

HOW WILL COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS IMPACT SOUTHEAST ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENTS?

What are the Common Core State Standards?

- The Common Core State Standards are a set of academic standards for K-12 English-language arts and mathematics. These standards are designed to ensure that all students graduating from high school are prepared for college, work, and success in the global economy.
- The standards were developed in 2010 by The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) with contribution from teachers, parents, and community leaders.¹
- To date, 45 states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted the Common Core State Standards.²
- While Common Core implementation timelines vary by state, most states have planned for implementation to happen before or within the 2014-2015 school year.³ The 2014-2015 school year also coincides with the release of new student assessments that students in Common Core adopted states will take to measure their progress.⁴ Student assessments are being developed by two main groups: Partnership for Assessments of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. Each Common Core adopted state has selected to use one of the two assessments, or to develop their own assessment system.⁵

What are academic standards?

- Academic standards are goals that tell teachers, parents, and students what skills and knowledge a student should master by a given point in time—usually by the end of an academic or grade year or by the time a student graduates from high school. For example, by the end of 2nd grade, a student should be able to add three-digit numbers (e.g., $248 + 125$).⁶

What problem does the Common Core State Standards address?

- Currently, each state has its own process for determining academic standards, which means that what students are expected to learn can vary widely between states. A report by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which compares academic performance across states, found that states with the greatest degree of variation between NAEP scores and their own state test scores were largely in the South, Southwest, and Far West and have a disproportionate share of low-income, non-White, and English language learner students.⁷
- Students of color and Native students are disproportionately affected by these low standards. Recent studies suggest that African American, Latino, American Indian, and Alaska Native high school students may have no better than a 55% chance of graduating from high school on time with a regular diploma, and that those who do graduate are unprepared for college and work.⁸

How will Southeast Asian Americans be impacted by Common Core State Standards?

- Similar to many other students of color, the majority of Southeast Asian Americans come from low-income, limited-English proficient communities with lower access to high quality education resources and standards, resulting in lower rates of education attainment.
 - **39.2%** of Cambodian Americans, **37.6%** of Hmong Americans, **38.4%** of Laotian Americans, and **51.5%** of Vietnamese Americans **“speak English less than “very well”** compared to **8.7%** of the U.S. population.⁹
 - **18.2%** of Cambodian American, **27.4%** of Hmong American, **12.2%** of Laotian American, and **13.0%** of Vietnamese American families **live below the poverty level** compared to **11.3%** of U.S. families.¹⁰
 - **34.3%** of Laotian American, **38.5%** of Cambodian American, and **39.6%** of Hmong American adults **do not have a high school diploma** or equivalent (Data: U.S. Census Bureau 2010).¹¹
 - **65.8%** of Cambodian Americans, **66.5%** of Laotian Americans, **63.2%** of Hmong Americans, and **51.1%** of Vietnamese Americans **have not attended college** (Data: American Community Survey 2006-2008).¹²

34.3%

of Laotian Adults,

38.5%

of Cambodian Adults,

39.6%

of Hmong Adults over the age of 25 do not have a high school diploma or equivalent¹¹

Lack of High School Diplomas Across Southeast Asian American Communities

(Data: U.S. Census Bureau 2010)

¹ Common Core State Standards Initiative. “The Standards” Accessed August 8, 2013, <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>.

² Ibid. “In the States” Accessed August 8, 2013, <http://www.corestandards.org/in-the-states>.

³ Council of Chief State School Officers. “The Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI)” Accessed August 13, 2013, http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/The_Common_Core_State_Standards_Initiative.html.

⁴ Common Core State Standards Initiative. “Frequently Asked Questions” Accessed August 13, 2013, <http://www.corestandards.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions>.

⁵ Scott, Dylan. “Two Paths Toward Common Core Standards Assessments” Governing: The States and Localities (February 15, 2012) Accessed August 13, 2013, <http://www.governing.com/blogs/view/two-paths-toward-common-core-standards-assessments.html>.

