



BARRINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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To the House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare:

Change is hard. Without a doubt, it is hard work adopting two new curricula and aligning to two new sets of standards combined with the task of implementation. The implementation of our new Language Arts and Math curricula has not been an easy task; even more so, for elementary teachers who are responsible with the charge of the implementation of two curriculum simultaneously. Yet, our educators have engaged in this challenging work, have changed their practice, and have created opportunities for significant improvements in communication, collaboration, and instruction in our district.

Ten years ago we were given the task as a district to implement and align State Grade Span Expectations and Grade Level Expectation standards into our curricula. Long hours and many years were spent studying the standards, creating classroom lessons and developing assessments to improve student learning. Over the past ten years, additional time has been dedicated to writing and re-writing curriculum. This is the work of educators. Constant review, refinement, revision and time is needed for systems to improve.

Now, the task of aligning the Common Core State Standards to our curriculum is no different. The big difference is that these standards are fewer, higher, clearer allowing us to support our strategic mission of "Empowering All Students to Excel" at greater levels. Our teachers have worked hard over the last two years to write aligned curriculum from K to 12. Our curricula have been developed by our teachers, supported by professional development opportunities from the state, EBEC and through coaches and university professors. We have worked closely with our teachers to ensure that we are doing the right work, and that the standards and the curriculum are in the best interest of our students. If our teachers did not support this work that they have dedicated their talents, time, and expertise to, they would have voiced their opposition long ago.

Nationally the feedback from educators has been that there is little support and communication from their district regarding curriculum implementation. In our District we have worked hard to identify ways create two-way dialogue with our staff and seek opportunities for continuous professional development. Improvement can only take place when one is willing to listen to concerns or suggestions of others. It is the job of our district to respond to those questions and support our educators.

We have supported our teachers with continuous professional development; as a district, we are fortunate to have seven professional days built into our district calendar. We have reached out to our educators through monthly curriculum meetings, we have established positions held by teacher called Curriculum Point People who represent each grade level in each building in our elementary schools. Their responsibility is to meet monthly to discuss math and English Language Arts questions and concerns that arise from their buildings and develop

collative solutions. Further, we have established a monthly district newsletter to afford the staff additional opportunities for continuous feedback. We want our educators to know that we are responsive to their concerns and questions and available to provide support. Again, we want our teachers to be confident that the work they have committed themselves to is meaningful to improving the quality of education they are providing to their students.

As communication is essential for the parents of any district, we are creating mechanisms to answer the concerns of our community, who we know still need to be educated on the Common Core State Standards. A series of forums have been held to provide information and to seek input from parents on the implementation of the new curriculum over the course of the past two years. A district FAQ site (www.commoncorefaq.weebly.com) has been established specifically related to frequently asked questions on the Common Core and PARCC.

One of the standing norms at our curriculum meetings is “focus on opportunities not obstacles.” To that end, our district is committed to continuous improvement, and as a district we seek solutions rather than roadblocks. These are the values and problem solving skills that we instill upon our students. The best way to summarize how our teachers view the Common Core State Standards is by reading our local newspaper. In summary, we as a district support the curriculum, instruction, and assessment aligned to the Common Core as developed, defined, and implemented by our talented educators. It is the support and the instruction of the teachers and students in the classroom that bring these standards to life, and our teachers are noting improvements for our students. I respectfully request that you support the Common Core, and more importantly the work of the teachers in districts across the states. Please do not allow our students to lose this opportunity to achieve higher standards that will support them in this competitive, global economy.

Respectfully Submitted,

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