



November 20, 2013

Dear members of the Wisconsin Legislature,

Thank you for the chance to share information about the Common Core State Standards in our district.

Before I answer your specific questions about the Common Core, I want to give you the context of the work in the Madison Metropolitan School District. Over the summer, we released our strategic framework, which will guide our work going forward. The vision of our framework is to ensure that every school will be a thriving school that prepares every student to graduate from high school ready for college, career and community.

The Common Core State Standards provide us with an important opportunity to help accomplish our vision. We need to ensure that our students have what they really need to succeed after high school. We are educating students for a different, ever-changing world and that means a shift to more critical thinking and problem solving for all of our students.

The Common Core will help us raise the bar and hold every student to high expectations. We believe that when we raise the bar high and support our teachers, our students will rise to the challenge.

We are working hard this year on learning about and thoughtfully implementing the Common Core. The district has developed a three-year implementation plan. This year, lead teacher teams are working together on the standards, giving us feedback and input along the way. We're also studying the Common Core district-wide, and we hope that families and the community will join us in that learning process throughout the year.

Below please find answers to your specific questions. I am happy to talk with you more about any of these or other questions.

**1. Prior to June of 2010, had your district formally adopted academic standards?**

The Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) had adopted the State of Wisconsin model academic standards in all subject areas.

**2. Has your district adopted the model Common Core standards? Has your district augmented those standards in any way? How has your district been impacted by the department's adoption of these model standards? If your district has adopted Common Core, would you consider the Common Core model standards more or less rigorous than whatever standards your district has used previously?**

Yes, MMSD has adopted the Common Core standards. The district is in the process of learning deeply about the standards and defining essential instructional practices that are important for implementation in our specific context. The standards are more challenging than what we've had in the past.

The standards also emphasize higher level skills. That means that students will be asked to think critically and solve complex problems, rather than use discrete skills to complete rote tasks. We believe these are the skills that students will need to be successful.

**3. What costs has your district incurred associated with curriculum updates, teacher training, etc., as a result of the Department of Public Instruction's adoption of the Common Core model standards in June of 2010?**

MMSD has an existing professional development program and budget. Our learning about the Common Core is the focus of that professional development this year and in coming years. From teacher teams to school leadership teams, to the district level, everyone is learning together about the Common Core this year. For the most part, that does not incur additional costs, but rather focuses our learning as a district.

**4. Many states, such as Minnesota, Iowa and Massachusetts, have a formalized process whereby their academic standards are reviewed every 5 to 7 years. Would you support the adoption of a similar process in Wisconsin? Why or why not?**

The Common Core standards were developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers with the input and expertise of teachers, parents, school administrators and experts from across the country. We are confident in the viability in those standards in the long-term.

Educators are constantly monitoring progress. In our district, school teams regularly review data and make instructional decisions based on student needs. All of our school improvement plans are public, and we will publicly report on our progress every quarter.

That type of ongoing learning, progress monitoring and decision-making is healthy. However, having a highly charged political discussion every five years that has the potential to change the foundation our work is laid on would significantly disrupt the progress we can make.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to provide information. I am happy to talk with you more about any of these or other questions.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Cheatham  
Superintendent  
Madison Metropolitan School District