

## **Common Core State Standards for Mathematics, pg. 4**

### **Understanding mathematics**

These Standards define what students should understand and be able to do in their study of mathematics. Asking a student to understand something means asking a teacher to assess whether the student has understood it. But what does mathematical understanding look like? One hallmark of mathematical understanding is the ability to justify, in a way appropriate to the student's mathematical maturity, *why* a particular mathematical statement is true or where a mathematical rule comes from. There is a world of difference between a student who can summon a mnemonic device to expand a product such as  $(a + b)(x + y)$  and a student who can explain where the mnemonic comes from. The student who can explain the rule understands the mathematics, and may have a better chance to succeed at a less familiar task such as expanding  $(a + b + c)(x + y)$ . Mathematical understanding and procedural skill are equally important, and both are assessable using mathematical tasks of sufficient richness.

The Standards set grade-specific standards but do not define the intervention methods or materials necessary to support students who are well below or well above grade-level expectations. It is also beyond the scope of the Standards to define the full range of supports appropriate for English language learners and for students with special needs. At the same time, all students must have the opportunity to learn and meet the same high standards if they are to access the knowledge and skills necessary in their post-school lives. The Standards should be read as allowing for the widest possible range of students to participate fully from the outset, along with appropriate accommodations to ensure maximum participation of students with special education needs. For example, for students with disabilities reading should allow for use of Braille, screen reader technology, or other assistive devices, while writing should include the use of a scribe, computer, or speech-to-text technology. In a similar vein, speaking and listening should be interpreted broadly to include sign language. No set of grade-specific standards can fully reflect the great variety in abilities, needs, learning rates, and achievement levels of students in any given classroom. However, the Standards do provide clear signposts along the way to the goal of college and career readiness for all students.

## **Common Core State Standards for Mathematics, pg. 5**

These Standards do not dictate curriculum or teaching methods. For example, just because topic A appears before topic B in the standards for a given grade, it does not necessarily mean that topic A must be taught before topic B. A teacher might prefer to teach topic B before topic A, or might choose to highlight connections by teaching topic A and topic B at the same time. Or, a teacher might prefer to teach a topic of his or her own choosing that leads, as a byproduct, to students reaching the standards for topics A and B.

What students can learn at any particular grade level depends upon what they have learned before. Ideally then, each standard in this document might have been phrased

in the form, “Students who already know ... should next come to learn ....” But at present this approach is unrealistic—not least because existing education research cannot specify all such learning pathways. Of necessity therefore, grade placements for specific topics have been made on the basis of state and international comparisons and the collective experience and collective professional judgment of educators, researchers and mathematicians. One promise of common state standards is that over time they will allow research on learning progressions to inform and improve the design of standards to a much greater extent than is possible today. Learning opportunities will continue to vary across schools and school systems, and educators should make every effort to meet the needs of individual students based on their current understanding.

### **Common Core State Standards for Mathematics, pg. 6**

The Standards for Mathematical Practice describe varieties of expertise that mathematics educators at all levels should seek to develop in their students. These practices rest on important “processes and proficiencies” with longstanding importance in mathematics education. The first of these are the NCTM process standards of problem solving, reasoning and proof, communication, representation, and connections. The second are the strands of mathematical proficiency specified in the National Research Council’s report *Adding It Up*: adaptive reasoning, strategic competence, conceptual understanding (comprehension of mathematical concepts, operations and relations), procedural fluency (skill in carrying out procedures flexibly, accurately, efficiently and appropriately), and productive disposition (habitual inclination to see mathematics as sensible, useful, and worthwhile, coupled with a belief in diligence and one’s own efficacy).

### **Common Core State Standards for Mathematics, pg. 8**

#### **Connecting the Standards for Mathematical Practice to the Standards for Mathematical Content**

The Standards for Mathematical Practice describe ways in which developing student practitioners of the discipline of mathematics increasingly ought to engage with the subject matter as they grow in mathematical maturity and expertise throughout the elementary, middle and high school years. Designers of curricula, assessments, and professional development should all attend to the need to connect the mathematical practices to mathematical content in mathematics instruction.

The Standards for Mathematical Content are a balanced combination of procedure and understanding. Expectations that begin with the word “understand” are often especially good opportunities to connect the practices to the content. Students who lack understanding of a topic may rely on procedures too heavily. Without a flexible base from which to work, they may be less likely to consider analogous problems, represent problems coherently, justify conclusions, apply the mathematics to practical situations, use technology mindfully to work with the mathematics, explain the

mathematics accurately to other students, step back for an overview, or deviate from a known procedure to find a shortcut. In short, a lack of understanding effectively prevents a student from engaging in the mathematical practices.

In this respect, those content standards which set an expectation of understanding are potential “points of intersection” between the Standards for Mathematical Content and the Standards for Mathematical Practice. These points of intersection are intended to be weighted toward central and generative concepts in the school mathematics curriculum that most merit the time, resources, innovative energies, and focus necessary to qualitatively improve the curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, and student achievement in mathematics.

## **Common Core State Standards for Mathematics, pg. 57**

### **Mathematics Standards for High School**

The high school standards specify the mathematics that all students should study in order to be college and career ready. Additional mathematics that students should learn in order to take advanced courses such as calculus, advanced statistics, or discrete mathematics is indicated by (+), as in this example:

(+) Represent complex numbers on the complex plane in rectangular and polar form (including real and imaginary numbers).

All standards without a (+) symbol should be in the common mathematics curriculum for all college and career ready students. Standards with a (+) symbol may also appear in courses intended for all students.

The high school standards are listed in conceptual categories:

- Number and Quantity
- Algebra
- Functions
- Modeling
- Geometry
- Statistics and Probability

Conceptual categories portray a coherent view of high school mathematics; a student’s work with functions, for example, crosses a number of traditional course boundaries, potentially up through and including calculus.

Modeling is best interpreted not as a collection of isolated topics but in relation to other standards. Making mathematical models is a Standard for Mathematical Practice, and specific modeling standards appear throughout the high school standards indicated by a star symbol (★). The star symbol sometimes appears on the heading for a group of standards; in that case, it should be understood to apply to all standards in that group.