

Helping Families Understand Common Core

1) What is Common Core?

Our students are now taking the Smarter Balanced Assessments, the tests that measure learning under Common Core. Common Core is a set of academic standards, or learning goals, for math and English that define what our students should know and be able to do at the end of each school year. For example, by the end of third grade, our kids should be able to measure and estimate weights of liquid and solve word problems using those quantities. You can read the standards [here](#).

The standards were [developed based on education research and proven best practices](#) from schools in California and across the country. They're designed to promote critical thinking and help ensure that our students graduate with the skills they need to be ready for the future. However, Common Core doesn't dictate the curriculum or lesson plans -- our teachers and school leaders still make those decisions. Read more at the [Common Core website](#), the [California State PTA site](#), The California Department of Education and [Embrace the Core](#).

2) How were the Common Core Standards developed?

Before we started using them in our school, the Common Core Standards were developed by a group of teachers, state governors and education leaders from 48 states. This group first came together in 2009 to establish learning goals based on education research and existing best practices with a proven track record of student success. State participation in the development process was voluntary, and so was the decision to adopt the standards here in California in 2010. Read more [here](#).

3) Why is the math homework different now?

You may have noticed changes in your child's homework. The updated standards in both areas--math and English--emphasize critical thinking. For math, this means many homework problems now have two parts: the solution to the problem, and a section where your child is asked to explain how they got their answers. [Go here for a side-by-side comparison](#) of examples of updated math questions with the old style of homework. You can find Common Core math resources for parents [here](#).