

## **COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS (CCSS) QUESTIONS**

### **1. What exactly are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?**

The Common Core State Standards are a set of standards in mathematics and English/language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. These standards clearly spell out what students should know and be able to do in order to exit high school as college and career ready. To be college and career ready means that a student would have the knowledge and skills required to begin entry-level, credit-bearing college courses in literacy and mathematics and/or be prepared to start an entry-level job requiring those same literacy or mathematical skills.

The CCSS were developed collaboratively by the National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices, the Council of Chief State School Officers, 48 states, and Washington, D.C. Over 10,000 stakeholders participated in writing and review committees that included teachers, content experts, higher education faculty, and parents. The final standards were validated by an expert committee and released in June 2010. To date, over 40 states and Washington, D.C., have adopted the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English/language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects as their state standards in those subjects.

The CCSS are not a curriculum – that is, they do not describe the materials of instruction, the strategies teachers should use to teach students, or the types of learning activities students should engage in to meet or exceed the standards. So, while states have, in adopting the CCSS, agreed on what students should know and be able to do in mathematics and English/language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects, they have left curriculum development up to each local school system in order to provide the best teaching and learning guidance to meet the needs of their students.

### **2. What parental input did parents have in the adoption of the Common Core State Standards?**

The CCSS were developed by a multi-state initiative coordinated by the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Input into the development of the standards was provided by teachers, parents, schools administrators, state leaders, and education experts from across the country.

### **3. If the standards were adopted three years ago, why are parents just now finding out about them?**

Maryland was one of the first states in the nation to adopt the Common Core State Standards in English/language arts and mathematics. The State Board of Education adopted the standards by unanimous vote in June 2010. The 2013–2014 school year is the first year of classroom implementation of the CCSS in all Maryland public schools.

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The following parent informational sessions were presented during the past two school years at the Baltimore County Area Advisory Council meetings:

- Introduction to the Common Core State Standards in Baltimore County Public Schools (2011–2012)
- Update on BCPS Transition to the Common Core Curriculum in Baltimore County Public Schools (2012–2013)

Additionally, MSDE provides detailed information for parents on its Web site at <http://msde.state.md.us/cc/> under the heading **Resources for Parents**.

#### **4. What research or data-based evidence exists that confirm that the CCSS will better prepare our students?**

The CCSS initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. These rigorous education standards establish a set of shared goals and expectations for what students should understand and be able to do in Grades K–12 in order to be prepared for success in college and the workplace. The standards are research- and evidence-based and internationally benchmarked.

As the CCSS were written, developers made careful use of a large and growing body of evidence, including:

- Scholarly research.
- Surveys on what skills are required of students entering college and workforce training programs.
- Assessment data identifying college- and career-ready performance.
- Comparisons to standards from high-performing states and nations.
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) frameworks in reading and writing for English/language arts.
- Findings from Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMSS) and other studies concluding that the traditional U.S. mathematics curriculum must become substantially more coherent and focused in order to improve student achievement.

Across both English/language arts and mathematics organizations (e.g. the International Reading Association, the National Council Teachers of English, the Conference Board of the Mathematical Sciences-National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics, Mathematical Association of America, etc.), there is acknowledgement that the CCSS offer states an opportunity to increase student achievement. The CCSS Mathematics Standards address many of the recommendations from *The Final Report of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel* (2008, U.S. Department of Education).

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**5. Most of the discussion around CCSS focuses on reading and math. What about the other subject areas?**

The CCSS are a set of standards in mathematics and English/ language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. The literacy standards for history/social studies provide frameworks to guide teachers to include significant social studies content for meaningful purposes during instruction. Science is supporting CCSS implementation by providing teachers with professional development to promote writing in the content area and the use of nonfiction reading materials related to the current science curriculum. Work continues on the development of fine arts standards that are scheduled to be released in 2014.

**6. Will BCPS have the flexibility to develop its own curriculum?**

The CCSS identify the standards that BCPS is using to develop its own curriculum. The BCPS curriculum will be aligned with the CCSS, but will be developed and used by our teachers. BCPS is also committed to continuing its tradition of developing curriculum for use with gifted and talented students.

**7. What resources are you providing to ensure that all teachers in the “nontested” areas have what they need to successfully contribute to achievement in the CCSS subjects?**

CCSS information and training have been provided to all teachers, and will continue so that all teachers may support the achievement of students. The accomplishment of these rigorous standards will require the participation of all teachers. Professional development will continue throughout the 2013–2014 school year and beyond.

**8. What differentiation will be made in the curriculum to meet the needs of gifted and talented students?**

Gifted and talented students require more rigorous instruction; therefore, as BCPS writes its curriculum, it will include specific gifted and talented courses to meet the needs of its gifted learners. This accelerated curriculum will incorporate best practices in gifted education including strategies that develop students’ critical and creative thinking skills and meet their learning needs.

As the CCSS-aligned curriculum is developed, professional development will be provided to teachers to strengthen their ability to meet the needs of gifted learners.

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- 9. Will the student assessments that will be used in connection with the CCSS be structured in such a way that it will be possible for advanced/gifted students to show what they know at the beginning of the school year as well as what they know at the end of the school year?**

As the curriculum is developed, students will participate in formative, diagnostic tasks, and performance-based opportunities that will identify students' strengths and needs prior to instruction. The conclusion of each unit of instruction will include a summative assessment to measure student growth during instruction.

- 10. Will parents have access to the PARCC questions and answers?**

MSDE has posted sample PARCC assessment items that can be viewed by parents at: <http://www.parconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes#6>.

- 11. What is the process to review what data is being or will be collected on our students, where is it stored, how will it be used, and with whom will it be shared?**

BCPS will house the PARCC results in *BCPS ONE* (a new, Web-based information portal designed to provide a centralized location for student and system instructional information), and parents will have access to their child's results. The PARCC results will provide BCPS with one data point that indicates if students are on track to be college and career ready.

- 12. What is the value and purpose of giving the MSA tests this year?**

MSDE provides direction to school systems in the state of Maryland about the schedule of state assessments. In order to be compliant with federal mandates, all students in Maryland must participate in an assessment in both mathematics and reading. The direction from MSDE for the 2013–2014 school year includes participation in a PARCC field test of either English/language arts literacy or mathematics, as well as a final year of administration of the MSA reading and mathematics assessments in Grades 3–8. MSDE has indicated that no student will be double-tested. Therefore, any student taking a PARCC field test in a particular content area will not be required to take the MSA in that content area. MSDE anticipates 1–3 classrooms per school will participate in the PARCC field test.