

The Common Core State Standards Initiative- What Does It Mean for Your Child: Article 2 of 8 in Series

Envision two third grade students. One attends school in rural Missouri and the other attends school in suburban Boston. Both aspire to become brain surgeons or Internet entrepreneurs. Will each receive the same educational foundation and experiences to help them reach their goals? Most likely, no. The goal of the Common Core is to level the playing field across our country in order to prepare ALL students for success in college and career in the 21st Century.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics, that were released June 2, 2010, were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators and experts across the nation. In January of 2011, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provided a series of regional workshops throughout the state to familiarize educators with the English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and their alignment with the current 2.0 Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs) and Course-Level Expectations (CLEs). West Platte initiated work on the Common Core migration in July, 2012.

The standards are aligned with college and work expectations. They are clear, understandable and consistent, and include rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills. Standards are designed to build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards. These evidence-based standards also incorporate information from other top performing countries so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society.

ASCD (formally the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development) recently released a report titled *Fulfilling the Promise of the Common Core State Standards: Moving from Adoption to Implementation to Sustainability*. This report illuminates activities educators and policymakers at all levels can undertake to successfully implement the Common Core State Standards across the nation. Based on the data gathered, ASCD made a number of key recommendations to education leaders that will help them successfully implement the Common Core State Standards in their school systems. Among the recommendations, schools are to:

- Transform principals into instructional leaders
- Listen to educators about their professional learning needs
- Adopt technology for teaching and learning
- Align initiatives into comprehensive reforms
- Make sure educators deeply understand the standards and the key instructional shifts they require
- Evaluate instructional resources for quality and alignment with the standards.

This article series will share the steps being taken by the West Platte School District to successfully implement the Common Core. Altogether, the Common Core State Standards Initiative will result in comprehensive changes to your child's educational programming. Selective abandonment of outdated practices and programs will occur. Integration of technology will occur. The cursive handwriting curriculum in the elementary will be replaced with a digital citizenship curriculum, and some student textbooks will be replaced by student tablets. Why? Because the Common Core is not aligned with past instructional rhetoric, skills, or habits. It is aligned with embedded technology competencies and it is aligned with the knowledge, skills and competencies our students will need in *their* future.

Throughout the Fall Semester, a core leadership team of teachers at West Platte has joined nearly 500 other educators in the Greater Kansas City area to attend professional development on the CCSS. Along with the building principals, this core group will lead in the alignment of the comprehensive West Platte curriculum to

the Common Core. This two-year training will help establish the leadership team that will lead our district through this process and ultimately prepare our students for testing when it arrives in April of 2014.

While most schools have taken steps already to migrate into the Common Core era, some have not. In either case, it is obvious that significant changes are in store, and the window of opportunity for successful preparation is narrowing. One of the most significant changes in this process is the comprehensive integration of technology into the educational program of every student. The next article in this series will detail the steps which have been taken in the West Platte School District to deliver the instructional technology required for our students and their learning in the Common Core Era.

An interactive “anchor” presentation which covers topics addressed in this article series may be accessed on the all new West Platte website: wpsd.net. This anchor slideshow will connect you with a variety of multimedia and in-depth details on this movement. On behalf of our students and teachers, thank you for your time to investigate this initiative. I encourage you to seek out these articles and additional information over the next few months. We look forward to partnering for progress with you in the Common Core Era!

Seeking a World Class Education,
Jerrod Wheeler, Ed. D., Superintendent of Schools