

The New Common Core State Standards are Here

The Common Core State Standards are a set of rigorous learning standards which the Wickenburg Unified School District (WUSD) has been transitioning into use over the past year. The standards are internationally benchmarked and are aimed at producing “college and career ready” students; meaning students will be able to enter college or technical training without need of remedial course work. At this stage, grades K, 2 and 9 are using the new standards and beginning this coming year the standards will be adopted at all grade levels within the Wickenburg Unified School District.

The standards were developed over the past few years through a collaborative effort. Thus far 46 states have signed on to use the new standards, to include the state of Arizona. Below I have provided a brief explanation of how the standards were shaped for use by students across the nation.

“The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts, to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce” (<http://www.corestandards.org>).

The advantage in adopting these new standards, beyond better college and career preparation for our students, is that we will be able to see how our students compare to other states in the nation (46 of them at least). The challenge with this adoption is that **academic rigor will increase dramatically**. Students will be required to work harder to pass their classes and parents will need to be aware that much more will be expected. WUSD has set up tutoring and after school programs to assist students through this transition, but we realize it will require a strong partnership between school and home for success to be realized.

As transition to the Common Core State Standards begins, parents and community members will see fewer standards taught in both reading and math, but at a greater level of depth. Students will be required in all settings to provide credible, evidence-based support for their conclusions. The vocabulary students will be expected to use will increase dramatically in all subject areas and there will be a renewed focus on writing. Students will also be exposed to much more complex reading passages. In math, concepts will spiral, meaning each successive year new concepts will tie back to the previous year’s learning. Math fluency will increase in importance, but through WUSD’s Beyond Textbook program, this shift has already been achieved at the K-8 level. Math students will not only learn the formula for solving problems, but they will need to understand why the formula works and be able to apply the concept to a real-life problem.

The Common Core State Standards hold great hope for better preparing our students to compete in a global environment, but the transition will not be easy. Academically we will be expecting more from our students than has ever been required before. Students will need to work harder to reach this new academic bar, but those that put in the effort will have assurance that they are truly ready for college and/or career and will be on a competitive level with their peers internationally.