

Lockport Elementary School District 91

808 Adams Street

Lockport, Illinois 60441

Donna J. Gray, Superintendent

"Education is our connection to the future"

August 24, 2011

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Welcome. We look forward to working with you to ensure a positive learning experience for your child this year. For many years, Public Education has instituted many new programs; however, none will be more revolutionary and have a greater impact on student learning than the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Educational and business leaders across the country recognized the need for common standards among the states. Thus the "Common Core Standards Initiative" came into being. New standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and business leaders to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce. Illinois, along with 46 other states has adopted these new K-12 Common Core Standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA). Standards in Science and Social Science are currently being worked on.

The purpose and rationale of the common core standards is to ensure that high school graduates in every part of the nation have the knowledge and skills necessary for college and/or career readiness. If students meet these new rigorous, high standards, they will have better career choices in their lives, and the nation will be more competitive in today's global economy.

A new state assessment, aligned with the Common Core State Standards, will be in place by the 2014-2015 school year. The transition and implementation of the new Common Core State Standards also referred to as the "New Illinois Learning Standards" will begin in 2011 and continue through 2014. Over the next three years, new academic content will be taught to students. The implementation and transition of the new ELA standards should be a fairly smooth process because District 91's current curriculum has many similarities to the new CCSS. However, the new ELA Common Core requires more rigor, focuses on reading comprehension, and includes a heavier emphasis on writing, grammar, informational text, thinking skills, instruction, and literacy across the curriculum. The mathematics standards focus on content (what students know about math) and practice (how students are able to apply and extend math principles).

Milne Grove School
565 East 7th Street
Mrs. Tracy Carlson
Principal
Phone: 838-0542

Kelvin Grove School
808 Adams Street
Mr. Scott J. Pritchard
Principal
Phone: 838-0737

District 91 has established the following timeline for implementing these new standards:

2011-2012 District 91 will:

- Fully implement English Language Arts and Mathematics standards in grades K-2.
- Implement portions of the English Language Arts standards in grades 3-8.

2012-2013 District 91 will:

- Fully implement English Language Arts and Mathematics standards in grades 3-8.
- Implement portions of the Social Science and Science standards in grades K-8.

2013-2014 District 91 will:

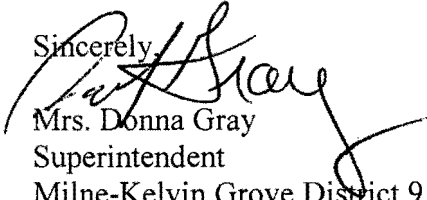
- Fully implement the new standards for Science and Social Science in grades K-8.

We feel this timeline is in the best interest of our students. However, we also acknowledge that while we are preparing students to meet rigorous college and career expectations, we will still need to give the Illinois State Assessment Test (ISAT) as is for the next three years. This means that we will be teaching content that is not aligned with this standardized test. This also means that there is a good chance that we will see scores decrease and the District may not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). However, with all of this in mind, we still believe that this proactive approach is best for our students.

These changes mean your child, and students across the state, will be better prepared to meet the new college and career ready high school graduation requirements and leave our schools with a strong educational foundation and the skills needed to succeed. Please continue to talk to your teachers and school staff about what your child is learning and how you can support his or her academic journey. Your participation is vital in ensuring your student's educational success.

To assist you in learning more about the Common Core State Standards, I have attached a short article published by Education Northwest that details what parents/guardians need to know. In addition, you can learn more about the Common Core State Standards at: Illinois State Board of Education Website - http://www.isbe.net/common_core/default.htm or the CCSS Website - <http://www.corestandards.org/>.

Sincerely,



Mrs. Donna Gray
Superintendent
Milne-Kelvin Grove District 91

Spotlight on the Common Core

March 2011

State Standards

A series published by Education Northwest to keep regional stakeholders informed about the Common Core initiative



WHAT DO PARENTS NEED TO KNOW?

