An Open Letter to the People of Acton and Boxborough 6/6/14
From ABRSD Superintendent of Schools Stephen E. Mills, Ed.D.

To be honest, when I took this job five years ago, of course I was honored and proud however, I was also a little intimidated. How do you improve a school system that is already outstanding? As I conclude my 36 year career, I would like to share with you some of the things I have tried to do while serving as your Superintendent. Many of us in the community worked hard four years ago to create a Long Range Strategic Plan that is guiding us even to this day. According to the Plan, 900 people come to work every day to fulfill our mission: to prepare all students to attain their full potential as lifelong learners, critical thinkers and productive citizens of our diverse community and global society. That mission is supported by six prioritized values. Drawing from our mission and values, we created six goals that have guided our work for these past three years. The first goal is about the students, the second about the academic program, the third about the teachers, the fourth involves technology, the fifth is the effective use of our facilities and space, and the sixth involves how we are going to pay to implement the first five.

As you know, these have been very difficult years in terms of finances due to the economic downturn. Many similar school districts have laid off many dozens of teachers. Here at AB, we have added professional positions. We added full time art, music and physical education teachers as well as full time assistant principals at the elementary schools. Much needed counseling and psychological support was added from kindergarten through grade 12. We built out a special education program at the High School and reduced the number of sections that English teachers teach to four. All of these personnel additions are consistent with the Long Range Strategic Plan.

We accomplished all of this by increasing the budget by less than 10% over 5 years, or less than 1.9% per year. This was done by reallocating available funds to direct service to students. I occasionally get asked whether or not my budget recommendations are sustainable over the long term. My response to that is given that these communities are defined by its world class public schools, the better question is whether we can afford NOT to sustain them.

During the years I have been here, the High School was designated a Blue Ribbon High School, the highest achievement available from the US Department of Education. The entire district is a Green Ribbon District, in part because we have reduced consumption of fossil fuels by 35%. US News and World Report said we have the 10th best High School in the country. Boston Magazine rated us first in the state in advanced placement scores and second in SAT scores. Boston Business Journal recently rated us the second best public school system in Massachusetts. Acton and Boxborough are now a fully regionalized school district K-12. We built out the Lower Fields Project in an extraordinary public/private partnership that has been successful athletically and financially. One final thought: the teachers here at AB are the finest in the world. You should treat them as such. It has been the greatest honor in my career to serve as your Superintendent these past five years. Thank you.

To: Stephen Mills
From: Larry Dorey
Re: Discipline Report for June, 2014
Date: 6/20/2014

There were 11 discipline referrals to the administration during the month of June, 2014. This total is up from 7 last year. 2 students were suspended this month, while 1 student was suspended during June, 2013

Suspensions for June, 2014

Infraction	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**
Abusive Language					
Computer Use					1
Drug Distribution				1	
Drug Possession	1				
Fighting	2				
Harassment	1				
Insubordination			1		
Truancy Issues					1
Total	4	0	23	1	2

A list of all infractions for the month of June, 2014 appears on the backside of this page.

c: JoAnn Campbell

Other Infractions for June, 2014

Infraction	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Abusive Language		1			
Abusive Language	1				
Academic Integrity		5			
Bus Discipline Issues		2			
C.H. Alcohol		1	2		
Computer Use Violation					1
Disrespectful Behavior					
Disruptive/Uncooperative Behav.	1		22	1	9
Drug Distribution				1	
Drug Paraphernalia	1				
Drug Possession	1				
Fighting	2				
Forgery				1	
Harassment	1		1		
Insubordination			1		
Leaving School Grounds		2			
Other		1	1	1	
Out of School Issue					
Tardy to School				2	
Teasing		2			
Threatening				1	
Truancy		3			1
Total	8	17	27	7	11

22.3

R.J. Grey Junior High School

To: Steve Mills
From: Allison Warren and Jim Marcotte
Re: Discipline Report for June 2014
Date: June 23, 2014

There were 12 discipline referrals/concerns (including requests from teachers for assistance) reported to the Administration during the month of June. There was 1 suspension this past month.

	Jun-10	Jun-11	Jun-12	Jun-13	Jun-14
Total Discipline Referrals Reported	*19*	*12*	*8*	*13*	*12*

	Jun-10	Jun-11	Jun-12	Jun-13	Jun-14
Total Suspensions	**3**	**1**	**0**	**4**	**1**
drug-related incident					
fighting	2				
harassment (non-sexual)					
inappropriate/disruptive/ disrespectful behavior				2	
non-compliance with school rules					
physical aggression	1				
possession/sale of illegal substance					
sexual harassment		1			1
stealing				2	
threatening					
Truancy					

	Jun-10	Jun-11	Jun-12	Jun-13	Jun-14
Total Other Infractions	**16**	**11**	**8**	**9**	**11**
abusive language/profanity				2	
bus discipline					
Academic integrity			1		1
class/school truancies		1			
computer violation					
dangerous behavior					
defacing property/vandalism					
disruptive behavior (classroom, cafeteria, hallway)	10	1	5	3	6

fighting					
harassment (non-sexual)/bullying/teasing					1
non-compliance with school rules	4	1	1	4	
out of school issue					
physical aggression		2			
sexual harassment					
stealing					
threatening					
uncooperative/disrespectful behavior	2	6	1		3
other					

The referrals/concerns generally were quickly resolved and no further intervention was required.

R.J. Grey Junior High School

To: Steve Mills
From: Allison Warren and Jim Marcotte
Re: Discipline Report for May 2014
Date: June 23, 2014

There were 23 discipline referrals/concerns (including requests from teachers for assistance) reported to the Administration during the month of May. There were 4 suspensions this past month.

	May-10	**May-11**	**May-12**	**May-13**	**May-14**
Total Discipline Referrals Reported	*31*	*22*	*21*	*42*	*23*

	May-10	**May-11**	**May-12**	**May-13**	**May-14**
Total Suspensions	**7**	**1**	**6**	**5**	**4**
drug-related incident			1		
fighting	2		3		2
harassment (non-sexual)					
inappropriate/disruptive/disrespectful behavior	3	1		3	1
non-compliance with school rules			1	1	
physical aggression	2				
sexual harassment			1	1	
stealing					1
threatening					

	May-10	**May-11**	**May-12**	**May-13**	**May-14**
Total Other Infractions	**24**	**21**	**15**	**37**	**19**
abusive language/profanity				1	
alcohol use/possession					
bus discipline		1	5	10	
Academic integrity	2				
class/school truancies	1			5	
computer violation					2
vandalism				1	
disruptive behavior (classroom, cafeteria, hallway)	11	8	1	8	11
harassment (non-sexual)/bullying/teasing	3	4	2	4	1
non-compliance with school rules	3		3	6	1

out of school issue					
physical aggression	2				
sexual harassment					
stealing					
threatening					
uncooperative/disrespectful behavior	2	8	4	2	4

The referrals/concerns generally were quickly resolved and no further intervention was required.

22.4.a.

