

How will the Common Core prepare students for their careers?

There is a lot of talk about how the Common Core State Standards are designed to better prepare students for college. However, the Common Core is not just focused on helping students who are college-bound, it is also designed to help students develop the skills and knowledge they will need to be successful in their careers.

Employers report that the majority of incoming employees lack foundational reading, writing and mathematics skills. A recent Workforce Readiness Training survey found the following:

- Seventy-eight percent of employers reported a need for employee training in reading comprehension.
- Fifty-two percent of employers indicated that there was a high need for additional training in basic mathematics skills.¹

The Common Core is designed to address these employer concerns. By the end of high school, students will be expected to:

- Use evidence from multiple sources to support their arguments,
- Write a cohesive report that is supported by evidence,
- Critically evaluate texts to determine which arguments are valid,
- Share their findings clearly and concisely,
- Respond thoughtfully to multiple perspectives, and
- Analyze and solve real-world math problems to make decisions.²

In addition to providing stronger foundational skills, the new standards and tests are also designed to help students develop the following skills, critically needed in today's workforce:

1 Communication skills

The Common Core State Standards emphasize the development of strong speaking, writing and listening skills and require students to incorporate different types of media as they create presentations.³ To develop these skills, teachers may encourage students to select a topic of their choice and use podcasts, websites and YouTube to learn more about that topic. Students would also share their findings with their classmates through writing, speaking or both. Developing these skills will better prepare future employees to listen, gather information from a variety of sources, write concise reports and effectively present their findings.⁴

¹ "The Ill-Prepared U.S. Workforce: Exploring the Challenges of Employer Provided Workforce Readiness Training," The Conference Board, accessed July 26, 2014, http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Documents/BED-09Workforce_RR.pdf.

² "Parent's Guide to Student Success: Kindergarten-High School," National PTA, accessed August 8, 2014, <http://www.njpta.org/Parents%20Guide%20to%20Student%20Success%20NJ.pdf>.

³ "Understanding the Skills in the Common Core State Standards," Achieve, accessed July 26, 2014, <http://www.pta.org/files/Common%20Core%20State%20Standards%20Resources/Common%20Core%20Research/Understanding-Skills-CCSS.pdf>.

⁴ "Understanding the Skills in the Common Core State Standards," Achieve, accessed July 26, 2014, <http://www.pta.org/files/Common%20Core%20State%20Standards%20Resources/Common%20Core%20Research/Understanding-Skills-CCSS.pdf>.

2 Teamwork and collaboration

The standards encourage student-led and project-based learning.⁵ As a result, future employees will be better equipped to manage their time and have more experience working with others prior to entering the workforce.

3 Critical thinking

The new standards require students to construct arguments based on facts and use tools to look for patterns and interpret data.⁶ In math, students will be expected to solve real-world problems such as using graphs to determine the best size for an industrial package or determining how much food and water is needed for an event. These skills will help students think creatively and better equip them to develop solutions to problems they can expect to face in the workforce. This is also a skill that employers have identified as critically needed in today's workforce.⁷

4 Research skills

The Common Core also emphasizes the development of strong research skills across grade levels. Students are expected to read a variety of texts, conduct rigorous research, use multiple sources and incorporate media, as needed, to support their arguments.⁸ Strong research skills will help future employees make sense of everyday problems and justify their solutions.

⁵ "English Language Arts Standards, Anchor Standards, College and Career Readiness Standards for Speaking and Listening," Common Core State Standards Initiative, accessed July 26, 2014, <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/SL/>.

⁶ "Standards for Mathematical Practice," Common Core State Standards Initiative, accessed July 25, 2014, <http://www.corestandards.org/Math/Practice/>.

⁷ The Ill-Prepared U.S. Workforce: Exploring the Challenges of Employer Provided Workforce Readiness Training," The Conference Board, accessed July 26, 2014, http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Documents/BED-09Workforce_RR.pdf.

⁸ "English Language Arts Standards, Anchor Standards, College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing," Common Core State Standards Initiative, accessed July 25, 2014, <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/W/>.