

TEACHERS' VOICE

“ The Common Core Standards will drive instruction and our core instructional materials will be the tools to support these standards. ”

– Linda Sink, APS Chief Academic Officer



PROFESSIONAL
PROGRESSIVE
UNIONISM

THE PROMISE

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

THE PERIL



March 2012

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albuquerque teachers federation

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THE PROMISE

The promise of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is that the United States, like the other countries to which we are compared, will be able to teach for deep conceptual understanding, rather than teaching only to the facts and skills that are easily tested. If we are able to accomplish this transition, facts and skills will be taught properly, as a means to support deeper conceptual understanding and application of knowledge, rather than as the end product of public education.

The peril of CCSS is that others, meaning those who are not full time educators, will take control of this iteration of the standards movement. If state departments of education, district departments, textbook companies and program producers are allowed to own the CCSS, it is doomed to be the next thing layered on teachers—the next thing they have to do with fidelity, but without understanding or ownership. Teachers must own the implementation of the standards. Without teacher ownership, the promise will never be realized.

In the early 1980s, after completing a teacher preparation program complete with an emphasis on engaging pedagogical strategies and a full semester of student teaching, I started teaching third grade. During my first year of teaching, the district went through the textbook adoption process for math. I took the process seriously and reviewed the competing texts carefully. My choice for the best textbook was the one with the most problems per page. Why? Because regardless of how I was prepared to teach math to young children, as a student, I had been successful in math by practicing—a lot.

In the late 1980's, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) published standards for teaching math that called for more emphasis on conceptual understanding and problem solving. By that point in my teaching, I considered my focus on direct instruction and the memorization of facts and algorithms to be successful. I had developed the reputation for being a good teacher and was receiving positive feedback from parents and administrators. Why should I change how I taught?

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Later, I was invited by a friend and colleague to attend a math workshop during the summer. The workshop focused on how to teach to the new NCTM standards. The workshop provided concrete examples of how to change my practice to include hands-on experiences that connected facts and skills with conceptual understanding. What an eye opener! After three summers of these district-supported classes and a semester class in the AFT ER&D course "Thinking Math," my teaching was transformed. After all those years as a successful math student who attended public schools, it turns out I was successful at practicing and memorizing. I had actually learned little about mathematical thinking. I was a compliant student who had good support at home, and I had taught my students based on my own surface success.

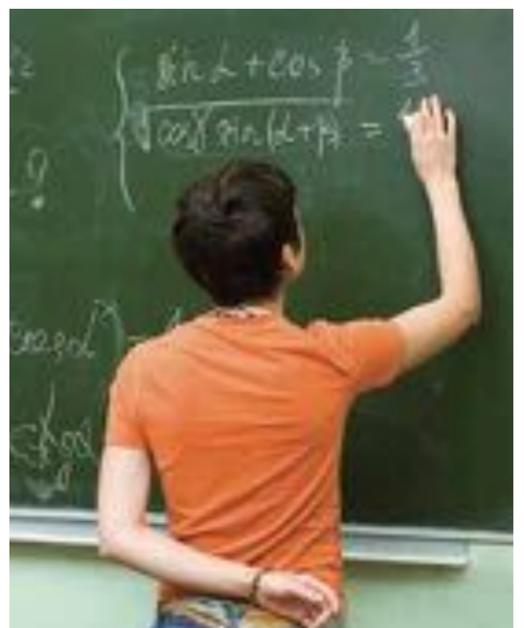
Over three years, I experienced three essential components to my growth: working closely with colleagues; time and support from my district; and the freedom to fail and try again. By the end of that time, I truly comprehended how children constructed their understanding, and how to create lessons that allowed for deep exploration leading to the children's ownership of concepts—lessons which balanced practice and memorization with rich experiences in mathematical concepts. I no longer substituted practice for learning.

This evolutionary epiphany changed how I taught every subject. I became a much better teacher, one who was able to integrate literacy skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—into math, science, social studies, etc. My students were more engaged, exhibited deeper understanding, and were better able to articulate their thinking and problem solving in all content areas. And, as you might well have guessed, I had fewer issues with classroom management. I was sold—standards are good.

Regrettably, the standards movement deteriorated from there. Every subject area had a list of standards—mostly a list of "essential" skills and facts. Then, states came up with their standards, and sometimes each district with their own variation. Instead of investing in the kind of time and support I had experienced, we were told to unwrap the standards, find the power standards, post the standards on the wall, and list the standards in our lesson plans—all without regard to whether or not we were engaging our students in standards-based instruction. "Opportunity to Learn" Standards, which were intended to ensure that every student had a well-qualified teacher and every teacher had the resources to do their job well, were summarily ignored. Soon, all we had to do was buy a textbook from a company who promised that their product was aligned with our standards. Testing companies included questions that matched our standards and then renamed their normed tests "standards-based" without really changing what and how they tested. Sadly, standards-based teaching became the next phase in the educational pendulum of passing fads. Teaching to the standards was based on only one thing—compliance. Increasingly, teachers entering the profession were trained to comply with a program and had little experience creating rich curriculum based on standards.

In this last decade, NCLB became the death knell of teaching for understanding. Instead of being standards-based, our systems are test-based. Fidelity to the program, the text, and the pacing guide has replaced effective and diverse standards-based pedagogical strategies. Now, we are ready to engage in the next standards movement. The Common Core State Standards embraced by most states, including our own, has great promise and an equal amount of peril.

THE PERIL



President's Message Continued on Page 2.

THE PROMISE *Continued...*

I still believe in the promise of well-crafted standards to guide us as we construct lessons aimed at deep understanding. Yet, I have witnessed the peril of surface implementation and compliance driven, short-lived bandwagons. We can learn from the previous standards movement and avoid these pitfalls, but teachers have to own it this time and we have to start now.

