



Westlake Charter School

Expanding Opportunities... Connecting Children to the World

November 21st, 2013

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Over the next couple of years, you will notice some changes in instruction and testing in our school that will directly impact your child. Many of you have heard about the adoption of Common Core Standards (CCSS), which were approved by the California State Board of Education in 2010. These standards are national learning expectations for college and career success that were developed by teachers, parents, school administrators, and education experts. These newly adopted standards provide a clear and consistent understanding of what students are expected to learn in K-12 mathematics and English language arts. While there are many similarities between the CCSS and our previous CA Standards, you might notice changes in what content is emphasized and the grade in which the content is taught. For example, there is an increased emphasis on texts that convey factual information, known as informational texts. Since 2010, WCS has worked to transform our report cards to reflect the common core standards. In addition, we have begun transitioning our teaching and assessment practices to match these more rigorous standards. We are making progress, but more work is to be done.

In addition, Governor Brown signed Assembly Bill 484 in October 2013, which provided legislation implementing a new assessment program for California (starting immediately). The new law suspends most STAR Testing for 2013-14 and allows for us to participate in a field test of the new Smarter Balanced Assessment System. The new Smarter Balanced testing system matches the rigor of the Common Core Standards and is completely adaptable/computer based, much like our current NWEA assessments. You can find sample test questions at: <http://sbac.portal.airast.org/practice-test/> We are excited about this transition, but we know that it will take time and training to understand and prepare our students for this change.

The new standards require us to redesign many of the thematic units we use, and while we have made progress, it's evident that allowing our teachers more time to work on this critical design phase will pay off significantly when we have fully migrated to CCSS. This said, I will be asking our Board of Directors in December to approve an early out week (January 27th-31st). The early out-days will allow our team – your student's teachers – dedicated time to the thematic redesign.

We have scheduled a K-8 Town Hall Meeting on Wednesday, December 4th at 6:00PM on the Del Paso Campus. During this Town Hall, we will share more information about the CCSS, the transition to Smarter Balanced assessments, and why the time to align our thematic units to the CCSS is critical to the success of our students. I encourage you to attend the Town Hall to learn more about the CCSS.

The purpose of adopting Common Core Standards is simply not to align with other states, but rather to raise the bar and ensure that our students are receiving a globally competitive education. With the new standards we expect there will be some growing pains, but please be assured we are working to ease the transition to the CCSS. We will continue to provide the same approach to academic excellence you have come to expect from Westlake Charter School, and look forward to your attendance at the Town Hall.

Respectfully,



Executive Director
Westlake Charter School