MONTHLY REPORTING OF
ELL STUDENT POPULATION
Acton Public Schools
June 1, 2014

Category	Total as of 5/1/2014	Additions	Subtractions	Total as of 6/1/2014
Conant	35	+2	0	37
Douglas	31	+1	0	32
Gates	22	0	0	22
McCarthy-Towne	41	0	0	41
Merriam	24	0	-1	23
APS TOTAL	**153**	**+3**	**-1**	**155**

ELL STUDENT POPULATION
Acton-Boxborough Regional School District
June 1, 2014

Category	Total as of 5/1/2014	Additions	Subtractions	Current Total as of 6/1/2014
RJG JHS	11	0	0	11
ABRHS	13	0	0	13
ABRSD TOTALS	**24**	**0**	**0**	**24**

EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDENT POPULATION
MONTHLY REPORTING & PROJECTIONS
Acton Public Schools
June 1, 2014

	April 1, 2014	Additions/ Subtractions April 1, 2014	Final Total As of April 1, 2014	May 1, 2014	Additions/ Subtractions May 1, 2014	Final Total As of May 1, 2014	June 1, 2014	Additions/ Subtractions June 1, 2014	Final Total As of June 1, 2014	**End of Year *Projection***
SPED 3-Year Olds (In-District)	25	+1	26	26	0	26	26	0	26	26
SPED 4-Year Old (In-District)	16	0	16	16	+2	18	18	0	18	19
SPED 5-Year Old (In-District)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
SPED 3-Year Old *Tuition in From Boxborough*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPED 4-Year Old *Tuition in From Boxborough*	2	0	2	2	0	2	2	0	2	1
SPED Student In Class TOTAL	**43**	**+0**	**44**	**44**	**+2**	**46**	**46**	**0**	**46**	**48-50**
Itinerant	15	+2	17	17	0	17	17	+1	18	20
OOD Preschool	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	2
SPED TOTAL	**59**	**+3**	**62**	**62**	**+2**	**64**	**64**	**+1**	**65**	**61-62**
**TYPICAL* 3-year old (In-District)	23	0	23	23	0	23	23	0	23	24
**TYPICAL* 4-Year Olds (In-District)	25	+1	26	26	-1	25	25	0	25	28
TOTAL	**107**	**+4**	**111**	**111**	**+1**	**112**	**112**	**+1**	**113**	**112****

The school district must ensure that programs are available for eligible students 3 and 4 years of age. The programs must developmentally appropriate and located in a setting that includes student with and without disabilities (State Requirement 603 CMR 28.06 (7) and Federal Requirement 34 CFR 300.101 (b); 300.124(b); 300.323(b))
****Projections may be impacted by move-ins and/or Department of Public Health referrals**

6/1/2014

MONTHLY ENROLLMENT

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOLS
2013-2014 ACADEMIC YEAR

	Sept. 1				Oct. 1				Nov. 1				Dec. 1				Jan. 1				Feb. 1				Mar. 1				Apr. 1				May 1				Jun 1			
Levels	A	B (1)	C	Tot	A	B (1)	C	Tot	A	B (1)	C	Tot	A	B (1)	C	Tot	A	B (1)	C	Tot	A	B (1)	C	Tot	A	B (1)	C	Tot	A	B (1)	C	Tot	A	B (1)	C	Tot	A	B (1)	C	Tot
K	281	39	7	288	281	39	7	288	281	40	7	288	281	39	7	288	280	40	7	287	278	40	7	285	277	40	7	284	280	40	7	287	278	40	7	285	280	40	7	287
1	302	51	6	308	302	51	6	308	301	52	6	307	298	51	6	304	300	51	6	306	302	52	6	308	302	52	6	308	302	52	6	308	305	54	6	311	305	54	6	311
2	316	60	6	322	316	60	6	322	317	60	6	323	316	60	6	322	315	61	6	321	314	61	6	320	314	61	6	320	313	61	6	319	315	61	6	321	315	61	6	321
3	366	59	8	374	365	59	9	374	365	60	9	374	365	59	9	374	365	59	9	374	365	59	9	374	365	59	9	374	364	58	9	373	363	58	9	372	364	58	9	373
4	373	57	7	380	375	57	7	382	375	57	7	382	374	58	7	381	373	59	7	380	372	58	7	379	372	58	7	378	371	58	7	380	373	58	7	380	373	58	7	380
5	355	71	2	357	355	71	2	357	355	72	2	357	356	72	2	358	358	73	2	360	360	74	2	362	361	74	2	363	361	74	2	363	362	75	2	364	362	75	2	364
6	358	71	2	360	358	69	2	360	359	69	2	361	358	69	2	360	357	70	2	359	356	70	2	358	357	70	2	359	356	70	2	358	362	70	2	364	357	70	2	359
1 D.Pre-sch. Cl	55	22	0	55	41	22	0	41	41	22	0	41	45	22	0	45	46	23	0	46	53	23	0	53	55	26	0	55	58	27	0	58	60	27	0	60	59	27	0	59
In D.Pre-sch. Itn	0	2	0	0	8	2	0	8	8	2	0	8	9	2	0	9	9	2	0	9	9	2	0	9	9	2	0	9	9	2	0	9	9	2	0	9	9	2	0	9
OOD Pre-sch	2	2	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	2	0	1	1	2	0	1	1	2	0	1	1	2	0	1	2	2	0	2
O.D. SPED K-6	22	7	0	22	24	7	0	24	25	7	0	25	25	7	0	25	26	7	0	26	26	7	0	26	25	7	0	25	25	7	0	25	25	7	0	25	24	7	0	24
A.P.S. Total	2430	441	38	2468	2425	439	39	2464	2427	443	39	2466	2427	441	39	2466	2430	447	39	2469	2436	448	39	2475	2438	451	39	2477	2440	451	39	2479	2453	454	39	2492	2450	454	39	2489
7	391	71	7	469	389	72	7	468	390	72	7	469	390	72	7	469	391	72	7	470	389	71	7	467	389	71	7	467	387	72	7	466	386	72	7	465	386	72	7	465
8	374	77	9	460	376	78	9	463	376	78	9	463	376	79	9	464	373	77	9	459	373	76	9	458	374	76	9	459	374	77	9	460	375	78	9	462	374	79	9	462
J.H.S. Total	765	148	16	929	765	150	16	931	766	150	16	932	766	151	16	933	764	149	16	929	762	147	16	925	763	147	16	926	761	149	16	926	761	150	16	927	760	151	16	927
9	398	71	9	478	394	72	9	475	396	72	8	476	396	72	8	476	394	72	7	473	394	72	7	473	394	71	8	473	393	71	8	472	392	71	8	471	393	71	8	472
10	403	72	9	484	404	73	9	486	404	73	9	486	404	73	9	486	403	73	9	485	401	73	9	483	402	73	9	484	402	72	9	483	401	72	9	482	401	72	9	482
11	396	78	8	482	393	81	8	482	393	80	8	481	395	80	8	483	394	81	8	483	396	82	8	486	398	80	8	486	398	80	8	486	397	80	8	485	403	81	8	492
12	411	108	5	524	405	106	6	517	405	107	6	518	403	107	6	516	403	107	6	516	404	106	6	516	404	106	6	516	403	106	6	515	402	106	6	514	397	105	6	508
9-12 Ungr.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P.G.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
H.S. Total	1608	329	31	1968	1596	332	32	1960	1598	332	31	1961	1598	332	31	1961	1594	333	30	1957	1595	333	30	1958	1598	330	31	1959	1596	329	31	1956	1592	329	31	1952	1594	329	31	1954
Total JHS & HS	2373	477	47	2897	2361	482	48	2891	2364	482	47	2893	2364	483	47	2894	2358	482	46	2886	2357	480	46	2883	2361	477	47	2885	2357	478	47	2882	2353	479	47	2879	2354	480	47	2881
O.D. SPED 7-12	43	8	0	51	43	8	1	52	48	8	0	56	48	8	0	56	51	8	0	59	53	8	0	61	52	9	0	61	52	9	0	61	52	9	0	61	54	9	0	63
Reg. Total	2416	485	47	2948	2404	490	49	2943	2412	490	47	2949	2412	491	47	2950	2409	490	46	2945	2410	488	46	2944	2413	486	47	2946	2409	487	47	2943	2405	488	47	2940	2408	489	47	2944
A.P.S. Total	2430	441	38	2468	2425	439	39	2464	2427	443	39	2466	2427	441	39	2466	2430	447	39	2469	2436	448	39	2475	2438	451	39	2477	2440	451	39	2479	2453	454	39	2492	2450	454	39	2489
Reg. Total	2416	485	47	2948	2404	490	49	2943	2412	490	47	2949	2412	491	47	2950	2409	490	46	2945	2410	488	46	2944	2413	486	47	2946	2409	487	47	2943	2405	488	47	2940	2408	489	47	2944
Grand Total	4846	485	85	5416	4829	490	88	5407	4839	490	86	5415	4839	491	86	5416	4839	490	85	5414	4846	488	85	5419	4851	486	86	5423	4849	487	86	5422	4858	488	86	5432	4858	489	86	5433