This year, as the union president, I have been engaged in two initiatives that have allowed me to work with the CCSS. The first is a grant from Gates—in conjunction with the American Federation of Teachers, Council of Chief State School Officers, Council of Great City Schools, and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices—which supports a pilot implementation

The unlearning, for teachers firmly entrenched in the compliance culture that has taken over our schools, will be a huge part of making the core standards movement successful.

of the CCSS. With this grant money, Albuquerque, along with Boston, Atlanta, Cleveland, Philadelphia and St. Paul, have been piloting the standards.

The second, an AFT Innovation Fund grant, provides for the creation of lessons and materials aligned to the new Common

Core State Standards for students still learning English. We are working as partners with PBS television affiliate WETA to develop the research-based professional development materials and model lessons for teaching English language learners in grades 1, 4 and 8.

I am learning a great deal working with the teachers on these projects. I have learned that it takes a significant amount of time and progressive leadership before the teachers are able to feel free to plan lessons that start with the standard, rather than starting with the mandated text, program or test—especially after years of expectations to the contrary. The unlearning, for teachers firmly entrenched in the compliance culture that has taken over our schools, will be a huge part of making the core standards movement successful.

These standards are written in a way that demands teaching deeply for conceptual understanding. Interdisciplinary teaching, with purposeful connections to all content areas skillfully planned within each lesson, will be essential. Accomplishing these two components will be no small task, especially if the goal is to change our entire educational system.

Teacher ownership is paramount and must be supported by the entire system. Given time and support, teachers will be able to collectively and collaboratively use the methods and materials appropriate for teaching with depth and for student engagement. Teachers will be able to leave behind the era of covering materials based on pacing guides and mandates, and return once again to teaching students, rather than programs. How can that happen? Simple. Like other countries famous for successfully reforming their educational systems, we must trust teachers.

In Solidarity,

Ellen

Like other countries famous for successfully reforming their educational systems—we must trust teachers.

THE COMMON CORE AND POLICIES

The silos of educational policy and teacher practice must be connected. New policies, especially those connected to the reauthorization of ESEA (No Child Left Behind), must focus on aligning the role of the federal government with the expectation and the necessary supportive policies and resources for school districts to successfully implement the CCSS. Trusting teachers and supporting them to teach to the standards must be integral to the next ESEA.

President Obama made clear what teachers have long understood, that we must stop teaching to the test. I agree with the president when he said:

We can't test our way to a middle class; we must educate our way to a middle class. The overemphasis on testing has led to narrowing of the curriculum, rather than creating a path to critical thinking and problem solving. These are the kinds of knowledge and skills our children need to compete in the global economy. Respecting public school teachers and providing them with the tools and resources they need to help our children learn and grow are essential to building a strong public education system, competing in a global economy and restoring economic opportunity for all (State of the Union Address, January 2012).

Yet, federal programs like Race to the Top do the exact opposite. The test-based accountability obsession that has defined the last decade must stop. Race to the Top and the reauthorization of ESEA must be envisioned and realigned to a very different mission than the competitive test score-driven policies upon which education is now based. As we continue to compare our country's educational system with those nations that do better, policymakers will have to embrace the truth that if classrooms and schools are expected to look the same, yet expect different results, we will have lost the potential of the common core.

In *The Atlantic* (December, 2011) article, "What Americans Keep Ignoring about Finland's School Success," a picture is painted for the generation of ESEA and all policies that guide our public schools:

For starters, Finland has no standardized tests. The only exception is what's called the National Matriculation Exam, which everyone takes at the end of a voluntary upper-secondary school, roughly the equivalent of American high school.

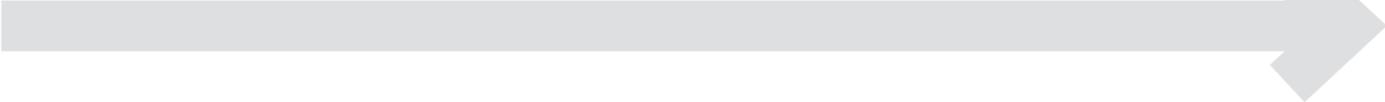
Instead, the public school system's teachers are trained to assess children in classrooms using independent tests they create themselves. All children receive a report card at the end of each semester, but these reports are based on individualized grading by each teacher. Periodically, the Ministry of Education tracks national progress by testing a few sample groups across a range of different schools.

As for accountability of teachers and administrators, Sahlberg shrugs. "There's no word for accountability in Finnish," he later told an audience at the Teachers College of Columbia University. "Accountability is something that is left when responsibility has been subtracted."

Along with the content standards, the federal government, and subsequently each state and every district, must pay attention to Opportunity to Learn Standards and craft policies that embed the notion that unequal resources lead to equality. The need-driven resources that define Opportunity to Learn Standards must be the focus of the federal government's role in the new ESEA.

Opportunity To Learn (OTL) means children have access to high-quality early learning programs and public schools that, at a minimum, are well-resourced and well-staffed by qualified professionals; provide classes of a size to ensure individualized instruction and attention to each child's learning needs; are safe, healthy and modern. Opportunity gaps are the differences in resources and school conditions that society provides for children and schools from place to place. (Forum on Educational Accountability, *All Children Deserve the Opportunity to Learn*, February, 2011. www.edaccountability.org).

This list of OTL standards is indisputable, yet there is one essential ingredient that must be added. That ingredient is time. In order to avoid "more of the same," additional time must be implemented in tandem with innovative uses of time. If the standards are to drive the instructional shift in our public schools, Congress and the president must refocus the federal role on flowing resources for wrap-around services and high quality early childhood experiences that address the opportunity gap. It is only through addressing the opportunity gap that we will address our country's achievement gap.