What are the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a coherent progression of learning expectations in English language arts and mathematics designed to prepare K–12 students for college and career success. The CCSS communicate what is expected of students at each grade level, putting students, parents, teachers, and school administrators on the same page, working toward shared goals. While most states already have English language arts and mathematics standards in place, they vary widely from state to state in their coverage and level of rigor.

How were the standards developed?

The CCSS effort was launched in June 2009, through a partnership of the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association working together with parents, teachers, school administrators, and experts from across the country. National and international research, evidence, and standards—including standards from countries that are often recognized for high-quality education—informed development of the CCSS. After public comment, the final version of the CCSS was released in June 2010.

The Common Core State Standards:

- Are aligned with college and work expectations;
- Are clear, understandable, and consistent;
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Build on strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- Are informed by other top-performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in a global economy and society; and
- Are evidence-based.

Source: <http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/>

What are the benefits for parents of common standards?

- A common set of standards ensures that all students, no matter where they live, will be focused on graduating from high school prepared for postsecondary education and

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Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/ Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts include standards for use in English language arts courses, as well as literacy standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. The standards for English language arts describe expertise that students will develop in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. The standards also describe how students use and strengthen these skills—particularly reading and writing—in other subjects at their grade level.

Let's look at how a grade 9 student might learn reading and writing in history. A sample ninth-grade standard for literacy is shown in the box below. A typical assignment tied to this standard might be:

Select a case that is scheduled to come before the United States Supreme Court. Use the text of the U.S. Constitution and at least two other sources to support two decisions the court could make: one arguing for the case and the other against it. Support your arguments using the information you gathered.

This type of assignment requires a student to define an issue, research it in an unbiased way, read carefully, and compare and contrast elements of the issue. In the age of the Internet, students must learn about trustworthy and reliable sources, the difference between an opinion and a fact, and how to verify statements made with additional sources of information. Then, students must be able to write about the issue, their conclusions, and the supporting evidence in a convincing manner.

Key Features of the Standards

Reading: Text complexity and growth of comprehension

The reading standards place equal emphasis on the sophistication of what students read and the skill with which they read.

Writing: Text types, responding to reading, and research

The writing standards acknowledge the fact that while some writing skills (e.g., the ability to plan, revise, edit, and publish) apply to many types of writing, other skills relate to specific types of writing: arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives.

Speaking and listening: Flexible communication and collaboration

The speaking and listening standards require students to develop a range of broadly useful oral communication and interpersonal skills, not just skills needed for formal presentations.

Language: Conventions (grammar), effective use, and vocabulary

The language standards include the essential “rules” of standard written and spoken English, but they also look at language as a matter of craft and making choices.

Example Standard for Literacy in Ninth-Grade History

Compare and contrast findings presented in a text to those from other sources, noting when the findings support or contradict previous explanations or accounts.

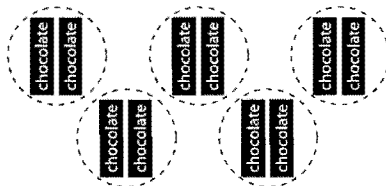
Standards for Mathematical Practice and Mathematical Content

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for mathematics include two types of standards: one for mathematical practice (how students are able to apply and extend math principles) and one for mathematical content (what students know about math). The two are linked together while students are learning.

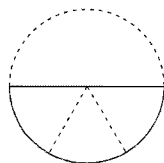
The Standards for Mathematical Practice are listed at the end of this section. Let's look at how a student might learn to "model with mathematics" (Practice Standard 4). This means students can use the math they know to solve problems they encounter every day. For a fifth-grade student, the following sample problems might be used to see whether he or she can model mathematical content that relates to dividing fractions. (The mathematics content standard for this new knowledge is shown in the box at top right. The practice standard shown in the sample problems is "model with mathematics.")

Students understand division with whole numbers from previous grades. Problems 1 and 3 review this understanding, and then extend the same thinking in problems 2 and 4 to divide a unit fraction (e.g., $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{5}$) by a whole number or vice versa.

- (Division using whole numbers): Louis has 10 chocolate bars. He wants to share them fairly with his four friends and himself. How many chocolate bars will each person get? ($10 \div 5 = ?$)
(Think: Divide 10 into 5 equal shares.)



