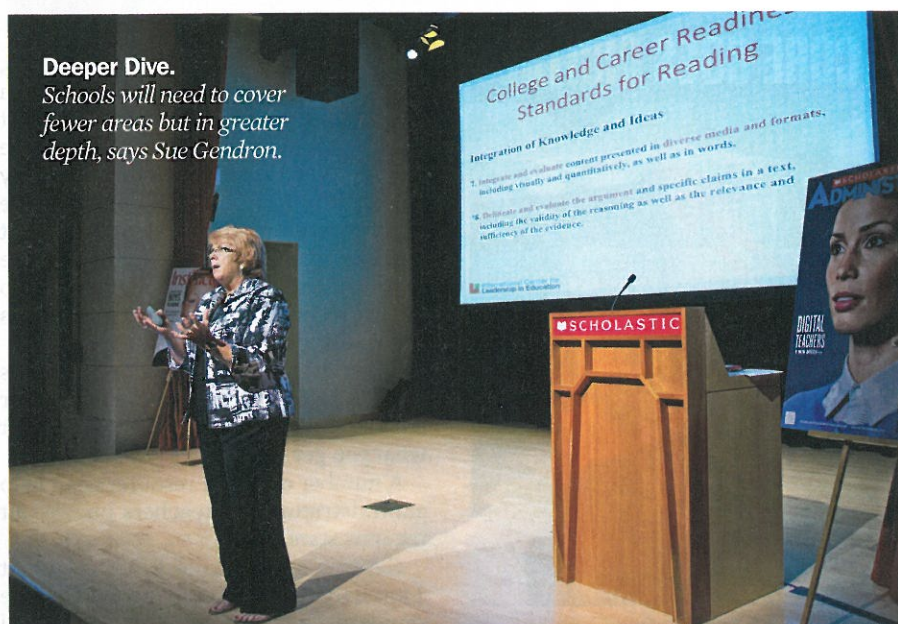


Deeper Dive.

Schools will need to cover fewer areas but in greater depth, says Sue Gendron.



Core Changes

Tools to help you and your staff stay up-to-date on Common Core curricula changes. **BY MICHELLE LOCKE**

LIKE IT OR NOT, COMMON CORE is here. The new set of standards for math and English language arts is designed to get students across the country on the same page as they prepare for college and beyond. It's an ambitious undertaking, and now's the time to start thinking about how it will affect your district.

Implementation started in several districts around the country this fall, and most states should have the standards in place by the 2014–15 school year, when assessment tools tailored to the new requirements are rolled out. So far, 46 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the standards (although one, Minnesota, has done so only for English language arts).

What, exactly, does Common Core mean for administrators and teachers? And how can districts prepare for the changes? Here's a short primer on how to prepare for—and keep track of—all the changes as they roll out.

What Administrators Need to Know
MATHEMATICS LIKELY WILL REQUIRE the most significant shift in teach-

ing methods, explains Sue Gendron, former Maine commissioner of education and now the policy coordinator for the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium, one of two groups developing assessments tailored to the new standards.

The Common Core standards for math leave no room for a “mile-wide, inch-deep approach,” she says. Instead, they demand a deeper and more focused strategy. Teachers will be expected to tackle three or four big ideas in math for each grade level, rather than just getting through as much content as possible—fractions this week, multiplication the next.

“You will not cover all of that content,” Gendron said in a recent talk on the coming changes. “You’re going to have to let go and as an administrator encourage your teachers not to try to cover all the material because it doesn’t help us to go deeper.”

There will be a new emphasis on developing resources for teachers to help students make sense of problems and integrate concepts into everyday life. Appendices to the mathematics

6 BEST COMMON CORE WEBSITES

STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE

corestandards.org

This site, from the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers, has the latest news on implementation as well as comprehensive details about the standards and their development. A helpful Myths vs. Facts section addresses common concerns.

PROGRAM ALIGNMENT

tinyurl.com/6pb2rgy

This Scholastic site lists programs that align with the new standards and has a range of professional development courses for teachers and administrators.

COMMON CORE PD

tinyurl.com/7yngc6n

The School Improvement Network's Common Core 360 PD program includes videos, grade-by-grade examples of implementation and usage, and case studies of two districts implementing the standards.

IN-DEPTH HELP

parcconline.org

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers has a number of resources, including the Common Core Implementation Workbook and individual administrators' experiences with implementation, such as how to explain to parents why homework may shrink from a worksheet of 30 problems to a few, more in-depth questions.

