

Photos of the Month!



Arcadia High Schools beats Pasadena 41-14 on Homecoming night! Carrie Zhang and Steven Earnest are named Homecoming King and Queen!



Hugo Reid Principal Tom Bruce puts on the bite suit for a K9 demonstration during Red Ribbon Week!



About 70 AP Environmental Science students from Arcadia High volunteer their time to help clean the Hahamongna Watershed Park on a recent Sunday!



Making the Transition to Common Core!

Arcadia Unified School District is utilizing a talented team of its own educators to help make the crucial transition to the new Common Core State Standards.

Over the next two years, the state is allocating funding to assist districts in making the change to the Standards, which align curricula across 46 states and the District of Columbia. Arcadia Unified is receiving \$1.9 million over 2013-14 and 2014-15 to proceed with its implementation of the Common Core.

"The idea was to use the funding to identify and support teachers who could serve as mentors and coaches to their colleagues as everyone figures out how the implementation of the Common Core Standards will affect classroom teaching," said AUSD Superintendent Dr. Joel Shawn. "Those teachers serving as Common Core Coaches know our culture of high performance, our schools, and our staff and will be able to provide sustainable classroom support as we make this big shift."

In addition to hiring the mentor coaches, the district will also use the funding to purchase instructional materials and send staff to conferences for further professional development and training related to the Common Core.

The Common Core State Standards emphasize critical thinking and writing across all subject areas and dramatically narrow the number of standards so that teachers can provide more in-depth instruction and promote better understanding within an important core of standards that will prepare students with 21st century skills.

"Arcadia Unified is enthusiastic about the new standards because of what it means for not only the students of Arcadia, but those across the country," said AUSD Board of Education President Cung Nguyen. "Our district has always been proactive about promoting critical thinking in our classrooms and teaching our students to be effective learners, so I have no doubt that this will be a successful transition."

A team of 13 AUSD teachers were selected to conduct research on Common Core, determine the district's needs for the transition, filter resources for their colleagues and help build instructional materials and textbooks for the switch.

"Instead of bringing in consultants or sending our teachers to outside trainings, we found it important to provide our teachers with individuals who can give them the classroom support they need to provide lessons that are in line with Common Core," said AUSD Deputy Superintendent of Educational Services David Vannasdale. "Our District has been moving toward the core principles of these new standards for several years."

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Common Core Continued...

School officials stress to parents that once the transition is complete, homework and other assignments may look different from what students are currently taking home.

"Homework may look different with the Common Core because we're facilitating deeper understanding that doesn't always require worksheets and the types of assignments that parents typically see their kids bringing home," Vannasdale said. "Students may have to read a chapter of a book, watch a film clip or work on just a few complex math problems so that they're ready to dig deeper into the issue when they come to class the next day."

The District hosted a special Board of Education meeting on Oct. 22 to discuss Common Core, give the community the opportunity to review new instructional materials and learn more about the transition. There will be more parent and community meetings announced soon.

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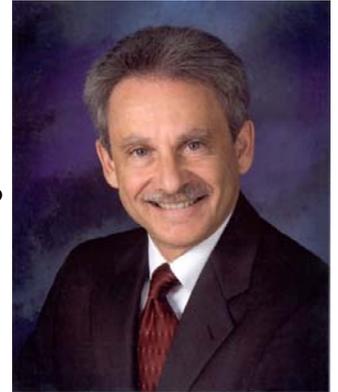
DISTRICT DELIGHTS!

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Update from Superintendent Dr. Joel Shawn

What you need to know about the Common Core State Standards

Much is being written and said about the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that 46 states including California have adopted. Arcadia Schools will be formally implementing new curriculum next year (2014-2015) that align with the standards. Additionally, Governor Brown has signed legislation that eliminates virtually all of the current state testing (known as the California Standards Tests) because they align with the old standards. The goal here is to give teachers the opportunity to transition their instruction now in order to be congruent with these new standards and so students will not be tested on content their teachers may not be covering. Arcadia teachers and staff have been working on this transition for the last few years and welcome this opportunity to focus on this change. I am devoting this article to questions and answers about the CCSS that will help you understand the changes coming to teaching and learning that Arcadia students will experience in the coming years.



1. What are the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards are a set of expectations that outline what students should be learning in English/language arts and mathematics at each grade level (K-12). These expectations have been “benchmarked” against international student learning standards.

2. What is the goal of the CCSS?

The goal of the CCSS is to make sure that all students are college and career ready.

3. Do the standards tell teachers how to teach?

No. The CCSS do not tell teachers how to teach; they outline the skills that all students need to master in order to be college and career ready when they graduate from high school.

4. Are there standards for science, social studies and other content areas?

No. At this time, the CCSS do not address content areas other than reading/language arts and mathematics; however, there is a strong emphasis in the CCSS in writing and reading in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects for Grades 6-12.

5. Why were the CCSS created?

Up until the adoption of the CCSS by 46 states, each state had its own education standards, with little consistency from one state to another. The CCSS were designed to provide a single set of research-based, internationally benchmarked standards that will ensure that all students nationwide have access to the same rigorous academic content.

6. Who wrote the standards?

There is a common and often quoted misconception that the CCSS were written by the federal government. In fact the CCSS were developed by a group of educators and experts coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The federal government did not write the standards and will not oversee their implementation.

7. How will student progress in meeting the standards be measured?

We will be measuring students’ progress through new assessments developed by a consortium called the “Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium.” We will be piloting these online, computer-based tests in the spring of 2014. In the spring of 2015 the tests go live and become a formal part of California’s new accountability system (that will replace the current Accountability Performance Index, the API). A great way to get a first hand experience with the new standards is by taking a sample test available on the Smarter Balanced website: <http://sbac.portal.airast.org/practice-test/>

8. Where can I learn more?

This is a big change. A good source for additional information may be found at the National Parent Teacher Association website.

<http://www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3683>

We also created a Common Core page on our website to make it easier for you <http://goo.gl/EQHFVj>

We will be working closely with our school sites to provide a variety of opportunities for parents and the community to learn more about the CCSS and our implementation and experience how teaching and learning will continue to improve in Arcadia for our amazing students.

All my best,
Dr. Joel Shawn

<https://twitter.com/suptshawn>

Electronic version available at www.ausd.net