

# Advice to Administrators From Teachers

## Implementing the Units:

“Having been a part of the Pilot and Review Process since the beginning, I consider myself well versed and experienced in the standards, process and curriculum. While the standards are rigorous, the curriculum isn’t always. It is important for administrators to know as they adopt the CCSS associated curriculum that the units are not meant to be used as is. They are templates to be adjusted and molded to fit the needs of the students and the strengths of the teacher. Depending on the district adopting this curriculum, more or less adaptation may be necessary or preferred, but these units should be living, breathing documents that are fluid and interactive. Giving teachers the autonomy and trust to make the necessary changes is essential to student progress and successful integration into the school environment. Due to the level of assumed knowledge and skills that are inherent in the curriculum units, there will most likely need to be significant changes made to each unit in order to support student success, trusting classroom teachers to do so will help cut back on pushback and ease the transition to integrating the CCSS. Lastly, don’t expect this process to be an easy one. These units are flawed, but they can also be dynamic and thought provoking,. It will take work to make them work, so don’t be timid about making the changes that need to be made in order to best serve your students.”

-J. Lesniak, Ferndale High School ELA Grade 10

“I would want (administrators) to be aware that being able to properly execute the common Core Curriculum requires technology that some schools or classrooms may not have access to. ELMO or Doc Cams, projectors, internet access and computers or access for each student are vital to many lessons and goals for the units. In addition, there may be other needs for materials such as novels which fit into the units better than what was used prior to implementing the CCSS. Administrators should also know that teachers need time outside of the classroom to collaborate with other grade-level teachers on structuring the implementation of units, especially when those units are still relatively new to the school”

-English Teacher 9-11

“I think it is important for the administrators to understand the amount of time it takes to transition our teaching into this new curriculum, especially when a department has not entirely committed to this objective together. The teachers who are willing to put in the time are still juggling old units (and required reading/writing assignments) and meeting common assessment requirements with other teachers who are not open to implementing new material – because they fear that the CCSS are just another trend that will go away in a matter of time. At one point in this process, between my ELA9 and ELA 10 classes, I was working on six different units

– two were in process, another two were being discussed at our pilot sessions, and the last two were being planned for what I needed to accomplish at the start of the next term. That is a lot to think about.”

“If administration is going to support the implementation of CCSS, it is crucial to get all members of a department on the same page. Not only does that combine more minds in creating the plans and bouncing ideas off one another, but it also creates consistency as a student moves from one class – or grade level- to another. There is an extreme language shift that comes along with these units, and if all teachers in a department aren’t on the same page, the students who have those teachers are instantly set back, causing us to spend valuable time re-teaching basic ideas that half of our students already know.”

-ELA 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher

“If I were to speak with an administrator, I would ask that they allow teachers common planning hours amongst grade level teams and a good amount of professional development time to help teachers become more familiar with how to plan, adjust and implement the units to suit classrooms and students. It takes time and mutual teamwork to get these units off the ground, and to do it in isolation is likely to be difficult, frustrating and time consuming. It’s an extremely worthwhile effort, and at the same time, it is a fairly new way of implementing ideas in the classroom that is more interactive and team oriented, which may take some time for both students and teachers to adjust to.”

-Jenifer Cramer – Avondale HS

“This work provides a direction to teachers. It allows them to work together towards making the transition to common Core easier, and it gives teachers a place to start so they don’t feel so overwhelmed. The units are handed to the teachers, and it’s up to them to tailor the units to the needs of their individual students. Teachers can bring their own expertise and flavor to the standing units, but at least they have a direction during this scary time.

Expect some pushback to the implementation of these units. The truth is that the CCSS is here; it’s not going anywhere and our students will most likely be assessed based on these standards in two years. There’s really no room for people to ignore this, especially if they want their students to achieve. The best we can do now is to work together to prepare our students for the types of critical thinking, syntheses of text and levels of understanding that will be expected from these assessments.”

-Beeth Srigley, Ferndale Public Schools, 9<sup>th</sup> grade teacher