The focus on the Common Core is essential for keeping our education standards high and ensuring students can compete with the best students around the world,” says Lorenzo Simonelli, President and CEO, GE Transportation. “It is one of the best community investments we can make.”

General Electric (GE) Foundation, the philanthropic arm of GE, will contribute $8.6 million in additional funding over four years to help the Erie School District teachers align their lessons with new education standards. The grant means Erie students will have additional resources as they learn and achieve at a higher level. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which Pennsylvania adopted along with 46 other states, will be fully implemented in the 2013-2014 school year. The standards will provide a consistent framework for what students are expected to learn in grades K-12, replacing a patchwork of state-specific standards that resulted in varying expectations for students.

“The grant will help with the changes that need to take place for Common Core implementation,” says Jay Badams, Erie Public Schools Superintendent. “It will aid us as we further develop a culture for learning to better prepare students for career and college.”

The District has sent almost 100 teachers, along with their school administrators, to CCSS-specific conferences and institutes. Upon return to their school, these teacher/administrator teams are charged with providing professional development on the best practices they learn around the shifts to the CCSS.

The GE Foundation initially selected Erie as part of the Developing Futures™ in Education initiative in 2007 with a $15 million, five-year grant. The new commitment, which will bring GE Foundation’s total grants to $23.6 million for the district, will focus on expanding CCSS implementation to high schools. Specifically, the new funding will do the following:

- Fund 10 full-time positions to develop and implement new programs and support the changes in math, science, and literacy.
- Support professional development that provides direct feedback to teachers and principals based on their efforts to implement the new standards.
- Allow for a community assessment and plan for engaging Erie in the need for higher education standards.
- Develop resources that teachers can use in their classrooms as they implement the new standards.

“‘The grant will help with the changes that need to take place for Common Core implementation,’” says Jay Badams, Erie Public Schools Superintendent. “‘It will aid us as we further develop a culture for learning to better prepare students for career and college.’”

The District has sent almost 100 teachers, along with their school administrators, to CCSS-specific conferences and institutes. Upon return to their school, these teacher/administrator teams are charged with providing professional development on the best practices they learn around the shifts to the CCSS.
To prepare for these tougher, more demanding standards, educators need to shift their instructional focus in English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Mathematics.

In English Language Arts, in addition to literary texts, students are asked to expand their reading of history, science, and the arts, called non-fiction, informational texts. The CCSS places importance on student writing and using evidence from the text to support their writing. That means students will be reading more complex texts and analyzing evidence from text rather than stating personal opinions. Students will answer questions that depend on their ability to read carefully and grasp information, arguments, ideas, and details based on text evidence.

“I now draw questions directly from the text,” says Angela Lombardozzi, a special education teacher at Central Tech. “When my students answer a question, I ask them to show me where they found the information in the original source.”

“There are no trick questions,” continues Ms. Lombardozzi. “The answers are right in front of them in the reading material. It encourages them to try harder and read more carefully.”

Rather than focusing solely on reading and writing skills, the CCSS build a staircase of text complexity with a focus on vocabulary so that all students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading by the end of high school. Students will be expected to learn words by considering meaning in context rather than rote drills.

“We are introducing the shifts gradually,” says Julie Boam, an English Language Arts teacher at Roosevelt Middle School. “I’ve been supplementing the fictional material with informational texts, which are more challenging. I’ve found that when challenging the students, it can help if the topic excites the students. I recently asked my students to read a high school-level article about chocolate. It had some intense vocabulary but they struggled through it because they were interested.”

In math, the focus is on the material that will matter most for college and career and core concepts that are useful in real life. Teachers will significantly narrow and deepen the way time and energy is spent in the math classroom so students can master foundations. For mathematics, the CCSS are designed to build new understanding onto foundations built in previous years.

“We are currently in the process of creating curriculum maps aligned to the Common Core for Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry,” says Diane Gliszewski, who teaches math at Northwest Pennsylvania Collegiate Academy. “I will be covering fewer topics. With a deeper understanding, we can explore the theory beyond the algorithms. Students need to understand the concept, not just the algorithm, which can be memorized.”

The CCSS shifts in math also call for conceptual understanding, procedural skill, and fluency of the key concepts of math. This translates to speed and accuracy in calculation, a solid conceptual understanding of math so students view math as more than a set of techniques for remembering numbers, and the ability to apply math to solve problems inside and outside the classroom. For instance, the CCSS calls for students to use math flexibility to better understand other subject areas, such as science.

