ON THE ROAD TO IMPLEMENTATION

Achieving the Promise of the
Common Core State Standards

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The K-12 Common Core State Standards (CCSS) represent a major advance in standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts. They are grounded in evidence about what it takes for high school graduates to be ready for college and careers and build on the finest state and international standards. They also provide a clear and focused progression of learning from kindergarten to high school graduation that will give teachers, administrators, parents and students the information they need for student success. Importantly, they were developed by and for states in a voluntary effort led by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Achieve was a partner in their development and strongly encourages states to adopt the standards and fully implement them.

In order to positively impact student achievement, standards – including the CCSS – must be not just *adopted* but *implemented*. Adopting the standards in a state represents the beginning, not the end, of the process, as the goal is to have content standards that actually impact what happens in the classroom. Unfortunately, there are too many examples where states have fine content standards that bear little resemblance to what is actually being taught and learned in classrooms.

The Common Core State Standards offer an unprecedented opportunity for states across the nation to improve upon their education policies and practices, and achieve system-wide reform. This will not be easy. States and districts and key stakeholders will need to think carefully about what it will take for the Common Core State Standards to become fully operationalized in every classroom, every year, from kindergarten to high school graduation, and make serious decisions about their budget, curriculum, assessments, graduation requirements, accountability systems, instructional resources and more.

Achieve's "On the Road to Implementation: Achieving the Promise of the Common Core State Standards" seeks to identify the key areas that state policymakers will need to consider to implement the new standards with fidelity. The guide is organized by topic with short chapters. It is *not* meant to be an exhaustive review or a checklist of all the issues that states and districts will need to consider as they move from adoption of the CCSS to implementation.   Rather, it is meant to be the starting point from which state and district leaders and their allies can organize and begin the necessary discussions around key topics to successfully implement the standards.   Inevitably, states and districts will discover new issues as they dive deeper into each topic. Moreover, they will need to consider what other topics should be added given their unique circumstances.

As states and districts begin the hard work of implementing the standards – and as the conversation and decision making around these issues becomes more concrete – Achieve will continue to add materials to the guide to reflect new information and lessons learned from policy leaders. The guide should be viewed, just as implementation should be, as a work in progress. Each piece in the guide, therefore, is dated and will be revised as events warrant.

To that end, we encourage you to share your thinking, plans and experiences in implementing the CCSS with us so that other states can benefit from your knowledge and experience. The ability to work together to solve common challenges was, after all, one of the primary reasons that the states gathered together to create the CCSS. Together, we can ensure that the Common Core State Standards become realized in every classroom, in every school, for the benefit of every student in every adopting state.

THE SERIES INCLUDES:

I. Considering the Common Core State Standards as Part of the College- and Career-Ready Agenda
1. Integrating Common Core State Standards into the College- and Career-Ready Agenda
2. Aligning the Common Core State Standards & College- and Career-Ready Graduation Requirements
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Coming Soon!
- ✓ Engaging Higher Education in Common Core State Standards Implementation (August 2010)
- ✓ Math Pathways & the Common Core State Standards (August 2010)
- ✓ Transition Strategies for Moving from Current State Standards to the Common Core State Standards
- ✓ Implementing the Common Core State Standards and the Role of Reading Lists

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ON THE ROAD TO IMPLEMENTATION

SECTION 1:
Considering the Common Core State Standards as
Part of the College- and Career-Ready Agenda

INTEGRATING COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INTO THE COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY AGENDA

Standards matter. When they are set at the college- and career-ready level, as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are, they set a clear bar and communicate a set of shared expectations across the system: All students, ready for college and careers, by the end of high school. Period. Ideally, high expectations drive the entire system – from states to districts to classrooms – towards excellence and increase the outcomes and opportunities for all students.

But standards cannot do this alone. They are an important element – arguably the first one that should be in place to set the foundation for the broader system – but still, are only the beginning. *Therefore, implementation of the Common Core State Standards should not happen in a vacuum but should be considered in the context of states' broader college- and career-ready reform agenda*. That means that the rest of the agenda – *college- and career-ready graduation or course requirements*, and *assessment, data* and *accountability systems* – must be taken into consideration when planning for implementation of the CCSS. Some important questions to ask as states implement the CCSS include:

✓ What progress has your state already made in adopting and implementing *college- and career-ready policies* – such as rigorous course requirements or assessments capable of measuring college readiness that are used by postsecondary institutions for placement decisions – and how will the CCSS impact those policies? What steps can states take to ensure those policies are bolstered by the common core, not unraveled?

✓ As your state implements the CCSS, consider whether your current *graduation course requirements* match that same high level of expectation. Should your state keep the *graduation requirements* policy the same or will you need to raise or alter the requirements for all students? Will you have graduation requirements that either match or go above the CCSS?