A = ACTON
B = BOXBOROUGH
C = Choice/Staff/Tuition In

Pre-School = SPED
P.G. = Post Graduates
Ungr. = Ungraded
O.D. = SPED Out of District

In D. = In District

Distribution:
S. Mills
M. Altieri
D. Bookis
L. Huber
D. Aicardi
A. Bisewicz
K. Nelson
E. Weiner
R. Cvitkovich
C. Bates
All Principals (2)

Students other than Choice counted under column C:
Staff Students -
Tuition In Students -
Sped Tuition in Students

 # Staff Children (38) Municipal Agreement (1)
Case [ ]

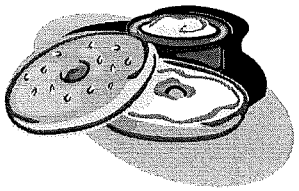
Actual
Acton Public Schools
2013-2014

6/2/2014
3:36 PM

June 1, 2014

Grade YO	Conant			Total	Douglas			Total	Gates			Total	McCarthy-Towne				Total	Merriam				Total	#Sec.	Avg. Siz
Rm	CAD	CAM	CPM	2#	DAD1	DAD2	DAM		GAD	GAM		1#	TAD1	TAD2	TAM	[1]3#		MAD	MAM	MPM	1#	7#		
													Case	22	20	21	63							
K-26	20	21	21	62	20	21	20	61	21	20	41		21	20	21	62		20	20	21	61	287	14	20.5
Rm	3	4	5	1#	3	4	5	2#	3	5			310	311	312	[1]2#		133	231	334	1#	6#		
													Case	23	22	22	67							
Gr. 1-2	23	23	23	69	22	22	23	67	22	21	43		22	22	22	66		22	22	22	66	311	14	22.2
Rm	6	7	8		6	7	8		6	8	10	3#	301	302	303	{1}1#		224	234	323	2#	6#		
													Case	22	23	22	67							
Gr. 2-2	21	21	21	63	22	20	22	64	21	22	22	65	22	22	22	66		21	21	21	63	321	15	21.4
Rm	9	10	20		9	10	11		17	7	9	3#	313	314	315	[4]2#	230	324	330	331	4#	9#		
													Case	23	24	26	73							
Gr. 3-2	23	24	23	70	24	24	23	71	23	24	24	71	23	23	23	69	23	23	23	23	92	373	16	23.3
Rm	17	18	19	1#	12	13	14	2#	18	19	20	1#	213	214	215	[3]3#	233	321	322	332		7#		
													Case	26	24	24	74							
Gr. 4-2	23	24	24	71	25	24	23	72	24	24	24	72	23	24	24	71	23	23	24	24	94	380	16	23.8
Rm	14	15	16		19	20	21		13	15	16	1#	210	211	212	[3]		135	232	333	1#	2#		
													Case	24	27	24	75							
Gr. 5-2	24	25	25	74	23	25	25	73	24	24	24	72	24	24	24	72		24	24	25	73	364	15	24.3
Rm	11	12	13		15	16	17		11	12	14		113	114	115	1#		223	235	335	1#	2#		
Gr. 6-2	24	24	24	72	24	24	24	72	24	25	24	73	24	24	24	72		23	23	24	70	359	15	23.9
Total Staff				4#				4#				9#				12#					10#	39#		
													Case+	[13]	Averag	23.6	495							
Total	21 Sec	Averag	22.9	481	21 Sec	Averag	22.9	480	19 Sec	Averag	23.0	437		21 Sec	Averag	22.8	478		23 Se	Avera	22.6	519	2395	105	22.8
Range	20	25			20	25			20	25				20	24					20	25			20	25

ALL DAY K - CAD, DAD1, DAD2, GAD, TAD1, TAD2, and MAD



Acton-Boxborough Regional High School
SUMMER SCHOOL

CAFETERIA INFORMATION

The High School Cafeteria will be open again this summer

From 6/25/2014 to 8/1/2014

ALL ARE INVITED!

Breakfast and Lunch will be sold daily from

9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Morning Break:

We will offer…Bagels, Fresh Fruit, Yogurt, Breakfast Sandwiches And bottled water

Grab and Go Lunch:

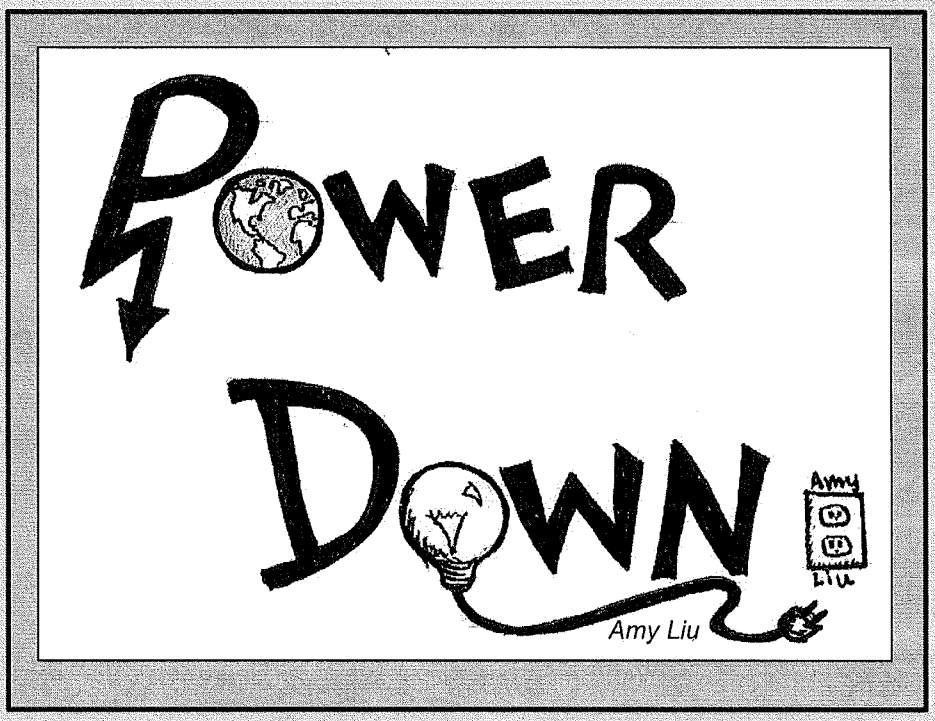
We will offer…Assorted Wrap Sandwiches, Salad and Daily Lunch Specials! All lunches are served with Choice of Milk, fruit and vegetables.

