

Parent's Backpack Guide to the Common Core State Standards



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For Prekindergarten–5th Grade: English/Language Arts and Mathematics

In 2010, Maryland adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to help make sure that all children have the knowledge and skills to succeed once they graduate from high school. This guide is designed to help you understand how the standards will affect your child, what changes you will see, and what you can do at home to help your children the classroom.

Why Are the Common Core State Standards Important?

The Common Core State Standards are important because they will help all children – no matter who they are or where they live – learn the same skills. They create clear expectations for what your child should know and be able to do in key areas: **reading, writing, speaking** and **listening, language**, and **mathematics**. If you know what these expectations are, then you can work with the teacher and help your child prepare.

English/Language Arts (ELA)

To improve student learning, the new Common Core State Standards make several important changes to previous academic standards. These changes are called shifts. The chart below shows what is shifting in English/language arts, what you might see in your child's backpack, and what you can do to help your child succeed.

What is Shifting?	What to Look for in the Backpack?	What Can You Do?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will now read more non-fiction in each grade level. 	Look for your children to have more reading assignments based on real-life events, such as biographies, articles, and historical stories.	Read non-fiction books with your children. Find ways to make reading fun and exciting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading more non-fiction texts will help your child learn about the world through reading. 	Look for your children to bring home more fact-based books about the world. For instance, your 1 st grader or kindergartener might read Clyde Robert Bulla's <i>A Tree is a Plant</i> . This book lets students read and learn about science.	Know what non-fiction books are grade-level appropriate and make sure your children have access to such books.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will read challenging texts very closely, so they can make sense of what they read and draw their own conclusions. 	Your children will have reading and writing assignments that might ask them to retell or write about key parts of a story or book. For example, your 2 nd or 3 rd grader might be asked to read aloud Faith D'Aluisio's non-fiction book titled <i>What the World Eats</i> and retell facts from the story.	Provide more challenging texts for your children to read. Show them how to dig deeper into difficult pieces.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When it comes to writing or retelling a story, your child will use "evidence" gathered from the text to support what they say. 	Look for written assignments that ask your child to draw on concrete examples from the text that serve as evidence. Evidence means examples from the book that your child will use to support a response or conclusion. This is different from the opinion questions that have been used in the past.	Ask your child to provide evidence in everyday discussions and disagreements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will learn how to write from what they read. 	Look for writing assignments that ask your child to make arguments in writing using evidence. For 4 th and 5 th graders, this might mean reading and writing about <i>The Kids Guide to Money</i> , a non-fictional book by Steve Otfinoski.	Encourage writing at home. Write together using evidence and details.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will have an increased academic vocabulary. 	Look for assignments that stretch your child's vocabulary and teach them that "language is power."	Read often to babies, toddlers, preschoolers, and children.

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Mathematics

To improve student learning, the new Common Core State Standards make several important changes to previous academic standards. These changes are called shifts. The chart below shows what is shifting in mathematics, what you might see in your child's backpack, and what you can do to help your child succeed.

What is Shifting?	What to Look for in the Backpack?	What Can You Do?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will work more deeply in fewer topics, which will ensure full understanding. (Less is more!) 	Look for assignments that require students to show their work and explain how they arrived at an answer.	Know what concepts are important for your child based on their grade level and spend time working on those concepts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will keep building on learning year after year, starting with a strong foundation. 	Look for assignments that build on one another. For example, students will focus on adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. Once these areas are mastered, they will focus on fractions. Building on that, they will then focus on Algebra. You should be able to see the progression in the topics they learn.	Know what concepts are important for your child based on their grade level and spend time working on those concepts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will spend time practicing and memorizing math facts. 	Again, look for assignments that build on one another, as described above. You should be able to see the progression in the topics they learn.	Be aware of what concepts your child struggled with last year and support your child in those areas moving forward.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will understand why the math works and be asked to talk about and prove their understanding. 	Your child might have assignments that focus on memorizing and mastering basic math facts, which are important for success in more advanced math problems.	Help your child know and memorize basic math facts. Ask your child to "do the math" that pops up in daily life.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child will now be asked to use math in real-world situations. 	Look for math assignments that are based on the real world. For instance, homework for 5 th graders might include adding fractions as part of a dessert recipe, or determining how much pizza friends ate based on fractions.	Provide time every day for your child to work on math at home.

Talking to Your Child's Teacher

When talking to your child's teacher, try to keep the conversation focused on the most important topics that relate to your child. This means asking the teacher how your child is performing based on grade-level standards and expectations. Also, ask to see a sample of your child's work and ask the teacher to explain how the CCSS are being taught in the classroom.

This information will enable you make important adjustments at home that can help your child achieve success in the classroom.

For more information, please visit: MarylandPublicSchools.org or contact your local principal or superintendent.