THE COMMON CORE AND PARTNERSHIPS

Teacher efficacy is non-negotiable in common core schooling. This standards movement will require partnerships at the federal, state, district and school levels. We can't afford surface partnerships. Starting and sustaining change in the deep structures of public schools requires true partnership—partnerships based on teachers and their unions working as equals with administration at every level.

Collaborative structures that replace our traditional factory model, top-down bureaucracies are not optional. Last year, the U.S. Department of Education sponsored a conference entitled, "Advancing Student Achievement through Labor-Management Collaboration," which highlighted school districts and labor leaders from across the country that have created successful collaborative labor-management relationships, policies and agreements.

A good start and an appropriate role for the US ED, however, they must literally practice what they preach. In the reauthorization, Secretary Arne Duncan must ensure that teachers' voices are driving the implementation of the common core standards, the next generation of tests, and how these are used as measures of success.

Secretary Duncan is quoted as saying to the attendees from 150 districts in 40 states, "I hope you will leave with at least two messages of hope. First and foremost, student success must be the heart of the labor-management relationship. The second message I hope you will take away from this conference is the importance of a new narrative in school reform."

That new narrative must be teacher-owned, standards-driven reform, which will replace the high-stakes, test-driven accountability. That new narrative must be a true partnership between our national unions and our federal government. Our unions should accept no less.

And, in our districts we must stop the debate about top-down versus bottom-up. The current standards movement cannot afford that to take that side-track. Central offices must listen to what the teachers and principals need and become organized around providing it.

- 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.

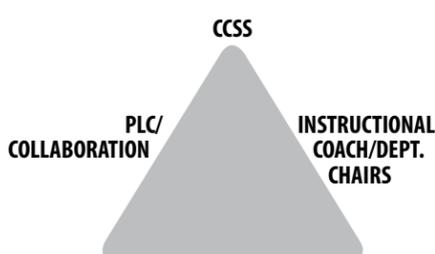
Districts must be redesigned to provide an infrastructure of services, policies and expectations that support school-level improvements in teaching and learning. To do so will require, among other things, more effective alignment of central office practices, resources, and policies with the varying needs of individual schools in the context of the Common Core. A labor-management

partnership will be able to lead changes not only in the classroom, but also in the central office. These changes must be in tandem.

As important as the relationship between labor and management is, a partnership between principals and teachers and among colleagues at the school level is more important. All too often partnerships are formed at the "top", while the principals and teachers continue to struggle with each other in the schools. Translating true partnerships into the relationships among and between central office, school leadership and teachers is needed as we transition to the common core.

The research on breaking down the isolation of the classroom by creating professional learning communities is compelling. Let's create PLCs at central office, among principals and among teachers. The focus of these professional learning communities should shift from compliance compliance to mandates and put on rich discussions about teaching in a standards-based system. What does that look like? How do we lead and support this transition? What structures must we break down and rebuild? APS and ATF plan to rework the Instructional Council language in our contract toward that end.

In our preliminary agreements, the Instructional Council will act as the leadership team that manages the process for the implementation of the Common Core State Standards at each site. This includes:



- 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.

We will all be learning together. There are no experts in the common core; it's new to us all. Principals must learn new leadership skills that will focus on supporting teachers who are learning, or re-learning, teaching skills. Principals must humbly learn with us side-by-side. Fidelity to programs, checklists and walk-throughs, must be replaced with a tolerance and acceptance of chaos.

We will all be learning together. There are no experts in the common core; it's new to us all. Principals must learn new leadership skills that will focus on supporting teachers who are learning, or re-learning, teaching skills. Principals must humbly learn with us side-by-side. Fidelity to programs, checklists and walk-throughs, must be replaced with a tolerance and acceptance of chaos. Compliance to programs that have been sold as the way to fix teachers and test-takers can no longer reign supreme.

Other counties, like Finland, have taught us about the policies that will guarantee the CCSS serve as a vehicle for positive change in the United States. We must follow the example they have set:

- No standardized testing of kids
- Egalitarian treatment of kids
- Teachers have autonomy and are trusted
- No standardized testing
- Smaller class sizes
- Smooth relations between teachers and administrators

We can all just imagine what it is going to be like in the next few years as the standards are implemented in the residual context of high stakes tests that are not connected with the new standards and punitive school ranking systems from the federal level and the state. It will feel unruly and foreign. If it doesn't, then we are doing this wrong. Policies at odds with the Common Core must be retired and replaced with supportive policies, funded time, and an unwavering emphasis on trust in the teaching professionals tasked with ensuring the standards translate into practice.



CLASSROOM INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY IS INSTRUMENTAL IN TEACHING AND LEARNING; CCSS PROVIDES CLARITY TOWARDS FOSTERING THAT ENVIRONMENT.

Ali Nava
1st Grade Teacher
Lew Wallace ES



I HEARD A PILOT TEACHER SAY SOMETHING PROFOUND. SHE SAID IT IS A RELIEF FOR TEACHERS THAT WE FINALLY HAVE STANDARDS WRITTEN TO FIT STANDARDS-BASED PRACTICES. SHE IS ABSOLUTELY RIGHT.

Gina Middleton
Common Core Pilot Project Mgr.
APS-RDA



THE COMMON CORE STANDARDS PROVIDE TEACHERS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO DELVE DEEPER AND BUILD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE KNOWLEDGE STUDENTS ARE LEARNING.

Agnes LeDoux
Principal, Inez ES

PLANNING

It's been talked about and practiced by knowledgeable educators for decades now. Conceptual planning, backward planning, understanding by design. Regardless of the term used, in a standards-based system we start planning with the standards—not the text, not the test. This is a mighty shift, one that will require great trust in teachers' judgment.

One of the mistakes of the last standards movement was the confusion between standards and standardization. Teachers, in partnership with their administration and with each other, need to be able to practice and model the habits of mind that we are expected to engender in our students.

