

## Transition to the Common Core Curriculum in Mathematics

Most states, with slight degrees of variance, have adopted the new Common Core Standards in Language Arts and Mathematics as their state standards. Schools across the nation now face the challenge of transitioning from their past state standards to the new ones. There is a degree of change in concepts and skills in both documents, but the greatest difference exists in math. There is no question that the Common Core Math Standards have raised the rigor expected in math instruction and learning in most states. In fact, there are several topics and skills that have been moved down as many as two grade levels, and there is a new emphasis (or focus) for a number of grade levels. Likewise, districts working with the new Common Core Standards have found that some topics and skills they feel are essential have been left out.

Districts need to begin implementing the new standards as soon as possible, in order to meet the increased demands. *But the problem facing school districts is whether also to continue to use curriculum aligned to the old standards because those standards are the basis for current state assessments – or to fully implement the new Common Core Standards, knowing they do not match the current state assessments.* In order to plan for the transition, a district must make a conscious decision with a clear acknowledgement of the possible impact on test scores. The decision is not an easy one to make, and the Curriculum Coordinating Council should carefully consider options and consequences before proceeding.

If a district chooses to fully implement the Common Core Standards with the changes in concepts and skills at each grade level, then the students will not receive the same intense instruction on the *old* standards, and student scores on related items still on the current state assessment will most likely be negatively impacted. If this is the transition choice that is made, then it is important that district patrons know the reasons why there might be a dip in scores and thus a potential for not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in math – until new state assessments are created.

If a district chooses to implement the Common Core standards and also maintain instruction on the old standards (which match the current assessment), then they must acknowledge the potential for not completing the curriculum at numerous grade levels. Teachers know, from student questions and conversations after taking the assessment, which standards are strongly emphasized on the current assessments. It is possible that those standards could be highlighted and added to the Common Core curriculum with the intent of phasing out the concepts that are no longer included at that grade level. Such concepts and skills would need to be identified clearly in the curriculum document, and the phase-out plan clearly articulated. In this plan, students would continue to be prepared for the current state assessment but the district would have to acknowledge that most likely they would not be fully implementing the Common Core Standards. This could result in creating gaps for students as they continue through the district curriculum.

In the next *Ehint*, we will explore some step-by-step methods of identifying the degree of alignment of your current curriculum with the Common Core Standards as adopted for your state, and how to go about revising the curriculum, instructional planning, and local common assessments for better alignment.