⁶ Campaign for High School Equity. “Common Core State Standards: Frequently Asked Questions”, page 1.

⁷ Castillo, David, and Lukan, Josef. National Council of La Raza. Access to Common Standards for All: An Advocacy Tool Kit for Supporting Success (Washington, DC: 2011), page 1.



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Lack of College Attendance Across Southeast Asian American Communities

(Data: American Community Survey 2006-2008)

How Southeast Asian Americans will be impacted by Common Core State Standards (continued)

- Case studies reveal that standards in English language learner classes attended by Southeast Asian Americans are not sufficiently preparing students for college and careers. For example, in a survey of over 100 Asian and Latino students across six public and charter high schools in New Orleans, Louisiana, 69.5% of respondents said they were placed in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes that they did not feel was appropriate for their level of language development.¹³ Students interviewed also reported, “façade’ learning environments that encourage playing on the computer, watching movies, and sleeping, rather than rigorous English-language instruction.”¹⁴
- Academic standards also vary across schools and classes within schools. For example, high school students report being exposed to different types of academic standards and content depending on whether they are placed in “higher” education tracks (e.g., eligible to enroll in Honors/Advanced Placement courses) or less advanced education tracks.¹⁵
- Southeast Asian American students can therefore benefit from the promises of Common Core, especially in ensuring that all students have access to high learning standards, regardless of their zip code, their school, their academic track, or their status as an English language learner.

“For students who are already struggling to meet current standards, extra support and resources will be essential for them to fully see their potential through Common Core. As a community-based organization, we are preparing ourselves to re-structure our services to provide youth with the additional academic support that they will need.”

— Kendra Thao, Executive Director
Hmong Women’s Heritage Association

What can local and federal policy makers do to ensure that all students, including Southeast Asian American students receive the benefits of Common Core implementation?

- Provide support to high-need students. States, school districts, and schools must provide additional support to students who are behind grade-level to ensure that they will be able to achieve the higher standards of Common Core. Without such supports, these students will continue to struggle and will be unable to access their full potential under Common Core.
- Create mechanisms for community-based decision making. States, school districts, and schools must create community engagement plans to inform parents and community members about Common Core implementation. School districts should also create mechanisms to receive input from community-based partners such as hosting community listening sessions or creating community advisory boards.
- Provide transition period for school accountability with Common Core assessments. In school year 2014, all students will be required to be tested under the new Common Core assessments. Test scores under the new assessments are anticipated to be “lower” than compared to existing test scores because not all schools have had time to fully teach the Common Core standards, and the new assessments will be measuring higher types of proficiency. During this transition period, federal and state policy makers must not penalize schools and school districts for this “drop” in test score by automatically labeling them as failing schools. Rather, these test scores should be considered baseline data on students’ existing levels of English and math proficiency, and be used for future improvement plans.
- Disaggregate data of Asian American ethnic groups in the new Common Core assessments. The Common Core assessments will provide a profound opportunity to collect nationwide data on student proficiency levels that can be compared across states. The success of Common Core relies on this accurate data on how students are performing and learning under Common Core. States should therefore disaggregate data by Asian American ethnic groups to identify where academic achievement gaps persist even with Common Core implementation, and drive instructional changes to ensure that all students, including Southeast Asian American students, can achieve their full potential under Common Core.

“School districts must create policies to inform parents about the changes that are happening, and to create mechanisms to receive honest feedback from communities and families about whether Common Core is being implemented.”

— Cristiane Wigngaarde, Parent Advocate, Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of New Orleans

⁸ ACT (2007). “Rigor at Risk: Reaffirming Quality in the High School Core Curriculum”, Iowa City, IA.

⁹ American Community Survey 2010, 1 year estimates.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE). “The Relevance of Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders in the College Completion Agenda” (Washington, DC 2011), page 8.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of New Orleans. ESL: Lost In the System (New Orleans, Louisiana: 2013), page 4.

¹⁴ Ibid, page 9.

¹⁵ Interviews with community leaders, August 2012 to July 2013.

