



**Independent, locally owned and operated!**

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published October 9th, 2013

## Funding the New Common Core Standards

By Cathy Tyson

As students get into the swing of the academic school year, Lamorinda pupils and teachers will be working on the same goals for English and math as 45 other states across the country using Common Core State Standards (CCSS). This new model of preparing students is a collaborative effort that has embraced best practices in English and math with the goal of fostering student's abilities to think critically.

Students here in Lafayette will have the same consistent clear benchmarks as students in kindergarten through high school in Lafayette, La., and Lafayette, Ind.

Stepping into the 21st century with these new standards does not come cheap. The Common Core is required to be in place for the 2014-15 school year so, thanks to California Assembly Bill 86, funding will specifically go toward professional development for teachers and administrators, instructional materials aligned to the new standards, and the high speed, high bandwidth to make it all possible.

To pay for these items in schools across the state, there are one-time funds available to support the activities required to implement the standards. The California Department of Education has been given a staggering \$1.25 billion from the General Fund to the State School Fund. That money will be distributed among school districts across California; the funds translate to \$200 per student.

What does that mean for Lamorinda high schools? Exactly \$1.07 million - with, of course, strings attached. As a condition of getting the money, school district governing boards must come up with a spending plan. The Governing Board of the Acalanes Union High School District, which includes Acalanes, Miramonte, Campolindo and Las Lomas, recently approved such a plan. As required, the money will go toward purchasing additional computers and software for technology based instruction, teaching materials and teaching the teachers, also known as "professional development" about the new content standards, curriculum and assessments.

Similarly, the board of the Lafayette School District which includes Stanley Middle School, Burton Valley, Springhill, Happy Valley and Lafayette elementary schools approved a preliminary plan on how to spend \$570,000 worth of implementation money, which must be spent by June 30, 2015 - use it or lose it.

Just a couple of years ago, the Moraga School District, which includes Los Perales, Rheem, Camino Pablo elementary schools and Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School had a "major infrastructure bandwidth upgrade," said Courtney Guinn, director of Educational Services and Instruction Technology. She added, "There is still a lot of work to do. This is new for everyone - teachers, principals and parents."

"The one-time apportionment awarded to the Orinda Union School District is \$497,600," said Loreen Farrell, director of Business Services, adding, "There are a lot of unknowns." She estimates that this will not be enough to cover the total cost to bring all of the Orinda schools - Del Rey, Glorietta, Sleepy Hollow, Wagner Ranch elementary schools and Orinda Intermediate School - up to capacity.

Test Yourself

In order to familiarize parents with the Common Core's new Smarter Balanced testing methods, Moraga School District's Courtney Guinn suggests taking currently available online assessments. Exams are aligned to the Common Core for English and math for grades 3-11. This past spring more than 5,000 schools participated in a pilot test, where actual students provided feedback on a range of items. Unfortunately, the sample online tests don't have answers, but it's interesting to experience what students across the country will be scratching their heads over next year.

Simply go to <http://sbac.portal.airast.org/practice-test/> and click on the bright green box with "student interface practice test," leave the guest user and guest session blank and click "sign in," on the next screen that pops up select the grade level you are interested in. Confession: this reporter was stumped on the 11th grade math first question; I don't typically use x and y in my everyday life.

Reach the reporter at: [cathy@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:cathy@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA