Back-to-School Talking Points for Principals to Welcome Parents & Families

Principals may want to consider using some of the talking points below when communicating with parents about the Common Core State Standards.

Dr./Ms/Mr., our Superintendent, and _______________ from our Board of Education gave you their commitment to support your sons and daughters as we move into this exciting time of change in education. I, too, am committed to provide your child with every opportunity to become successful and enjoy their learning here at _________________.

- The goal of the Common Core State Standards is simple: we will provide teaching and learning to ensure that all students - including your child - become successful and graduate college and career ready.

Together lets watch a 3-minute video that explains how the Common Core State Standards will help students achieve at high levels and help them learn what they need to know to get to graduation and beyond. http://www.cgcs.org/domain/33 (English and Spanish)

- New Jersey has had high academic standards for over 20 years; known as the Core Curriculum Content Standards. The nine content areas represented by the Core Curriculum Content Standards are English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, technology, 21st century life and careers, health and physical education, visual and performing arts, and world languages.

- The New Jersey State Board of Education voluntarily adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010 to replace the English language arts and mathematics standards.

- Using the Common Core, students are given challenging lessons that require them to seek out and acquire knowledge, apply what they have learned, and build upon that information to create new knowledge.

- This update is what many good educators have been trying to do for a long time. The CCSS help students move away from rote memorization and isolated skills and return to creativity and deeper learning in the classroom; provide personalized, rich content to students in innovative ways; and, allow students to both learn and to apply what they have learned.

- The standards are intended to help students clearly understand what they need to know and be able to do. Student learning activities are based on connecting what they have already learned and the academic work that will be introduced as they move forward.

- The standards allow teachers to design many different ways that students can show us how they can apply their new knowledge and skills. This helps students in all grades see how their schoolwork relates to real life.
• The standards are for all students, including those with special needs, who may require instructional supports, different ways of teaching and instruction in foundational skills to make progress in the standards.

• If you visit your child’s classroom, you will see some new ways that our teachers are working with students.

• Like every parent in this room, I am sure that you are wondering about homework.
  o One of the most helpful things you can do is to show your child that you think homework is important.
  o Avoid doing your child’s homework for him/her; teachers need to see where your child is having trouble.
  o Many children today do their homework while their parents are at work. When you are at home, ask to see your child’s homework and discuss it with him or her. Ask questions and be supportive.
  o Today’s students may learn subjects that you and I never had when we were in school. Don’t worry; you can still help your child by praising progress, using resources that teachers send home, monitoring how your child uses the internet to get new knowledge, and communicating directly with teachers. You do not have to be an expert in a subject to help with homework. There are many places to go for help.

• So, as a parent, what can you do to help your child learn with the CCSS?
  o Encourage your child to stick with it, even when a problem becomes difficult.
  o Help build independence and confidence in your child.
  o Read to, with, and in front of your child and discuss what you read.
  o Ask questions and learn more about the CCSS in your child’s classroom.
  o Connect with your child’s teacher about your child’s learning progress every month.
  o Attend parent/teacher conferences and talk with teachers about your child’s strengths and weaknesses. Ask your child’s teachers, or me, how you can best support your child at home.
  o Participate in academic events that invite you to the school.
  o Set a goal with your child to complete college or other advanced training after high school.
  o Make your child’s success a family priority. This means that school comes before sports, entertainment, or work.

• Together, our communication about the Common Core will:
  o Help you set shared goals with your child’s teacher for what your child needs to know and be able to do;
  o Allow your child to move beyond rote memorization to show critical thinking and problem solving skills;
  o Enable you to check in regularly on your child’s progress to see where he or she may have mastered skills early and could benefit from further enrichment;
  o Help you identify if your child is struggling, talk to your child’s teacher, and work together to determine a plan to help your child improve; and
  o Help you know if your child is on track to be successful in education or employment after high school.

• Common Core State Standards were designed use the most advanced thinking about preparing all students for success in college and their careers. Using these learning standards, your child will be better prepared to graduate from high school and compete with other students across the nation and the world.