

Jefferson Davis Parish School Board

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JEFF DAVIS PARISH CURRICULUM / COMMON CORE INFORMATION

OVERVIEW

As Superintendent of Jeff Davis Parish, I take my role as the Instructional Leader very seriously!! It is my responsibility to guide our district through the changes that our teachers and students are required to navigate in today's changing educational landscape. This Information sheet contains information we know about Common Core, facts from the Louisiana Department of Education, and details about how we in Jeff Davis Parish have chosen to address the shifts associated with Common Core.

Common Core State Standards have been adopted by 48 states. They were developed through a collaborative effort by most of these states, including Louisiana. The standards for student learning are more rigorous and require higher levels of thinking and application. (Example: A student in third grade math is now required to master skills that previously were taught in the fifth grade.) This can cause frustration for students, parents and teachers since we now have to make sure that prerequisite skills have to be taught so our student can understand the new, more rigorous skills they must master in these grades. Our teachers are highly aware that students will need additional support, practice and reinforcement to learn the skills they need.

Although Common Core State Standards have been portrayed in a negative light through the media, there are very few, if any, viable alternatives for standards. When 48 states adopted these standards, textbook companies, testing companies, technology businesses and anyone dealing with education made the shift to address these standards, thus there is very little, if any educational information out there that has not been transitioned to Common Core!!

Concerns have also been voiced regarding the inappropriate nature of several of the texts that are utilized to teach the ELA Common Core State Standards. Several of these texts have upset parent groups across the country. We share these concerns and want our parents to know and understand that in these cases we are using appropriate excerpts to help establish a foundation for the skills our students need to master. Our teachers have been provided guidance as to how to handle these issues in a professional manner with our students' best interest in mind.

Please understand that there are many positive aspects of Common Core and that Jeff Davis Parish school system is working diligently to provide the best education possible for our students. We want them to be able to compete academically with students from around the world and truly believe that we can accomplish this by adhering to rigorous standards for their achievement and learning.

What is Common Core? According to the Louisiana Believes Website, Common Core is:

WHAT ARE THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS?

The Common Core State Standards are fundamental descriptions of reading, writing, and math skills that focus on the ability to think independently. Here are two examples of these descriptions:

- 3rd grade math: Tell and write time to the nearest minute and measure time intervals in minutes. Solve word problems involving addition and subtraction of time intervals in minutes.
- 5th grade reading: Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text.

ARE THESE STANDARDS MORE RIGOROUS THAN PREVIOUS LOUISIANA STANDARDS?

Yes, these standards are more rigorous than those previously used in Louisiana. Before adopting these standards, Louisiana students were learning material that was sometimes a full year behind the material being learned by students in several high-performing states. The table below illustrates one reading concept as it was represented in the old standards compared to how it is represented in the Common Core State Standards. Note that the Common Core State Standard requires students to engage in independent thinking to compare, contrast and analyze characters.

GRADE 4 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Louisiana Grade Level Expectations **Reading & Responding, Standard 1**

Identify a variety of story elements, including:

- the impact of setting on character
- multiple conflicts
- first- and third-person points of view
- development of theme (ELA-1-E4)

Common Core State Standards **Literature: Key Ideas & Details**

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

Describe the depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

Literature: Craft & Structure

Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

HOW DOES MATH INSTRUCTION LOOK WHEN TEACHERS USE THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS?

The Common Core State Standards require students to find real and exact answers to problems. In addition to finding the exact answer, students are expected to be able to explain why that answer is correct. Often students learn shortcuts to math problems. Shortcuts are often difficult to apply to more complex, real world problems. The new standards develop students' ability to think independently rather than relying on shortcuts.

HOW DOES ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS INSTRUCTION LOOK WHEN TEACHERS USE THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS?

The Common Core State Standards require students to:

1. Read increasingly difficult books and articles, including fiction and non-fiction
2. Research, analyze and present ideas
3. Develop arguments grounded in evidence and communicate them in writing

Students cannot memorize facts and answer multiple choice questions on bubble tests; instead, they must read and write with support from texts beginning in early elementary school.

Why Common Core? Again, according to the Louisiana Believes Website:

WHY DID LOUISIANA ADOPT THESE STANDARDS?