✓ What impact does implementing the CCSS have on your current mathematics, English, history/social studies, science and technical courses? How will you create or revise courses that are built upon the CCSS? Does your state have a plan in place to review *courses* to make sure they are covering the CCSS in a progression that ensures college and career readiness for all?   What communication will need to be developed to alert districts and teachers to the change?

✓ What is your state's plan to evolve your *assessment* system (formative and summative) to align to the common standards? Are you working with other states to develop common assessments? When will your state move to the new assessments and what will the transition strategy be? Will you revise your current assessments to align with the Common Core State Standards? If so, when will your state initiate conversations around budget implications for new item development, field testing and potential standard setting? What work must be done now and what can wait for common assessments? What is your communication plan to districts regarding the revision of your assessment system, specifically including timeline for implementation?

✓ Will your state revise and/or create state-level *curriculum frameworks and other instructional materials* for classroom teachers? How will you go about doing that? Will you work with districts? With other states? What sort of professional development will be needed? How will this work be funded? Have you had conversations with key legislators on the Appropriations Committee to help

them understand the purpose and timing of adopting the CCSS? Have you had internal budget discussions to identify various state and federal funding streams that can support this work?

✓ Will your state be reviewing or purchasing new *textbooks* and other instruction tools and supplies? How will you ensure that the materials are aligned to the Common Core State Standards? If you are a textbook adoption state, have you considered and planned communication around the impact of the CCSS implementation on your adoption cycle? Should you consider revising the adoption cycle while considering the timeline of implementation as well as the last adoption of ELA and/or mathematics materials?

✓ Does your state have a *P-20 longitudinal data system* in place that will let teachers, schools, districts and the state know whether their students are on track? What are the data elements you have and use and what do you need to change or add? How are data being used and disseminated now? How can your state use data to support your system-wide efforts?

✓ What will a new *accountability* system that supports the full implementation of the common standards – and values college and career readiness for all students– look like?   What are your state's plans for moving to such a system? How will the implementation of the CCSS potentially impact the accountability of your schools and districts? If your state has legislated promotion/retention requirements, how will the adoption of CCSS affect those grades? How will you communicate to parents and the general public if fully implementing the CCSS represents a significant increase in rigor that could result in more students being unsuccessful in the short term?

✓ How will your state communicate with key stakeholders about any decisions that are made about changes in *course requirements, assessments* and/or *data and accountability systems* to ensure alignment to the CCSS?

✓ Does your state have a *coalition of supporters* of the college- and career-ready agenda – including those both inside- and outside-the-government– and how can you make certain they are engaged around the adoption and implementation of the CCSS?

ALIGNING THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS & COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Across the nation there is an "expectations gap," a disconnect between what students need to know to earn a high school diploma and what they need to know to be successful in college and careers. In many ways, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) aim to help close this gap, as they are anchored in college- and career-ready expectations and were designed to ensure all students progress to the college- and career-ready level by the end of high school. But the standards alone are not enough; states need other policies in place to ensure that students have actually met the expectations in the standards. Research from Achieve and others suggests that for high school graduates to be prepared for success in postsecondary settings and in the 21st century workforce, they need to take four years of challenging mathematics — including content at least through Algebra II or its equivalent — and four years of rigorous English aligned with college- and career-ready standards.[1] The CCSS support this vision.

High school course-taking requirements are one important policy lever states can use to help ensure that the broader intent of the CCSS is realized.[2] But course requirements and course titles alone will not ensure college and career readiness. Currently, high school courses vary widely in their academic content and rigor. Although some students are exposed to content-rich and stimulating classes that build college- and career-ready skills in high school, many others only have access to a less rigorous curriculum or to courses that are rigorous in name only. These watered-down courses are unlikely to prepare students for college and career opportunities.

Implementing the Common Core State Standards provides states with the opportunity to re-evaluate their high school graduation requirements – and course content – to ensure that ALL students are expected to take courses aligned with the CCSS that will prepare them for college, careers and life.

THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS & MATHEMATICS COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The Common Core State Standards in Mathematics for grades K-8 are organized by grade level and define specific content knowledge students should master by the end of each grade. The high school standards, however, define coherent blocks of mathematics content, without identifying at what grade students should master them, or in what type of course. Nearly every state currently has organized their high school mathematics standards around courses – such as Algebra I or Geometry – so states will need to think through how they want to go about implementing the CCSS in math for grades 9-12, and what it will mean for their existing high school course requirements.

Specifically, the CCSS in Mathematics reflect the need for all students to take at least three years of rigorous mathematics through what is currently found in an Algebra II/Integrated Math III course (or their equivalent). In fact, given the amount of algebra in the CCSS, it is clear that students will need to

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[1] Over the past five years, many states have made an effort to raise their high school course requirements to better align them with college- and career-ready standards. Today, 21 states — *Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas* and *Washington* – and the *District of Columbia* have elevated their high school diploma requirements to the college- and career-ready level.

