Common Core Standards Work in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District: Progress and Challenges

presented to the Urban District Leadership Network

May 24, 2011

“The Primary Goal of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District is to become a premier school district in the United States of America.”
What has CMSD accomplished so far?

• Presented four Common Core Standards symposia to:
  – Create broad stakeholder involvement
  – Gather feedback about district, school, and classroom readiness
• Implemented 2 six hour Common Core “unpacking” professional development workshops for all district K-2 teachers
• Drafted four year implementation strategy as part of district’s Race to the Top scope of work
• Begun outreach to other schools/districts in our region, across our state, and at a national level

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**Where CMSD hopes to go next?**

- Planned K-2 scope and sequence “1.0” curriculum writing for teachers, administrators and parents in June 2011
- Identify and support “Common Core Teacher Champions” for each district K-8 school to support K-2 implementation
- Craft K-2 Common Core “Look For” documents to support building administrators in K-2 implementation
- Refine and repeat cycle of “unpacking”, “sequencing”, “championing”, and “monitoring” for grades 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12

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What lessons has CMSD learned so far?

• Many people believe that the Common Core can be horizontally aligned with state standards but are not paying enough attention to vertical alignment about the depth of learning expected of students
• Teachers and leaders are embracing the Common Core standards but will require very high levels of support in order to transform teaching
• The assessments will enlighten the standards; Smarter Balance and PARC must begin to share more publicly how the standards might be effectively assessed

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What tools or partners has CMSD used?

- CMSD is counting on institutes like The Aspen Institute, The Gates Foundation, the Council of the Great City Schools and other conveners to provide access to experts (David Coleman, etc.)
- CMSD has gained tremendously through informal conversations and formal collaborations with other large urban districts (which was more difficult to do in a state-centric standards environment)
- CMSD has carefully monitored Ohio Department of Education resources which may become very helpful in the future

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Some final thoughts from CMSD

• There are a lot of “moving parts” to consider so that teachers, principals, central office staff, parents and community are ready for this fundamental shift
• Professional staff knowledge may be an issue; we cannot assume teachers themselves are very well prepared in these common core skills, dispositions, and habits of mind
• District and union collaboration has been a key piece of CMSD’s early successes
• The standards are distinctly “un-American” and we need to prepare our public for a new way of schooling

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