

# Common Core State Standards & Afterschool: An Overview

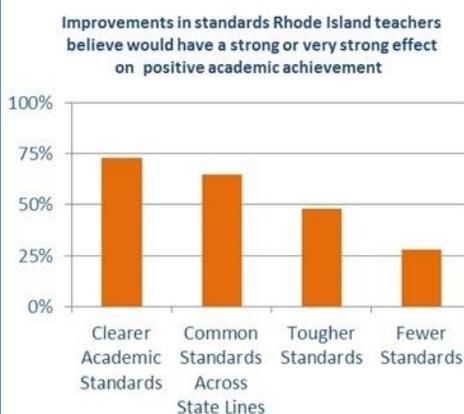
## Common Core State Standards

Out-of-school time programs and providers are one link in the chain of support that nurtures growth and development in today's youth. Common Core State Standards strengthen this network by helping teachers, families, and out-of-school time providers align their goals and expectations in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics for students in grades K-12.

Rhode Island is one of 45 states that has formally adopted the Common Core State Standards. The transition to curriculum and instruction that is fully aligned to the Common Core State Standards has been taking place over the past few years, with the expectation of full implementation in Rhode Island schools by the 2013-2014 school year.<sup>1</sup>

The standards build upon individual state standards, and are influenced by initiatives in top-performing countries. They are supported by research and evidence garnered from a variety of sources. These sources create a solid framework to support standards that are equivalent to best practices around the country and the globe.

A 2010 survey conducted by Scholastic indicates that a majority of Rhode Island teachers believe that clearer academic standards that cut across state lines will accelerate college and career readiness in their students.<sup>2</sup>



In addition to specific benchmarks in ELA and Mathematics for each grade level, the standards include "Habits of Mind"<sup>3</sup> – called "capacities" in ELA and "practices" in Mathematics – which describe a robust set of broad abilities supported by the standards that will help students succeed in academic and professional endeavors, society, and the global economy at large.

## Common Core State Standards and Afterschool

Afterschool programs able to reinforce and strengthen concepts targeted during the traditional school day have an advantage when it comes to contributing to student success.<sup>4</sup> The standards are a well

defined set of expectations designed to be used by educators in all learning environments. They provide school day and afterschool instructors a common set of targets to help shape academic content and assessment.

*"The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers."*

From the Common Core State Standards Initiative Mission Statement

Explicit learning goals are crucial in supporting academic development in afterschool programs.<sup>5</sup> The standards provide a framework to help link a Lego Robotics lesson to Mathematics, a musical review to ELA, or any other non-traditional learning activity to established academic skills. In doing so, learning goals are honed and reinforced, helping develop and enhance the non-traditional learning experiences that are such an important part of afterschool programming. Incorporating defined academic benchmarks into program design also allows for targeted evaluation of students' academic progress,

*Envisioning a Rhode Island that maximizes how, when, and where children and youth learn to ensure their success.*

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a crucial feature in a landscape where the funding is increasingly tied to program quality and effectiveness.<sup>6</sup>

## Common Core State Standards: Key Changes

Understanding some of the basic differences between the previous state standards and the Common Core State Standards may be helpful in providing a broad framework for afterschool programs to use when connecting activities and programming to the Common Core.

### English Language Arts

One of the biggest differences between Rhode Island State Standards and the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts is the former's focus on literature and the latter's focus on understanding, appreciating, and working with nonfiction. The New York Times recently featured an opinion piece, written by a NYC school teacher, that praises the decision to shift students' focus from literature to nonfiction: <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/11/22/what-should-children-read/>. In addition to sharing some wonderful insights on the benefits, both immediate and long-term, of student appreciation and understanding of non-fiction, the author suggests an array of current, engaging nonfiction sources – literary, auditory, and graphic – that can provide inspiration and entry into the world of nonfiction for afterschool practitioners and the youth with whom they work.

### Mathematics

Rhode Island State Standards emphasized basic facts and rote methods to be used in order to solve mathematical problems. Common Core State Standards look at math from a broader perspective, encouraging students to develop a fluency of basic facts coupled with a deeper understanding of why things happen. Common Core State Standards also encourage teachers and students to explore multiple ways to represent math concepts, and encourage an emphasis on real-world learning.

A quick Google search for “real world math” gives over 99 million resources that promise to help teach standards-based math with real-world topics that will interest students. Chances are that most afterschool programs already engaged in hands-on, inquiry-based activities already have a plethora of opportunities to engage students in “real world math” much in the same way that you use math every time you follow a recipe, plan your holiday shopping, or complete myriad other daily tasks that use the same math skills outlined in the Common Core State Standards.

**View the  
Common Core State Standards  
[www.corestandards.org/the-standards](http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards)**

Whereas the Rhode Island State Standards focused on many math topics in each grade, the Common Core State Standards focus on just 2-3 concepts per grade. Afterschool practitioners can focus on these concepts and think of simple ways to integrate them into lessons and activities that are part of everyday programming. Many of the

overarching concepts in the Common Core State Standards for math – coherent progression, fluency, and the emphasis on real-world learning – are as much about being comfortable with numbers as they are about understanding how to manipulate and use numbers to solve math (and everyday) problems. By integrating numbers into activities you and the youth are already participating in and are already comfortable with, you will help youth build positive numeracy connections and help them gain the confidence needed to succeed in reaching the academic goals of the Common Core State Standards.

## References

- <sup>1</sup><http://www.ride.ri.gov/instruction/commoncore.aspx>  
<sup>2</sup>*Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools* (2010.) Retrieved November 15, 2012, from Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation: [http://www.scholastic.com/primariesources/pdfs/Gates\\_Foundation\\_RI.pdf](http://www.scholastic.com/primariesources/pdfs/Gates_Foundation_RI.pdf)  
<sup>3</sup>*Connecting High-Quality Expanded Learning Opportunities and the Common Core State Standards to Advance Student Success.* (2011.) Retrieved March 17, 2012, from Council of Chief State School Officers: <http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/Connecting%20Expanded%20Learning%20Opportunities%20and%20the%20Common%20Core%20State%20Standards%20to%20Advance%20Student%20Success.pdf>  
<sup>4</sup>*Shared Features of High-Performing After-School Programs: A Follow-Up to the TASC Evaluation.* (2005, November). Retrieved March 17, 2012, from Southwest Educational Development Laboratory: [www.sedl.org/pubs/fam107/fam107.pdf](http://www.sedl.org/pubs/fam107/fam107.pdf)  
<sup>5</sup>LaFleur, J., & Russell, C. (2011.) *The Beacon Community Centers Middle School Initiative: Final Report on Implementation and Youth Experience in the Initiative.* Washington D.C.: Policy Studies Associates, Inc., prepared for Department of Youth and Community Development and The Wallace Foundation.  
<sup>6</sup>*Connecting High-Quality Expanded Learning Opportunities and the Common Core State Standards to Advance Student Success.* (2011.) Retrieved March 17, 2012, from Council of Chief State School Officers: [www.ccsso.org/Documents/Connecting\\_Expanded\\_Learning\\_Opportunities\\_and\\_the\\_Common\\_Core\\_State\\_Standards\\_to\\_Advance\\_Student\\_Success.pdf](http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/Connecting_Expanded_Learning_Opportunities_and_the_Common_Core_State_Standards_to_Advance_Student_Success.pdf)

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