

July 19, 2010

Dear Connecticut Educator:

I have two items for you in this update.

CSDE Ready to Help Districts Transition to Common Core State Standards

On July 7, 2010, with a unanimous vote, the State Board of Education adopted new national academic standards, known as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts and mathematics that will establish what Connecticut's public school students should know and be able to do as they progress from kindergarten through Grade 12. States competing for Race to the Top funding from the U.S. Department of Education are expected to adopt the CCSS by August 2, 2010, to receive maximum points on Assurance 1 of the application. (More information about the CCSS is available at <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>. More about Connecticut's Race to the Top application is available at <http://www.ct.gov/sde/rttt>.)

The CCSS were designed to consist of fewer, clearer and higher-level standards; to be aligned with college and work expectations; to include rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher order thinking skills; to build upon the strengths and lessons of current state standards; to be internationally benchmarked so that all students will be prepared to succeed in our global economy; and to be based on evidence and research.

The English language arts standards require that students systematically develop literacy skills and understandings through reading, writing, speaking and listening. For Grades 6-12, there is also a set of standards for English language arts in the content areas. The mathematics standards are designed to focus on developing students' understanding of mathematical concepts and acquisition of fundamental reasoning habits, in addition to fluency skills.

The newly adopted national standards will provide guidance to local curriculum committees as they develop grade-by-grade and course-level expectations and as they engage in secondary school reform as required by P.A. 10-111.

Although the CCSS do not include standards for prekindergarten, we believe that the inclusion of standards before kindergarten is necessary and fundamental to ensure that there is a strong transition between early childhood and public education. Therefore, Connecticut is making plans to incorporate prekindergarten standards into the final draft of its prekindergarten-Grade 12 standards.

The Bureau of Teaching and Learning will continue to provide timely updates and is committed to supporting districts in the transition to the CCSS. Information on standards transition guidelines, interpretation documents and notices for regional CCSS workshops will be posted on the Bureau of Teaching and Learning CCSS Web site at <http://www.ct.gov/sde/ccss>.

For more information, please contact Joanne White at 860-713-6751 or joanne.white@ct.gov.

Improving School Climate as a Vehicle to Diminish Bullying

Circular Letter C-12 reiterates the importance of creating positive, safe and respectful school climates as both the foundation for high quality learning and the ultimate remedy for diminishing bullying in our schools.

I submitted a Report on the Status of Analysis of Bullying Policies in Connecticut to the legislature in January 2010 making important recommendations to help achieve this goal, and this circular letter includes those recommendations. Please review: [Report on Bullying Legislation](#) [pdf]

Nationally, the importance of assessing, creating and maintaining positive school climate is clearly recognized, and our state is at the forefront of this movement. In the letter, I also called attention to the National School Climate Standards, which are an additional helpful and important tool.

I urge all schools to be aware of this priority and to be informed by Circular Letter C-12 to create and maintain safe environments that optimize opportunities for learning.

Sincerely,

Mark K. McQuillan
Commissioner of Education