



May 20, 2013

MEMORANDUM

To: All APS Administrators and Teachers
From: Shelly Green, APS Chief Academic Officer
Ellen Bernstein, ATF President
Re: Expectations and Explanations for Common Core Instruction in APS

Background

New Mexico, along with 45 other states and the District of Columbia, has adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers.

The new standards represent the best effort so far to transform today's patchwork quilt of 50 sets of state standards into one set of strong, consistent expectations for what all students should know and learn.

The Common Core State Standards provides a historic opportunity to finally get the standards movement right because these standards are fewer, more focused, and demand much greater depth of understanding.

Diving deeper than ever into content and complex text in rigorous, engaging ways will serve students through a purposeful integration of concept and skill development. We are responsible for providing that rigorous instruction.

Implementation

The New Mexico Public Education Department mandated the implementation of the CCSS for K-3 in 2012-13 and grades 4-12 in 2013-14. This joint memo is intended to guide that implementation in APS by a set of common expectations and explanations for all schools in APS.

We know that the complete transition to Common Core Standards-based instructional practices will take years. The District will be working to transform current practices in order to support the changes expected in each school. Toward that end, APS has posted the newest work on the CCSS for grades 4-12 on the AIMS website for teachers to access as they plan for the next school year.

The CCSS is designed to go deep into the subject matter. The CCSS is not a list of information to be taught. The skills, knowledge, and abilities students must have to be proficient should be your focus as you plan, teach and assess students and your goal should be teaching to all levels on Webb's Depth of Knowledge Taxonomy. All lessons for each grade level and subject need to dig deep into concepts, tasks, and learning objectives. Teaching in a standards-based system is for deep understanding across different platforms and for application in multiple contexts.

Expectations

The Common Core State Standards are the acknowledged framework and learning targets for English Language Arts and Math in APS and fidelity to the CCSS is a priority. This shift from fidelity to an instructional program to the standards is a significant change in District expectations.

While no other standards may replace the *Common Core State Standards for Math and English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects*, the standards naturally weave into every content area. Teachers of science, social studies and other content areas must use the CCSS when setting objectives and planning activities/projects. Does this mean you are required to teach reading while you teach chemistry or U.S. History? No, each discipline is made up of a core of academic vocabulary and essential knowledge that is deep, rich, and vital. Successful standards-based instruction blends the content of a discipline with reading and writing complex informational and technical text. This means that instruction in every classroom focuses on both the content and the reading and writing skills students need to demonstrate learning in the discipline.

In the coming years as content standards, such as the *Next Generation Science Standards*, are adopted at the state level, you will receive guidance regarding their implementation. Until that time, continue to use the ELA and Math CCSS as you teach to the NM state standards in each content area.

All students should have access to the CCSS. We know that, as students approach or enter Tier 3 interventions, modifications of instructional strategies may necessitate the use of more prescriptive programs. The APS/ATF Memorandum of Understanding, *The Common Core State Standards, Standards-Based Teaching Practices, and the Relation To APS Programs And Practice* (below) support these expectations.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
The Common Core State Standards, Standards-Based Teaching
Practices, and the Relation To APS Programs And Practices

The District and the Federation agree that starting in the 2012-2013 school year and in all subsequent school years, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will be the foundation of instruction for all APS students.

Both parties believe that teachers must collectively and collaboratively use appropriate methods and materials to help students develop conceptual understanding that leads to proficiency in the CCSS.

Both parties affirm that all educational programs must be sensitive to the needs and aspirations of students and that all students in APS must have equal access to the CCSS.

The following clarifications are intended to support the above statements:

- All instructional programs can be used with the CCSS. Teachers have the discretion to augment the District-approved curricular programs. Teachers may also adjust the pacing and scope and sequence of District-approved curricular programs to align with the CCSS.
- Tier II and III intervention programs, while more prescriptive by nature, are one of the instructional tools used to teach to the CCSS. Additional tools and resources may be utilized to meet the CCSS.
- Principals and staffs are encouraged to analyze school practices to ensure they are still relevant as APS moves toward adopting the CCSS at all grades. For example: Baldrige is no longer a district-supported program. Continuing with Baldrige, CCI, Continuous Improvement, and PDSA is at the discretion of the Instructional Council.