Louisiana students are just as capable as any other group of students across our country or in the world, but they are lagging behind their peers. Louisiana students rank 44th and 46th amongst states in English language arts and math, respectively. Our state must level the playing field for our students so they can compete in our ever-changing global economy. The Common Core State Standards hold students across the country to the same high bar and allow Louisiana students to see how they perform compared to students across America. Instead of teaching students shortcuts and measuring their learning with bubble tests, these standards require independent thinking to solve problems much like the demands of the American workforce.

WHAT ARE ISSUES OR CONCERNS WITH COMMON CORE AND HOW IS JEFF DAVIS PARISH ADDRESSING THEM?

Primary Focus

The major shifts in the areas of ELA and Math are:

ELA

Read & understand complex, nonfiction text

Answer text dependent questions verbally and through writing

Write argumentative essays and support opinions with research

Math

Conceptual understanding

Procedural skill and fact fluency

Application of skills to real life situations

Perseverance in problem solving

Types of Texts

Texts that students read are being shifted from primarily literature based to include the use of informational text such as service or maintenance guides.

Rigor of Reading Levels

Traditionally the complexity or rigor of reading texts has been determined by a student's grade level and Jeff Davis Parish has prided itself on getting students to read on grade level by scaffolding and providing support through small group reading and remediation. One major focus of Common Core is that students read complex, rigorous texts that are on grade level or higher to prepare them for mastery of more complex skills.

Complexity of Math Tasks

Another major focus of Common Core is that students complete complex, rigorous Math tasks that are on grade level or higher to prepare students for mastery of more complex skills. Fluency is still very important so there is emphasis on automaticity when it comes to addition/subtraction and multiplication/division!!

Reading Series

Jeff Davis has continued to utilize our Phonics-Based Reading Series in Grades Pre K-2. We have consistently emphasized the importance of our students being able to read. We continue to rely on our teachers expertise and our adopted reading series to help us attain this goal.

We are in the process of transitioning in Grades 3 - 11 to the Department of Education Unit Plans that our teachers have embraced and supplemented to address the needs of our particular students.

Math Series

Jeff Davis is in our second year of utilizing a new Math Series, which is a consumable math textbook that our teachers feel is very Common Core aligned. These textbooks are evaluated each year and updated to provide us with the best, most current instructional information available. As with ELA, our Jeff Davis Parish Math teachers are very cognizant of where our students are and what skills they need in order to be successful.

Success Maker Labs

All of our students in grades K - 5/6 spend 30 minutes each day in a Title I computer lab working on individualized Common Core aligned ELA and Math skills. The Success Maker program evaluates students' current levels and reinforces skills for remediation or accelerates students who have mastered skills expected at their grade level.

Study Island

This program is similar to Success Maker but is available to all students in grades K - 12. Again, this is an opportunity to provide support for students who have not mastered skills that are presently being taught.

Grade Recovery and Response to Intervention

Students are provided opportunities to recover grades and receive intervention for skills they have not mastered. These are steps to encourage and promote students' learning and academic success.

Homework Resources

Homework is very essential for teachers to verify and validate that students have learned what they taught during that lesson.

Jeff Davis Parish has worked to provide our students and parents with many resources that can be accessed at home to help our students complete homework. We have compiled a Homework Resource Sheet that has been sent home for all parents and students to have access to the support they need when they leave school in the afternoons.

These resources include video presentations of math problems being worked, internet sites and phone numbers parents and students can utilize to get the personal help they may need.

Parental Involvement

As a parent, we recognize that you are the driving force of your child's education!! We need and value your input, presence and support in providing your child the very best education possible!!

We would like to remind you that you can stay updated on your child's grades, absences, and discipline in real time by logging into the [Jefferson Davis Parish Command Center](#) which is linked as part of this website. When you login you can see the grades your child has received, if excuses have been delivered and entered by the school or if your child has received any discipline referrals or tardies.

We do utilize the JCampus phone system that calls if your child has been absent reminding you to send an excuse to school. All of our schools are also utilizing a free phone app that you can subscribe to at “no” cost. These apps will push out immediate notifications for a wide range of activities, programs or issues at the school. Please check with your child’s school to become part of the great ways we can keep you informed!!