As we transition to the common core, it must be the professional right of all teachers to practice with fidelity to their own professional knowledge. They must be faithful to their sense of what is right and appropriate based on their professional knowledge, study and reflection in collaboration with their peers and with evidence of their results.

Planning in a standards-based system does not start with a program. It starts with the standard. The CCSS are written for that purpose. It begs us, as teachers, to understand and embrace that coverage is the enemy of understanding. For decades now, we've been comparing our traditional school experience in America as one that plans for coverage an inch deep and mile wide, while other countries ensure that only a few concepts are taught at each grade, building on understanding as the students progress. Because of our systems of "coverage" rather than understanding, we repeat and repeat as we focus on the memorization of skills and facts divorced from context and content. The CCSS instead is created, as in most other successful countries, so that we can teach fewer concepts, but concepts that will be taught deeply.

How do we move beyond designing mere interesting activities or textbook "coverage?" We do so by freeing teachers to become the policymakers of classroom practice. Teachers should use their professional knowledge to make the best decisions for their students in collaboration with their school communities. When we trust professional teachers, the focus of lesson planning shifts from the acquisition and manipulation of knowledge for its own sake to making essential connections with previously-learned concepts and solving real-world problems.

Understanding by design or backward/conceptual planning helps teachers design instructional activities that promote teaching for understanding, such as using differentiated instruction to address the needs of all learners. Because teachers have been required to use the plans in the textbook, rather than creating their own lesson plans, teachers will need time to learn how to plan together based on the standards. Teachers will need to develop lesson plans that use a variety of strategies and practitioner-generated unit designs.

PEDAGOGY

Pedagogy is the key. I am worried—even disturbed—that in all the work I have been involved in thus far, we talk about changes in instructional strategies, but never really describe for ourselves and others what teaching practice on a Common Core Standards-based system looks like.

Pedagogy does not look like transmission teaching—meaning we transmit what is on our brains to the brains of our students. It does look like students engaged and grappling with complexity. Teaching strategies will be dominated by assignments that include evidence of students' thinking at progressively deeper levels.

Think constructivist teaching strategies. Think about how understanding is constructed from a base of prior knowledge. Students come to us, not as a blank slate, but instead as ready, even predisposed, to making sense of all new information according to his or her current conceptions. Picture these pedagogical strategies:

- A primary emphasis on a hands-on, problem-centered approach in which the learners are actively involved.
- Class discussions designed to make a connection between activities and the underlying conceptual knowledge.
- Projects built around thematic units or the intersection of topics from two or more disciplines.
- Experiments and research projects in which findings are presented and debated with the class as a whole.
- Field trips that allow students to put the concepts and ideas discussed in class in a real-world context.

Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels, developed by Norman L. Webb at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, is a truly helpful tool for teaching and assessing for deep conceptual understanding. Depth of Knowledge is the degree of depth or complexity of knowledge standards and assessments.

Webb identified four levels (dese.mo.gov/divimprove/sia/msip/DOK_Chart.pdf) for assessing the DOK of content standards and assessment items:

- Level 1** - Recall of a fact, information, or procedure.
- Level 2** - Skill/Concept: Using information or conceptual knowledge, two or more steps, etc.
- Level 3** - Strategic Thinking: Requires reasoning, developing plan or a sequence of steps, some complexity, more than one possible answer.
- Level 4** - Extended Thinking: Requires an investigation, time to think and process multiple conditions of the problem.

Teachers will use their professional knowledge to make the best decisions for their students and must be trusted to do so. As the pendulum swings away from testing and back to learning, let's trust teachers to realize that philosophies and methodologies that are the most sound lie in the gray areas between the black and the white debate of whole language versus phonics or facts versus concepts. There is no need to dichotomize the teaching of skills versus the construction of understanding. Once teachers are the policymakers of their pedagogy, we will attract and retain the best and the brightest in the profession and the result will be better teaching and higher learning.

PROGRAMS

Districts have invested scarce resources purchasing instructional programs that were created before the CCSS were created. While we must no longer mandate that these programs be followed with fidelity, there

is no need to replace them. Programs will be one, but not the only, resource teachers will use as they teach to the standards.

Any instructional program can be used with the common core. As long as teachers have the discretion to: 1) augment, especially with informational texts; and 2) adjust, so they can use the sections in the text that apply to the standards they are teaching at that point of in time. Warning: The program and textbook companies are going to slap a label in their products that reads, "Aligned to the Common Core." We don't need to buy it—literally. Purchased curriculum has no place in the common core system.

Programs will be one, but not the only, resource teachers will use as they teach to the standards.

Curriculum is what a teacher creates by gathering a variety of instructional tools and resources, aimed at teaching to the common core. I want to make a distinction:

teaching *the* common core and teaching *to* the common core are distinctly different ideas. Teaching *the* common core implies that we can follow prescribed curriculum, post the standards on the wall, have the students reference and recite them, and call it standards-based. Teaching *to* the standards is much more complex and will require teacher-created curriculum and carefully crafted lessons that infuse the conceptual base in the standards, not merely the standards themselves.

This concept is illustrated by Linda Darling-Hammond as she compared the United States and Finland:

The process of change has been almost the reverse of policies in the United States. Over the past 40 years, Finland has shifted from a highly centralized system emphasizing external testing to a more localized system in which highly trained teachers design curriculum around the very lean national standards. This new system is implemented through equitable funding and extensive preparation for all teachers. The logic of the system is that investments in the capacity of local teachers and schools to meet the needs of all students, coupled with thoughtful guidance about goals, can unleash the benefits of local creativity in the cause of common, equitable outcomes.

