

Communicating Effectively with Latino Parents: Common Core and Assessments

Our students need to be ready to succeed in college and in life. While Latino students have tripled their college-going rate, too often they arrive there only to discover they are not academically prepared to succeed. This can lead to students spending time and money on content they should have learned in high school—or worse—contributing to them dropping out entirely.

More than nine million Latino students are currently being taught to and assessed on the set of academic guidelines in math and English language arts, commonly known as the Common Core State Standards. Consistent standards and aligned assessments that more accurately gauge student learning are critical to leveling the playing field for all of our children.

Standards and assessments can play a powerful role in understanding where Latino students stand on their path to success. At the same time, Latino parents must be armed with the facts about the Common Core and assessments in order to make informed decisions about what's best for their children and sustain these learning supports over time.

Drawing from recent qualitative research with English-speaking and Spanish-speaking Latino parents, the following resource is designed to support communications to Latino parents about the Common Core and assessments.

Tip Sheet

Attitudes: Latino parents are...

- Generally more satisfied with the level of education their child is receiving than parents overall.
- More likely to feel that the expectations that are set at home and the child wanting to do their best, are the top reasons for the success of their child.
- Predisposed to support the Common Core and see the value in quality assessments. The intensity of support is strongest among Spanish-speaking Latino parents.
- Less likely to believe that there is too much testing in schools today.
- Largely unaware of “opting out” and once they have received information, are not in favor of parents opting their children out. This is particularly true among Spanish-speaking parents.
- Receptive to the idea that challenging students with harder material is a good thing. (NOTE: this resonates most with Spanish-speaking Latino parents.)

When Communicating With Latino Parents, remember to...

- Stay positive and focus on the long-term benefit to the student (e.g. success in college and career).
- Emphasize how the standards and assessments create consistent guidelines that promote equity in education.
- Explain that standards and assessments work hand-in-hand. Be sure to connect everything to student success and not focus entirely on process.
- Communicate a vision for education, not a single solution. In describing how standards and assessments benefit students, be sure to not frame them as a “silver bullet” that will address all of the challenges facing the education system.
- Show examples that illustrate how the standards and assessments are working. For example, many states and communities are seeing increased ACT scores and grade level assessment scores. It can also be useful to highlight personal examples of student and teacher success in using the new standards.

On Assessments:

- Acknowledge that tests are just one part of understanding a child’s progress. Homework, report cards and updates from teachers are also critical elements when looking at how students are progressing.
- Note that new assessments replace previous tests and now provide parents and teachers a more accurate look at a child’s progress.
- Emphasize that the new tests measure the skills students need after high school, such as: communications, teamwork, critical thinking, analytical writing and problem solving.

On Score Release:

- Begin by describing the scores as a “new baseline.” It is not fair to compare the new test results to the old because these are new tests that measure different skills. What happens next is what matters, not what happened before.
- Acknowledge that the tests are more challenging, but that it’s worth it because they provide accurate information on how students are doing.

Commonly Used Terms

English

Common Core State Standards

Assessments

Critical thinking

Problem solving

Analytical writing

College and career ready

New baseline

State tests

Report cards

Opting out/opt-out

Ready to succeed

Spanish

Estándares Académicos Fundamentales

Nuevos exámenes

Pensamiento crítico

Resolución de problemas

Escritura analítica

Preparados para la universidad y carrera profesional

Nuevo punto de partida

Nuevos exámenes / exámenes estatales

Notas de calificaciones

Optar por no tomar los exámenes “opting out”

