

Spotlight on Common Core Mathematics

District 84.5 is in the third year of our important transition to the Common Core State Standards. This year involves implementation of the more rigorous and aligned Standards. The shift to Common Core is intended to provide higher level standards, with a clear progression from one grade level to the next, leading to what is needed for success in college and careers.

District 84.5 students have historically performed well on classroom assessments, benchmark assessments, and MAP and ISAT testing. The ISAT will be replaced with the more challenging PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) assessment in 2014. While we believe that District 84.5 students will continue to perform at a high level, we anticipate some possible dips in the results during the first year of the new testing, both in our district and nationwide.

District 84.5 teachers are currently focused on two key areas of curricular implementation: English Language Arts and Mathematics.

The New Math Standards

The change in mathematics is reflected in the new content standards, as well as math instruction practices that are more focused and coherent for student learning. The shift away from the "inch deep, mile wide" curriculum calls for going into more depth in each content area. The intent is to connect mathematical practices with the content detailed in the Standards.

There are eight mathematical practices that provide the framework for all of the Standards:

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them
2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively
3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others
4. Model with mathematics
5. Use appropriate tools strategically
6. Attend to precision
7. Look for and make use of structure
8. Look for an express regularity in repeated reasoning

The skills for using these practices are best understood through the significant shifts being made in our classrooms on a daily basis. Teachers are incorporating these practices with the math content standards in their daily instruction. At many grade levels, teachers are using the math textbook less often and instead employing carefully developed lessons specific to the Standards.

These Standards require a focus on mastery of key skills. By learning critical content in more depth, children will learn with a greater sense of independence, flexibility and ownership of these skills. As they learn, we support children in discussing, critiquing, and using multiple means to solve problems.