

West Hartford Public School District

Agenda Item: Common Core State Standards

Meeting date: December 20, 2011

From: Eileen S. Howley, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and Curriculum

Through: Karen L. List, Superintendent

Background

In 2009, the council of Chief State School Officers (State Commissioners of Education) and the National Governor's Association formed the Common Core State Standards Initiative. They engaged educators, content specialists, researchers, community groups, and national organizations. They used advisory experts from ACHIEVE, ACT, the College Board, the National Association of State Boards of Education and the State Higher Education Executive Officers. The National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, National Council of Teachers of English, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, along with other organizations were asked to provide feedback on the standards.

The Initiative's website cites the following rationale for the standards:

The standards clearly communicate what is expected of students at each grade level. This will allow our teachers to be better equipped to know exactly what they need to help students learn and establish individualized benchmarks for them. The Common Core State Standards focus on core conceptual understandings and procedures starting in the early grades, thus enabling teachers to take the time needed to teach core concepts and procedures well—and to give students the opportunity to master them.

On July 7, 2010, with a unanimous vote, the Connecticut State Board of Education **adopted** the new national academic standards, known as the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics that have established what Connecticut public school students should know, be able to do and understand as they progress through grades K-12.

The Common Core State Standards Overview

The Common Core State Standards are designed to:

- comprise fewer, clearer and higher level standards
- align with college and career expectations
- include rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher order thinking skills
- build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards
- be internationally benchmarked so that all students will be prepared to succeed in our global economy
- be based on evidence and research

**Agenda Item:
V.B.1**

English Language Arts/Literacy

The English Language Arts/Literacy standards require that students systematically develop literacy skills and understandings through reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. For grades 6-12, there are additional standards in literacy for science, social studies and technical subjects.

The standards are based on expectations for college and career readiness. Students who are college and career ready:

- Demonstrate independence
- Build strong content knowledge
- Respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline
- Comprehend as well as critique
- Value evidence
- Use technology and digital media strategically and capably
- Come to understand other perspectives and cultures

The ELA/Literacy standards include “anchor standards,” or college and career ready standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language, which also address literacy in science, social studies and technical subjects. The full text of the standards are available at www.corestandards.org

The new literacy standards emphasize that:

- Students read a balance of literature and literary non-fiction K-5
- Literacy is part of science and social studies/history; and more informational text is part of English Language Arts (6-12)
- Students engage in appropriately and increasingly complex text (appendices include text samples and how text complexity is determined)
- Questions regarding text are text dependent (requiring close reading of text)
- Students can write to inform or argue using textual evidence, beginning in elementary school
- Students use academic vocabulary

The Anchor standards are then developed as a progression of skills, knowledge and understanding from kindergarten through grade 12. Anchor standards are written for reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language.

Mathematics Standards

The Mathematics Standards are grounded in the Standards for Mathematical Practice, that is, they describe various levels of expertise that mathematics educators at all levels should seek to develop in their students. These practices rest on important “processes and proficiencies” with longstanding importance in math education. They are derived from the NCTM process standards and the National Research Council proficiencies. They include:

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them
2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively
3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others
4. Model with mathematics
5. Use appropriate tools strategically
6. Attend to precision
7. Look for and make use of structure
8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning

The math standards emphasize:

- Mathematical modeling
- Use of mathematics and statistics to analyze empirical situations
- Application to real world settings
- Thinking and reasoning mathematically
- A rigorous definition of college and career readiness

The mathematics standards promote greater focus in each grade. The following chart illustrates key concepts to be instructed by grade.

Grade	Key concepts instructed
K-2	Addition and subtraction; measurement using whole number quantities
3-5	Multiplication and division of whole numbers and fractions

6	Ratio and proportional reasoning; early expressions and equations
7	Ratio and proportional reasoning; arithmetic of rational numbers
8	Linear algebra

Math Standards for High School

- The high school standards specify the mathematics that all students should study in order to be college and career ready.
- Standards are listed across 6 conceptual categories: Number and Quantity, Algebra, Functions, Modeling, Geometry, Statistics and Probability.
- Standards are not identified by grade level or course. “Unwrapping” or prioritizing the standards is left to school districts.

How will the Common Core State Standards be Assessed?

Currently 29 states, including Connecticut, joined together to form the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). Connecticut is a governing state in SBAC and is taking an active role in the consortium through representation on several workgroups. The assessment system balances summative, interim, and formative components for ELA and mathematics:

- Summative Assessment (Computer Adaptive/Performance Tasks)
 - Mandatory comprehensive assessment in grades 3–8 and 11 (testing window within the last 12 weeks of the instructional year) that supports accountability and measures growth
 - Selected response, short constructed response, extended constructed response, technology enhanced, and performance tasks
- Interim Assessment (Computer Adaptive)
 - Optional comprehensive and content-cluster assessment
 - Learning progressions
 - Available for administration throughout the year
 - Selected response, short constructed response, extended constructed response, technology enhanced, and performance tasks
- Formative Processes and Tools
 - Optional resources for improving instructional learning
 - Assessment literacy

The SBAC Content Specifications are the design element of the standards. These are currently in draft form and review and are ready to be finalized shortly. Specifications delineate what will be on each assessment. They are designed to provide clear and rigorous prioritized assessment targets that translate the grade-level standards into content/curricular frameworks along a learning continuum.

We are currently anticipating a national administration of assessments for the 2014-2015 school year in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11. The CSDE has shared that they anticipate a pilot of computer-based items in 2013-2014. For more detailed information about SMARTER Balanced Consortium, you can visit www.smarterbalanced.org

The West Hartford Plan

Given the demands of all of the changes as well as the continuing demands of current expectations, we have designated the 2011-2012 school year as a year of study and design.

- A year of study and design
 - ✓ overview with Maryann Wiggs for extended leadership, curriculum specialists
 - ✓ individual leaders attending CCSS workshops
 - ✓ begin to design an overview of professional development for faculty in various departments
 - ✓ preliminary sharing of information with CPDC, faculty meetings highlighting that change is in the offing
 - ✓ faculty meetings, CSI time and CSI series on curriculum review and renewal
- Curriculum Design
 - ✓ overview of Ainsworth Rigorous Curriculum Design (connected to our curriculum criteria and review and renewal, extended leadership, curriculum specialists)
 - ✓ 9-day intensive workshops in 3-day intervals to engage in Ainsworth's model
 - ✓ continued curriculum writing/revision summer of 2012 and beyond
 - ✓ continued curriculum review and renewal process
- Professional Development
 - ✓ planning for future: CSI, faculty meetings, summer curriculum work

Dr. Howley and Paul Vicinus, Director of Teaching and Assessment, will provide an overview of the multi-year implementation plan for the West Hartford Public Schools and will be available to answer questions.