[2] Meeting graduation requirements does not necessarily only mean fulfilling Carnegie unit or seat time requirements. Students who can demonstrate that they have the knowledge and skills typically associated with a required course ought to be able to demonstrate that competency in ways other than seat time.

take at least two years of algebra (or equivalent integrated courses) to reach the "college- and career-ready line" identified in the CCSS. States should examine their existing course structures and pathways to ensure students have options for how they can reach the college-and career-ready level identified in the CCSS as they work to implement the new standards.

Some issues states will need to carefully consider include: whether states can keep their current course requirements for all students or whether they will need to change and/or raise them to cover the full range of the CCSS so that all students meet the college-and career-ready level; whether states want to require "traditional" courses or take an integrated approach; whether content that has been typically taught in one course needs to be reassigned to another course; and what to do about the fourth (or more) year of mathematics for students who meet the college- and career-ready requirements earlier in high school.

Based on the design of the 9-12 mathematics CCSS, it is very likely that students can complete the standards and meet the college- and career-ready level in 2-3 years, leaving time at the end of high school for students to take additional mathematics, aligned with their post-high school plans. Given the research base supporting the importance of the fourth year of math[3] – which higher education officials say it is critical to students' success in college – this is a critical issue of concern for states as they consider what standards above the "college- and career-ready line" they will organize into fourth-year courses.

THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS & ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts in K-8 are organized by grade level and define specific content knowledge students should master by the end of each grade. At the high school level, they are organized in 9-10 and 11-12 grade bands, suggesting certain expectations for each half of high school. Nearly every state in the U.S. currently requires four years of English, even states without college- and career-ready course requirements. Unlike in mathematics, course titles in English rarely carry much meaning. In fact, most states simply require English I-IV or just "four years of English Language Arts," without any specificity.

States, therefore, will need to organize the ELA standards into courses that build on each other, and ensure students are progressing towards college and career readiness. They will also need to evaluate their current ELA course standards to look for gaps, overlaps and missing standards. The challenge in ELA is defining what is most important for students to learn, and how the various strands – such as language, writing, reading fiction and informational texts, etc. – can come together in specific courses. Although the transition to CCSS-based English courses may be a little smoother for states than the transition to math courses – as the CCSS in ELA are clearly designed to cover all four years of high school – states will need to consider how much of their current practices will need to reorganized, reassigned or replaced to ensure their course requirements are fully aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

BEYOND MATHEMATICS AND ENGLISH COURSE REQUIREMENTS

While there are no Common Core State Standards in history/social studies or science, the CCSS do include discipline-specific literacy standards for those subjects, as well as for technical subjects, for grades 6-12, organized in two-year grade bands. These literacy standards – which are part of the ELA Common Core State Standards – offer guidance on how reading and writing can be taught contextually

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[3] **http://www.achieve.org/files/Achieve-MathWorks-FactSheetFourthYear.pdf**

in their content areas. Implementing the CCSS Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects won't necessarily require states to alter their science and history requirements, but the standards do suggest ways in which these courses can help ensure students are able to read, write and communicate at the level demanded by colleges and employers. Implementing the CCSS provides states an opportunity to review all of it high school graduation requirements and ensure all students are completing a rigorous and broad curriculum.

ALIGNING ASSESSMENTS WITH THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

The goal of the Common Core State Standards Initiative is to ensure that states have a progression of K-12 standards in place that ensure that students have the knowledge and skills in mathematics and English Language Arts to graduate from high school ready for college and careers. Just as states will need to modify or create new curriculum frameworks and instructional materials to match the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), states will also need to significantly alter their assessments to ensure alignment with the CCSS.

Assessments play a critical role in state education systems, providing consistent measures of whether or not students are meeting or exceeding the state's academic standards. A coherent assessment *system* anchored in college- and career-ready expectations will include a combination of measures designed to meet the following goals:

- Effectively measure the depth and breadth of the CCSS;
- Inform and improve the quality and consistency of instruction;
- Indicate whether or not students are reaching mileposts that signify readiness; and
- Hold educators and schools accountable for improving student performance and readying students for postsecondary education and careers.

The release of the CCSS offers a unique opportunity for states to take a hard look at their current assessment systems and make the design- and policy-based decisions necessary to move to next-generation assessment systems. As states begin to implement the CCSS, they have the opportunity to strengthen and significantly improve their assessment systems. Assessments given in grades 3-8 and high school should be designed to indicate whether students are on track to graduate ready for college and careers. And all assessments should do a better job measuring the more sophisticated knowledge and skills called for in the CCSS than is possible with most current assessments.

There are a number of important ways state assessment systems will need to evolve to measure the CCSS. States will need to:

- Refocus their assessments to measure the essential knowledge and skills targeted by the CCSS;
- Improve the quality and types of items included in on-demand tests to create more cognitively-challenging tasks that measure higher-order thinking and analytic skills, such as reasoning and problem solving;
- Move beyond a single, end-of-year test to open the door for performance measures and extended tasks that do a better job of measuring important college- and career-ready skills and model exemplary forms of classroom instruction; and
- With their higher education communities, establish a college-and career-ready "anchor" assessment given to all students near the end of high school to signal whether students are ready for college and careers. Anchoring the system in college and career readiness ensures that tests given in lower grade levels are vertically aligned to the high school assessments so they signal whether students are on pace.

