

# New Jersey's CommonCore

## *What the Common Core Means for Students in Grades 6–8*

The Common Core State Standards were developed by states and written by educators and education experts to provide a consistent, clear and rigorous set of learning expectations for all students. New Jersey adopted the standards in 2010, and for the past four years, our educators have been transitioning classroom instruction to align to the Common Core State Standards. The standards define what students are expected to know and do in each grade. New Jersey school districts continue to develop curriculum and choose the books that may be used for instruction. Teachers maintain control over their lessons and plans.

New Jersey adopted these standards to make sure students graduate with the essential knowledge and skills needed to succeed in life. The standards are based in research on other high-achieving countries and were created to meet the expectations of college coursework and career demands. New Jersey students will graduate ready for college or their chosen career path due to the deeper learning achieved through instruction aligned with these stronger standards.

### IN THE CLASSROOM

New Jersey's Common Core State Standards are changing the way our students learn by developing and reinforcing core knowledge and skills across grade levels and subject areas. In Grades 6–12, the standards also include reading and writing standards for social studies, science and technical subjects. More importantly, the Common Core State Standards focus on the deep analysis and critical thinking skills that are crucial in the 21st century. For teachers, the New Jersey Common Core State Standards provide fewer, clearer standards and the opportunity for instructional shifts in both mathematics and English language arts (ELA).

Here are a few examples of what Grade 6–8 teaching and learning now look like in New Jersey classrooms under the Common Core: <sup>1</sup>

#### SIXTH GRADE

- Analyzing how chapters of a book, scenes of a play, or stanzas of a poem fit into the overall structure of the piece
- Gaining knowledge from materials that make extensive use of elaborate diagrams and data to convey information
- Writing arguments that provide clear reasons and relevant evidence using credible sources
- Reviewing and paraphrasing key ideas and multiple perspectives of a speaker
- Understanding ratios and rates, and solving problems involving proportional relationships
- Dividing fractions and solving related word problems
- Using positive and negative numbers together to describe quantities and understanding ordering and absolute value
- Understanding the use of expressions and equations to represent and solve real-world problems

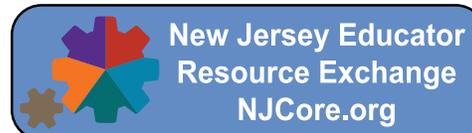
#### SEVENTH GRADE

- Citing several sources of specific evidence from a piece when offering an oral or written analysis of a book, essay, article, or play
- Analyzing works of fiction to see how events advance the plot and how setting shapes the characters
- Determining an author's point of view or purpose in a nonfiction work and analyzing how the author takes a position different from other authors
- Conducting research in response to a specific question by drawing on evidence from several credible literary or informational sources to support an analysis or reflection
- Solving percent math problems
- Understanding arithmetic of rational numbers and solving related word problems

#### EIGHTH GRADE

- Analyzing where materials on the same topic disagree on matters of fact, interpretation, or point of view
- Learning how authors support their ideas through word choice, sentence and paragraph structure, and other methods
- Analyzing the purpose of information presented in diverse media (e.g. print, TV, web)
- Interpreting figures of speech (e.g. irony, puns) and developing a large vocabulary of general academic words and phrases
- Understanding slope and relating linear equations in two variables to lines in the coordinate plane
- Understanding functions as rules that assign a unique output number to each input number; using linear functions to model relationships
- Developing a foundation for analyzing statistical relationships by using a best-fit line (a straight line that models an association between two quantities)

Source: <sup>1</sup> National PTA's Guide to Student Success, [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)



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Beyond content changes in the classroom, New Jersey's Common Core State Standards provide the opportunity for new instructional practices that foster student engagement in our classrooms through lessons that include project-based learning and peer discussions. Student-led and small group work are emphasized to build strong communication and collaboration skills. The instructional shifts are focused on building students' critical thinking and communication skills, as well as helping students understand how classroom learning relates to the real world.

