

Common Core State Standards
Information Submitted to Westford Eagle
Christine M. Francis, Ed.D.

*** What are the Common Core State Standards?**

When we refer to the Common Core State Standards, we are using shorthand for the revised Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in English Language Arts and Mathematics, which incorporate these standards. The Common Core State Standards are the result of a national initiative led by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to provide a clear and consistent national framework to prepare K-12 students for college and the workforce. The standards were informed by effective models from states around the country and also from countries around the world. Massachusetts is one of more than 40 states which have adopted the Common Core State Standards into their curriculum frameworks in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

*** What is different about the revised frameworks?**

The revised Massachusetts Curriculum Framework in English Language Arts and Literacy emphasizes integrating literacy into other content areas. At the preK- 5 level, the Common Core State Standards are integrated throughout the literacy standards. At the Grades 6 - 12 level, there are specific literacy standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects, which supplement the content standards in those areas. At all grades, there are stronger links between the standards for reading literature and reading informational text, and between reading and writing. There are detailed standards on writing arguments, explanations, and narratives. There is an emphasis on finding evidence in a text to support a statement. There is an explicit understanding that the ability to read progressively more complex text is key to college and career readiness.

The revised Massachusetts Curriculum Framework in Mathematics features greater focus on critical content at each grade-level, more explicit connections within and across grades, and more precisely worded standards. The document includes guiding principles for mathematics, standards for mathematical practice, specific grade-level standards in preK-8, and conceptual categories and model pathways for High School.

*** Why did the state implement this new set of standards?**

As stated on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

(DESE) website, the new frameworks in English Language Arts and Mathematics, comprised primarily of the Common Core State Standards, "were written explicitly to define the knowledge and skills that students must master to be college and career ready by the end of high school".

*** What is the impact of these new standards in Westford?**

We have incorporated information about the new standards into our professional development programs for staff members. These sessions have taken place during early release days and other opportunities for staff to meet and work together. In many cases, teachers were already integrating literacy into other content areas, but we are now identifying ways in which we may make these connections more explicit and with more coherence within and across grade-levels. We are making adaptations to our curriculum, particularly with respect to some mathematics topics which, due to the focus on critical content areas, have been moved to different grade-levels. Both of these changes require teachers and curriculum coordinators to collaborate on revising curriculum, instruction, and assessment to meet the new standards.

*** Is the school department's budget impacted by the professional requirements of these new standards?**

In the FY13 budget, we have included a request for new curriculum materials to meet the new requirements. We anticipate that we will need to purchase new informational text resources to support the requirement to integrate literacy into content areas. In the upcoming years, we may need to request additional funds for other instructional materials and assessments, in order to meet the goal of college and career readiness for all students.

*** When does the state expect the Common Core State Standards to begin being implemented?**

This year (2011-2012 school year), the state is expecting "partial implementation". The spring MCAS will focus on standards common to the former and the new Frameworks, and will also assess selected standards from the former Frameworks not included in the new Frameworks. Next year (2012-2013 school year), the state expects "near full implementation". The spring 2013 MCAS will focus on standards common to the former and new Frameworks, with an emphasis on the new Frameworks. Districts are expected to have all curriculum and instruction fully aligned to the new frameworks by the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year.