We won't have thinking kids without thinking teachers. Thinking teachers, who develop curriculum from multiple sources, will be able to develop in their students the skills, attributes and dispositions that employers want and that our students need. Schools will graduate students who are creative, innovative, adaptable, self-motivated, and able to solve problems and work in groups.

TRANSITION TO COMMON CORE STANDARDS (CCSS)

The new standards released last year by the Common Core State Standards Initiative 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 provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn. 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 CCSS Initiative developed K-12 standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics that are fewer and more focused than most current standards.
- These standards are focused and demand much greater depth of understanding.

In 2013-14, the New Mexico Content Standards will be transitioning to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in Math and English Language Arts. The CCSS are content standards adopted by 47 states and U.S. territories.

Teachers, school administrators, and experts collaborated in the development of CCSS to provide a consistent framework to prepare students for college and the workforce. CCSS are designed to be rigorous so students master the CCSS knowledge and skills and are ready to succeed in college and careers.

The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) adopted the CCSS in October 2010. The PED is planning for implementation in K-3 in 2012-13, and for full implementation with aligned common assessments in 2014-2015.

Regardless of what you teach, it is worth reading through the standards. Below are some suggested resources:

<http://www.corestandards.org>

<http://www.aps.edu/academics/common-core-state-standards>

<http://www.hunt-institute.org/education-initiatives/shaping-rigorous-world-class-education-standards/>

CCSS ASSESSMENTS

Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is an alliance of 25 states working together to develop common K-12 assessments aligned to the CCSS in English Language Arts and Mathematics, anchored in what it takes to be ready for college and careers. New Mexico joined PARCC in September 2011.

PARCC is developing assessments for grades 3-11 for English Language Arts and Mathematics, and offers multiple assessment opportunities each year to provide timely instructional information for teachers.

According to the PARCC website, the next-generation assessment system envisioned by PARCC will have several benefits not found in current assessment systems including benefits to: students, who will know if they are on track to graduate ready for college and careers; teachers, who will receive regular results to guide learning and instruction; parents, who will have clear and timely information about the progress of their children; states, who will have valid results that are comparable across the member states and; the nation, since the assessments are based on the college- and career-ready, internationally-benchmarked CCSS.

Because the assessments have not yet been developed, PARCC does not know exactly what they will look like. Thus far, PARCC has suggested that there will be around five assessment opportunities throughout the year, with the first three assessments serving as optional diagnostics and the last two assessments serving as required summative assessments. The diagnostic

assessments will occur during the beginning of the year, and the summative assessments will take place at the end of the year. These assessments will use a combination of computer-based items and responses requiring pen and paper.

THERE ARE BIG SHIFTS IN EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS. THE CCSS RAISE THE BAR ON WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW AT THEIR GRADE LEVEL. TEACHERS ALSO NEED TO MAKE GENUINE EFFORTS TO PRESENT INFORMATION AT DEEPER LEVELS.

Lisa M. Burnham, 4th grade Teacher
Georgia O'Keeffe ES

WE ARE BEING PRESENTED WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE CURRICULUM THAT BEST ARTICULATES THE STANDARDS AND ENCOMPASSES THE UNIQUENESS OF OUR STUDENTS. NO MORE FIDELITY TO A SCRIPT. INSTEAD, WE GET TO USE OUR PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION TO TEACH. THIS IS INDEED EXCITING!

Miriam Martínez
Dual Language Kindergarten
Teacher, Los Padillas ES



DIAL a TEACHER

DON'T FALL BEHIND...

344-3571

M-TH 5:30-8:30 PM

REMINDE YOUR STUDENTS TO CALL FOR FREE HOMEWORK HELP IN ENGLISH OR SPANISH.

GET HOMEWORK HELP

I OFTEN FEEL PRESSED (AND STRESSED) BECAUSE MATH TEACHERS ARE EXPECTED TO COVER SO MANY THINGS EVERY YEAR. I APPRECIATE THE CCSS: THEY FOCUS ON FEWER CONCEPTS THAT CAN BE DEVELOPED IN GREATER DEPTH.

Paul Roensch
Math Teacher, Eldorado HS

ISSUES

Testing Schedules and Lost Prep Time

As testing season approaches, teachers often ask about the loss of prep time due to testing schedules. All should be aware that there is no compensation for lost prep time due to testing schedules; however, they should also be aware that there are contractual safeguards to protect against disproportionate loss of prep time. The following contract language should be adhered to.

Article 5.E.4 states: "Special events, such as school-wide testing, which result in a deviation from the normal weekly schedule, shall be scheduled in a manner which does not result in a disproportionate loss of prep time for any individual or group of individuals. Care shall be taken when scheduling such events to ensure that any resulting loss of prep time shall be minimized and be as equitable as possible for all employees."

New Licensure Rules Affecting Middle Schools

The Public Education Department recently began new monitoring and enforcement of licensure requirements affecting 6th grade teachers. To instruct 6th grade classes, a teacher must have one of these licenses: Elementary (K-8); Middle Level (5-9); or a "Specialty" (PreK-12). Any teacher who has worked in middle schools for five years or more can apply for and automatically receive the Middle Level (5-9) license. Sixth grade teachers with less than five years of experience must obtain one of the license types mentioned above.

To apply for the "automatic" Middle Level license, teachers should contact Darlene Espinosa (APS Licensure Specialist) in APS Human Resources. She will verify the years of middle school experience with successful evaluations and provide the verification letter, the Superintendent's recommendation form, and application. The fee for the Middle Level license is \$125.

It is important to note that these new rules do not affect special education teachers. The special education license covers all grades from Pre-Kinder to 12th grade.

ADVOCACY

The How & When of Voluntary Transfers

As the spring semester progresses, we begin to receive more questions about voluntary transfers. Many misconceptions exist about what process to follow for the transfer and when the actual move to a new location can take place. Below is a list of salient points on the provisions (Article 16) of the Negotiated Agreement that guide voluntary transfers.

