

**CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REPORT TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
SCHOOL YEAR 2012 – 2013**

INTRODUCTION

The Board of Education (BOE) requested that the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) become familiar with Maryland's Third Wave of Educational Reform with emphasis on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) being developed to enable Maryland to comply with the Education Reform Act of 2010, commonly referred to as the "Race to the Top Act." Based on this familiarity, the CAC was asked to identify ways to communicate the new curriculum to the community, with emphasis on the students and parents who will be most affected by the changes.

The CAC was also asked to review student leadership programs with the aim of comparing programs nationwide with programs/opportunities available within Calvert County schools.

Members of the CAC participated on a number of CCPS ad hoc committees during the school year.

DISCUSSION

Common Core State Standards

The CAC received presentations on the scope and content of Maryland's Third Wave of Educational Reform. The topics presented were:

- the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) which identified the differences with the current Maryland State Curriculum (MSC);
- the revised student performance assessment which is being developed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC); and
- the new teacher and principal evaluation system which will include adherence to accepted professional practices as well as including a measure of student growth.

Based upon our newly developed understanding of the components of Maryland's Third Wave of Educational Reform, the CAC held discussions to identify the various aspects of the program which should be communicated to the local community, the target audiences, and the means of informing them of the significant aspects of the current round of educational reforms. It was determined that the students most affected by the change to the CCSS would be those in grades three through eight. Students entering the first and second grades would start out with the new curriculum while high school students would not be affected by the CCSS based on the current implementation schedule.

The question “How to communicate the new CCSS?” was discussed at length by CAC. This discussion led to defining the scope of the communication content, the target audiences, and the most effective means of communication. The initial discussions centered on the need for changing the curriculum and the content of any communication. Since Maryland schools are currently rated among the best nation-wide, many citizens do not understand the purpose of the change. A common belief is “if it isn’t broken, why fix it?” These discussions identified a number of significant points that parents need to understand, such as the reasons for and the goals and objectives of the new CCSS, how to assist their students to be successful in the new curriculum, and, changes to the grading system. The CAC members agreed that any communication program must emphasize the importance of the parent/teacher partnership in the education process.

Subsequent group discussions addressed ways to share the information with the community. It was determined that an effective communication program should be tailored to a specific audience. Once the audiences were identified, the best way to reach each audience was considered. Potential methods for communicating the message covered the full range of available sources from print media to social networking and in-person presentations. During another meeting, the CAC reviewed a variety of handouts prepared by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) as well as by a number of other state education departments from across the United States. The general consensus was the handouts should emphasize the details of CCSS and the desired proficiency levels; less emphasis needs to be placed on the transition process. The information should be presented in a clear, concise format that is easily understood by the reader.

Four audiences were identified: students, parents, and the community at large. Although, the overarching information would be the same, the orientation and level of detail will vary for each of the identified audiences. Teachers and staff were also identified as a separate audience; however, their training on the CCSS and the new performance evaluations are being addressed by CCPS and were considered outside the purview of the CAC.

Local newspapers and the local cable channel provide outlets for informing the community at large. These are good sources for general overview information and should be used frequently. The use of the CCPS website provides an excellent media for communicating messages tailored for specific audiences. The use of personal presentations at each elementary and middle school will provide the opportunity for students and parents to discuss specific concerns with CCPS personnel. Many of the CAC members volunteered to participate with the CCPS staff in making these presentations.

Student Leadership

The time available for the CAC to review various aspects of “Student Leadership” was limited due to the cancellation of one of the monthly meetings as a result of inclement weather. There was time to begin to develop an understanding of the various programs nation-wide. Based on the initial research, this would be a worthwhile topic for further exploration by the 2013-2014 CAC.

Ad Hoc Committee Participation

Members of the CAC participated on the following committees:

- School Calendar 2014-2015
- Educational Support Person of the Year
- Beach Elementary Redistricting
- Review of the Social Media Policy
- The Second What Counts Forum
- What Counts Report

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing discussion, the CAC has developed a number of recommendations that, in our opinion, will assist in facilitating a smooth transition to the Common Core Standards. Implementation of the recommendations is within the purview of the CCPS.

- Continue to use the CCPS web site to communicate the various elements of CCSS. The CCPS staff has begun development of a web page entitled Maryland Common Core State Standards. The page is accessible through both the Parents and Students links. It currently contains information about the Common Core State Standards, the Common Core State Curriculum, and the PARCC Assessments. Information on the additional topics of Mathematics, English Language Arts, and Transitioning to CCSS are under development.
- Develop presentations for school-based meetings to inform parents and students of CCSS. Presentations should be geared towards each audience (parents & students) and scheduled for the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year. Include CAC members in the presentations.
- Draft and publish Calvert County specific handouts taking the comments provided on the various documents reviewed into consideration.