It is important to note that even if states plan to move to common assessments, a number of these changes could be incorporated in to their current assessment systems now before any common assessments come online in 2014-15.

THE PROMISE OF COMMON ASSESSMENTS

While states that adopt the Common Core State Standards will need to evolve their assessment systems, they will not need to do it alone. In keeping with the spirit of multistate collaboration that fueled the creation of the common core, states now have the opportunity to work together to develop a shared assessment system to measure student learning against the CCSS. Through the Race to the Top grant competition, the U.S. Department of Education has allotted $350 million in federal funds to state consortia for the development of common assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

Three consortia of states have formed to apply for the assessment funds. The *Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers* (PARCC) is a group of 26 states committed to building a next-generation assessment system for grades 3 through high school. The system will be anchored by college- and career-ready tests in high school, and will include a combination of end-of-year assessments and "through-course" assessments administered throughout the school year. In addition, the system will include optional formative tests, starting in kindergarten. The system will also be completely computer based. Achieve is coordinating the work of PARCC. The *Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium* (SBAC) is a group of 31 states that proposes developing adaptive, online tests including required summative exams, combined with performance tasks given through the year, and optional formative exams. Finally, the *State Consortium on Board Examinations Systems* is the only consortium to apply for the $30 million Race to the Top High School Course Assessment Program, and plans to use a competitive process to select at least three board examination systems that include courses in the core subjects aligned to the CCSS, to be administered at the end of 10th grade.

The benefits of having common assessments are clear. Multistate consortia:

- Provide a common and consistent measure of student performance across states, which will allow states to compare performance on a common metric;

- Offer an opportunity for states to pool financial and intellectual resources to develop better assessments while reducing the cost to each state;

- Allow states to move collectively to next-generation assessment systems by leveraging innovations in research and technology that are harder for individual states to achieve on their own; and

- Provide opportunities for cross-state collaboration in other critical areas, including the development of curriculum materials, formative assessments, instructional tools and teacher professional development.

TRANSITIONING TO NEXT-GENERATION ASSESSMENTS

Implementation of the CCSS and the transition to next-generation assessments will have significant implications for states. Ultimately, states will need to map out a detailed transition and phase-in strategy and timeline that identifies the key milestones for sunsetting their current state assessments and ramping up administration of the next-generation assessments. This multifaceted plan should address a host of critical issues that states and districts will need to attend to including:

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- Evaluating the relationship between the old and new assessments;
- Evaluating the various cost implications of the new assessments;
- Changes in curriculum needed to ensure alignment to the new standards and assessments;
- Professional development needs to help educators prepare for the new assessments;
- New data and reporting systems needed to incorporate and provide maximum access to the new assessment results;
- Changes in the accountability system necessary to incorporate the new assessments;
- Outreach and communications strategies to ensure that parents, students, educators and others are aware of and prepared for the new system; and
- A strategy to help inform and engage State Board of Education members and legislators of the policy, practical and financial impacts of the new assessment.

The timeline for the Race to the Top assessment grant winners means that any new operational assessments developed by state consortia will not be available for full implementation until 2014-2015. This raises the question of what states should do in the interim period and how best to handle the transition. One of the most important steps during the transition will be getting educators familiar with the new standards via intensive professional development. As soon as preliminary versions of the newly designed assessments are available, it will be critical to build opportunities for educators to become familiar with the new assessment designs and instruments and to delve into the necessary changes for curriculum and instruction.

As the assessment consortia work to ensure that the next generation of assessments provides instructionally-sensitive information back to schools and teachers, it will be critical to provide educators with training on how to utilize and maximize the data generated from the assessments to inform instructional practices. Additionally, as states evolve to next-generation assessments that are designed to measure a more robust set of skills, it will be important to focus on providing professional development in the areas of instruction that have been left out of traditional assessment systems, including contextualized tasks involving extended analysis, research or communication.

The CCSSS provide an extraordinary opportunity for states to pool their resources and expertise to develop next-generation assessment systems that better reflect what students need to learn to be prepared while also demonstrating greater utility for instruction and accountability purposes. States should seize the opportunity in the period ahead.

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THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS & ACCOUNTABILITY

For the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to have maximum impact, states will need to evolve their accountability systems to more fully embrace college and career readiness as the goal for all students. To date, very few states have built their accountability systems around the expectation that all students will graduate high school ready for postsecondary pursuits. Student assessments haven't been pegged to college- and career-ready standards and neither have the goals and metrics used to measure school progress.

