



EXTENDING AND
DIFFERENTIATING THE
COMMON CORE
STANDARDS



A POSITION PAPER

The California Association for the Gifted (CAG) periodically publishes position papers that deal with issues, policies, and practices that have an impact on the education of gifted and talented students. All position papers approved by the CAG Board of Directors are consistent with the organization's philosophy and mission, and the current research in the field.

The position papers support the organization's belief in the value and uniqueness of all individuals, its respect for diversity present in our society, and its commitment to honoring the similarities and differences among all students. CAG encourages the provision of educational opportunities that are appropriate to challenge and nurture the growth of each child's potential. The organization is especially mindful of the need for advocacy for individuals who have developed or show the promise of developing intellectual abilities and talents at high levels.



EXTENDING AND DIFFERENTIATING THE COMMON CORE STANDARDS

California Common Core State Standards (CCCSS) use educational concepts that have been the focus of gifted education for many years. These concepts stress rigor, depth, complexity, relevance, and deeper understanding. However, as stated by the Common Core State Standards Initiative, “The Standards set grade-specific standards but do not define the intervention methods or materials necessary to support students who are well below or well above grade-level expectations...the standards do not define the nature of advanced work for students who meet the Standards prior to the end of high school. For those students, advanced work...should be available.” Gifted education has developed effective strategies to both meet the needs of a wide variety of learners (differentiation) and create the mindset and metacognition to meet challenge. The pedagogy needed to support and extend the complex curriculum of CCCSS is already a core part of GATE training.

- In comparing the language of the new California Common Core State Standards with the current California Standards (CS), more emphasis is placed on rigor, clarity, and depth of understanding. For example:
 - Demonstrate understanding/ sort/ define role (CCCSS) vs. Identify/ Name (CS)
 - Reference to text to support answers, compare and contrast (CCCSS) vs. Ask and answer questions(CS)
 - Define role (CCCSS) vs. identify (CS)
 - Describe connections, Make sense of problems, Interpret, Explain in real-world contexts (CCCSS)
- There are fewer standards in CCCSS and more encouragement for students (and teachers) to go deeper into topics and make connections, both personal and cross-curricular.
- The California Common Core State Standards focus more on making sure students use the skills and strategies they learn, placing less emphasis on the learning of skills and more on the utilization and transfer of that knowledge to new situations.



- Implications for teachers: The CCCSS calls for general education teachers to recognize and address student learning differences, and incorporate rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills.
- Gifted education professionals play an important role in the implementation of the CCCSS in the classroom through collaboration with other teachers and by serving as valuable resources on differentiated curriculum and assessment. The evidence-based strategies that are used in gifted education can make a major contribution to the professional development that school administrators will need to support complex curriculum and deep student learning. The training should also demonstrate how to extend the Common Core and apply differentiation strategies, depth and complexity, critical thinking and inquiry, problem solving, and creative, divergent thinking.
- Professional development for implementing and extending the CCCSS for gifted and high-potential learners should focus on evidence-based differentiation practices as they relate to specific core content.

Because the California Common Core State Standards does not provide a framework for appropriately challenging students who are already at or above grade level, gifted programs are still essential. Therefore, the standards should be enriched by ensuring that there are open-ended opportunities to meet them through multiple pathways, more complex thinking applications, and real world problem-solving contexts. Programs will also be needed to address the social and emotional issues prevalent among gifted students and provide training and support for appropriate parenting strategies.



References:

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) website: <http://www.nagc.org/CommonCoreStateStandards.aspx>

Sacramento County Office of Education. (2010) Analysis of California Mathematics Standards to Common Core Standards California Department of Education: http://www.scoe.net/castandards/multimedia/k-12_math_crosswalks.pdf

Sacramento County Office of Education. (2010) Analysis of California ELA Standards to Common Core Standards California Department of Education: http://www.scoe.net/castandards/multimedia/k-12_ela_crowwalks.pdf

California Association for the Gifted. Position Paper (2003): "Gifted Learners in the Regular Classroom"