

New Common Core Standards & Project Based Learning – What's DEF got to do with it?



In June of 2010, the State of North Carolina adopted new “Common Core State Standards” for grades K through 12 in math and language arts, an initiative spearheaded by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Concurrently, North Carolina’s Department of Public Instruction developed a new set of “Essential Standards” which, like the Common Core did for math and English, added more rigorous content and new teaching approaches for all of the remaining subject areas.

One benefit of the Common Core not only being implemented statewide in NC, but having also been ratified by 46 other states and the District of Columbia, is that these standards represent an opportunity for clarity and consistency across states in what is taught and tested in public schools.

Another strength of having a Common Core comprised of research- and evidence-based standards that were created by a consortium, is that it allowed them to be built upon the identified strengths, as well as lessons learned, from all of the former state standards, rather than what “worked” or “failed” in just one or two states. Further, in addition to being based on best practices in the US, strategies and skills from other top-performing countries were incorporated as well, ensuring that our graduates will be capable of meaningfully participating as a part of a global economy and a global society.

Dare County Schools’ teachers began instructing based on some of the new standards this Fall and students will be

tested on them for the first time next school year, in the Spring of 2013.

Although both the Common Core and Essential Standards have required a shift in **what** is taught, more importantly, they have and will continue to require a rather dramatic paradigm shift in **how** it is taught. Students will be much more consistently engaged in working on real-life problems by practical, hands-on application of the skills they are learning. This is what will be required of them to be successful in college, in professional circles, and in life, and these standards will help make sure that our graduates are ready.

You may be surprised to learn this, but DEF, through private donors like YOU, has been championing these sorts of advancements for a number of years in Dare County. For example, some of the teaching strategies employed by the AVID teachers are what is now being mandatorily implemented in every classroom across the state.

Further, our 21st Century Skills Grants program has been able to act as an incubator for innovative, project-based learning ideas which stress collaboration, communication, extrapolating the knowledge students already possess across subjects and resourcefulness in the way that pupils go about finding answers when the reference sources may not be immediately obvious to them.

For more information about the Common Core, please see the Dare County Schools website at www.darecountyschoolsonline.com.

FY 2010 -2011 Business Partners of the Year

- Cape Hatteras Electric Cooperative – CHSS
- Cape Hatteras Kiwanis Club – CHES
- Dairy Queen, Nick Nuzzi – FFHS
- Dare County Arts Council, Laura Martier – DCAS
- Dowdy & Osborne, LLP, Jeff Dowdy and Teresa Osborne – FFES
- Food Lion #2530, Rick Chance – MHS
- Good For You, Janet Rainey – MMS
- Ortega’s Grill, Marcelo & Lisa Ortega – MES
- Rita’s, Richard & Wanda Harrison – KHES
- Subway, Joseph & Michelle Staten – FFMS
- The Home Depot, Laura Kline – NHES