



A VISION OF LEARNING:
Creating a 21st century education for
Oak Lawn-Hometown District 123 students

Common Core Standards Transition and Reporting Practices

October 2012

INTRODUCTION

The Illinois State Board of Education has adopted new English Language Arts standards for K-12 education known as the *New Illinois Learning Standards Incorporating the Common Core*. These standards are a list of expectations that help teachers make sure their students have the skills and knowledge they need at each grade level. As a result of the adoption and implementation of the new Illinois Learning Standards, D123 teachers and administrators have developed a standards-based English Language Arts curriculum featuring assessment and lesson activities identifying and integrating student understandings and applications that demonstrate mastery of standards.

What is a standard, and why did we revise our D123 English Language Arts curriculum?

Standards are specific learning outcomes that students must meet at certain grade levels. They are an effective way to describe to all parents and students what students are expected to know and be able to do when they are in school. Since the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) recently adopted the Common Core State Standards, D123 has revised its English Language Arts curriculum to reflect these 'new' standards.

Standards do not tell teachers how to teach, but they do help teachers figure out the knowledge and skills their students should have so that teachers can build the best lessons and environments for their classrooms. Standards also help students and parents by setting clear and realistic goals for success.

How are the Common Core State Standards different from the previous Illinois Learning Standards?

The Common Core Standards in English Language Arts and literacy focus on the following key points :

READING

- The standards establish a “staircase” of increasing complexity in what students must be able to read so that all students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading no later than the end of high school. The standards also require the progressive development of reading comprehension so that students advancing through the grades are able to gain more from whatever they read.
- The standards mandate certain critical types of content for all students, including classic myths and stories from around the world, foundational U.S. documents, seminal works of American literature, and the writings of Shakespeare.

WRITING

- The ability to write logical arguments based on substantive claims, sound reasoning, and relevant evidence is a cornerstone of the writing standards, with opinion writing—a basic form of argument—extending down into the earliest grades.
- Research—both short, focused projects (such as those commonly required in the workplace) and longer term in depth research —is emphasized throughout the standards but most prominently in the writing strand since a written analysis and presentation of findings is so often critical.



SPEAKING AND LISTENING

- The standards require that students gain, evaluate, and present increasingly complex information, ideas, and evidence through listening and speaking as well as through media.
- An important focus of the speaking and listening standards is academic discussion in one-on-one, small-group, and whole-class settings. Formal presentations are one important way such talk occurs, but so is the more informal discussion that takes place as students collaborate to answer questions, build understanding, and solve problems.

LANGUAGE

- The standards expect that students will grow their vocabularies through a mix of conversations, direct instruction, and reading. The standards will help students determine word meanings, appreciate the nuances of words, and steadily expand their repertoire of words and phrases.
- The standards help prepare students for real life experience at college and in 21st century careers. The standards recognize that students must be able to use formal English in their writing and speaking but that they must also be able to make informed, skillful choices among the many ways to express themselves through language.
- Vocabulary and conventions are treated in their own strand not because skills in these areas should be handled in isolation but because their use extends across reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

- Just as media and technology are integrated in school and life in the twenty-first century, skills related to media use (both critical analysis and production of media) are integrated throughout the standards.

A full listing of all grade level standards and other helpful resources can be found at www.corestandards.org

The D123 approach to addressing the Common Core standards in our curriculum includes a **focus** on specific standards through **three instructional cycles** (trimesters) throughout the year. This approach to instruction and assessment is meant to be a practical model for assessing student growth over time. Each standard is assessed three separate times over the course of the year, with the rigor and complexity of the text increasing each cycle, along with the expectations for student performance (growth over time).

How will student progress be reported?

Traditional grading has always been very subjective. Letter grades do not report the achievement of standards. A traditional average is based on all work, including work that may or may not be focused on the rigorous standards of that particular grade level. A grade of "A" or "92" does not tell anything specific about a child's academic strengths, weaknesses, or attainment of the standards.

Report cards reporting only letter grades fail to provide teachers, students, and parents with an accurate picture of what a student really needs to know, or might do to improve, in a particular subject. In a traditional system, students receive higher grades when they turn in work on time and complete every task, even if they do not show mastery on the standards. Sometimes students get lower grades because they do not have good work habits, even if they have mastered the standards.



In the standards-based outcomes approach to instruction that the D123 teachers have started to implement in the English Languages Arts curriculum this year, student performance will be assessed using a scale of 1-4 to indicate progress on the grade level standards for each trimester.

Performance Indicators

4 = Exceeds Standards	3 = Achieving Standards	2 = Making Progress	1 = Not Yet Making Sufficient Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + A student earning a 4 independently uses and applies knowledge in ways that demonstrate higher level thinking skills. + Typically, few students perform at this level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + A student earning a 3 demonstrates understanding of grade level skills and concepts and requires minimal support. + A 3 throughout the school year indicates strong, excellent work at grade level. + The 3 mark is the goal for the grade level and should be celebrated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + A student earning a 2 has not yet met the standards but is progressing toward achieving skills and learning end-of-year concepts. Some support from teachers, parents and/or peers is needed. + A 2 indicates ongoing growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + A student earning a 1 is currently not meeting the grade level standards. The student demonstrates an inconsistent understanding and application of knowledge. + Intervention is needed from teachers and parents.

Performance levels are not based on only one assessment experience. Teachers have designed multiple assessment tasks and collect evidence of student learning throughout the grading period. Evidence may include teacher observations, student work samples, projects, tests and quizzes. Teachers review these items for evidence of learning when grading student progress for the report card.

The standards-based report will tell you how your child is doing in their progress towards completing the standards-based curriculum. Grade level standards describe the knowledge and skills that students are expected to master by the end of the school year. It is expected that most students will not “achieve grade level standards” (3) before the end of the year.

Additional information for parents looking for ways to support their child’s experiences in the English language arts classroom can be found at the website of the Council of Great City Schools (www.cgcs.org) . The publications are titled, “Parent Roadmap: Supporting Your Child in English Language Arts” and are specific to each grade level from Kindergarten through grade eight.

