



## Lincoln Public Schools

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Assistant Superintendent of Schools

To: School Committee  
From: Mary Sterling  
Re: Report on Alignment to Massachusetts ELA 2011 Standards  
Date: December 20, 2012

In 2010 the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) adopted the national Common Core standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Our state is one of 47 states committed to integrating the national standards into their own state standards. Massachusetts revised the state "curriculum frameworks" in ELA and mathematics to incorporate the national standards and then distributed the new frameworks to districts in August, 2011.

A report to School Committee in May 2012, provided information on key questions about the amount and kind of change this represents for the state and for our district in ELA and mathematics. It also described district work accomplished to date and delineated plans for the summer and school year.

This report provides an update on our work in English language arts, focusing on three points:

- What are the changes in the new state ELA frameworks that reflect the priorities of the national common core standards?
- What have we accomplished so far in the district and what are next steps?
- What are some examples from our instruction that illustrate some of the changes?

### **2011 Massachusetts ELA Standards**

The new curriculum frameworks incorporate the "Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects." The document describes an ambitious set of goals for "College and Career Readiness" from PreK-grade 12. As described briefly in the May 2012 report, the Massachusetts standards were already rigorous and largely aligned with the new national standards. However, there are four main shifts in emphasis in the state frameworks that respond to the national priorities:

1. Reading Informational Text: beginning in the earliest grades, the new standards call for students to gain more experience and skill in reading and learning from informational texts.
2. Writing in Three Modes: students at all grade levels must learn and demonstrate skill in writing narrative, informational, and opinion pieces on a range of topics.

3. Literacy in the Content Areas: expectations for skillful reading and writing in social studies, science, and engineering are articulated in the new standards.
4. Media Literacy: specific guidance is given in the standards to “embed” the use of digital resources and media tools throughout the grade levels.

### **Steps Towards New Standards Alignment in Lincoln**

We have been working towards the revision of our ELA curriculum, instruction, and assessment since the new standards were distributed in the summer of 2011. Regarding assessment, we completed the revision of the English language arts report card descriptors, Grades K-8. This effort was led by our ELA curriculum leader, Judy Merra, in collaboration with literacy specialists and classroom teachers. We have also updated our common assessments in English language arts and refined our use of data from these assessments. Our curriculum, described in the Lincoln Learning Expectations, is in the process of a revision. A team of teachers and leaders met this past summer to plan and begin the work on these expectations; the work will continue through this year with an anticipated completion date of spring, 2013. This past summer, we focused on instruction of informational reading through professional development sessions for classroom teachers, grades K-5 and for science and social studies teachers in grades 6-8.

Adjustments to our instructional program continue in the daily literacy instruction and learning in the classrooms. Teachers have used some of the ideas and resources from the summer sessions to integrate more non-fiction reading and digital resources into the topics that students study. For example, students in grade six who study water supply issues are using a greater range of non-fiction resources along with their literature study of A Long Walk to Water. Students are making greater use of media resources in social studies, science, and language arts to increase their access to information on topics they are researching. For example, fifth grade students will be using digital resources to research student-selected topics in social studies. Writing narrative pieces, though still important, has been reduced a bit to make room for more informational writing. As the year evolves, teachers will spend more instructional time on writing opinion pieces and will explore the dimensions of media literacy.

On Thursday, December 20, 2012, Judy Merra will join me to make a presentation to School Committee to amplify this report with examples from the classrooms and from our professional collection of resources.