If your child currently receives free or reduced lunch, their Eligibility will continue through the Summer.

ENERGY CONSERVATION
"GREEN TEAM" PORTFOLIOS 2014

~

Acton-Boxborough Regional School District



Congratulations to the AB community on the four national & state awards received following review by:

- Massachusetts Dept of Energy Resources
- Nat'l Energy Education Development (NEED)
- NSTAR

22.8

Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

SCHOOLS OPEN

***Note changes in Elementary schedules*

Wednesday, September 3, 2014*

* With the exception of
8th, 10th, 11th, & 12th graders, who start on Thursday, September 4th

HIGH SCHOOL 7:23 a.m. - 2:18 p.m.

JUNIOR HIGH 7:30 a.m. - 2:06 p.m.

BLANCHARD, DOUGLAS & GATES
All-Day K and Grades 1-6
8:40 a.m. - 2:50 p.m.
(1st & 3rd *Thursdays 12:20 p.m. dismissal*)

Kindergarten
AM Session - 8:40 a.m. - 11:20 a.m.
PM Session – 12:10 p.m. - 2:50 p.m.
(No PM session on 1st & 3rd Thursdays each month)

CONANT, McCARTHY-TOWNE, MERRIAM
All-Day K and Grades 1-6
9:20 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
(1st & 3rd *Thursdays – 1:00 p.m. dismissal*)

Kindergarten
AM Session - 9:20 a.m. - 12 noon
(Thursday schedule 9:20 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.)
PM Session - 12:50 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
(No PM session on 1st & 3rd Thursdays each month)

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Elementary School Lunch Price: $2.75
Junior High & High School Lunch Price: $2.75
Milk only: $ .50

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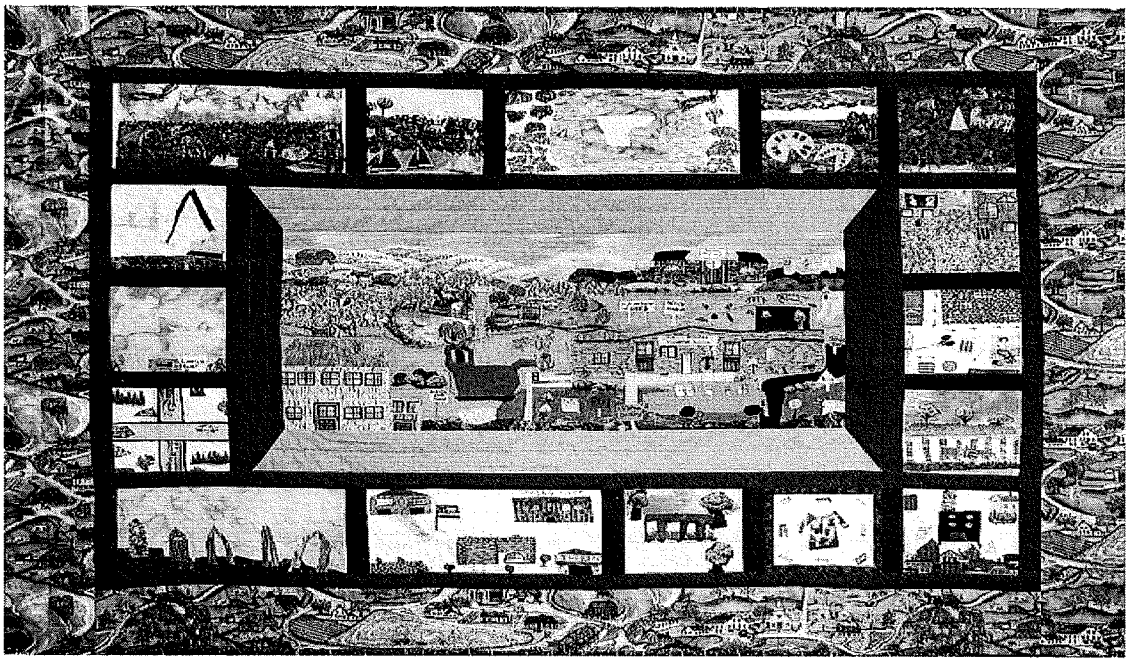
*****Direct Phone Numbers ******

Blanchard: (978) 263-4569 **Conant**: 978-266-2550 **Douglas**: 978-266-2560 **Gates**: 978-266-2570
All other schools: 978-264-4700

06/18/14



June 21, 2014

Nancy Sherburne

Acton, MA 01724

Dear Nancy,

The thread that binds the fabric together is critical to the integrity and structure of making a high quality quilt. The thread is PAC; the fabric is the school; the quilt is the end product of our school-home partnership.

Your contribution to the Acton & Acton-Boxborough Special Education Parent Advisory Council has been remarkable, in that you built a conglomerate of disparate people from its infancy to a respected organization in which there is a built-in partnership with the schools. This was no easy feat. But through your tenacity, prolific writing style and organized presentations, you convinced your parent base to become involved, to flourish as advocates for programs and budgets which supported them, and served on many occasions as the first contact for parents & guardians, new to Pupil Services and special education.

Consequently, you worked tirelessly to establish an interactive and honest relationship with Pupil Services which resulted in a partnership between school and home for the brainstorming of programs which met the needs of our diversified student body, for example, open discussions about strategies and supports for the expansion of our Junior High Connections and High School Bridges programs and the extended summer modules that emphasized the mastery of social skills with regular education peers.

But, the PAC Chair was not an easy task. You reached out to parents to support and unite them, you clarified the role of PAC through the school committee's interaction and subsequent policy, you created a Special Education Handbook for parents to appropriately guide them through the special education process and district resources and programs. You even increased our special education resources at the Acton Public Library to conveniently make those resources available to parents, guardians, and town residents.

To further help parents, you launched the new and innovative website which is informative and rich in detail (website: abspedpac.org). This "one stop shopping" for information on the schools, is well-known among other PACs and serves as a model for other school districts.

