



# 10 Frequently Asked Questions about the Common Core State Standards and PARCC

<p>1.</p> <p>Massachusetts is a national leader in education. Why did the Commonwealth adopt the Common Core, and why is the state considering PARCC?</p>	<p>In order to make sure students are learning what they need to know and be able to do at each grade level, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and local educators <a href="#">periodically upgrade Massachusetts' curriculum standards</a>. The state and educators were already working on such an upgrade when development of the Common Core began in 2009, and the two efforts merged. The new math standards focus on fewer topics each year so students have time to learn concepts deeply, and the new English language arts standards require students to speak and write in a variety of formats and support their ideas with evidence from authoritative sources.</p> <p>The Massachusetts state assessment, MCAS, is 17 years old and was never intended to be a predictor of college readiness. Massachusetts is in the last year of a two-year test drive of <a href="#">PARCC</a> as a possible replacement for MCAS English and math tests.</p>
<p>2.</p> <p>Is the Common Core a federal mandate that takes away local control?</p>	<p>No. The federal government, through Race to the Top, <a href="#">encouraged states to adopt college- and career-ready standards</a>, but it did not specify which standards. Common Core was created by states, and Massachusetts played a leading role. In addition, the Core outlines what students should be able to do at different grades. The <a href="#">standards do not dictate curriculum</a> (how that knowledge will be taught), materials, or practices, all of which are up to districts, schools and teachers.</p>
<p>3.</p> <p>Does the Common Core diminish the state's high standards for literature and math?</p>	<p>No. Literature is a major part of the English language arts standards and Massachusetts augmented these by adding its own list of recommended authors from the Commonwealth's prior ELA standards. The extensive list includes writers such as Mark Twain, Herman Melville, and Langston Hughes. With the new math standards, students will focus on fewer topics each year so that they have time to master each and build toward algebra. The standards include what students will need to know to take Algebra 1 in the eighth or ninth grade and a more rigorous sequence of math courses in high school.</p>
<p>4.</p> <p>Was the Common Core adopted in a public process?</p>	<p>Yes. The Council of Chief State School Officers released public drafts of the Common Core in February 2010, and the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education released the draft standards for public comment in May 2010. Commissioner Mitchell Chester appointed independent panels – which included <a href="#">educators</a> – to report back to the Board on the standards. The Board <a href="#">adopted the standards at a public meeting</a> in July 2010.</p>

## 10 Frequently Asked Questions about the Common Core State Standards and PARCC in Massachusetts

<p>5.</p> <p>When did Massachusetts schools start teaching the Common Core?</p>	<p>The transition began in fall <a href="#">2011</a>.</p>
<p>6.</p> <p>Is the Common Core the same in every state?</p>	<p>No. States can customize 15 percent of the standards. Massachusetts added more than 20 math standards, as well as pre-kindergarten and ELA standards.</p>
<p>7.</p> <p>Is PARCC part of the Common Core?</p>	<p>No. PARCC is the test that measures whether students have mastered the concepts and skills outlined in the Common Core, but it is a separate initiative. While Common Core is already part of the state's learning frameworks, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will not decide on PARCC until fall 2015.</p>
<p>8.</p> <p>Will my child's personal information be secure if he or she takes a PARCC test?</p>	<p>Yes. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is governed by the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the Commonwealth's Fair Information Practices Act, and the Department has clear <a href="#">policies regarding the collection and use of student data</a>.</p>
<p>9.</p> <p>Where can I find out which districts are using PARCC in spring 2015?</p>	<p>A <a href="#">summary and complete list</a> of districts' assessment decisions for spring 2015 are available on the Department's website.</p>
<p>10.</p> <p>Where can I find out more about Common Core and PARCC?</p>	<p>For more information, please go to the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">MA Curriculum Frameworks</a>, which incorporate the Common Core State Standards.</li><li>• Grade-by-grade Common Core <a href="#">parent guides</a> that the National PTA published in English and Spanish.</li><li>• <a href="#">PARCC Massachusetts</a> webpage and <a href="#">10 Things to Know about PARCC</a>.</li><li>• <a href="#">PARCC national</a> website.</li></ul>