

Curriculum Leadership Institute E-Hint

Common Core Standards for Mathematics

Step-by-Step Transitioning

In a previous *E-Hint*, we talked about decisions that need to be made by the Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC) regarding district priorities in transitioning from the existing curriculum to alignment with the new Math Common Core Standards. When ready to begin, the actual transition process looms as an almost insurmountable task. As with all huge tasks, this one is easier to accomplish if you break it down, step-by-step.

Note: In order to make the work easier, save a copy of your state's common core standards as a document that can be edited and from which portions can be copied and pasted into other documents.

Step 1. The Math Subject Area Committee (SAC) must determine through group discussion precisely what the common core standards, as adopted by your state, mean in terms of measurable skills and concepts. Because standards are not intended to be curriculum, there are likely several of the standards that are actually teaching strategies or broad goals rather than student learning descriptions. These cannot and are not supposed to be measured, thus they should not be included as curriculum. Instead, they should be identified on the standards document as the types of statements they are (strategy/goal). This step could be defined as “clarification” of the standards to make them more usable for creating curriculum.

Step 2. Use the “clarified” standards document for comparison with the current local curriculum. It would be helpful to create a table of the local curriculum so that alignment can be indicated in a clear, organized manner. (See example below.) Create columns 1 and 2 by copying and pasting the current curriculum, then create additional columns with headings like those suggested in the example. Note that each grade level has its own table.

Grade Level:				
1	2	3	4	5
Local Curriculum Code	Local Outcomes/Components	Common Core Code	Grade level recommended for this concept	Grade levels included in “phase in” process

Step 3. Look at the first local outcome or component in the table. Find the standards from the “clarified” common core document to which that local outcome or component aligns. List the common core code in column 3. On the clarified document, underline or highlight the part of each standard that matches the local curriculum target. Keep in mind that each grade level will need copies of the clarified common core from several grade levels in order to fully document the alignment. Continue this process until you’ve examined all outcomes/components for the grade level.

Step 4. Now look at the clarified standards document, and find items for this grade level that are not yet highlighted. These concepts or skills may appear in the local curriculum – but at a different grade level (which is why teachers need the additional documents). If the items are located, indicate in column 4 where their inclusion is recommended.

Step 5. After each grade level has completed its own alignment process, it will be necessary to compile a “master” common core document to identify those things that do *not* appear anywhere in the local curriculum. This may be accomplished by reading aloud the code for each common core standard and having each grade level report which specific parts of the standard matches their grade level’s curriculum. Each identified part should be marked in some way, making it clear that unmarked items are not anywhere in the current curriculum.

Now that the alignment has been accomplished, the discussion must change focus to determine what to do with the resulting data. Recommendations are detailed in the steps below. As the SAC members progress through the steps, they must keep in mind the decisions made by the CCC regarding the transition.

Step 6. If a concept or skill from the **common core** does not appear anywhere in the **local curriculum**, the SAC must determine whether it should be added to the curriculum and, if so, what scaffolding may be necessary at lower grade levels to support the new skill.

Step 7. If a concept or skill from the **local curriculum** does not appear in the **common core**, there are several options.

- a. Decide if the item is valuable enough that it should be kept anyway, even though it does not appear in the common core, and if so – identify the most appropriate grade level for its inclusion.
- b. Decide whether it is valuable only until the new assessment is implemented and then it should be phased out. If this is the case, indicate the year it will be phased out.
- c. If the concept or skill is deemed not to be that important, choose to eliminate it from the new curriculum.

Step 8. For all of the concepts and skills that appear at a different grade level in the local curriculum than what the common core recommends, determine if they should be moved to the recommended grade levels (noted in column 4). In column 5, record any grade levels that would also need the instruction in the first year of implementation, to prevent gaps in student learning.

Step 9. Create a new curriculum document to reflect all the decisions made and follow logical steps for its critique, including: (1) whether the focus/purpose statement from the previous curriculum is still appropriate; and (2) whether the curriculum is now too large to be accomplished in a single year for any grade level. If the latter occurs, then the SAC must have group discussions again, and make some difficult decisions. Can something be moved to another grade level? Will you have to purposely eliminate something, even if it is in the standards?

Step 10. Using the chart created through this work, code the new curriculum to show alignment with the common core standards.

The natural next steps are to review the impact of the new curriculum on existing instructional plans and common assessments, and to devise a plan for necessary revisions.