

# TAKING ACTION: FACE-TO-FACE

Clarify Common Core benefits. Make clear, powerful points.

## 9 TIPS FOR TEACHERS

*Whether you like to talk, write or go digital, these steps will help you communicate the benefits of Common Core standards.*

### #1: Start a Conversation.

Ask every teacher to solicit and answer questions about California's Common Core learning standards during in-person meetings with parents this year.

### #2: Write About It.

Dedicate a recurring column in your school newsletter to explain and illustrate what California's Common Core learning standards look like in practice.

*Bonus Tip: Use photos of students working on a project, videos of teacher trainings or other visual elements to showcase what Common Core looks like in the classroom.*

### #3: Make it Real.

Distribute a 1-page information sheet to parents that spells out what students in your class will be expected to know by the end of this academic year.

*Bonus Tip: Use/Build on the Fact Sheet in this Toolkit to show more details of what Common Core looks like in your classroom.*

### #4: Get Social.

Share videos and photos of Common Core at work in the classroom through your school's social media channels. (Check that your school has obtained parent approvals for photographing their children.)

*Bonus Tip: Refer to the Facebook Postings and Tweet Sheet in this Toolkit to get started.*

### #5: Find Experts/Champions.

Appoint an in-house Common Core expert — a teacher or administrator — to address questions on the Common Core learning standards. Arrange a 15-minute weekly Common Core staff meeting with the Experts/Champions, either in person or conference call, to discuss a Common Core topic and help teachers learn to more expertly handle questions.

### #6: Go Digital.

Create a "Common Core" section on your website. If you don't have the resources to maintain a new page, link to a trusted source from the front page of your site.



*Bonus Tip: Refer to the Resources section on the last page of this Toolkit.*

### #7: Show, Don't Just Tell.

Host Family Math nights to model Common Core learning methods for parents and bring them up to speed on the new math vocabulary.

*Bonus Tip: Throw in pizza and childcare to boost attendance.*

### #8: Engage.

Set up a Common Core-centered meeting with your school's PTA or Parent Committee.

*Bonus Tip: Prepare for the meeting by reviewing the Key Messages and Talking Points in this Toolkit and designating one or two spokespersons (i.e. Experts/Champions).*

### #9: Teach & Learn.

Create an internal communication method for staff — listserv, department meetings, intranet page, etc. — that highlights best practices for Common Core.



### PowerPoint Presentation

*Click [here](#) to download a brief PowerPoint presentation. Refer to the Notes pages for help in delivering a presentation to other teachers and administrators, parents or community members on the benefits of California's Common Core standards.*

With one of these brief statements, you can quickly tell other teachers and administrators, parents, students, school board members and community groups why Common Core matters.

### COMMON CORE MINUTE #1

- I'm impressed that the skills my students will need to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce are strongly supported by Common Core.
- Common Core challenges students to be more analytical, which will help them to be more thoughtful students and, eventually, more useful employees.
- Most importantly, it will help support them when they make decisions and solve difficult problems throughout their lives.
- What's more, Common Core's assessments are much like the dashboard in a car. We'll get timely information so we can better navigate the learning process and see if students are getting to their destinations, or if changes need to be made along the way.
- Common Core gives us, as teachers, the flexibility to do what we do best – select the curriculum that best fits our students' needs and determine how best to present it.

### COMMON CORE MINUTE #2

- Here are some concrete ways high school students' learning will change with the new Common Core standards.
- Common Core standards call for more nonfiction reading and real-world writing.
- For example, students might be challenged to create two characters for a new video game and write their dialogue.
- Other students will have some fun with professional writing, such as writing a press release for a terrible-smelling perfume/cologne.
- We will also bring math to the real world.
- An example of this is to have students create a family budget. Based on an annual salary, kids will figure out what's left after taxes and how much to spend each month on necessities such as shelter, food, transportation and savings – as well as luxuries which include entertainment, gifts and investments.
- All of these skills require judgment and complex thinking that will prepare students to be more successful in the real world.



# TAKING ACTION: REACHING OUT

Emphasize the benefits of Common Core. Connect with your community.

## LETTER TO FAMILIES

*Send a letter home to parents to help them better understand what their children's classroom will be like with Common Core. Ask for parental involvement. Include a copy of the **Common Core Fact Sheet** located in this Toolkit. This letter is an example to get you started.*

Dear *[Name of School]* Community,

Our teachers continue to work hard to help your children reach their full potential.

Our staff has been working together to prepare the knowledge and skills our graduates need to be ready for the next step in their lives. California has updated its academic standards to focus on 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning, and we plan to meet those goals with each of our students, so that they are ready for careers or college by the time they leave our classrooms.

Meeting these new standards means rethinking the way we teach, and you'll notice some exciting changes in our classrooms. Our students will be working with ideas in more involved ways. They'll be finding, accessing, evaluating and creating knowledge.

As you know, when young people learn to drive, they can only learn so much from the passenger seat. Similarly, students grappling with ideas in literature, math, science, history and other subjects need direct experience and plenty of time to practice making use of concepts. That kind of learning, like learning to drive in a parking lot, involves opportunities to experiment and make mistakes in the safety of the classroom with experienced teachers by their side, setting new challenges as students are ready for them.

Our teachers are excited to do this kind of work with students, especially in English language arts and math courses. Students might get math problems that involve more than one way to arrive at the correct answer. Or, you might notice that when students are reading a novel, they will also read non-fiction texts that explain the historical period of the setting. These are just two examples of how students will be asked to think more deeply and make connections between academic content and the world beyond the school walls.

You are also your child's "driving instructor." You have a critical role to play in providing them with opportunities to learn and explore, giving them feedback on what's working and what's not, and encouraging their persistence, both when they succeed and when they make mistakes. Making sure that our young people can handle their role in the driver's seat of learning is a team effort, and we need you to be part of the team. We look forward to continuing to work together to build a bright future for our students and our community.

*[Principal]*

*[Teacher Leader]*

*[PTA Leader]*

