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By ELLY GRIMM

• Leader & Times

The Common Core standards being taught in schools across the country have recently received a lot of criticism, some of it so vehement that several states have introduced legislation to repeal the standards.

While the standards are being criticized throughout the U.S., teachers in USD No. 480 have been able to adapt to the standards since being implemented in fall 2013.

“The standards ask the students to use higher level thinking on fewer standards, versus more standards that just skimmed the surface for learners,” said Jennifer Hyde, a third grade teacher at MacArthur Elementary School. “These standards in my opinion are asking our students to be better problem solvers and not just ‘good test takers.’”

The Common Core standards aim to demonstrate what students should know in English and math at the end of each grade, aiming for a more unified educational system. The idea of having a unified system is seen as a positive to Jack Hansen, a 7th grade English teacher at West Middle School.

“Anything that can be a springboard to a unified national education system, from a standards aspect, is something I think is a good thing,” he said. “With the number of educators coming and going within the profession, it is important to have something similar, no matter what state it is.”

Teachers also say the Common Core standards also have higher structures for students. Maureen Mulligan, a second year kindergarten teacher at MacArthur Elementary School, said this has been a problem for her since the standards were implemented.

“Being new to teaching, I don’t really know anything else, so for me this has always been my normal,” Mulligan explained. “I think that when implemented correctly it allows for students to learn on a deeper level, Common Core is very rigorous and expects a lot from our students, which I think as a district is important that we expect our students to be high achievers.”

While the district has been able to adopt the standards, they don’t come without some criticisms, including state testing glitches some faculty being unfamiliar with the standards.

Mulligan said she believes it will take a few years for teachers and students alike to figure out the standards. She added that she believes the standards will be worked out but it will take time for that to happen.

“The transition from the retired standards to a new way of teaching will take time for teachers and students alike,” added Hyde. “Our students and teachers may not feel successful for a few years because of the length of time it will take.”

Hansen admitted that at the beginning of the standards being implemented, he was overwhelmed by all the work that was expected. But he added that he has been able to adapt his English classes to the curriculum.

"I thought the task was daunting. But, through the process, I found that there were some definite overlaps between the retired standards and the new Common Core State Standards," he said.

Another part of the Common Core standards is requiring students become better at problem solving, which all three teachers have said has happened with their respective students.

"I have noticed from this year to last year, as I become more comfortable teaching the standards and really understanding what is being asked of the students, my students are able to understand better and learn on that deeper level," said Mulligan. "They are able to problem solve and be critical thinkers."

The fight over Common Core remains raging in several areas and only time will tell the fate of the Common Core standards.

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