- Teachers wanting a transfer should contact the principal at the prospective site and provide requested documents (résumé, letter of interest, etc.). Human Resources (HR) does not facilitate these contacts or create a list of transferees.
- A principal cannot offer a position to someone seeking a transfer. The principal makes a request to HR for the employee. HR is the entity that officially offers the position.
- If an offer for a voluntary transfer is not made before the start of the new school year, the transferee will remain in their original position through the first 20-day count.
- If a teacher accepts a new position after the first 20 days, he/she will remain in the original position until the end of the current grading period or for not more than ten workdays, whichever period of time is greater. However, earlier movement to the new site may occur if there is agreement by both principals.

Each transfer situation may have unique circumstances. Members may wish to contact the ATF office for more information or clarification.



Negotiations Update

The union began bargaining with APS late last month.

For the first time in three years, the legislature did not cut the state's education budget. While the district did receive an increase in funding over last year, the amount did not cover fixed cost increases and other expenses not accounted for in the funding formula. Nevertheless, it is the union's position that our members have sacrificed enough through the economy and funding drought, and it is time for the district to do all it can to financially honor its employees in some way.

In addition to addressing money issues, we will look for ways to improve upon contract language.

Evaluations

As your final observation and the completion of your yearly evaluation draws closer, please keep in mind the following:

- It is your responsibility to demonstrate proficiency on all nine competencies.
- You are to be evaluated on the competencies, not individual indicators.
- It is your administration's responsibility to follow the evaluation process and accurately assess your performance.
- By now, you would have had to have been put on an improvement plan if the district intended to not renew your contract for performance issues.
- Any violations of the evaluation process would result in a poor evaluation being void. The entire process and an excellent overview of evaluation responsibilities are outlined in our negotiated agreement on pages 44-45 and 82-83. If you do not have a hard copy of the agreement, you can view it at atfunion.org.
- If you are not evaluated (which does happen), the failure of the administration to evaluate will not adversely affect you or reflect negatively on you.

Members should contact the office if they have concerns or questions about their evaluations.

APS Xerox Print Program

As many of you may already know, APS has been planning to replace current copiers with new Xerox machines in all schools. Concerns and questions from Fed Reps have been shared with APS.

The concerns primarily have been around speed, access, supplies, training and service. Some schools are worried that their current machines, mostly Gestetners, will not be serviced during the interim. APS has assured me this is not true, and the machines your school currently has will be kept up until the transition is complete.

Some teachers have reported a concern that their personal printers will be taken. Again, not true. Personal printers can be kept as long as employees purchase their own ink. Ink may no longer be purchased through the school. Again, this takes effect when the transition to the new Xerox machines is complete.

APS continues to work with Xerox to address questions and concerns. Your technology teacher/coordinator should have information about your school's plan. ATF is distributing information from APS to Fed Reps. If you have questions or concerns, let your Fed Rep know.

SAT Chairs Report Improvements

The cumbersome SAT process has been the subject of many conversations between ATF and APS leadership.

As a result, last year Linda Sink and Ellen Bernstein invited all the chairs to a meeting to air their concerns. Since then, changes have been made. The result of a recent survey of SAT chairs indicates that the information, training, and processes have improved. Bernadette Valdez and Joab Gouveia promise that they will continue to work to improve the SAT process.

ORGANIZING

Act & Advocate...Communicate! Congratulations to NBCTs!

Of the 51 new NBCTs in APS, 38 are ATF members! A majority of these members participated in ATF's National Board Candidate Support Program. We are so proud of each and every one of you! ATF and the ATF Teacher Leadership Foundation hosted the third-annual Joyce Briscoe National Board Certified Teacher Award reception on February 24th. ATF members who become NBCTs are eligible to receive a scholarship of up to \$1000.

