

# ALABAMA COLLEGE AND CAREER READY

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1 What are Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards?

Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards are a list of academic goals for what school students need to know in their math and English classes each school year.

### 2 I hear one person say Common Core and another one say Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards. Is there a difference?

The Common Core State Standards are a list of shared academic goals developed by educators. The initiative to set shared academic goals was launched by the nation's governors and school superintendents. Forty-five states and schools managed by the United States Department of Defense currently use a version of the Common Core State Standards. Our College and Career Ready Standards are Alabama's version of Common Core.

### 3 Why did Alabama start using standards modeled after the Common Core State Standards?

Every few years, the Alabama State Board of Education appoints a committee made up of Alabama parents and teachers to review and update its list of academic goals for public schools. In 2009, this committee was tasked with deciding whether the Common Core State Standards for math and English would work in Alabama. After careful review, this committee overwhelmingly recommended adopting a version of Common Core updated to meet the state's specific needs.

### 4 Why do we need common academic standards?

There are several reasons why common academic standards are important. First, they help make sure a diploma from Alabama means as much as one from another state. Secondly, they help make sure a student doesn't fall behind if he or she moves. And, third, having common standards lets teachers share resources more easily.

### 5 How are Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards different from curriculum?

Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards are a list of academic goals for what students need to know in their math and English classes each school year. A curriculum is made up of the lesson plans, materials, and methods for instruction created by your child's teachers to help their students meet the academic goals our schools have set for students through the adoption of higher standards.<sup>1</sup>

### 6 What books are required under the Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards?

The only required reading materials used within Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards are the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address.<sup>2</sup>

1 Thomas Rains Jr., "Common Core complaints are misdirected," AL.com, March 21, 2014, [http://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2014/03/complaints\\_in\\_alabama\\_about\\_sc.html](http://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2014/03/complaints_in_alabama_about_sc.html) (last accessed May 7, 2014).

2 Ross Wiener, "The Common Core's Unsung Benefit: It Teaches Kids to Be Good Citizens," The Atlantic, March 5, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/03/the-common-cores-unsung-benefit-it-teaches-kids-to-be-good-citizens/284209/> (last accessed March 31, 2014).

**7 Should I be concerned whether or not my child’s textbook says it is “Common Core aligned”?**

No. As a parent you can rest assured knowing that your local school board members and teachers choose the textbooks, workbooks, novels, and other materials that are best suited for your child. If you object to content in one of your child’s books, you should discuss it with your child’s school.

**8 My child’s math homework is different from how I was taught. Will my kids still learn math facts like the times tables and basic concepts to solve problems like I did?**

Yes, your child still must learn math facts like multiplication tables.<sup>3</sup> One benefit of Alabama’s College and Career Ready Standards is that instead of simply memorizing math facts, students now learn why these numbers hold the value they do and what relationship they hold to other math concepts.

**9 Under the state’s English language arts standards, will my child still read classic literature?**

Yes, the classics are still being read in every public school in Alabama. One great thing about shared standards is that one English teacher may decide to have his students read John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, while another may have her students read *To Kill A Mockingbird* to teach the same standards.<sup>4</sup>

**10 Do my child’s teachers have a say in what is being taught inside their classrooms?**

Yes, it is up to local teachers to write lesson plans, select teaching strategies, and determine what curriculum is taught inside their classrooms.<sup>5</sup>

**11 Do my local school board and superintendent have a say in the direction of our local schools?**

Yes, along with your child’s teachers, your local school board and superintendent are responsible for determining what books and other materials are used in your community.

**12 Will my child have to take any standardized tests?**

Alabama’s College and Career Ready Standards do not require any tests. Alabama students in grades 3-12 will continue to take a standardized test each year; however, under Alabama’s College and Career Ready Standards, Alabama’s public schools will spend less time testing and more time teaching. Beginning in 2014, students will only spend a few hours a year taking standardized tests instead of five days.<sup>6</sup>

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3 2013 Revised Alabama Course of Study: Mathematics, Alabama State Department of Education, 2013, <https://docs.alsde.edu/documents/54/2013%20Revised%20Alabama%20Mathematics%20Course%20of%20Study.pdf>.

4 2013 Revised Alabama English Language Arts Course of Study: English Language Literacy for College and Career Readiness

5 Thomas Rains Jr., “Common Core complaints are misdirected,” AL.com, March 21, 2014, [http://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2014/03/complaints\\_in\\_alabama\\_about\\_sc.html](http://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2014/03/complaints_in_alabama_about_sc.html) (last accessed March 21, 2014).

6 Assessment Update, Elementary/Secondary Education Work Session, Alabama State Board of Education, March 13, 2014.