“In Algebra, I am trying to get the students to see letters as missing pieces of a puzzle. Most students say they get lost when there are letters in the equation. I use the acronym ‘GUESS—G = what is given, U = unknown, E = the equation, S = substitute, and S = solve—which helps them break down the problem,” says Janice Gangemi, a math teacher at Central Tech.

“I pull examples from the real world—how much paint is needed to cover a wall, will a 10 foot by 10 foot media center fit in a room, how much money is necessary to cover monthly bills—and ask students to set up equations,” says Ms. Gangemi. “Students do not realize that they are using forms of algebra to solve these problems. Giving them problems that they can relate to in their everyday lives helps to engage them in the learning process.”

### Educators Gather to Prepare for CCSS and Student Success

More than 400 teachers, principals, administrators, and business leaders, including 47 from Erie, came together this summer to enhance their understanding of the instructional shifts and other major changes the CCSS will bring to the classroom. At the annual GE Foundation Summer Conference, themed “The Common Core State Standards and Our Commitment to Student Success,” participants from the seven Developing Futures in Education districts had an opportunity to interact with national education leaders and share strategies with their peers.

The goal of the conference was to provide participants with an understanding of what it will take to implement the CCSS and the roles of the various stakeholders. Participants learned about the shifts required by the CCSS in terms of instruction and assessment in math and literacy and were given concrete steps for implementing the shifts in their classrooms. They were also introduced to the wide range of resources that are available to educators as they adopt the new standards.

“It is a privilege to be a part of the Common Core movement. Listening to the authors of the standards and the educational experts drove home the importance of addressing the gaps in education and making sure students are prepared for college and beyond,” says Jeffrey Boam, Assistant Principal at Pfeiffer-Burleigh Elementary, who attended the conference. “While the process is already underway, I’m looking forward to working with the teachers, administrators, and the community to make these changes happen.”

### Youth Empowerment Summit Challenges High Schoolers to Dream

We are introducing the shifts gradually,” says Julie Boam, an English Language Arts teacher at Roosevelt Middle School. “I’ve been supplementing the fictional material with informational texts, which are more challenging. I’ve found that when challenging the students, it can help if the topic excites the students. I recently asked my students to read a high school-level article about chocolate. It had some intense vocabulary but they struggled through it because they were interested.”

In math, the focus is on the material that will matter most for college and career and core concepts that are useful in real life. Teachers will significantly narrow and deepen the way time and energy is spent in the math classroom so students can master foundations. For mathematics, the CCSS are designed to build new understanding onto foundations built in previous years.

“We are currently in the process of creating curriculum maps aligned to the Common Core for Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry,” says Diane Gliszewski, who teaches math at Northwest Pennsylvania Collegiate Academy. “I will be covering fewer topics. With a deeper understanding, we can explore the theory beyond the algorithms. Students need to understand the concept, not just the algorithm, which can be memorized.”

The CCSS shifts in math also call for conceptual understanding, procedural skill, and fluency of the key concepts of math. This translates to speed and accuracy in calculation, a solid conceptual understanding of math so students view math as more than a set of techniques for remembering numbers, and the ability to apply math to solve problems inside and outside the classroom. For instance, the CCSS calls for students to use math flexibility to better understand other subject areas, such as science.

“In Algebra, I am trying to get the students to see letters as missing pieces of a puzzle. Most students say they get lost when there are letters in the equation. I use the acronym ‘GUESS—G = what is given, U = unknown, E = the equation, S = substitute, and S = solve—which helps them break down the problem,” says Janice Gangemi, a math teacher at Central Tech.

“I pull examples from the real world—how much paint is needed to cover a wall, will a 10 foot by 10 foot media center fit in a room, how much money is necessary to cover monthly bills—and ask students to set up equations,” says Ms. Gangemi. “Students do not realize that they are using forms of algebra to solve these problems. Giving them problems that they can relate to in their everyday lives helps to engage them in the learning process.”

### More than 400 teachers, principals, administrators, and business leaders, including 47 from Erie, came together this summer to enhance their understanding of the instructional shifts and other major changes the CCSS will bring to the classroom.

At the annual GE Foundation Summer Conference, themed “The Common Core State Standards and Our Commitment to Student Success,” participants from the seven Developing Futures in Education districts had an opportunity to interact with national education leaders and share strategies with their peers.

The goal of the conference was to provide participants with an understanding of what it will take to implement the CCSS and the roles of the various stakeholders. Participants learned about the shifts required by the CCSS in terms of instruction and assessment in math and literacy and were given concrete steps for implementing the shifts in their classrooms. They were also introduced to the wide range of resources that are available to educators as they adopt the new standards.

