



# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## Common Core Talking Points for Legislators

### WHAT ARE THE STANDARDS?

The Common Core State Standards are a set of high-quality academic expectations in English-language arts (ELA) and mathematics that define both the knowledge and skills all students should master by the end of each grade level in order to be on track for success in college and career. They were created through a state-led initiative and have been adopted by more than forty-five (45) states, including Arkansas. The Common Core State Standards have replaced our previous curriculum frameworks.

- The standards establish **consistent** learning goals for all students – regardless of where they live – so children will stay on track in school when moving from one state to another.
- With a **clear roadmap** of academic expectations, students, parents and teachers can work together toward shared goals.
- The standards are **relevant to the real world**, focusing on the knowledge and skills students will need to succeed in life after high school, in both post-secondary education and a globally competitive workforce.
- A diverse team of teachers, parents, administrators, researchers and content experts developed the Common Core to be **academically rigorous, attainable** for students, and **practical** for teachers and districts.

### WHAT'S DIFFERENT WITH THE NEW STANDARDS?

#### Shifts in English Language Arts (ELA)

- 1) Building knowledge through **content-rich nonfiction** and **informational texts** in addition to literature
- 2) Reading and writing grounded in **evidence from the text**
- 3) Regular practice with **complex text** and its **academic vocabulary** (words like commit and synthesize)

#### Shifts in Mathematics

- 1) **Focus:** 2-3 topics focused on deeply in each grade

- 2) **Coherence:** Concepts logically connected from one grade to the next and linked to other major topics within the grade
- 3) **Rigor:** Fluency with arithmetic, application of knowledge to real world situations, and deep understanding of mathematical concepts

### **THE ROAD AHEAD...**

Implementation of the standards is completely in the hands of our state and all of us will need to work together to make implementation successful for students. This will include difficult decisions about our priorities so they are supporting the ability of teachers to teach the Common Core State Standards.

Many states are taking advantage of the opportunity to work together, particularly by participating in at least one of two coalitions – the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) – to develop next generation assessments. Arkansas is a member of PARCC. New assessments will be in place in 2014---2015 and will replace existing Benchmark Exams in ELA and math.

### **WHAT CAN LEGISLATORS DO NOW?**

The standards will be fully implemented in Arkansas by 2014---2015. Legislators are crucial partners in laying the groundwork for a smooth transition to the new standards. Legislators can help by:

- Understanding how the new standards fit within the state’s existing education framework, such as its accountability system or teacher evaluation programs, when proposing new legislation.
- Engaging in an ongoing dialogue with the Department of Education, districts, and education leaders about how the legislature can best support the transition process
- Raising awareness about the new standards among your constituents at town hall meetings and other events in your district

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR LEGISLATORS**

- Arkansas Department of Education <http://www.arkansased.org>
- Common Core Standards <http://www.corestandards.org>
- Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) <http://www.parconline.org>