



# Common Core State Standards: What Families Should Know

**Preparing our young people for the world of tomorrow means** equipping them with the knowledge and skills today that they will need to succeed in the workforce. To do that, we need to update our goals for learning – and that’s really all Common Core Standards are. They are a set of learning goals that work grade-by-grade, step-by-step toward what modern careers and colleges expect, so that when students graduate, they are ready for college, ready for work – ready for life.

**So what does it mean to be “ready?”** In our fast-changing world, readiness involves having a very flexible kind of skill set – like a rope that can be used in many contexts. We need workers who can adapt to new situations and apply what they know to unforeseen problems. By making it a priority that students are able to weave together knowledge from different content areas, and problem-solving skills, and the ability to communicate and work in teams, we’re asking educators to shift their approach to teaching.

**We will be putting more emphasis on giving students chances** to integrate what they learn in various subjects. We are excited to see this kind of excellent teaching become more and more common – I think that this approach is going to build the next generation of American innovation.

“The new Common Core State Standards – and our resulting Core Curriculum – simply means that what we teach and how we teach is evolving to keep pace with the expectations our future graduates will face.”

- Superintendent Richard A. Carranza

- ✓ Families can go to [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org) for more information
- ✓ Visit [www.sfusd](http://www.sfusd) for more information on our Core Curriculum



**SFUSD** SAN FRANCISCO  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# Common Core State Standards: What it means at SFUSD

## ● English Language Arts (ELA) PK-12 Core Curriculum

San Francisco Unified School District's ELA Core Curriculum establishes clear student learning goals and a roadmap for teachers to select materials and strategies for effective teaching, assessment and reflection.

The core curriculum provides teachers guidance around both the "What" and the "How." The "What" establishes what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. The "How" is the Comprehensive Approach to Literacy that provides the structures and methodology to ensure that students are learning the "What."

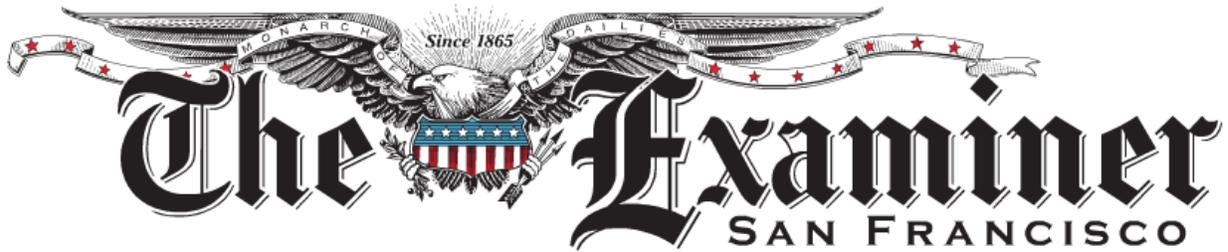
In the The ELA Core Curriculum, students will closely read increasingly complex fiction and non-fiction texts, assemble arguments based on evidence from those texts, and use this evidence in both written and oral formats.

## ● Mathematics Core Curriculum

The Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSS-M) emphasize a balanced approach of conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and problem solving. Implementation of the CCSS-M requires many shifts: from an emphasis on getting answers quickly to making sense of and persevering on challenging open-ended problems; from working in isolation to collaborating and critiquing each other's mathematical arguments; and from evaluating students by their standardized test scores to using performance tasks for formative assessment. Educators throughout the district have already begun to shift to this new vision of mathematics. Our work now is to scale up this vision and implementation to all schools.

At SFUSD, preparing our young people for the world of tomorrow means equipping them with the knowledge and skills today that they will need to succeed.





February 11, 2014

## SFUSD is using a better way to teach math

By Richard A. Carranza

No one can argue with the fact that our world is rapidly changing. A kindergarten student today will need job skills that we can't even conceive, but we're working on it.

What we teach and how we teach is evolving to keep pace with the expectations our future graduates will face.

### **A change is needed**

The way we have been teaching math isn't working, not just in the San Francisco Unified School District but across the nation, as is evidenced in international tests of math achievement.



In San Francisco, nearly half of our students fail to reach proficiency in Algebra 1 the first time they take the course in eighth grade, and many of these same students continue to struggle through high school math.

The new California Common Core State Standards present a great opportunity.

### **A new approach to teaching math**

The introduction of new standards gives SFUSD an opportunity to better define a coherent, focused and rigorous math curriculum. The new standards focus on students learning more deeply about the processes of math — and, of course, problem-solving, reasoning and explaining their thinking.

Teachers will offer rich mathematical experiences, rather than being defined by a specific textbook. Students will work together more often to solve problems.

But what we mean by learning more deeply is that now they will be expected to explain how they got the answer by showing different ways of solving the same problem and making the connection to other math concepts and real-world situations.

What's important to know is that teachers will be focusing on fewer concepts to allow students to gain an understanding of each one. And according to the best mathematicians in the country, the Common Core State Standards are much more rigorous and relevant.

## **Rigorous means depth of understanding**

It used to be that the word rigor implied doing more advanced math at earlier grades. Parents may have thought that their child's success relied on taking Algebra 1 in middle school. In the CCSS math-course sequence, middle school math includes algebra in every grade level, with increased exposure as the grades progress.

This course sequence ensures a solid middle-grade foundation that prepares students for college mathematics. The standards that defined an Algebra 1 course under the old California standards are now divided between the CCSS Math 8 course and the CCSS Algebra 1 course, which all students will take in ninth grade.

The CCSS Math 8 and CCSS Algebra 1 courses also include content from more-advanced high school courses and concepts not previously taught in middle and high school math, especially statistics.

But here's the really big shift: When it comes to education, rigor actually means depth of understanding. In fact, this is how we are now looking at all aspects of how we teach students. This positive momentum is system-wide. More and more you will see students working in collaboration, explaining their reasoning and arguing from evidence in all their academic subjects.

## **Teachers leading the way**

So now, as we move into the Common Core State Standards in math (CCSS-M) we'll see dramatically increased rigor and alignment in K-12 mathematics.

All schools in the SFUSD are expected to fully implement the CCSS-M in the 2014-15 school year and we are well on our way.

We have mentor-teacher-led teams helping to educate their peers in using this new set of standards that reflect the kind of academic rigor necessary for success in college and careers. And just as relevant, I hear first-hand from many math teachers that the CCSS-M is way more fun for students and for teachers.

*Richard A. Carranza is superintendent of the San Francisco Unified School District.*