Supports and Tools

The first step to implementation requires that teachers know and understand the Common Core State Standards. The modules on Blackboard were developed to provide an overview of the standards. They may be useful in PLCs or in staff meetings.

The APS Scope and Sequence/Units of Study

By using the APS Scope and Sequence materials to guide your instruction, you will be preparing your students in the best way possible. These standards are not stacked like previous standards. They are built on progressions or trajectory across grade levels as are the Scope and Sequence and Units of Study created by APS. The pacing in the Units of Study is not absolute, but will guide teachers as they plan and implement throughout the school year.

Assessment and Embedded Performance Tasks

On-going, formative assessment is a critical tool to meeting the rigor of the standards. Formal and informal assessment will serve as the founding for your instructional decision-making. Our District's two short cycle assessments will follow the units of study with a flexible window to allow teachers and students to access the assessments at the most appropriate time. Performance tasks are embedded in the APS Scope and Sequence. Using these will help you not only to assess your students' understanding, but will also prepare them for the rigor of the upcoming Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment in 2014-15.

Programs and Materials

Any textbook, program or supplemental material can be used as one, but not the only, resource in a classroom to teach to the standards. Materials at your school should be analyzed and used carefully as a tool used to teach to the CCSS. Use your materials wisely, planning around the standards at all times.

Guiding the Implementation at Each Site

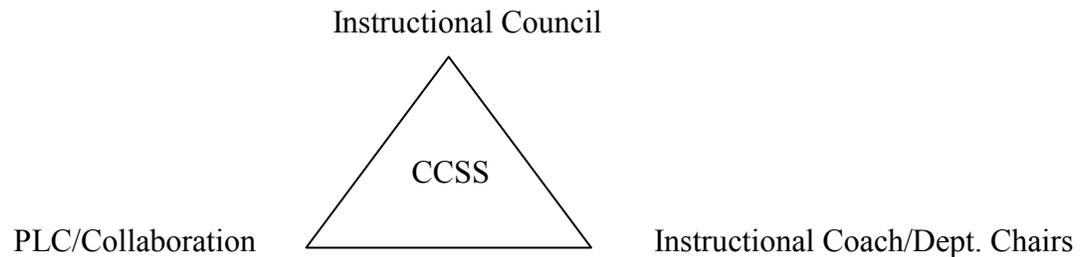
Collaboration benefits teaching and learning when it occurs on several levels: when principals and teachers collaborate through the Instructional Council; when educators collaborate with their colleagues to support innovative classroom practices and set high expectations for themselves and their students; and when students are given opportunities to work together toward academic goals in ways that enhance learning.

As per our contract language, each school's Instructional Council will act as the leadership team that collaboratively manages the process for the implementation of the Common Core State Standards at each site. Please refer to the contract language on the next page.

APS/ATF Negotiated Agreement
Article 7 INSTRUCTIONAL COUNCILS (ICs)

8. The IC will act as the leadership team that manages the process for the implementation of the Common Core State Standards at each site. This includes:

- Creating structures at the school that explicitly connect the work of the Instructional Council and the Instructional Coach so that the PLC/Collaboration work is connected to the implementation work.



- Moving the staff from awareness of the CCSS to implementation.
- Ensuring information is not just dispensed, but also understood.
- Ensuring that teachers are able to share their perspectives and pedagogical strategies with each other as they learn about and implement the CCSS.
- Collaborating with the Instructional Coach and teacher leaders on professional development about the CCSS.
- Gathering both qualitative data and quantitative data about the progress of implementation, questions that arise, and the supports needed by the teachers.
- Basing the implementation of the CCSS on the unique needs of the staff and student population of the school.
- This is a collaborative effort between the IC members and their constituents. Work on the CCSS implementation should not come “top-down” from the IC to the staff.
- The Instructional Council will ensure that the implementation of the CCSS at their site is informed by, and connected to, the District’s plans.