



Featured Topic - Common Core

During the past year, the Davidson Institute has received many questions asking how [Common Core State Standards \(CCSS\)](#) impact gifted students. To answer these questions, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) has dedicated [this section of their website](#) to CCSS with general information, FAQs and resources for educators and parents. Gifted education expert, Tamra Stambaugh, answers a few questions on CCSS and gifted students below. We hope that you find this information helpful and that you experience a successful end to your school year!

Guest Q&A

[Tamra Stambaugh, Ph.D.](#) is an assistant research professor in special education and executive director of Programs for Talented Youth at Vanderbilt University. Dr. Stambaugh conducts research primarily in gifted education with a focus on students of poverty, key curriculum and instructional interventions that support gifted learners. To read the full Q&A, [click here](#) as the following version has been edited.



What is Common Core and how does it affect gifted children?

Common Core is a set of College and Career academic standards focused on reading and math for students grades K-12. The development of the Common Core standards was led by the National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The standards were developed based on leading state and international standards. Teachers and experts were invited to comment on or contribute to the development of the standards. Forty-four states to date have adopted the Common Core standards (www.corestandards.org).

Common Core standards are basic college and career readiness standards designed for all students and were not written for gifted students. As many states are just beginning their journey toward implementation of Common Core, much about the impact on all students, including the gifted, is yet to be discovered. Proponents of Common Core argue that more rigorous, consistent standards across the nation promotes equity in educational expectations among the States, a chance to better compete in a global society, and the chance to have a better prepared group of high school graduates ready for college, career, and life in the 21st century. As there are fewer standards for teachers to teach, there can also be a stronger emphasis on depth and mastery instead of breadth. [Read more >](#)

Will gifted students' needs be better met with the implementation of Common Core?

Gifted students learn at a faster pace and make abstract connections within and across disciplines more easily than their same-age counterparts. A more rigorous set of standards can be an exciting thought for gifted children and their advocates but it is not enough.



Teachers will still need to differentiate for gifted students, in the era of Common Core. In a national survey led by the Fordham Foundation (2008) teachers reported spending less time and attention on high performers in the classroom than on low performers (Fordham, 2008). As new standards are introduced for all students, it is unlikely that teachers will shift their focus to advanced students if this currently isn't being done – especially with the accountability structures that are an integral part of state assessment systems. There are many competing priorities for educators right now. Given past history and even stiffer accountability systems in some states it is unlikely that gifted students will be a focus any time soon and the results of the Fordham Foundation survey will continue to be a reality. [Read more >](#)

What are some tips for educators to implement common core with gifted students?

1. Don't assume the standards are rigorous enough for gifted students and likewise, don't assume that gifted students will just know the standards without being taught. As shifts occur in the way teaching is happening and what is being taught, gifted students may need some time to adjust to a different way of learning, but this does not mean they don't need more rigorous content, higher expectations, and adjustment to the learning pace. They may just need to learn a new way of "doing" school. This doesn't make them any less gifted nor does it lessen the need for ongoing adaptations to better meet their needs.
2. Differentiation for gifted students is still necessary. Gifted students need fewer repetitions to learn new content, can grasp more advanced concepts within and across disciplines earlier, and prefer concept-based/whole-to-part teaching. While Common Core standards seem to support this type of learning to an extent, teachers will likely need to "unpack" the standards and scaffold instruction for the majority of learners and gifted students are still likely to move through the standards at a faster pace or will need more depth and complexity as well as adjustment to instructional strategies. As previously mentioned, raising the bar for all means raising the bar for gifted, too. Now that educators in most states are examining how to add rigor to the curriculum in general, conversations about adding rigor or creating/re-aligning advanced standards for gifted is most appropriate and necessary.
3. Classroom instructional management strategies such as different grouping strategies, diagnostic-prescriptive assessments, and acceleration are essential in a Common Core classroom to meet the needs of the gifted.
4. Administrators need to support teachers with the resources and structures necessary for gifted student growth. Without school-wide systems that allow for and support a variety of grouping strategies, replacement curriculum, and acceleration, for example, gifted student growth is likely to remain stagnant.
5. Administrators and teachers need professional development to meet the needs of gifted learners in the general classroom. Authors of the latest [State of the States](#) survey from the National Association for Gifted Children report that 17 states require teachers in gifted and talented programs to have a gifted education credential and only 3 states require general education teachers to have training in gifted education (see State of States, 2012-2013, NAGC). Professional development regarding how to meet the needs of gifted learners as part of Common Core is essential, as teachers are not typically prepared to meet the unique needs of this population.