Implementation of the CCSS provides states with the opportunity to move in a new direction, one that makes college and career readiness the main objective of educators, schools, students and families. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) will be an occasion for the federal government to provide clear incentives for states to move in this direction, but in the meantime, there are a number of steps states can take to improve their own accountability systems.

EVOLVING ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS TO REFLECT COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY EXPECTATIONS

States should take the following steps to ensure that their school accountability systems align with the college- and career-ready goals inherent in the Common Core State Standards.[1]

Expand Accountability Indicators While Maintaining a Focus on College and Career Readiness. At the core of a good accountability system is information – the right information provided to the right people at the right time. As states rethink their accountability systems, they should start by determining what information is most important for the people whose efforts are necessary to improve student readiness. To that end, there are three types of indicators states should adopt: those reflecting *curriculum participation and success*, those reflecting *achievement*, and those reflecting *attainment*. To incentivize and support continuous improvement, states should design the indicators in a manner that reflects a continuum of whether students are *progressing toward*, *achieving* and *exceeding* college and career readiness.

By creating a continuum of indicators, states can accomplish two things that most accountability systems today do not. First, they can ensure that students who are identified as off track get the attention and resources they need to get back on track before it's too late. Second, they can avoid a situation where the floor becomes the ceiling and instead provide incentives for students who achieve the college and career readiness standard earlier in high school to continue to strive for more. This represents a new vision of the kind of information states should collect, report, and enable schools and districts to use.

The table on the following page illustrates how a broader set of indicators targeting college- and career-readiness might be organized.

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[1] The recommendations throughout this document are discussed in greater detail in *Measures That Matter* (**www.achieve.org/measuresthatmatter**).

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	PROGRESSING TOWARD COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS	MEETING COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS	EXCEEDING COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS
Course completion and success	✓ Timely credit accumulation ✓ Credit recovery	✓ Successful completion of college and career-ready course of study	✓ Participation in AP, IB and dual enrollment
Achievement	✓ Performance on aligned assessments of core content and skills early in high school ✓ Grades (given quality control mechanisms)	✓ Meeting standards on the college and career-ready anchor assessment ✓ Postsecondary remediation rates	✓ College-level performance on AP and/or IB exams
Attainment	✓ Graduation	✓ Earning a college and career-ready diploma	✓ Earning credits in dual enrollment courses ✓ Application to and enrollment in postsecondary education

Set Statewide Goals to Spur Collective Improvement Efforts. In recent years, governors and other state leaders have become increasingly involved in setting goals for educational achievement and attainment that are tied to statewide plans for economic development. States have set specific quantitative goals for increasing high school graduation rates, increasing college enrollment rates, decreasing college remediation rates, and increasing two- and four-year degree completion over a four to ten year period. Such goals can serve to remind decision makers of the intrinsic link between education attainment and economic opportunities for the state – and can help redirect or align resources accordingly. Statewide goals also broaden the base of support beyond policymakers and foster dialogue between educators and the broader workforce around the education pipeline and labor market projections. But unless these large-scale goals translate into specific, meaningful goals for individual schools and districts, they will remain aspirational, rather than become the organizing principles for systems of instruction, support and resource allocation.

Set Stretch Goals for Schools. The Common Core Standards provide a roadmap for what students need to learn at each grade level to be on a path to graduate high school prepared for success in college and careers. In order for schools to have clear improvement targets to aim for, states will need to adopt "stretch goals" that reflect ambitious expectations for the percentages of students who will meet the standards at each grade level and, ultimately, graduate college and career ready. Those goals should, as mentioned above, be linked to the statewide goals for P-20 improvement. The accountability system ought to encourage educators, students and administrators to meet the goal; monitor whether that goal is being achieved; and provide feedback to those in the system about where strengths and weaknesses appear.

Award Credit for Meaningful Progress and Expect All Schools to Eventually Reach the Target. States should develop school accountability metrics that consider a combination of *status* and *growth* because both are important. Looking at status gives a picture of where students currently are performing on key college- and career-ready indicators, an especially critical measure for those students about to leave high school. Looking at growth toward a standard ensures that all students – from those far below to those well above the standard – are expected to progress academically. This approach can push schools

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and systems to move *all* students regardless of where they are currently performing along a continuum of readiness.

Adopt a Broader Vision of Accountability, One that Empowers Educators as Much as it Holds Them Accountable for Performance. States need to think about accountability more broadly. Too often accountability has been thought of as punitive – schools that don't meet standards face consequences – but it need not be that narrow. Rethinking accountability includes considering it as a way to target assistance to schools in need, use data more effectively, and reward and incentivize progress. When, as is often the case right now, accountability systems are too focused on identifying and fixing failure, they fail to do enough to motivate exemplary performance. Incentives are important to creating an environment in which accountability goals are perceived as something meaningful to work toward, not just something to meet to avoid sanctions. Incentives for schools that are meeting accountability indicators can include the following: recognition among peers and within the community, increased discretion in using current resources, and autonomy from costly or time-consuming state requirements.