Moreover, your focus has always been on student achievement. Either through parent surveys to gather information and perceptions or through the PAC generated reports on analyses of data (MCAS, budget), you always demonstrated thoughtful, respectful, but intentional suggestions for improvement of an already excellent school district. All admired your passion and your long and arduous hours of work for student, families and schools. Paramount in your skills was your ability to be a "buffer" when issues were not as clear as the expectation; your style is unique and consequently, you gained respect from both the schools and home community.

You accomplished a great deal since 2006 and I am thrilled that you have served the schools so well. On behalf of the schools and community, I thank you for the volunteer service you have faithfully done for all of us.

Sincerely,

Liza Huber
Director of Pupil Services

Office of the Director of Curriculum and Assessment
Acton Public Schools
Acton-Boxborough Regional School District
(978) 264-4700 x 3213
http://ab.mec.edu/curriculum/curriculum.shtml

TO: Dr. Stephen Mills, Superintendent
FROM: Deborah Bookis, Director of Curriculum and Assessment
DATE: June 20, 2014
RE: Implementing New MA Frameworks (CCSS)

For the past several years, the district has been implementing the 2011 Massachusetts English Language Arts and Literacy Framework and the 2011 Massachusetts Mathematics Framework, both of which include 100% of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education developed a three-year transition plan to which the district strictly adhered. Specific information about what teachers and administrators have done towards this transition has been posted yearly on the district website under "Curriculum Standards." In addition, the following yearly postings and outreach have been done in an effort to keep the community apprised of our concerns and progress.

2010-2011

- Postings on district website . . . What has the district done to prepare for the new Frameworks?
- Postings on district curriculum website about MA DESE transition plans from 2001 to 2011 Frameworks

2011-2012

- Continued postings on district website . . . What has the district done to prepare for the new Frameworks?
- MCAS presentation and postings and reports by the *Beacon*
- Summer 2012 Professional Learning Posting

2012-2013

- Continued postings on district website . . . What has the district done to prepare for the new Frameworks?
- Memo to School Committee 9-12-12, *Open House Information for Parents*
- Elementary School Open Houses attended by Director of Curriculum and Assessment and the Elementary Mathematics Curriculum Specialist/Coach
- Posted Open House documents to the district website
- Principals included links to Open House documents in their eloops and newsletters
- MCAS presentation and postings and reports by the *Beacon*
- Professional Day Report 2012
- December 12, 2012 letter, *Implementing State Initiatives Response,* written by Marc Lewis, President of the Acton Education Association, and Deborah Bookis, Director of Curriculum and Assessment. This letter was sent to Mitchell Chester, Commissioner, MA DESE; Jamie Eldridge, State Senator; Cory Atkins and Jennifer Benson, State Representatives; *EdWeek*; *The Beacon*; *The Patch*; and the *Boston Globe*.
- 2013 Summer Professional Learning Posting

2013-2014

- Continued postings on district website . . . What has the district done to prepare for the new Frameworks?
- MCAS presentation and posting and reports by the *Beacon*
- November 7, 2013 Joint School Committee PARCC motion
- Professional Day Report 2013

Search Go

Acton Public Schools & Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

Home | District | School Committee | Our Schools | Departments | Students | Parents | Staff | Community

Quick Links

Bullying Prevention & Intervention

The District recognizes that safe learning environments are necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. Read the following information regarding bullying.

- District Bullying Prevention & Intervention Policy
- District Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts Bullying Law
- Guidance for Students With Disabilities
- Parent, Student & Teacher Resources
- Reporting Incidents

PreK–Grade 12 Regionalization

On June 3, 2013, voters at Town Meetings in Acton and Boxborough approved the expansion of the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District to include PreK–12. The new PreK–12 Region will begin on July 1, 2014.

- Earlier Regionalization Updates
- PreK–12 Regional Agreement, Approved 6/3/13

News & Events

Last Day of School 2014: The **last day of school** will be Wednesday, June 18, 2014. Read about **dismissal times**, bus schedules and end-of-year assemblies. more

2014-2015 Calendar, Fall 2014 School Opening and Open

Welcome to the APS & AB School District

Welcome from the Acton Public Schools (APS) and Acton-Boxborough Regional School District (ABRSD). APS refers to students (grades K-6) from Acton; ABRSD includes junior high and high school students (grades 7-12) who live in Acton and Boxborough. The AB District also includes the Carol P. Huebner Preschool and Acton-Boxborough Community Education. Read a message from our superintendent, Steve Mills.

School Committee News

- Meetings: Calendar, Agendas, Packets & Minutes more
- Archives: Agendas, Packets & Approved Minutes more

Department News

Curriculum News

- Curriculum Websites: Literacy, Math, and Science/Social Studies more
- Common Core State Standards (CCSS): Math information for Parents more
- Common Core Information: Overview for Parents more

Facilities News

- Green Ribbon Schools and K-12 Recycling Awards: ED-GRS and MassRecycle more
- 18% Electricity Reduction: Thanks to faculty, students & staff more
- Energy Efficiency: EPA Energy Star awards to four

Soccer at Gates Elementary

Curriculum Standards

Course Selection

Learn about course selection at the junior high and high school by reading Understanding Course Selection at R.J Grey JHS and ABRHS.

Frameworks

The new Massachusetts English Language (ELA) Arts & Literacy and Mathematics Frameworks are available online. This site, known as the "CANDI site" (**C**urriculum **AND** **I**nstruction) is a resource created by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to support the transition to the new Frameworks. Important links include the "transition plan" and the "crosswalks" (side-by-side comparison of the old and new Frameworks).

The new Massachusetts ELA & Literacy and Mathematics Frameworks incorporate the Common Core Standards. Below are documents and links to learn more about the Common Core.

- Common Core Overview
- Common Core Shifts
- National PTA Parent Guides

What has the district done to prepare for the new Frameworks?

2013-2014

- A summer 2013 workshop on the *6 Traits of Writing and the Common Core Types of Writing K-8* was held on campus.
- A 4-day summer 2013 workshop on *Readers Workshop* was facilitated by Teachers College.
- Two graduate level courses were offered to K-6 classroom and special educators: *Deepening Comprehension Strategies to Enhance Student Learning* and *Translating the Common Core Writing Standards into Classroom Practice*.
- A two-to three-year endeavor with *AdLit* was begun to focus on a literacy-based inquiry process in Social Studies, Science and ELA. Classroom teachers, special educators and administrators in grades 7-12 began this work in the fall of 2013 and will continue through the summer and into the 2014-2015 school year.

- A course, *Fostering Mathematical Practices*, was offered by EDC (Education Development Center) for grades 7-12.
- A *Purposeful Talk* workshop was offered for all educators in grades K-6.
- The implementation of Reading Benchmark Assessments continued.
- Mathematics program pilots took place at Gates, Conant, Blanchard and Merriam.
- Writing rubrics were created for the three types of writing: opinion/argumentative, narrative, and informational in grades K-6, along with prompts, learning progressions, and demonstration texts.
- The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Annual Convention, held in Boston this year, was attended by a cohort of classroom teachers K-6, Reading Specialists K-8, English teachers 7-12, English Department Leaders 7-12, and the Director of Curriculum and Assessment.