CURRICULUM EXPERTISE

tinyurl.com/67h5x2q

ASCD, the supervision and curriculum group, is an endorsing partner of the Common Core initiative, so it figures this website is an A-to-Z compendium of information, statistics, and opinions on the new curricula.

DIGITAL RESOURCES

tinyurl.com/7qruatn

This Academic Benchmarks website provides adoption maps, digital resources, and the latest news on Common Core developments.

standards contain useful guides, and Gendron advises teachers to keep those handy while working with students.

The revised standards will encourage teachers to adopt new approaches, says Gendron, citing the case of one Montana teacher who has flipped the classic model. He now uploads his lectures to the Web for students to watch as homework, freeing up class time for working through problems.

Along with teacher development, administrators will need to review their technical capacity. Up-to-date Internet connectivity, hardware, software, and broadband capacity are all crucial to implementing and assessing the new standards.

Under the new English language arts standards, teachers in all content areas will share in the responsibility for literacy development. There will also be some shifts in the types of texts students will be expected to master. Administrators should plan on having meaningful conversations with teachers about the resources they're using and how they engage with students, Gendron says.

Students will be expected to be able to read both literary and informational text closely, and with deep understanding. In the new mix, informational text should comprise 70 percent of the materials they read in high school. Teachers will need to incorporate informational text that includes primary and secondary sources, scientific materials, quantitative resources, maps, charts, and digital content. Students will also be required to engage in short and extended research projects throughout the school year to analyze, synthesize, and reflect upon complex text.

Some new material will be required, and existing material will be used in different ways. A number of districts are supplementing current materials with online resources to align to the standards, says Carrie Heath Phillips, program director of Common Core State Standards for the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

Preparing Your Teachers

ADAPTING TO COMMON CORE WILL MEAN changes, many of them positive and happily embraced by teachers, but changes nonetheless. The teachers that CCSSO has worked with "have been really positive" about the new standards, says Phillips. "It is giving them fewer things they have to do and giving them more

CORE GOES DIGITAL



REFERENCE APP

tinyurl.com/5wbj56g

MasteryConnect, a free Common Core standards app for iPhone and Android, lists standards by subject, grade, and subject category.

COMMON CORE K-6

tinyurl.com/6pmuzyz

This free app, from Learning United, contains access to the standards and tools to compare and contrast Core changes for grades K-6, as well as a listing of key terms.

TRANSITION HELP

leadered.com/ccsTransitions.html

The International Center for Leadership in Education has a number of good resources, including workbooks and a three-year transition plan.

LEXILE HELP

tinyurl.com/7qxyoq4

Lexile's site helps your district differentiate instruction, track progress, and apply Lexile measures across the curricula.

UP-TO-DATE NEWS

commoncoretools.me

This all-around site features the latest tools being developed to support implementation of the standards.

PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE

tinyurl.com/7tm3t2s

The National Parent Teacher Association site provides a broad perspective on the changes and also gives a focused view of the standards for each grade level.

space to use their creativity."

For instance, as with mathematics, says Phillips, "the standard in English language arts is a lot different than most state standards now. It's much more focused; you don't have a huge laundry list of things to teach." Concepts have to be covered in greater depth, but that opens up the opportunity to incorporate more fun, real-world applications into the classroom that teachers and students enjoy, she adds.

Keep in mind that the new standards aren't about creating more work for teachers, Phillips says. "It's also about what you get rid of that's not helpful."

A number of online resources can help administrators and teachers puzzle out the new standards.

Georgia state school superintendent John Barge gives a broad overview of the standards in place for the 2012-13 school year in Georgia (gpb.org/education/common-core). Expect more teacher-training videos to be added.

The New York State Department of Education's EngageNY website has a section on how to train staff on its site (engage.org/common-core).

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics offers PowerPoint presentations on what the changes mean for teachers in specific grades (nctm.org). For more math help, check out the National Council of Supervisors of Math's site, with links to updates, presentations, and research on the new standards (mathedleadership.org/ccss/materials.html).

The National Council of Teachers of English offers information, videos, and materials available for order on effective teaching under the new standards (ncte.org/standards/commoncore).

The Illinois State Board of Education has a Common Core webpage with several links to information on the standards as well as resources including webinars (isbe.net/common_core/htmls/educator_tools.htm).

Teaching Channel videos show how the changes are playing out in classrooms that have adopted the new standards (teachingchannel.org).

Finally, the data-driven company A-List Education (alisteducation.com) offers tutoring, teaching, and standardized test prep for students in grades 5-12 and can help teachers consider how the new curricula fits with existing college tests such as the SAT and the ACT and also with high school AP courses. ■