Dedicate Resources to Intervene in Persistently Low-Performing Schools. Schools and districts cannot be considered successful unless their students are successful. When educators, schools and systems are not meeting expectations, there needs to be meaningful consequences. States seeking to prepare all high school graduates for college and careers need a strategy for responding to their lowest-performing high schools, which are responsible for a disproportionate number of students who graduate unprepared for what's ahead (if they graduate at all). Continuing to rely upon incremental change strategies will not lead to effective change in these schools. Evidence from across sectors – nonprofits, businesses, and government agencies – suggests that in cases of deep, chronic organizational failure, two models of dramatic change are available:

- *Classic turnaround*, in which highly capable leadership (typically new) receives a strong mandate from the top to take the bold actions needed to achieve a fast boost in results, and
- *Starting fresh*, in which the school "closes and reopens" with new leadership, staff and programs

Research on many different kinds of organizations, including schools, suggests that in persistently, profoundly failing institutions, incremental change strategies have little chance of success. Staff members are demoralized and do not believe the organization can succeed. Leaders and employees lack the capacity and authority needed to revive the organization. In this context, typical school improvement tactics, like more staff professional development and new curriculum adjustments, are not sufficient to reverse years of failure. As a result, cases of successful dramatic improvement in the research almost always involve either a classic turnaround or a completely fresh start. Each approach has value in different contexts, depending on the availability of turnaround-ready leaders, the supply of operators to take over schools and "start fresh," and other factors. Therefore, states and districts need a portfolio of options that can be matched to different school contexts as required. States should approach any turnaround model with the intent of administering intense support that will build capacity within the school and/or district to sustain success once the turnaround is successful. This is particularly important in rural schools and districts that may be difficult to staff and have little access to resources.

Develop a Differentiated Strategy to Support Low-Performing Schools. As states raise standards there will likely be an increase in the number and types of schools that will fall below expectations, making it critical that low-performing schools are differentiated and diagnosed. Schools falling below the line will be very different from one another and will require different interventions and supports. States need to

develop strategies to stimulate significant improvement in middle-tier schools where a smaller, but not insignificant, proportion of children are not meeting standards. These schools won't necessarily require major interventions, but they will need encouragement, support, data and best practice information to improve. This does not necessarily require hands-on support or interventions from the state. Rather, states can stimulate significant improvement in many middle-tier schools by shining a bright spotlight on the need to increase college and career readiness, and linking schools to readily available resources (e.g., materials, websites, organizations that help schools with these issues, etc.) that do not require direct state involvement to be helpful to schools. In developing such strategies, states can draw on existing frameworks that elucidate the critical elements of statewide systems of support, but give special attention to issues that are vital to improving high school expectations and performance.

Key elements of such a supports system likely include: identifying the school's strengths and challenges, including a study of their policies and practices related to curriculum and instruction, safety nets for struggling students, and the capacity of the teaching force to deliver college- and career-ready curriculum; using data to help schools identify which educators and technology-based instruction produce the highest levels of learning progress for students with differing characteristics – and help schools extend the reach of these to more students; focusing professional development on boosting the subject matter knowledge of high school teachers, including an emphasis on engagement strategies for moving toward college and career readiness for all students. The middle-tier schools with their districts and external partners can then in many cases rise to the occasion since, unlike the chronically low-performing schools discussed above, they have some level of capacity to improve on their own.

Support Capacity-Building Efforts in Districts and Schools. Raising standards puts increased pressure on schools and districts to improve performance. Yet schools will not be able to improve performance without a clear strategy for building the capacity of the school systems, schools and educators. States will need to think anew about where the capacity to help under-performing schools will come from. Ultimately, it is the state's responsibility to ensure that needs are being met, but in some places external partners or districts might be in a better position to do this work than state education agencies, and collaboration will be critical to a school's success. In such cases, the state should create partnerships but must retain final responsibility for ensuring that the work is done.

Beyond addressing personnel issues, any action plan created for schools and districts should address sustainability. If quality sustainability plans are not developed and implemented with fidelity, the school will most likely begin to underperform over time. In Georgia, seventeen schools that were in Needs Improvement for five or more years made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two consecutive years in 2009 (removing them from the Needs Improvement list) despite new assessments with higher cut scores and rising Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO). For some of the schools, it was the first time ever making AYP. This was done with basically the same staff that had always underperformed, but with clear, actionable steps toward improvement and the involvement of strong administrators. After being removed from the Needs Improvement list, supports and the accompanying funding were also removed. The schools have continued progress and achieved AYP again this year despite another increase in AMOs. Anecdotal comments from teachers and administrators point to the sustainability of the action plans as a key component of their continued progress.