2012-2013

- Through a summer 2012 R&D, new semester courses in high school English were created with the new frameworks in mind.
- Through a summer 2012 R&D, the K-6 Everyday Math curriculum was revised to help support the new mathematics framework.
- A summer 6 Trait workshop was held, with a focus on the Common Core shifts.
- Two 2-day workshops with Kathy Collins focused on Growing Readers and the shifts within the Common Core.
- A Pathways to the ELA Common Core K-8 workshop was attended by APS Reading Specialists, a team of educators from the Junior High, and the Director of Curriculum and Assessment.

2011-2012

- Reading support personnel hired for the Junior High
- New Frameworks distributed to all schools and departments
- *Literacy for All* Conference attended by Elementary Principals and Reading Specialists, team of teachers and administrators from the Junior High and the Regional Department Leader of Special Education Services.
- Grade levels and departments use new Frameworks as they develop Learning Goals and Assessment Tools
- Continued attendance of 7th grade departments to 6th grade district meeting
- Attendance of elementary special educators to elementary district grade level meetings
- Attendance of A-B special educators to department meetings for new Framework discussions
- Four Curriculum meetings K-12 (Elementary Specialist, JHDL and RDL) for ELA, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies/History and World Languages (7-12) and full day meetings for Physical Education, Visual Arts, and Performing Arts

2010-2011

- Teachers and Administrators attended conferences to learn about the Common Core standards
- Director of Curriculum presented, *Common Core and MA Frameworks* to the EDCO Program Advisory Council and to our districts' Principals

- Discussions with Department Heads
- K-12 ELA Committee unpacked the new MA ELA and Literacy standards and where applicable, provided learning activities to guide understanding
- K-6 Grade level meetings devoted time to reviewing new mathematics framework and identifying needed resources
- K-6 Mathematics Program updates, where applicable, were purchased
- A summer R&D completed for Conant and Gates grades 3-6 with mathematics consultant
- Teaching and Learning Committee convened to assess Literacy instruction in the district and develop definition and goals
- Leveled libraries purchased for all elementary schools as well as some Reading Assessment tools
- Literacy Professional Development (reading focus) provided throughout the district including: Reading Comprehension Strategies at the Junior High, Annenberg Reading Course 3-5, 6 Traits Writing in Nonfiction 7-8, Running Records 1-6

Updated: 06/19/2014

The Common Core State Standards: Insight into Their Development and Purpose

David T. Conley

Common Core State Standards Validation Committee Co-Chair

Professor of Educational Policy and Leadership and Founder and Director of the Center for Educational Policy Research (CEPR) at the University of Oregon

Founder and CEO of the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC)

This publication provides a clear, concise, and accurate summary of the following:

- the rationale for the standards
- an overview of how they were developed
- a summary of the research base supporting them
- some of the evidence that the Common Core State Standards will prepare students for college and careers
- insight into the changes in teaching and learning that are likely to occur as the standards are implemented
- how to use the standards

These represent some of the most important issues on the minds of teachers, administrators, parents, policymakers, and members of the public at large.

The Common Core State Standards:

Insight into their development and purpose

Why Common Standards?

Educational standards are not new. Every state has had grade-level educational standards for at least a decade, and most for much longer than that. Standards help ensure that students in every school will acquire the knowledge and skills critical to success in college, career, and life. Standards help guide local school boards as they make critical decisions about curriculum, textbooks, teachers, course offerings, and other aspects of district instructional programs. While standards provide a framework, they do not require a certain curriculum or specific teaching methods. Those decisions are left up to educators.

In the past, vast differences in educational expectations existed across states. A 2010 study by the American Institutes of Research documented a huge expectations gap, with some states expecting their students to accomplish far more in school than other states with much lower standards[1]. In essence, what a fourth grader was expected to know in math could vary dramatically depending on the state in which she lived. Until recently, this patchwork of high and low standards that varied from state to state had few consequences, in part because formal education was not as important to all students, many of whom were able to obtain stable, well-paying employment in their local community without high levels of education. The situation is much different today. Local economies in many parts of the country have seen radical transformation. Few jobs provide career-long security. To retain their jobs, workers need to acquire new, more complex skills. An educational system that is based on the assumption that people will live in one community doing one job their whole lives is no longer realistic. Neither is one that enables students in some parts of the country to be lifelong learners while leaving many others with minimal knowledge and skills.

The Common Core State Standards are a response to the new realities of the US economy. The role of the new common standards is to ensure that all students are able to be successful in an economy and society that is changing at a remarkable pace and that will continue to do so throughout their lifetimes. Several statistics show that this need to better prepare students for college is an urgent one. ACT annually publishes a report on the number of students taking its test who meet its college readiness benchmarks. In 2013, 54 percent of all high school graduates took the ACT, and only 26 percent of test-takers reached the college readiness level in all four areas tested (English, reading, mathematics,

and science).[2] The Institute for Education Sciences reported that 20 percent of students in 2007-2008 indicated that they took remedial courses in college.[3] The rate was even higher for two-year institutions and open-enrollment colleges. According to data from 33 states, more than 50 percent of students entering two-year colleges and almost 20 percent of students entering four-year colleges are placed into remedial courses[4], which are estimated to cost more than $3 billion annually.[5]

The Common Core State Standards allow educators to share a common language about what they want students to learn, and they enable development of high-quality materials that address the standards. They build upon previous experience with standards, both in the US and abroad, to create a focused, challenging, appropriate set of learning expectations that educators can interpret and implement locally through the curriculum, programs, and teaching methods they decide are best suited to their students.

They help educators create *consistency* of expectations, *clarity* of learning targets, and *economies of scale* in the production of instructional materials carefully crafted to support student success. Above all, the new standards aim to hold all students to the same high expectations for college and career readiness. While the standards do represent a challenge, they are based on expectations that students in the US and elsewhere have proven capable of meeting. Achieving them will require changes in educational practice, examples of which are discussed later.

How They Were Developed

With this backdrop of students' lack of preparedness for college and careers, governors and chief state school officers began talking about the need for a common set of high standards. In November 2007, state education chiefs met in Columbus, Ohio to discuss the opportunity to collaborate on a single set of world-class K-12 standards benchmarked to college- and career-readiness. The following year, CCSSO, NGA, and Achieve - a group established by governors and business leaders in 1996 - released an influential report Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S. Students Receive a World-Class Education. The report, guided by an advisory group that included governors, state education chiefs, and leading education researchers, recommended states "upgrade state standards by adopting a common core of internationally benchmarked standards in math and language arts for grades K-12 to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to be globally competitive." Following the recommendations of the report, in April 2009 NGA and CCSSO convened governors' education policy advisors and chief state school officers in Chicago to discuss creation of the Common Core State Standards Initiative. As a result, NGA and CCSSO invited states to commit to a process to develop common standards in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. Based on the interest from states, work to develop the standards commenced. By June 2009, governors and chief state school officers from 49 states and territories were participating in a state-led process to develop com-

The Common Core State Standards allow educators to share a common language about what they want students to learn, and they enable development of high-quality materials that address the standards.

mon standards for English language arts/literacy and mathematics. By September, the finally tally included 51 states and territories.