“It is a privilege to be a part of the Common Core movement. Listening to the authors of the standards and the educational experts drove home the importance of addressing the gaps in education and making sure students are prepared for college and beyond,” says Jeffrey Boam, Assistant Principal at Pfeiffer-Burleigh Elementary, who attended the conference. “While the process is already underway, I’m looking forward to working with the teachers, administrators, and the community to make these changes happen.”

### Youth Empowerment Summit Challenges High Schoolers to Dream

The keynote speakers of the day included Boguslawski, a 25-year-old entrepreneur and motivational speaker. They are also co-founders of the Dream Girls DMV Mentoring Program, an organization that helps young women achieve their dreams.

The day started out with a fun activity where students were asked to create portraits of themselves at the age of 23—using nothing but tape. The conversation then became more serious as students talked about the challenges they faced to get to college and starting their careers.

The day-long summit included presentations and interactive workshops designed to get students to expand their horizons and examine their options for college and career.

For example, one speaker described the challenges of getting her college degree as a single mother. Students also learned about opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), and what it takes to pursue careers in these areas.

The keynote speakers of the day included Boguslawski, a 25-year-old entrepreneur and motivational speaker. They are also co-founders of the Dream Girls DMV Mentoring Program, an organization that helps young women achieve their dreams.

The day started out with a fun activity where students were asked to create portraits of themselves at the age of 23—using nothing but tape. The conversation then became more serious as students talked about the challenges they faced to get to college and starting their careers.

The day-long summit included presentations and interactive workshops designed to get students to expand their horizons and examine their options for college and career.

For example, one speaker described the challenges of getting her college degree as a single mother. Students also learned about opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), and what it takes to pursue careers in these areas.

The keynote speakers of the day included Boguslawski, a 25-year-old entrepreneur and motivational speaker. They are also co-founders of the Dream Girls DMV Mentoring Program, an organization that helps young women achieve their dreams.

The day started out with a fun activity where students were asked to create portraits of themselves at the age of 23—using nothing but tape. The conversation then became more serious as students talked about the challenges they faced to get to college and starting their careers.

The day-long summit included presentations and interactive workshops designed to get students to expand their horizons and examine their options for college and career.
National Business Leaders Focus on Supporting College and Career Readiness

Summit Challenges High Schoolers to Dream

I n support of implementation of the CCSS, the GE Foundation convened a public-private coalition of business leaders, nonprofit professionals, educators, and policy experts in July 2012. This second annual convening was designed to share information and strategies about the CCSS. More than 160 leaders and experts across sectors and political lines discussed how businesses can unite to leverage their strengths — innovation, quality control, and continuous improvement — to help CCSS implementation and to ensure the sustained economic competitiveness of the United States. Ten business leaders from Erie were in attendance.

Robert Corcoran, Vice President, GE Corporate Citizenship and President and Chair, GE Foundation, explained the need for a convening like this. “Often business leaders are looking for a new way to deal with the lack of qualified candidates for open jobs — CCSS is part of the solution. We all need to join together to ensure we understand these changes and that our educators have the support they need to make them work.”

Ann Cramer, director of Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Affairs at IBM Corporation, agreed that the role of business in understanding the CCSS and its implementation is critical. “It’s not just that we need a smart, prepared workforce, we’re also committed to growing communities,” she said. “We can bring our business insight, our voice to advocate, and our employees to lend their expertise to really support this education transformation, and I think that’s very positive.”

Over the course of the conference, business leaders learned how to build awareness of the standards in their communities. They had the opportunity to share ideas with other business leaders and discuss with superintendents and educators the support business can provide to states and districts to implement higher academic standards.

The GE Foundation called on the business community to use its collective voice to:

- Build good will and advocate for CCSS implementation among policy makers;
- Provide expertise and/or funds to help schools build the capacity to support CCSS;
- Communicate about CCSS to employees to help sustain community support;
- Be a voice for staying the course when early assessments predictably indicate a short-term drop in student scores; and
- Provide opportunities through mentoring, internships, and other initiatives for students to understand the workplace and be better prepared for college and career.

Business leaders from Erie who attended the conference are committed to working together to promote what they learned within their community.

“I learned how behind the United States is in education when it comes to other countries. We teach so many topics while other countries—those with students that do much better on achievement tests—focus on fewer topics. We need to focus on what is important,” says James E. Martin, Erie Region President for Northwest Savings. “As a business leader, I see the implications of this disparity. Business needs to get this message out to the broader community.”

“Parents, students, and industry all need to be in alignment about how to create a competitive workforce,” says Jim Rutkowski, Jr., General Manager at Industrial Sales and Manufacturing, Inc. “There are good jobs in manufacturing and students need to develop the right skills—attention to detail, adaptability, and critical thinking—that will allow them to excel in these jobs.”