Below are the main instructional shifts in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The chart provides guidance on how each shift should look in the classroom, and lists a few examples of available resources teachers can utilize in the classroom.



INSTRUCTIONAL SHIFT	IN THE CLASSROOM	LEARN MORE
ELA – Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction	Students should read and write about real-life events, such as historical events, science experiments, biographies and news articles, in addition to grade-appropriate literature.	<a href="#">Learning about the Art of Advertising: Using YouTube and T-Mobile–Analyze the purpose and effectiveness of advertisements.</a>
ELA – Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and nonfiction	Students should be able to identify facts and information in a text to support their opinions or answers. Prompts such as, “How do you know that?” or “Where did you find that information?” should be used in class discussions.	<a href="#">Getting Ready to Write: Citing textual evidence on the topic of child labor–Identify, discuss, and apply textual evidence.</a>
ELA – Regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary	Students should read increasingly complex texts that focus on building a strong vocabulary and understanding words that appear across content areas or with multiple meanings. Teachers should provide opportunities for students to determine word meaning when sufficient context is provided by the text. Some academic vocabulary will need to be explicitly taught.	<a href="#">Kick Me: Making Vocabulary Interactive– Students find missing words from classmates to complete analogies.</a>
Math – Focus	Students will focus on the content presented in the following critical areas: <b>Grade 6</b> – Ratios and proportional reasoning; early expressions and equations <b>Grade 7</b> – Analyzing proportional relationships to solve percent problems <b>Grade 8</b> – Linear algebra and linear functions	<a href="#">Hunt Institute's Helping Teachers: Coherence and Focus–Explains focus in mathematics for classroom teachers.</a>
Math – Coherence	Students should understand how different math topics relate to others within a single grade and across grade levels. Collaboration among all grade-level teachers should be encouraged so that they are aware of the foundations set in the previous grades and the expectations for later grades.	<a href="#">Hunt Institute's Gathering Momentum for Algebra–Explains how content progressions across grade levels prepare students for algebra.</a>
Math – Rigor	Students should apply their understandings to solve appropriately complex real-world problems. Instruction should place an emphasis on integrating conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency.	<a href="#">Get the Math in Music–Students apply mathematic formulas to coordinate tempos between music samples.</a>

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## LEARN MORE

- [New Jersey Department of Education Common Core State Standards Video](#)
- [Council of the Great City Schools' Three-Minute Video](#)
- [National PTA Parents' Guide to Student Success](#)
- [Council of the Great City Schools' Grade by Grade Roadmaps](#)  
[English language arts](#)  
[Mathematics](#)

## NEW JERSEY EDUCATOR RESOURCE EXCHANGE

New Jersey, in collaboration with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), has created the New Jersey Educator Resource Exchange at [NJCore.org](http://NJCore.org). The New Jersey Educator Resource Exchange is New Jersey's central resource for:

- Learning about New Jersey's Common Core State Standards, New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, and Model Curriculum Framework;
- Uploading and sharing lesson plans and other instructional resources with fellow educators throughout the state;
- Accessing high-quality instructional resources tagged to each standard in each grade level;
- Spreading awareness about the standards and sharing resources with parents to extend students' learning at home.

## INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

[New Jersey's Model Curriculum Framework](#) provides educators a suggested way to incorporate the standards into five units across each grade level.

[The EQuIP \(Educators Evaluating the Quality of Instructional Products\) Rubric](#) created by Achieve is an evaluation tool to determine lesson and unit alignment to the Common Core State Standards.

- [AchievetheCore.org](http://AchievetheCore.org)
- America Achieves' [commoncore.americaachieves.org](http://commoncore.americaachieves.org)
- [BetterLesson.com](http://BetterLesson.com)
- [LearnZillion.com](http://LearnZillion.com)
- [Readwritethink.org](http://Readwritethink.org)
- [ShareMyLesson.com](http://ShareMyLesson.com)
- [TeachingChannel.org](http://TeachingChannel.org)