Development of the new standards was guided with one goal in mind: to prepare students for college and careers. So rather than designing the standards from kindergarten up, they were designed from high school down. To develop the Common Core State Standards,[6] work and feedback groups consisting of teachers, content experts, states, and leading thinkers, drew upon over a decade's worth of evidence describing what it takes to be ready to succeed in college or in career training programs. The list of work and feedback group members can be found here.

In addition, the experience of other countries with high educational expectations helped identify the knowledge and skills that are universally important. The initial drafts of the Common Core State Standards, then, incorporated the combined expertise and experience of states, teachers, education organizations, and other nations that have sought to raise educational expectations and achievement.

These initial drafts of the standards, grounded in research and best practices, were provided to all state education agencies, educators, and the public at large for review, scrutiny and comments. The feedback received from these groups resulted in significant revisions and refinements over multiple drafts. The final version was presented to states in June 2010.

A Strong Evidence Base

The evidence behind the standards reflects what has been learned about college and career readiness standards over the past decade. In 2003, Standards for Success[7] released the first comprehensive set of college readiness standards based on research conducted at over a dozen universities around the country, all members of the Association of American Universities. The American Diploma Project[8] quickly followed suit with standards that also addressed community college and workplace readiness. Soon after, both ACT[9] and the College Board[10] released their versions of college readiness standards, as did the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.[11] All of these documents influenced the Common Core State Standards and helped ensure that they were derived from standards developed with significant educator input and previously tested and validated in the field.[12] Content area standards from prestigious groups such as the National Assessment Governing Board and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics also served as important references.[13] In addition, states considered to have high-quality standards, including Massachusetts and California, were consulted.[14]

International comparisons also helped ensure the standards were set at a high level. For example, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) yielded detailed profiles of how numerous other countries teach math, which assisted in identifying the most effective sequencing of mathematics topics.[15] Additional research conducted on TIMSS data and the results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) along with observations about high performing nations such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Korea helped to identify the language skills that are expected in other countries and the types of texts and level of complexity found in those nations.[16] The Common Core State Standards bibliography identifies much of the research and many of the reports that contributed to the development of the standards. This information can be located for Mathematics here (see pages 91-93) and for English Language Arts here.

In addition, the evidence base underlying the Common Core State Standards and the process used to develop them were scrutinized by a specially appointed Validation Committee. The Validation Committee was appointed by a group of governors and chief state school officers in 2009, and the Committee members were chosen based on their experience in the development or implementation of national or international standards in education or their demonstrated record of exceptional or unique expertise in English language arts, mathematics, or a related field, such as special education, English language learners, assessments, teaching, or curriculum development.

After five months of review by the Validation Committee that included group meetings and individual critiques and comments, the Committee voted overwhelmingly to confirm that the standards met the seven validity criteria established by the Committee. Specifically, the Committee's review process determined that the standards were a valid

representation of the knowledge and skills necessary for students to be college and career ready.[17]

Common Core State Standards: Aligned with What Students Need to Succeed

One of the most important goals of the Common Core State Standards is that they provide the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college, career, and life. Determining that the standards meet this goal was accomplished by comparing them to the best state standards, examining them in relation to previously developed college and career readiness standards, and having them reviewed by postsecondary instructors who teach entry-level courses.

Almost every state has compared its previous standards to the Common Core State Standards to identify commonalities and differences. National organizations have also undertaken such analyses. The authors of a 2010 study sponsored by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation concluded that the Common Core State Standards are clearer and more rigorous than the vast majority of previous state standards.[18] A separate study published in 2012 used statistical techniques to conclude that states with standards more like the Common Core math standards had, on average, higher NAEP scores than did states whose standards aligned less with the Common Core.[19]

Two other studies undertaken by the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) specifically examined the relationship between the Common Core State Standards and college and career readiness. The first study[20] compared the Common Core to five sets of high quality standards. One was Standards for Success, described previously. Two of the five were exemplary state K-12 standards (California and Massachusetts). One was the Texas postsecondary system's college and career readiness standards, and one was the International Baccalaureate, an international organization with a long history of preparing students for the most demanding postsecondary institutions in the world. The study found a high degree of alignment between the Common Core State Standards and these exemplary standards geared to college and career readiness.

A second EPIC study[21] queried nearly 2,000 instructors from a cross-section of US postsecondary institutions to determine if the Common Core State Standards were applicable and important to entry-level courses in 25 different subject areas. These included subjects necessary for a baccalaureate degree along with those associated with career preparation. The results of the study indicated that instructors found nearly all of the Common Core State Standards to be applicable and important to the success of students in their courses.

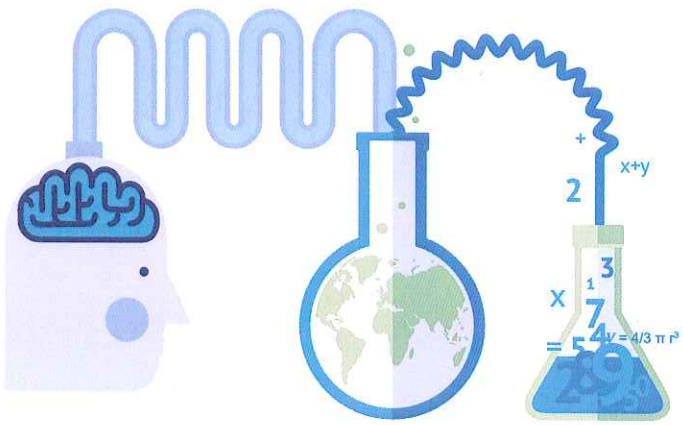
Another study explored the relationship of the Common Core State Standards in mathematics to student achievement internationally.[22] It found a very high degree of similarity between the Common Core mathematics standards and the standards of the highest-achieving nations that participated in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 1995.

Looking at the ELA standards, an Achieve comparison of standards from the high-achieving educational systems in Alberta, Canada and New South Wales, Australia with the Common Core found that, generally, standards across all three systems are comparable in rigor.[23]

These studies help strengthen the conclusion that the Common Core State Standards are clearer and more rigorous than many previous state standards. They also illustrate the observation that the Common Core State Standards do not take education in a new, untested direction, but instead create a framework for focusing teaching and learning on the knowledge and skills that are widely agreed to be most important to post-high school success. While additional efforts to validate, refine, and improve the standards will always be needed and welcomed, the Common Core State Standards start from a position of strength.

Learn more about the Common Core State Standards at http://www.corestandards.org

Major Shifts in Teaching Will Need to Occur[24]



As states and schools implement the Common Core State Standards, teachers will need to adapt to a new set of learning expectations that are clearer, deeper, and often more rigorous than what they were used to. Here are some examples from Student Achievement Partners[25] of important shifts that will support successful implementation of the Common Core State Standards:

Mathematics

1. **Emphasis**: Greater focus on fewer topics.
   Focus: The Common Core State Standards call for a greater focus in mathematics. Rather than racing to cover topics in a mile-wide, inch-deep curriculum, the Standards require significant narrowing and deepening in the way time and energy is spent in the math classroom. The standards focus deeply on the major work of each grade so that students can gain strong foundations: solid conceptual understanding, a high degree of procedural skill and fluency, and the ability to apply the math they know to solve problems inside and outside the math classroom.

