

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).

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