*Deborah Blea, Chamiza ES

Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood

Sarah Castillo-Jaramillo, Tierra Antigua ES

Generalist/Early Childhood

Ranell Cox, Desert Ridge MS

Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood

*Suzan Dunnum, Truman MS

Science/Early Adolescence

*Michael Evans, La Cueva HS

English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood

*Jeannie Fenchel, Zia ES

Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood

*Michael Freeman, North Star ES

Generalist/Middle Childhood

*Barbara Garvey, Retired

English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood

*Kathlyn Graham, La Cueva HS

Mathematics/Adolescence and Young Adulthood

*Antoinette Hallam, Carlos Rey ES

Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood

Lisa Haven, Harrison MS

Mathematics/Early Adolescence

Heather Hunter, Eubank ES

Generalist/Early Childhood

*Regina Ligon, Mission ES

Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood

*Qiyun Lin, Sierra Vista ES

Exceptional Needs Specialist/Early Childhood – Young Adulthood

*Gina Loveridge-Murray, Hawthorne ES

Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood

Linda Mackie, Mission ES

Exceptional Needs Specialist/Early Childhood – Young Adulthood

*Carmen Martinez-Mares, John Baker ES

Generalist/Early Childhood

Cheryl McElheney, MacArthur ES

Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood

*Nicole Miner, Manzano Mesa ES

Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood

*Ruth Montgomery, Longfellow ES

Library Media/Early Childhood through Young Adulthood

*Jennifer Nagel, Zuni ES

Exceptional Needs Specialist/Early Childhood – Young Adulthood

*Daniel Ormrod, Dennis Chavez ES

Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood

*Anita Ortiz, Painted Sky ES

Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood

AROUND



THE NATION

Robert Perea, La Cueva HSMathematics/Adolescence and Young Adulthood***Susan Pinch, Sierra Vista ES***Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood***Eryka Raynak, Painted Sky ES***Generalist/Early Childhood***Marnie Rehn, John Adams ES***English Language Arts/Early Adolescence****Cary Robinson, Zia ES***Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood****Tanya Shaw, La Cueva HS***Exceptional Needs Specialist/Early Childhood – Young Adulthood****Sarah Sherman, Kennedy MS***Exceptional Needs Specialist/Early Childhood – Young Adulthood****Ritamarie Theiler, McCollum ES***Exceptional Needs Specialist/Early Childhood – Young Adulthood****Melissa Tholund, La Mesa ES***Exceptional Needs Specialist/Early Childhood – Young Adulthood****Deborah Vigil, MacArthur ES***Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood****Constance Warren, Kennedy MS***English as a New Language/Early Adolescence – Young Adulthood****Anita Warriar, SY Jackson ES***Generalist/Middle Childhood****Mark Woodard, Bel-Air ES***Generalist/Middle Childhood****Aimee Wray, La Cueva HS***English Language Arts/Adolescence and Young Adulthood****Jin Yoshida, La Cueva HS***Art/Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood***Participated in ATF National Board Candidate Support.***Congratulations to these ATF members who renewed their National Board Certification in 2011**

- **Shari Doyan**
- **Ulrike Kerstges** – *Painted Sky Elementary School*
- **Jane Avon Yessak**

**ATF Members—
It's Nomination Time**

1) ATF At-large Officers – ATF Members in good standing are eligible to run for office. Nominate yourself or a colleague by sending a certified letter of nomination to the ATF Office, ATTN: Secretary. Nominations must be postmarked by April 2, 2012. The following offices are up for election:

- President (must have been a member for at least one full year to be eligible for President)
- Executive Vice-President
- Membership & Involvement VP
- ATF Secretary
- ATF Treasurer

2) Fed Rep of the Year - ATF Members, please nominate a Fed Rep for the honor of ATF Fed Rep of the Year! It can be your school's Fed Rep, or another excellent rep you know. ATF members should have received nomination forms at the beginning of March. Send forms through interschool mail to Kristin at "ATF Office" by April 2nd.

3) AFT NM Convention Delegate Call - Any ATF member interested in being a delegate to the AFT New Mexico Convention, be sure to submit your information by April 2nd. You should have received a flyer with the details at the beginning of March.

Money Does Matter in Education, New Report Shows

Faced with massive budget deficits, states and districts nationwide are slashing education dollars. At the same time, there seems to be a concerted effort among some politicians and privatization advocates to convince the American public that more education spending won't help students, while cutting funding will do no harm—in other words, that money doesn't really matter.

A new report from the Albert Shanker Institute, written by school finance expert and Rutgers University professor Bruce Baker, reviews the large body of empirical research on the relationship between funding and education outcomes. In *"Revisiting the Age-Old Question: Does Money Matter in Education?"*, Baker points out that claims that "money doesn't matter" are based either on ignorance or a misunderstanding of the research, which shows that overall expenditures have a consistently positive impact on student performance.

Moreover, he concludes that "schooling resources which cost money, including class size reduction or higher teacher salaries, are positively associated with student outcomes."

More money will not solve all our education problems—some things work, and others don't—but, as Baker explains: "Sufficient financial resources are a necessary underlying condition for providing quality education. When schools have more money, they have greater opportunity to spend productively. When they don't, they can't."

Wisconsin Gov. Walker Will Face Recall Election

AFT members in Wisconsin played a big role in helping collect 1 million signatures supporting a recall election for Governor Scott Walker. Only 540,208 signatures were required, so the petitions submitted on Jan. 17 were an impressive feat. By comparison, Walker received 1.1 million votes in his 2010 election.

The recall effort was prompted by Walker's aggressive anti-worker policies, including his push last year to abolish the collective bargaining rights of public employees. What's more, a recent report shows that his policies have led to extensive job losses in the state.

Stephanie Bloomingdale, secretary-treasurer of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO, applauded union and community members who had gathered signatures everywhere from union halls to grocery stores to bowling alleys—in middle of winter, no less. Members of AFT-Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, and their affiliates, were among the most active signature gatherers, as they were during last year's recall elections aimed at anti-union state legislators.

Obama Says We Need to Stop Teaching to the Test

President Obama made crystal clear in his Jan. 24 State of the Union address that the health of our economy and the quality of our public education system always have been and always will be intertwined, AFT president Randi Weingarten says.

"Strong public schools are the cornerstone of a strong economy, a strong democracy and a strong middle class," she says.

"Obama also made clear what America's teachers have long understood: We can't test our way to a middle class; we must educate our way to a middle class. The overemphasis on testing has led to narrowing of the curriculum, rather than creating a path to critical thinking and problem solving. These are the kinds of knowledge and skills our children need to compete in the global economy. Respecting public school teachers and providing them

with the tools and resources they need to help our children learn and grow are essential to building a strong public education system, competing in a global economy and restoring economic opportunity for all."

North American Union Leaders Discuss Common Concerns

Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO, and Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labor Congress, were special guests at Public Services International's North America meeting Jan. 26-27 at AFT headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The gathering brought together more than two dozen North American unionists to discuss international labor cooperation and the global attacks on public services and public sector workers. The meeting was a stark reminder that issues of inequality are dominating the two nations' respective governments at all levels, with policymakers aggressively pursuing agendas that chip away at government as the great equalizer.

Both Trumka and Georgetti said that public sector workers—and more specifically, their pay, their benefits and their workplace rights—may be the primary target of the attacks, but the effort to financially demote and silence government workers is fundamentally going to be borne by all workers.

"We see three imbalances in our economy," Trumka said. "We have an imbalance between the power of employees and employers. We have an imbalance between imports and exports, and we have an imbalance between the financial economy and the real economy."

