

# University City Cluster Committee

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## Dear Parent,

California, along with 45 other states, is adopting new standards for what students are expected to learn, that better reflect the knowledge and skills required for success in the 21st century. These are called the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), or Common Core for short.

## Why do we need a Common Core?

- Past standards were not designed to focus on the skills and performance expectations needed for success in today's world. The Common Core provides an explicit framework for learning that goes beyond merely knowing a set of facts, requiring students to apply their knowledge through critical reasoning.
- Even in high-performing states and schools, many students require remediation in their postsecondary work - either in college, military, or elsewhere. The Common Core will help students become self-sufficient learners who require less remediation and can adapt to local, national, and global workforce changes foreseen in the 21st century.
- Unlike previous state standards which were unique to every state, the Common Core provides consistency between states so that all students meet the same expectations, regardless of where they live.

## How does the Common Core change what we do?

- For our **students**, the Common Core will shift the mindset of what it means to be a student. It will encourage them to take ownership of their learning, with teachers there to facilitate and guide them. Students will be challenged to “learn how to learn”, to demonstrate their understanding, and to deepen their knowledge of what inspires them.
- For our **teachers**, the Common Core reflects the desire to help students think critically, reason effectively, and be creative. Some teachers will be required to update their teaching strategies and practices to fulfill these goals, while others have implemented practices prior to this school year. By building on professional development activities already in place, all teachers will support one another during the Common Core implementation.
- For **parents**, you should expect your children to become better prepared to think and reason well. They will be challenged to strive for greater understanding of ideas, while learning the content that was taught in the past. Your support in this endeavor, like any part of your child's education, is needed. The University City Cluster Committee welcomes conversation with you in more detail at our monthly meetings as our schools adopt the Common Core standards.

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## What are the Common Core State Standards?

- The Common Core State Standards are performance expectations that promote comprehension over rote memorization and the application of knowledge over the simple statement of facts.
- The standards are designed to promote the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With our children fully prepared for the future, they will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy.
- For example, among the English Language Arts standards for writing in 6th grade, a student should be able to “Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.” This is not a standard that demands rote memorization; it is a performance expectation that is relevant to the real world.
- Likewise, a 6th grade Mathematics standard for Expressions and Equations doesn’t merely ask for a student to plug in a formula. Instead, a student is asked to “Solve real-world and mathematical problems by writing and solving equations of the form  $x+p = q$  and  $px=q$  for cases in which  $p$ ,  $q$  and  $x$  are all nonnegative rational numbers.” In this case, as with others for math, students are engaged with meaningful problems for critical thinking and reasoning.
- For more information about the origin, development, and detailed descriptions of the Core Content State Standards, you are encouraged to see the FAQ at this link online:  
<http://www.corestandards.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions>
- To learn more and get involved, attend the University City Cluster Committee monthly meetings, which are held on the 4th Monday of each month from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm in the UCHS Media Center (in the middle of campus). For a list of our meeting dates this year, go to [www.uccluster.com](http://www.uccluster.com).

## SIGNED BY

Common Core Working Group, University City Cluster Committee:

Marie Byrd, Laura Cartier, Patricia Freund, Tim Gentner, Chris Juarez, Heidi Lyon, Antonella Manetti, Stephanie Mason, Dena Meeder, Kurt Meeder, Kimberly Moore, Jeff Olivero, Mark Salata, Anne St Louis