

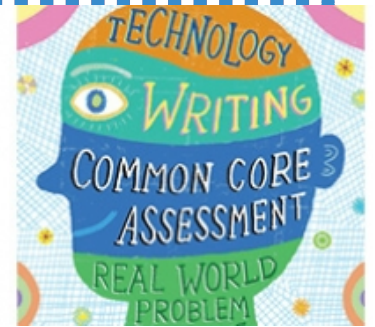
# North Florida South Carolina Region



## Common Core <sup>TIP</sup> Corner



So we have started to dip into the Common Core, and assessments aligned with the new standards aren't far behind. Starting in 2014, we will replace the familiar state-curriculum-based assessments with digital assessment tools that will measure students' progress against the Common Core standards.



The stakes are high! When Kentucky administered the first Common Core-aligned tests in 2011–12, the number of students scoring “proficient” in language arts and math fell by more than a third. And though experts say the drop was completely expected—the Common Core, after all, holds students to a higher standard—teachers nationwide are wondering how to best prepare their students for tests that are still being *developed*.

If you think, ‘All we have to do is wait until the questions come out, and then teach to those questions,’ you’re going to be *surprised*, because the new tests are being designed to assess skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.

Before you panic, take a deep breath. The Core-aligned assessments walk kids through the steps needed to demonstrate critical thinking and collaboration. And both the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), the two consortiums that are developing the assessments, have released prototypes and demos to help you get an idea of what they will look like. (Go to [smarterbalanced.org](http://smarterbalanced.org) and [parconline.org](http://parconline.org) for more information.)

This addition of our newsletter will focus on preparing for the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Testing. All information was gathered from PARCC and SBAC websites in addition to [corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org)

lazy days  
SPLISH SPLASH SPIOOSH  
rays of sunshine  
ICE CREAM & POPSICLES  
giggles & smiles  
BURGERS \*HOT DOGS \*CORN ON THE COB  
twinkling stars  
CAMP FIRES & S'MORES  
SUMMER

# What we do KNOW about the

## PARCC and SBAC Tests...

Testing will take 8 to 10 hours.

But additional time may be available for students who need it, according to PARCC.

SBAC will offer adaptive-form tests. As a student works on one question, the computer is generating two more. Which question the student gets next depends on his answer to the first one. Because the test will be customized to each student's ability, teachers will be able to tell if a student is working ahead (or behind) grade level, and in which areas.



PARCC will offer

fixed-form tests. Students will be measured against grade-level expectations. Test results will simply indicate whether or not a child is at grade level.

Reading passages will be more complex. Because the Common Core emphasizes authentic, high-quality fiction and nonfiction texts, educators expect the reading passages on the new tests to be up to one grade level ahead of what students are used to seeing on state tests.



# Expert Advice on How to Prepare for CCSS

## Using Technology

Both the PARCC and SBAC assessments will be delivered via computer or tablet, and students will be expected to be familiar enough with these tools to use them to answer questions. Though the final technological specifications are still being worked out, the latest list of requirements for the PARCC test includes an external keyboard, headphones, and a microphone, leading educators to speculate that keyboarding and streaming video may be part of the testing process.

Currently, a typical language arts assessment requires students to read a passage, then respond to five or six multiple-choice questions based on the passage. The newer tests may require students to go back into the passage and highlight evidence for their answers—which aligns well with the first of the 10 Common Core ELA/Literacy anchor standards for college and career readiness: “Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.”

The new assessments will also require students to compare, contrast, and synthesize information from multiple sources. The tests will be able to incorporate video clips and, possibly, websites, as sources of information. And students will be expected to compose their responses to essay questions using a computer and keyboard, instead of pencil and paper.

### How You Can Prepare Your Students:

Make sure they have experience with writing on computers and have mastered basic keyboard and word-processing skills. Help them view and manipulate graphs and spreadsheets, as appropriate for their grade level. Encourage them to use technology often, and make sure they have ample opportunities to do so at school.

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## More Writing

The Common Core emphasizes writing at all grade levels, and the new tests will directly assess students’ writing skills, as well as their ability to synthesize information and support conclusions.

Instead of relying primarily on multiple-choice questions, the new tests will give students ample opportunity to demonstrate a variety of writing skills. After reading a passage, students will be asked to write simple answers to short, constructed-response questions.

Students may also be given a “poorly written paragraph” to rewrite, along with some new data to incorporate into the revised version.

Students in grades 3 and up will likely be asked to complete an ELA “performance task,” such as writing a persuasive argument based on provided materials. Students in grades 3 and 4 may be given one or two texts—an article, for example, or a video—while students in high school may be asked to integrate information from up to five different sources.

After reading, viewing, and/or listening to the source material, students may be asked to write answers to a variety of questions about the texts; expect these to be higher-level questions that require students to analyze the information and provide support for their answers.

After a break, students will have a set amount of time—70 minutes or so, depending on their age—to write an essay based on the texts.

The directions will tell students, ‘Here are the critical pieces and what we’re looking for,’ So students writing a persuasive essay, will be reminded to include claims, counterclaims, and evidence.

### How You Can Prepare Your Students:

Immediately increase the amount of writing in your class. Students need to be writing across all subjects, at all grade levels. The expectation is that all kids will be doing at least four research projects a year.