"Occupy Wall Street was a good try," said Georgetti. "It was a great focus on the greed of that small group of people with a lot of power, but it hasn't gone far enough. What we really need to do is occupy every level of government. That is what we think our challenge is. Occupy them with labor-friendly elected representatives."

'Reformers' Playbook on Failing Schools Fails a Fact Check

Posted January 23, 2012 by Richard Rothstein on the Economic Policy Institute Blog (epi.org), excerpts below.

Education "reformers" have a common playbook. First, assert without evidence that regular public schools are "failing" and that large numbers of regular (unionized) public school teachers are incompetent. Provide no documentation for this claim other than that the test score gap between minority and white children remains large. Then propose so-called reforms to address the unproven problem — charter schools to escape teacher unionization and the mechanistic use of student scores on low-quality and corrupted tests to identify teachers who should be fired.

Careful examination discloses that disadvantaged students have made spectacular progress in the last generation, in regular public schools, with ordinary teachers. Not only have regular public schools not been "the great discriminator" — they continue to make remarkable gains for minority children at a time when our increasingly unequal social and economic systems seem determined to abandon them.

Assuming systemic failure to justify a frenzy of ill-considered reforms, we've spent almost no time investigating what caused these trends. We can only speculate.

Rather than spending such energy imagining how schools have failed, so we can fix them, we might devote attention to investigating what schools have done well, so we can do more of it.

Systems cannot improve if prescriptions rely on flawed diagnoses.

FED REPS ACT**Fed Reps Want Teacher Input in Principal Evals**

Several years ago, a customary year-end event was the school staff giving input on the principal evaluation. But over time, the District moved away from this practice, and now providing such important feedback is a distant memory. While there is no state law that requires staff input on a principal's evaluation, many believe the employee perspective is a vital component of a building administrator's total assessment.

ATF Mid-School Vice President Mary Mercier, with the Mid-School Reps, introduced a motion to the ATF Fed Rep Council on the issue of staff input into principal evaluation. The motion cited research showing that effective and positive school level leadership is one of the most important factors in attracting and retaining high quality staff. The MS Reps want District Administration to take seriously staff experiences with principals and believe this data is best obtained directly. The motion calls on ATF leaders to negotiate a formal process for staff input into principal evaluations. A final vote on the motion will be taken on March 6th.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Support for the PTA Clothing Bank

ATF and AEAA contributed almost \$3,000 to the PTA Clothing Bank, from our annual drive. Thank you to all who contributed.

"The Bernalillo County Council of PTAs Clothing Bank would like to thank each of you for your generous donations to assist us with clothing the more than 2,500 APS students we serve each year."

Kim Kerschen, Director,
BCCPTA Clothing Bank



Brain Research: Learning and Applications

The Albuquerque Academy is pleased to once again bring you a roster of renowned neuroscience and educational experts. New Spring Date: March 9 and 10.

Featured Topics include: Memory and recall; Working with struggling learners; Effect of technology on the brain; Nutrition and the brain; Assessment and brain-based learning; Neuroscience of deeper learning.

Details and online registration at www.aa.edu/braininstitute, or contact Lisa Rhodes rhodes@aa.edu or 505.828.3268.

Progressive Union-Led Reform through TURN

Formed in 1986, the Teacher Union Reform Network (TURN) is a union-led effort to restructure teachers unions to help promote the kinds of reforms that will lead to better learning and higher achievement for all students. TURN's goal is to explore, develop, and demonstrate models that lead to the restructuring of unions so that they will become more responsible and more responsive to students' needs. ATF President Ellen Bernstein is currently serving as Co-Chair of the TURN network.

Southwest TURN, which includes the Albuquerque Teachers Federation, is part of five regional networks of the TURN, a nationwide network of AFT and NEA union locals, which will share \$2 million in funding from the Consortium for Educational Change. CEC received funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for this work.

With this funding, SW TURN will expand its work to advocate teacher union-led education reform on policies, programs, and practices that impact schools, teaching, and learning.

Currently, few venues exist within union organizations for union leaders to address difficult issues impacting teaching and learning conditions. Within the union community, TURN and its regional networks provide opportunities to discuss these important topics in an enriched and collaborative way.

Patrick Dolan, founder and leader of Dolan and Associates and a voice for union reform for decades, will work with CEC and the TURN regions on the project.

"TURN locals are real unions, representing their membership in sound ways that embrace good teaching and learning. They are on the front edge of reform, seeking a more powerful professional voice for educators, guided by solid research and the skills and interests of their members," said Dolan. "This funding will enable growth of new and more professional unions."

TEACHERS' VOICE



Legislature Ends; Now It's Your Turn

By Sara Attleson, ATF-COPE Chair

"I'm not afraid to shake up the system, and government needs more shaking up than any other system I know."

—Ann Richards

The legislature has adjourned and educators across the state are now (or will soon be) facing the consequences of the actions of 112 legislators and one governor. The 30-day session was filled with issues important to school employees—funding, evaluation, retirement and more. These matters are not just casual conversation topics, but are real issues that impact our lives financially and professionally. If you were disappointed by the actions, or inaction, of lawmakers during this legislative session, then I believe you have two choices. The first is to do nothing—in which case, you should stop reading. The second choice—which I believe is our only choice—is to get involved in your union's political action campaign. The ATF-Committee on Political Education will assess every area legislator's "effectiveness" in funding and defending public education. (We encourage you to do your own research on your representative and senator.) In the spring, COPE will present its recommendations for endorsement to the ATF Fed Rep Council for its consideration. For those candidates who receive the endorsement, we will ask union members to volunteer in their campaigns. This will be your opportunity to "shake up" Santa Fe. You can decide who will be sent to a new legislature to decide on issues important to you and your family. Contact me at the union office to get involved.



albuquerque teachers federation
professional progressive unionism

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Mary Mercier

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