

Dear Parents,

On behalf of the staff at Neah-Kah-Nie School District, I am happy to welcome you to the 2014-2015 school year! The start of the school year is always exciting, but this year there are some important changes designed to better prepare your child for future success and I wanted to take a minute to explain them.

As you may know, in 2010, Oregon adopted new, higher academic standards called the Common Core State Standards in English and math. Our state chose to adopt the K-12 standards to help ensure that all students graduate from high school with the academic knowledge and skills necessary for success in college, career, and life. The challenge is all too real in Oregon, where statewide approximately 66 percent of Oregon's high school graduates who go on to attend community college need to take remedial, or pre-college level, courses in English and/or math. Students taking remedial classes waste time, money, and scholarship funds on relearning content that should have been mastered in high school – without earning any college credit. At a district level, we have worked to address this challenge in several ways, and we are pleased to see it being addressed on a state level through raising academic standards in all grades. We believe that all students deserve to graduate from high school with the skills they need to be successful in college or the workforce – without the need for remediation.

The new standards explain what your child should know and be able to do at each grade level. The standards are aligned to college- and career-expectations so when your child graduates from high school, he or she will be ready to take their next step into a college or career. Although Oregon has had academic standards for years, the previous standards did not adequately prepare our students for the rapidly changing economy of the future. These new standards offer a clear, strong path for your student's success.

It's important to know the standards do not tell a teacher how to teach. Our local school district will determine the curriculum that best helps teach these standards in the classroom.

With a shift to new standards, we also must shift our statewide test so that it is aligned to the information your child is learning. Oregon will transition to a new statewide assessment this spring. Students in grades 3-8 and 11 will take this end-of-year test to demonstrate their learning. Instead of relying on multiple choice questions like our past tests have done, this test will be more interactive and engaging and will provide better information about what your child knows and can do.

Because the standards are higher, we know it will take students a few years to master them, which is why we will initially see a drop in the number of students reaching this higher proficiency level. However, it is really important to remember this drop in test scores is not because our students woke up one day and were not as smart as the day before. It is because we are now teaching them to a higher standard, which is a good thing for your child and their future. We know your child is capable of achieving at high levels and we are committed to providing the support to make this transition as smooth as possible.

We encourage you to stay involved and active in your child's education. You are an important partner in the work of preparing your child for success this year and in the future. I hope you will take the time to review the information provided, ask questions, and join us in supporting your child in the months and years to come.

Paul Erlebach, Superintendent
Neah-Kah-Nie School District