Rumbo al triunfo

Key Messages: English

- Where a family lives, how much money they make, or their race or ethnicity should not determine the quality of the education that a child receives or their ability to succeed in college and career. Consistent standards and assessments for students throughout the country mean that more students will receive a quality education and have an equal chance to succeed.
- The Common Core State Standards ensure that all students are prepared for success after graduation by establishing a set of clear, consistent guidelines for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level in math and English.
- To be ready for college and careers, students need to apply their knowledge and skills in areas such as communications, teamwork, critical thinking, analytical writing and problem solving.
- In addition to report cards and updates from my child's teacher(s), the new tests provide parents with a more honest look at how students are doing and whether they are on track to succeed.
- The student test results recently released are the first for [STATE]'s students to measure the academic goals laid out in the Common Core State Standards [OR STATE SPECIFIC NAME] and mark a new baseline that enables us to know where all of our students stand on their path to success.
- The Common Core State Standards and assessments will improve student achievement over time. But, as with any change, there is a period of adjustment as teachers and students get used to the new standards and tests.
- In Kentucky, the first state to begin using the Common Core, student test scores went down at first. But the percentage of high school graduates ready for college and careers increased from 34 percent to 62 percent in four years.

Opting Out

- Taking standardized tests is part of life. You have to take a test to get into the military and most four-year colleges. In many professions—from hair dressers to doctors—you have to take tests to earn licenses. Taking these end-of-year tests helps prepare students for what lies ahead.

Key Messages: Spanish

- El éxito en la universidad o en la carrera profesional de un estudiante no debe depender de donde viva su familia, su nivel económico, su raza o su grupo étnico. Los estándares consistentes y los nuevos exámenes significan que más estudiantes en el país recibirán una educación de calidad y tendrán igual acceso al éxito.
- Los Estándares Académicos Fundamentales, conocidos como el Common Core, aseguran que todos los estudiantes estén preparados para triunfar después de graduarse porque establecen normas claras y consistentes de lo que los estudiantes deben aprender en cada año escolar, tanto en las matemáticas como en las artes del lenguaje inglés.
- Para prepararse para la universidad y carrera profesional, los estudiantes necesitan aplicar sus conocimientos y destrezas en áreas como: comunicación, trabajo en equipo, pensamiento crítico, escritura analítica y resolución de problemas.
- Además de las notas de calificaciones (report cards) y la comunicación con los maestros de mis hijos, los nuevos exámenes dan a los padres un sentido más honesto de cómo le está yendo a los estudiantes, y si están en camino al éxito.
- Porque los Estándares Académicos Fundamentales (Common Core) dan a los estudiantes las destrezas necesarias para triunfar en la escuela, la universidad, y en el lugar de trabajo, llevar los estándares a un nivel más alto hace que los exámenes difíciles valgan la pena.
- Los nuevos exámenes estatales presentan un reto mayor a los estudiantes porque el mundo de hoy presenta retos mayores, y los estudiantes necesitan saber y poder hacer más, para estar listos y triunfar en la universidad y carrera profesional.
- Los resultados de los estudiantes en los exámenes recientemente publicados son los primeros que miden las metas académicas especificadas en los Estándares Académicos Fundamentales, el Common Core, para los estudiantes del estado de [NOMBRE DEL ESTADO]. Esto marca un nuevo punto de partida y medida que nos permite saber si ellos están camino al éxito.
- Los Estándares Académicos Fundamentales (Common Core) y los nuevos exámenes van a mejorar el rendimiento escolar año tras año. Pero como en todo cambio, habrá un periodo de ajuste en el cual los maestros y estudiantes tendrán que acostumbrarse a los nuevos exámenes.
- En Kentucky, el primer estado en utilizar los Estándares Académicos Fundamentales (Common Core), el puntaje que lograron los estudiantes en los exámenes disminuyó al principio, pero el porcentaje de estudiantes que se graduaron de la secundaria listos para la universidad y carreras profesionales aumentó de un 34 por ciento a un 54 por ciento, en solo tres años.

Optar por no tomar los exámenes "opting out"

- Tomar exámenes estandarizados es parte de la vida. Para ingresar al ejército o la mayoría de universidades tienes que tomar un examen. En muchas profesiones—desde un estilista hasta un médico—hay que tomar exámenes para ser acreditado o tener licencia para ejercer. Los exámenes de final de año escolar, ayuda a que los estudiantes estén preparados para el futuro.