

Linked Learning, the Common Core State Standards, and New Assessments

Meeting the Common Core State Standards

California will begin assessing student achievement based on new, more rigorous state standards in the 2014-15 school year. Known as the Common Core State Standards, the same principles that guide these standards are the same ones that guide the learning goals of Linked Learning—a focus on critical thinking, analysis, and applying knowledge to solve real-world problems to better prepare students for college, career, and life.

Linked Learning principles are already aligned with the new Common Core State Standards—with a focus on critical thinking, analysis, and applying knowledge to solve real-world problems.

Linked Learning students will have an advantage under the Common Core. Rigorous academics combined with an engaging, real-world learning environment will prepare students to excel under the new standards. Linked Learning is an innovative approach that offers a solution to help students meet the new standards and prepare for whatever path they choose after high school.

What are the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards are a state-led effort, informed by extensive research and developed by educators—including teachers, standards experts, and business leaders from across the country. The standards enforce a set of rigorous, clear learning goals in English language arts and mathematics for grades K-12. They identify much of the knowledge and skills that can help students graduate from high school prepared for college-level work and the careers of the future.

California is among the 45 states that have voluntarily adopted the new standards and that are working to implement them now. The goal of the new standards is to prepare students to succeed in today's economy. Like Linked Learning, the new standards represent a shift from memorizing facts and figures to challenging students to develop a deeper understanding of subject matter, think critically, and apply learning to different situations and in different contexts. Emphasis is on student learning and progress rather than just success on an assessment.

New State Assessments

California is working with other states and testing experts to develop new assessments aligned to the Common Core through the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, which it will begin using in the 2014-15 school year. The consortium is developing better ways to administer tests and is planning to use computer adaptive assessments, which will:

- more effectively measure student knowledge and understanding of English language arts and math, replacing existing state tests;
- give educators, parents, and students more accurate, timely information showing how well students are learning and whether students are on track to graduate high school, ready for college and the workplace; and
- provide more accurate and useful information about student achievement that will allow educators to compare student performance across classrooms, schools, districts and states, ensuring all students will be taught to the same high standards.

Helping All Students Excel

As California districts, schools and teachers begin to use the new assessments tied to higher standards, statewide test scores are likely to be lower than they have been. This is expected, but should prompt a public discussion about what schools can do better to prepare students better for college and the workplace. Fortunately, Linked Learning students are already in a position to excel under the new state standards. Through both Linked Learning and the Common Core, students are offered a rigorous academic experience that challenges them and put them on a path to obtaining the skills and knowledge they will need for college, career, and life.