- (Division of a unit fraction by a whole number): The Jonas family has half of a large pizza. There are three people in the family. They want equal shares of the pizza.



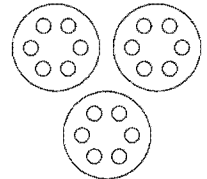
Example Standard for Fifth-Grade Mathematics

Apply and extend previous understandings of division to divide unit fractions by whole numbers and whole numbers by unit fractions.

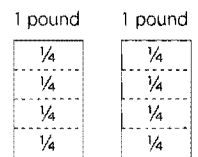
- Interpret division of a unit fraction by a nonzero whole number, and compute such quotients.
- Interpret division of a whole number by a unit fraction, and compute such quotients.
- Solve real-world problems involving division of unit fractions by non-zero whole numbers and division of whole numbers by unit fractions.

What part of a pizza will each person get? ($\frac{1}{2} \div 3 = ?$)
(Think: Divide $\frac{1}{2}$ into 3 equal shares.)

- (Division using whole numbers): Eva has 18 cupcakes. She wants to have enough plates so that she can put 6 cupcakes on a plate. How many plates will she need? ($18 \div 6 = ?$) (Think: How many 6s are there in 18?)



- (Division of a whole number by a unit fraction): Juan has 2 pounds of raisins and wants to put them into bags with $\frac{1}{4}$ pound of raisins in each bag. How many bags will he need? ($2 \div \frac{1}{4} = ?$) (Think: How many $\frac{1}{4}$ s are there in 2?)



Standards for Mathematical Practice

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

careers. In an increasingly mobile society, families with children transferring to new schools will not have to adjust to new learning expectations. Standards will be the same for all students in states adopting the CCSS, making transitions smoother for students.

- In a competitive global economy, all students must compete with not only American peers in other states, but with students from around the world. The CCSS were designed to prepare students to succeed in this environment.
- Common standards will facilitate conversation among parents, teachers, and children about high-level academic learning goals. Because common standards define exactly what students should know and be able to do at each grade level, they will help parents hold their schools accountable for teaching students in ways that support learning of the important content and skills defined by the CCSS.
- With adoption of the CCSS, states and districts can share experiences, methods of assessment, teaching practices, instructional materials, and approaches to helping parents support and reinforce learning at home.

How will the standards be assessed?

Two consortia of states—the SMART-ER Balanced Assessment Consortium and the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers—have been awarded federal funding to develop an assessment system aligned with the CCSS. Different types of assessments to measure students' progress during and at the end of the school year will be designed for students in grades 3–12. These assessments will be used by states adopting the CCSS beginning in the 2014–2015 school year.

When will the CCSS be implemented?

Many states have already adopted the CCSS. A few others are in the process of doing so. Several states have posted a comparison of their current state standards against the CCSS on their websites. States are also in the process of looking at how and when

to introduce the new standards. Plans may include training for school and district staff, communicating with interested people (e.g., community members, parents, and students), and transitioning from existing to new assessment systems.

For more about the Common Core State Standards, visit <http://educationnorthwest.org/common-core/>.

What Can Parents Do To Prepare for the CCSS?

Has your state adopted, or is it planning to adopt, the CCSS? If it is, you can do the following:

- Create a study group with other parents, community members, or school staff to examine the new standards. Discuss your initial impressions or concerns about the standards, how they differ from your existing state standards, and learn how the school or district will prepare for implementation.
- Through your involvement on the site council, parent-teacher association, or other committee, ask your school administrators and teachers how they will prepare to teach to the standards and how they will measure student progress toward meeting the standards. Ask how parents and community members can provide regular feedback and support teaching and learning of the standards.
- Attend school board meetings and ask whether policies will be developed to support schools in this work.
- Talk with business and community leaders about the need for high goals and clear expectations for our children's education.
- Talk to your children about the importance of graduating from high school ready for college and career success. Discuss how the standards will be used to guide teaching and learning from kindergarten through high school.