Keep your expectations developmentally appropriate, but show your students how to find information, glean relevant facts from texts, and integrate those facts into their writing. Emphasize the importance of using information to support their arguments; the Common Core requires students to provide evidence for their conclusions and opinions.



# Expert advice on how to prepare for CCSS Testing Continued...

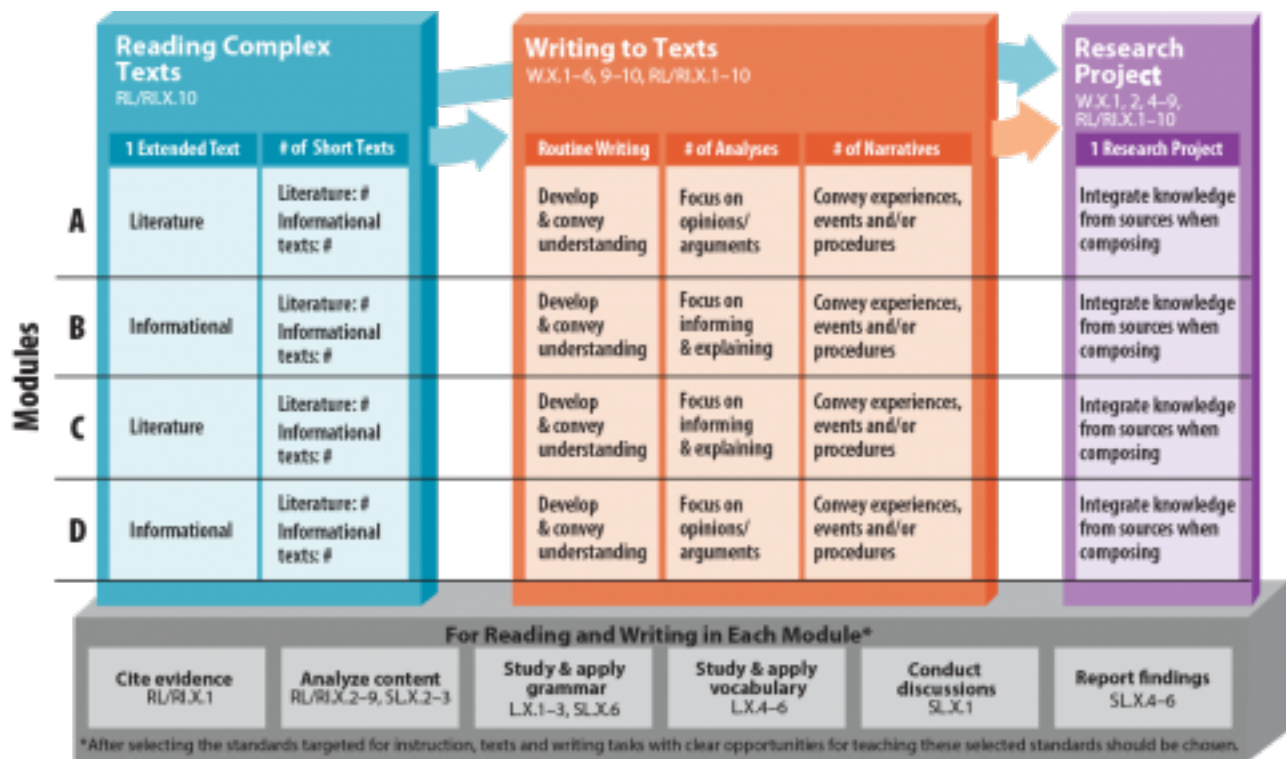
## Real-World Problem Solving

Instead of asking students to solve simple equations, the new assessments will require them to apply their mathematical knowledge to real-world problems. Your students will see multistep problems as well. And say good-bye to bonus points for guessing correctly on multiple-choice questions. Students will be asked to key in their answers—drastically reducing the chances that they will get questions right unless they understand the underlying mathematical principles.

One grade 6 prototype issued by PARCC asks students to determine how many miles a particular car can drive based on the amount of gas in the tank and a chart of the car’s typical gas mileage. The next question asks students to rank four cars’ gas mileage. To do so, they must be able to read and interpret graphs, manipulate numbers, and make calculations. The final question tells students how many miles a woman drove and how many gallons of gas she used, and asks students to figure out which of the four cars she was driving.

### How You Can Prepare Your Students:

Bring the real world into the classroom. For every math concept you teach, find a real-world application. And provide ample time and opportunities for students to explore ways of using math in everyday life. Of course, solid computation skills are essential too, so continue to emphasize accuracy in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Stress close and careful reading as well. If students rush through word problems or math directions, they’re likely to miss important information that could affect their answers. Gradually move away from simple equations to more complex, multistep problems.





# 'Twas the last day of school ..."

'Twas the last day of school and no one could talk

Everyone was silent and watching the clock!

The minute hand said it was five minutes to three, and excitement was growing inside us with glee!

Teachers and children were lost in a dream  
Of sandy white beaches and frozen ice cream!

No pencils, no folders, no homework to do,  
But my how fast this school year flew!

Have lots of fun and take time to play.

Happy summer to all—Enjoy each sunny day!



Hey Teacher,  
IT'S SUMMER!

## A Teacher's Summer Vacation



what my friends think  
I do



what my mom think I do



what society thinks I  
do



what my students think  
I do



what I think I do



what I really do