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ON THE ROAD TO IMPLEMENTATION

SECTION 2:
Process and Planning Considerations around
Implementation of the Common Core State Standards

GETTING STARTED ON COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Create a Strategic Implementation Team:** The first order of business for states is to put together a team that will be tasked with implementation planning, including setting a timeline for full implementation and the transition from getting where your state is today to where it needs to go. This will require a team that knows your current state standards well, has the capacity to consider and make recommendations about each of the elements that should be in a state's plan and can execute such a plan. The team should be cross-cutting with representatives from the state department of education, higher education and the Governor's office. The team should include policy, budget and communications experts. The team should also include representation from districts and schools, including teachers, administrators and content area experts. Your strategic implementation team should have responsibility for creating an overall vision, timeline, phase in strategy and work plan for implementation.

   As the work proceeds, your strategic team will likely need to create other working teams to dive into specific issues and make recommendations to the strategic team about how to proceed on those issues. Due to the importance of CCSS implementation, your team should consider what mechanism can be used to provide project oversight from the leadership team (e.g., the chief state school officer and key deputies). It will also be critical to consider what mechanism is in place to ensure fluid communication between the department of education, Governor's office and other state education agencies such as your higher education system?

2. **Create a Supportive Environment:** Whether they are part of your strategic team or not, be sure to consider the important role of other key stakeholders in your process. Consider up front who needs to be engaged in the work, who needs to be kept informed and how you are going to interact with the various stakeholders. Having a plan from the beginning on when and how to engage stakeholders is critical to building support for full implementation of the Common Core State Standards – as well as the rest of your college- and career-ready agenda. It is critical to inform and involve key state board of education members and legislators in discussions around implementation. They are critical partners and must be engaged from the beginning.

3. **Create a Plan, a Timeline and a Budget:** What is the date when you want the new common standards to be fully operational in your state? Is that the same date that new assessments will be in place? Working backwards, what are the elements that must be addressed in your plan (using the list suggested above and other items that your team determines are critical) and when? What expertise do you have in your team? What expertise do you need to find? Who is responsible for what elements of your plan and how will team members – and the team – be held accountable? How will you know whether or not your state is on track? If full implementation takes years, how will you sustain your efforts over time? How will you fund implementation? What funding streams are currently available to fund these efforts? How might funding streams and other reform priorities be leveraged so that the budget implications of implementation are minimized? How might Race to the Top funds impact your plans and timeline?

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LEVERAGING STATE BUDGET AND FUNDING TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

While the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have the potential to initiate significant reform across the country, much of that potential is contingent on successful implementation, with states embedding the CCSS as a major priority in their strategic plan. Many of the implementation challenges of the CCSS can only be overcome through thoughtful and strategic planning on the part of state leaders including the State Education Agency (SEA), which is charged with implementing the state's education budget. Chief among these challenges is the potential unintended impact of the new standards on state budgets. It will be critical for state leaders to review historic budget information and make determinations as to the reallocation of resources and funds to implement the CCSS successfully. To do this, states will need to view their education budget holistically and allocate funds to ensure the whole reform plan, driven by CCSS implementation, has been reviewed and has the adequate funds and resources to ensure high-quality and actionable outcomes.

In the current economic environment, implementation cannot be successful without a clear understanding of the funding streams available to states and districts and a clear plan for using those funding streams to accomplish the goals of the CCSS and related policies, programs and curricular materials. In this time of budget reductions, it is critical that state departments of education take a strategic and global view of the budget for the agency and its districts with regard to what will be funded, at what level, and with sustainability in mind. Strategic and global budget planning will be a key to a successful implementation of the CCSS and the overall reform agenda.

There are certain areas that are heavily affected by the implementation of the CCSS. In particular, at the state level, teacher professional development and resource management are top of mind. A comprehensive view of the state education budget includes reviewing both state and federal funds and how those have been leveraged historically. States also need a view toward the future. It is absolutely critical that chief state school officers include the chief financial officers in all planning discussions for CCSS implementation as well as state experts in the various funding sources available to state agencies, such as a state's Title I or Federal Programs officer. Including these staff in the planning process will maximize the opportunities for using repurposed resources and funding. In many cases, for example, professional development on the CCSS may take place using curriculum development or school improvement funding. Each office is conducting the same training on the CCSS, but with perhaps a different focus. Consolidating funding streams to reach the same goal allows for more flexibility in other areas by providing an economy of scale and reducing the redundancy of efforts.

It is also important that the K-12 chief include the strategic implementation team for the CCSS in these budgeting and planning discussions in order to model the philosophy that funding should support the agency strategic goals and priorities rather than individual programs. All members of the strategic implementation team as well as the work teams they create to tackle specific issues, should be empowered to plan creatively. Another step is to develop multiyear work plans and budgets, which are critical to ensuring the work can be sustained over years through federal and/or state sources.

There will be a range budget implications related to implementing the CCSS—some unexpected. Here are questions that will help guide your internal budget discussions as your state develops its CCSS implementation strategy:

STATE SUPPORT

✓ *What are critical areas the state needs to support to implement the CCSS successfully?* Some areas might include:

- The development/revision of state resources;
- Communications and outreach strategies to key stakeholders (e.g., local boards of education, legislators, parents, educators); and
- Revisions to the state's longitudinal data system.