Erie business leaders will be developing a plan on how local businesses can play a role in the implementation of the standards inside and outside schools.

in the Washington, D.C. area. Tina and Trina are also co-founders of the Dream Girls DMV Mentoring Program, which offers social and enrichment opportunities for girls aged 4 to 18 in the Washington, D.C. area. Tina and Trina have spoken at universities and high schools about the importance of education and leadership development. All of the students participating in the Summit received Tina and Trina’s book, Ten Steps to Succeeding at Any College. Students really responded to the messages emphasizing college and career readiness. “Everything you do now determines your future. If you want to be successful then, you have to be successful now,” says Keywonna Morgan, a junior at East High School. “Thinking about what you want to be helps you strive to become that person and keeps you on the right path.”

“I want to be a businessman or an engineer and I plan to go to college and study hard,” says Husan Kargar, a senior at East High School. “The Summit is good because I need to look to the future and prepare.”

The Summit was chaired by Ledora Stribling, an engineer at GE Transportation and part of GE’s Operations Management Leadership Program. Ledora worked with a team of GE employees to organize the event. In addition to participating on the day of the event, GE volunteers visited high school campuses before the Summit to speak with students during lunch and encourage them to attend the event.

“I remember how challenging it could be in high school,” shares Ledora. “When I got out of college two years ago I wanted to reach back and help those students who need a little extra help. I am so grateful that my work at GE allows me to do this.”
Transforming Students to Gentlemen at East High

Some of the young men at East High School will be wearing white dress shirts and black ties in school this year. The outfits are part of the Gentleman’s Club (GC), a program developed by Stephen Peters in 1996. The goal of the Club is to help young men become leaders in their schools and communities by helping them set priorities, make good choices, and take responsibility for their actions. Designed to provide opportunities for Club members to enhance self-esteem and self-image, the GC is being used as a successful intervention tool in many inner city and urban school districts.

With support from the GE Foundation, Mr. Peters spent a day at East High School this past September where he met with counselors, faculty, and the 25 young men selected to participate in the first year of the program. “Mr. Peters inspired me with his story of where he came from to where he is now,” says Michael Salow, a student at East High School and GC member. “The Club is something I want to do because I want a better opportunity in my life.”

School counselors are serving as mentors to GC members. At weekly meetings, mentors review grades, discuss challenges, and identify ways that Club members can play a positive role in the school community. The majority of GC members are 10th graders. The plan is to add a new group of students each year. “This is a completely new approach for us,” says Jim Smith, Principal at East High School. "We selected students that could go either way. The Club will give these young men positive reinforcement at a critical time in their lives. It will give them the incentive and drive to believe in themselves.”

Parents will also be involved in the program. “We hope to bring parents into the building and help them to develop a positive relationship with the school,” says Mr. Smith. “Parents need to be part of the solution.”

As the program grows, Mr. Smith plans to reach out to the broader community. “We will be meeting with local businesses to identify mentors,” says Mr. Smith. “These mentors can work with Club members in the coming years. Working with local businesses is definitely a draw for GC members. “The Club helps to develop character to be a business person and successful. I want those things for myself,” says Bill Thomas, another Club member.

Strong Vincent Students See Science and Math in Motion

When GE Transportation held a ceremony to launch its new Tier 4 locomotive, with its breakthrough diesel engine technology that will reduce air pollution, 12 Strong Vincent students and their science teacher, Clive Tattersall, were in attendance. During the ceremony, students met with engineers who worked on the project and learned about the new technology and what it takes to build a locomotive.

“It’s really important for students to be able to see the connection between learning science and math in the classroom and applying that knowledge to build a locomotive—or anything else. I hope that the experience also demonstrated to them that when you bring together a team of people with different backgrounds and skills, and you work together, you can accomplish big things,” says Rob McKeel, GE Transportation, General Manager, Global Locomotive Operations.

“They got to see a product—a locomotive—that is made right here in Erie and uses the most innovative technology. Now, when they are in science class they can make the connection about how what they are learning relates to their future.”

Mr. Tattersall has incorporated educational materials from the GE website into his lessons in the classroom. Last year, his seniors in Environmental Science used energy utilization data in conjunction with the District’s energy audit program. Students used a worksheet developed by Mr. Tattersall to track the energy usage of various appliances in their homes.

Attending the launch clarified for students that what they learn in Mr. Tattersall’s class can be helpful in their future careers. “I saw the amount of work and the number of people that are involved in building these new technologies,” says 11th grade Denzel Thompson. “The things I learn in the classroom like math and science and in the after-school shop classes can help me pursue a career as a welder.”