questions, teachers should carefully consider the text, task, talk and thinking taught within each unit prior to changing the recommended Big Idea and Essential Questions.

5) Q. How were the required complex texts on the curriculum maps chosen?

A. Teacher Summer Writing Teams were asked to analyze texts within the core curriculum using the qualitative dimensions of text complexity (levels of meaning and purpose, structure, language conventionality and clarity and knowledge demands) and quantitative measure of Lexile level. Based on their analysis, the writing teams made recommendations on which selections reflected the intent of our instructional shifts and allowed for the bundling of literacy and content standards. If a classroom teacher has input regarding the instructional value of a particular selection, he or she can provide that suggestion to the content area curriculum specialists to inform future curriculum map refinements.

6) Q. For Grades 3-5, teachers will now be administering the Renaissance Learning online assessment instead of DIBELS. Will teachers still provide fluency instruction and a report grade for their students?

A. Yes. Fluency is one of the five building blocks of literacy development and is emphasized in the CCSS Foundational Skills. Fluency practice builds students' automaticity in phonics and word attack skills to support effective comprehension. Teachers have the opportunity to assess their students through formative assessments during in-class fluency practice with Six Minute Solution or Intervention Guide passages, rereading of a section of the anchor texts, observation during guided reading groups and presentations of written work. These formative assessments, among others, will allow teachers opportunities to monitor and track progress of students to inform the fluency grade.

7) Q. What is AB 484 and how does it affect the statewide assessments we will take in April or May?

A. Assembly Bill (AB) 484 (Bonilla) seeks legislative authority to implement the 12 recommendations made by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI) for the reauthorization of California's statewide student assessment system. AB 484 proposes the establishment of the California Measurement of Academic Performance and Progress for the 21st Century (CALMAPP21), which would replace the existing Standardized Testing and Reporting Program (STAR) and reduce the amount of testing required for the 2013-2014 school year to support the implementation of the Common Core.

If AB 484 passes, the only state required assessments for 2013-2014 school year would be:

- Grade 3-8 ELA and Math CST/CMA/CAPA
- Grade 4 and 7 Writing Assessment (Decision Pending)
- Grade 5,8,10 Science CST/CMA/CAPA
- Grade 10, ELA and Math CAPA
- Grade 11, EAP
- ELA CST
- Algebra II CST
- Summative Math CST

8) Q. What is happening with AB 484?

A. Here is the timeline for AB 484:

- Passed 6-0 at the Assembly Education Committee vote on May 1, 2013
- Passed 12-3 at Assembly Appropriations Committee vote on Friday, May 24, 2013
- Passed Assembly floor 55-16 on Wednesday, May 29, 2013
- Passed 7-1 at the Senate Education Committee on June 26, 2013
- Passed 6-0 at the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 12, 2013
- AB 484 will return to Senate Appropriations on August 29, 2013 for a final vote. If there are no further amendments, it will go for the final and third read with both Assembly and Senate floors.

9) Q. Will teachers have to administer both the CST and SBAC assessments during the 2013-2014 school year?

A. States, including California, will be applying for a waiver from the federal government to avoid "double testing" students as they transition to the new generation of assessments. That would mean that any school that is identified as a Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortia (SBAC) pilot school for the 2013-2014 school year would not have to take the CST. Currently SBAC is determining the sites and the percentage of schools that will be allowed to be part of the SBAC pilot for the 2013-2014 school year. As soon as we know the names of the piloting school sites, we will let all stakeholders know.

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.