What kinds of differentiated tasks can teachers prepare for gifted students in the classroom?

Differentiation for the gifted must occur at all levels of instruction: resources and materials, strategies/approaches, pacing, assessments, and task demands/questions/products. Teachers can create tasks that are more rigorous by asking students to conduct original research about

a topic, examine topics through overarching concepts, consider multiple variables to study, or add other disciplines for study (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006). [Read examples >](#)

How will the Common Core impact college admissions, especially for gifted students?

This is yet to be seen. According to the [College Board website](#), the SAT will be redesigned to better match the Common Core standards by 2016 and the ACT has been aligned to Common Core (<http://www.act.org/commoncore/pdf/CommonCoreAlignment.pdf>). We will have to see how this will play out and how universities will respond. Some universities have already adopted "test-optional" policies but this is not prevalent among elite universities. [Read more >](#)

For more details about the Common Core, view Dr. Stambaugh's PowerPoint - [Gifted Students and the Common Core: Implications from Practice \(PDF\)](#).

Resources

Davidson Gifted Database resources

The following books published by Prufrock Press all refer to some aspect of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and gifted education.

Providing teachers and administrators examples and strategies to implement CCSS with advanced learners at all stages of development in K through 12 schools, these books describe and demonstrate specific examples as well as effective differentiated activities.



- [Using the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts With Gifted and Advanced Learners](#)
- [A Teacher's Guide to Using the Common Core State Standards With Gifted and Advanced Learners in the English/Language Arts](#)
- [Using the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics with Gifted and Advanced Learners](#)
- [A Teacher's Guide to Using the Common Core State Standards With Mathematically Gifted and Advanced Learners](#)

Based on CCSS, this series offers instructional activities for high-ability students that emphasize critical and creative thinking skills while letting gifted students apply these skills in integrative and substantive ways.

- [Changing Tomorrow 1: Leadership Curriculum for High-Ability Elementary Students](#)
- [Changing Tomorrow 2: Leadership Curriculum for High-Ability Middle School Students](#)

The second edition of [Critical Issues and Practices in Gifted Education: What the Research Says \(2nd ed.\)](#), the definitive reference book about gifted education, presents updates on every topic with new research and introduces several critically important topics such as cluster grouping, Response to Intervention, programming standards, the CCSS, educational leadership and legal issues.

From Pieces of Learning publishing, the book [Differentiated Activities and Assessments Using the Common Core Standards](#) shows educators how to use differentiated curriculum, differentiated instruction, and differentiated assessment with the CCSS including more than 50 topics in language arts, math, social studies, science and interdisciplinary topics.

In the News

May 9, 2014 - *Washington Post*, [Chicago Teachers Union passes resolution opposing Common Core](#) (Valerie Strauss)

May 5, 2014 - *UConn Today*, [UConn Poll: Americans Skeptical About Common Core](#) (Tom Breen)

April 18, 2014 - *New York Times*, [When the Circus Descends](#) (editorial on [Common Core](#)) (D. Brooks)

October 30, 2013 - *EdWeek*, [Common Core Needs Tailoring for Gifted Learners, Advocates Say](#) (Katie Ash)

Davidson Institute Updates

Davidson Young Scholars

The [Davidson Young Scholars](#) program provides FREE services designed to nurture and support profoundly gifted young people and their families, including talent development and educational advocacy, an online community, annual get-togethers, and the Ambassador Program. Applications are due the first of each month. For more information, see the [How to Apply](#) and [Qualification Criteria](#) pages.



Educators Guild

All educators, and people interested in gifted education, are invited to join the [Educators Guild Discussion Group](#) on Facebook and contribute to the ongoing conversation about how to best serve the academic needs of our nation's brightest students.



Closing Thought

"Some students will be able to meet the standards faster than others, and the developers [of the common core] realized that one size does not fit all. They specifically [said that] children with disabilities and advanced learners are going to need more . . . Differentiation continues to be necessary for gifted learners under the common core."

~ Jane Clarenbach of [National Association for Gifted Children](#), in the Education Week article, [Common Core Needs Tailoring for Gifted Learners, Advocates Say](#)

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