

August 8, 2013

I am writing to share with you some of my thoughts about the positive aspects of the Common Core State Standards.

I am a teacher with 22 years of experience currently in Kindergarten at Wood Creek Elementary (Farmington Public Schools) which services a diverse economic and cultural population including many transient students from other states. I am also a member of a pilot and review team for the MAISA Writing Units and am actively transitioning to the Common Core State Standards in Reading and Math as well.

Becoming informed about the CCSS has had a significant impact on my professional practice. Working to implement the standards has created an opportunity for myself and other teachers to engage in lively discussions as we endeavor to interpret and understand the standards. We are meeting in a variety of configurations to re-evaluate curriculum and learning materials to ensure that not only are they in alignment with the Common Core but that they create meaningful learning opportunities for students to reach these elevated benchmarks. We are integrating our knowledge of skillful teaching practices into these discussions. We are collaborating at our grade levels with direction and a genuine sense of purpose. Furthermore, the common language and learning progression structure provided by the CCSS facilitates collaboration across grade levels as well.

Compared to the Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations, the CCSS are clearer, more cohesive, more focused, and promote a deeper understanding of concepts while being fewer in number. This has enabled me to teach concepts across content areas in relevant and authentic ways and with increased rigor. These changes in my professional practice have translated into positive changes in student learning and achievement. Behaviorally, I have observed an increase in student engagement, stamina, verbal participation and collaboration. As writers, my students have not only produced more writing but also at quality levels far beyond two years ago. Writing samples from 2011 would show one simple sentence per page with attempts at spelling words and some spacing between words. Writing samples from 2013 after implementing the CCSS would include informative and opinion pieces as well as narrative and show multiple sentences per page, appropriate use of basic conventions, 'readable' words, more details, and evidence of revision and editing. As readers, my students read at higher levels of text and engage in meaningful conversations about both fiction and non-fiction books due to improved foundational and comprehension skills arising from the Common Core State Standards.

I am excited to be a part of the initiative which will truly ensure that my students are college and work ready in the global society of the 21st Century and It is my hope that the State of Michigan will support this work.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dawn Smith