TALKING POINTS

How the New Illinois Learning Standards Promote More Dynamic Instruction and Engaged Learners

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- Remarkable transformations are taking place in teaching and learning across the state thanks to the effective implementation of the new Illinois Learning Standards.

- The Illinois Learning Standards for English language arts (ELA) and math, adopted in 2010 and based on the Common Core State Standards, establish clear, consistent and high expectations for what Illinois students should know and be able to do in these two core subjects from kindergarten through grade 12.

- The standards focus on critical thinking, analytical writing and real-world applications, motivating students to engage with material on a much deeper level than required under the state’s former learning standards. Students are encouraged to explain how they arrived at the answer to math problems and reading comprehension questions.

- Teachers and administrators at the local level still decide how best to teach their students and how to meet the unique needs of their classrooms. The new Illinois Learning Standards ensure that our students will meet the same expectations at each grade across Illinois and the country.

- Educator feedback shows strong support for the new learning standards and the implementation process.
  - ISBE’s 2014 Teacher Survey of Standards Implementation showed nearly 85 percent of teachers feel prepared to implement the new standards.
  - Nearly 50 percent said the new standards are already reflected in their current lessons.
  - Scholastic’s Primary Sources Survey of Teachers showed a strong support for the new standards.
  - A large majority believe the new standards will positively impact their students’ abilities to connect with the material and apply it.
• A new Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) website highlights the innovation happening in local classrooms as the new standards are put into practice. Illinois Teacher Voices shares teacher stories and perspectives regarding curriculum and instructional changes as they implement the new Illinois ELA and math learning standards. The site features teachers from across the state speaking on student engagement, classroom changes, professional development, teaching styles and parental issues and offering suggestions for fellow teachers.

• ISBE and partnering organizations offer numerous resources, in both online and face-to-face formats, for teachers, administrators and parents as schools implement the new learning standards across the state.

  o Online Resources
    ▪ ISBE’s Professional Learning Series offers hundreds of supplementary resources at each level of implementation.
    ▪ A monthly newsletter, Capture the Core, offers learning standard updates and new resources to educators and administrators.
    ▪ ELA and Math Shift Kits have been designed to help educators implement the realigned standards.
    ▪ A Model Math Curriculum has been developed to assist districts in designing a math curriculum that aligns with the new standards and their individual students’ needs.

  o Outside Resources
    ▪ ISBE Foundational Services, delivered by Regional Offices of Education and Intermediate Service Centers, offers professional development on a wide array of learning standard and implementation topics.
    ▪ Area Workshops for educators (coming this fall) will introduce teachers to resources that will guide their efforts as they examine different dimensions of the new standards.
    ▪ The Institute for Math Leaders provides information and support for Illinois math teachers at every grade level to assist in developing lesson plans and assessments to align with the new standards.

• Communicating with parents has been an ongoing endeavor; resources are available to help parents better understand the new standards and prepare their children for the higher expectations.

• Parental involvement is crucial, so parents are encouraged to take advantage of available resources.

  o Parent Resources
    ▪ The National PTA has helped break down the standards through a video series for parents.
The PTA has also developed Parent Guides for K-12 in both Spanish and English.
The Core Coalition’s Common Core Illinois website contains numerous resources and tips for talking to teachers, sample lessons and answers to frequently asked questions.

- **Illinois’ recently adopted science benchmarks** known as the [Next Generation Science Standards](https://www.nextgenscience.org) (NGSS) will be implemented in the 2016-17 school year. Classroom resources for NGSS will be available this winter at no cost to Illinois teachers. Additionally, new [Physical Education goals](https://www.illinois.gov/PE) have been implemented to enhance students’ communication skills, teamwork and problem solving by using both their minds and bodies.

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