2. **Coherence**: Linking topics and thinking across grades.
   Thinking across grades: The Common Core State Standards are designed around coherent progressions from grade to grade. Learning is carefully connected across grades so that students can build new understanding onto foundations built in previous years. Each standard is not a new event, but an extension of previous learning.

   Linking to major topics: Instead of allowing additional or supporting topics to detract from the focus of the grade, these concepts serve the grade level focus. For example, instead of data displays as an end in themselves, they are an opportunity to do grade-level word problems.

3. **Rigor**: Pursue conceptual understanding, procedural skills and fluency, and application with equal intensity.
   Conceptual understanding: The Common Core State Standards call for conceptual understanding of key concepts, such as place value and ratios. Students must be able to access concepts from a number of perspectives so that they are able to see math as more than a set of mnemonics or discrete procedures.

   Procedural skill and fluency: The Common Core State Standards call for speed and accuracy in calculation. Students are given opportunities to practice core functions such as single-digit multiplication so that they have access to more complex concepts and procedures.

   Application: The Common Core State Standards Standards call for students to use math flexibly for applications in problem-solving contexts. In content areas outside of math, particularly science, students are given the opportunity to use math to make meaning of and access content.

The Common Core State Standards are a response to the new realities of the US economy.

English Language Arts/Literacy

1. Regular practice with complex texts and their academic language

   Rather than focusing solely on the skills of reading and writing, the Common Core State Standards highlight the growing complexity of the texts students must read to be ready for the demands of college and careers. The Common Core State Standards build a staircase of text complexity so that all students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading no later than the end of high school. Closely related to text complexity—and inextricably connected to reading comprehension—is a focus on academic vocabulary: words that appear in a variety of content areas (such as ignite and commit).

2. Reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from texts, both literary and informational

   The Common Core State Standards place a premium on students writing to sources, i.e., using evidence from texts to present careful analyses, well-defended claims, and clear information. Rather than asking students questions they can answer solely from their prior knowledge or experience, the Common Core State Standards expect students to answer questions that depend on their having read the text or texts with care. The Common Core State Standards also require the cultivation of narrative writing throughout the grades, and in later grades a command of sequence and detail will be essential for effective argumentative and informational writing.

   Likewise, the reading standards focus on students' ability to read carefully and grasp information, arguments, ideas and details based on text evidence. Students should be able to answer a range of text-dependent questions, questions in which the answers require inferences based on careful attention to the text.

3. Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction

   Building knowledge through content rich nonfiction plays an essential role in literacy and in the Common Core State Standards. In K–5, fulfilling the standards requires a balance between informational and literary reading. Informational reading primarily includes content rich nonfiction in history/social studies, science and the arts; the K–5 Standards strongly recommend that students build coherent general knowledge both within each year and across years. In 6–12, ELA classes place much greater attention to a specific category of informational text—literary nonfiction—than has been traditional. In grades 6–12, the Standards for literacy in history/social studies, science and technical subjects ensure that students can independently build knowledge in these disciplines through reading and writing.

   To be clear, the Common Core State Standards do require substantial attention to literature throughout K–12, as half of the required work in K–5 and the core of the work of 6–12 ELA teachers.

While additional efforts to validate, refine, and improve the standards will always be needed and welcomed, the Common Core State Standards start from a position of strength.

How Educators Can Be Successful with the Common Core State Standards

Educators who are making the transition from their current standards to the Common Core State Standards will likely do so in several steps. To start, they may want to compare their old standards to the new Common Core State Standards. That analysis lets teachers decide how best to arrange their classroom lessons to align with the new standards.

It may also be beneficial for educators to gauge and understand the cognitive level of the Common Core State Standards by looking at the verbs of the standards and not just the nouns. The verbs indicate the type of thinking in which students will be expected to engage, and knowing them helps teachers see where their instruction is aligned with the thinking skills contained in the Common Core State Standards. For example, the math standards expect students to conjecture, analyze, reason, communicate, and discern. The English standards expect students to integrate, summarize, convey, cite, and interpret. Being familiar with the verbs helps teachers plan lessons that get students to develop new ways of thinking that use and apply the content knowledge contained in the Common Core State Standards.

Knowing where the standards expect more and different thinking from students is important as curriculum developers, teachers, and others begin to translate the standards into practice. This knowledge helps all students achieve the fundamental goal of the Common Core State Standards, which is to develop deeper understanding of a core set of content and skills—and to do so in a way that leads to readiness for college, career, and life. This happens through locally-developed, approved, and implemented curriculum.

Educators may also choose to take advantage of the resources being created to help all students learn the content and develop the thinking skills specified in the Common Core State Standards. The availability of this wealth of materials, strategies, and resources means that each individual educator does not need to work alone to figure out how to get all students to higher levels of achievement. One key advantage is that as educators find solutions to teaching to specific standards or addressing particular challenges, these solutions and strategies can be shared rapidly throughout the teaching profession.

What's True about the Common Core

A great deal has been written and said about the Common Core State Standards. It is important to know the truth in order to implement them properly and to engage in a thoughtful and reasoned critique of the new standards.[26] Several of the most commonly raised questions about the Common Core State Standards are addressed here.

First, the standards were not developed by the federal government. They resulted from a process that was initiated entirely outside of the federal government by the nation's governors and education commissioners. They were subjected to careful and rigorous scrutiny by experts in math and reading, state education department staff, teachers, school district administrators, members of community groups, parents, and many other individuals. Much has been debated about the role of the federal Race to the Top competition in encouraging states to adopt the new standards. This 2010 initiative from the U.S. Department of Education offered states the chance at $4 billion in grants if they adopted certain education-improvement ideas. The contest afforded a small number of points to states that adopted a set of college and career readiness standards, and many states, but not all, chose to adopt the Common Core State Standards around the time of this competition.[27] In a 2010 survey, state education leaders cited educational quality issues more often than Race to Top (RttT) as important factors in their states' decision to adopt the Common Core State Standards.

Second, the Common Core State Standards initiative is separate from the two assessments being developed by states to measure them. The Partnership for Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) are both voluntary groups of states that have banded together to create high quality assessments that are tied to the common standards and that provide meaningful feedback to educators. States can choose to participate or not participate in either of these assessment consortia, and a number have changed allegiances or dropped out altogether. Some states have chosen to remain in a consortium but also to develop their own tests or contract with other vendors to provide tests.

Third, the standards identify what is important for

students to learn; they do not specify the instructional methods or curriculum that teachers must use. This is not a one-size-fits-all approach. The outcomes students ultimately achieve are varied and include readiness for hundreds of college majors and literally thousands of careers. The Common Core State Standards let teachers choose instructional methods that result in students having these choices available to them when they complete high school.

Fourth, as noted previously, the Common Core State Standards are not such a radical departure that they require educators to start from scratch and redesign all that they do. The Common Core State Standards organize and sequence content in ways that lead toward all students being college and career ready, and they do so by focusing on key content and by setting higher expectations. In this sense, the Common Core State Standards encourage best practices in teaching and learning. Educators build on their current effective methods to implement the Common Core State Standards in ways that make the most sense for the students in their classroom.

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