✓ *What funds to local systems can be directed to support CCSS implementation?* States can take leadership roles in providing guidance to districts regarding allowable expenditures of state and federal dollars. States can provide districts targeted guidance with regard to specific, research-proven methods to implementing the new standards change. In addition, schools in corrective action receiving state or federal funds can be required to provide services to those teachers that will lead to higher quality instruction. Finally, federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds can be withheld by the state for statewide work with the written agreement of local superintendents.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

✓ *What funding streams are available to support teacher professional development (PD)?* When in the planning process for an initiative as large as PD, strategic decisions should be made to leverage the various funding sources to support both targeted and more general professional development for teachers and administrators alike. This would free funds to be utilized in other areas. The only caution is to ensure that use of this effort does not supplant current funding plans or place future funding in jeopardy.

- *Title I:* States should review their use of consolidated administration funds as new definitions allow Title I-eligible schools to receive funds. This expands the number of schools that can be impacted by state and local professional development funding. Some districts may choose, for instance, to not designate a high school as a Title I school. As this school does not generate Title I funds, the district can use this money to support the school.
- *Title II:* Title II also provides professional development funding. A sometimes forgotten or underestimated funding source is the Title IIB-Math Science Partnership (MSP) grant. While MSP cannot be used to fund statewide activities, it can be used to provide targeted PD in districts who received the competitive grant. In addition, schools outside the competitive grant can receive state support for a nominal fee.
- *Additional Federal Funds:* Funds from Title III and IDEA are allowable to provide PD to ESOL and Special Education teachers.

✓ *What alternatives are there to face-to-face professional training? Can they provide a cost benefit? Are there opportunities to partner with neighboring states or regionally?* In this budget environment, districts often find it difficult to release teachers for PD. Fully web-based webinars that utilize the

web for both visual and audible delivery to teachers is one inexpensive method of providing PD. Most services allow sessions to be archived and accessed later by teachers at their convenience. Because of their ability to be archived, teachers and administrators who access the sessions later still have the benefit of seeing and hearing the questions that came up during the sessions. Partnerships with public television also can deliver inexpensive PD to teachers in need of learning content. Some states have started using TeacherLine from PBS as a means to deliver content training.[1] So, while these types of tools may cost more up front, they may be more cost effective in the long run. The key is promoting and communicating these opportunities through email listings and professional organizations to ensure they are being fully utilized and meet the needs of teachers and administrators.

CURRICULAR MATERIALS AND RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

✓ *What funding can be used for curricular materials and resources development?* State and federal funding both provide potential streams of funding to develop or revise existing classroom resources such as curriculum frameworks or assessment models. School Improvement funds can be used to work with groups of teachers to develop such resources. It can also be a great professional development opportunity for some teachers in struggling schools to work with content specialists and teachers in successful schools to develop new curricular materials aligned with the CCSS. The big caution is to make sure any work done with state funds now can be supported solely by state funds in the future unless the project takes a completely new direction down the line. Federal funding for this type of activity can come from Consolidated Administrative funds or other Title funds. These funds will need to be targeted on English Language Arts and math and tracked.

In addition, staff should work closely with procurement and contract staff. It is possible that purchase of products can be made both more efficient and cost saving. Some states even have procurement exemptions for educational resources (textbook or instruction resources) and commodities.

✓ *How will the CCSS impact assessment costs?* This question must be addressed in the early stages of CCSS implementation. While common assessments are on the way, states will have to make due in the interim. Critical assessment impact questions to consider include: How will changes in the standards affect the state's current assessment system? Will it require a new standard setting? Can the state wait until 2014-15 for the common assessments without sacrificing important content? What changes will need to be made to vendor contracts? Is there time for field testing? Will the state need additional forms to reach representative sample of item performance?

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

For a high-quality implementation in the current economic environment, state departments of education will have to review budgets holistically to determine the best way to fund the strategic priorities like CCSS implementation. This exercise is neither easy nor comfortable, yet it is a critical conversation for state leaders to have to drive effective and efficient implementation. Strategic budgeting also provides a basis to seek additional funding from state legislatures and private grant prospects. For this exercise to yield results, a strategic plan must be agreed upon by the leadership and allowable funds, regardless of concentration area, must be assigned to the respective projects.

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[1] **http://www.pbs.org/teacherline/**

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ON THE ROAD TO IMPLEMENTATION

SECTION 3:
Policy Considerations around Implementation
of the Common Core State Standards

COMPARING CURRENT STATE STANDARDS TO THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: CONDUCTING A GAP ANALYSIS

As states consider the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), policy leaders and educators must have the data necessary to determine the impact of the CCSS on curriculum, instruction, assessments and teacher professional development in their individual state. To determine the impact of the CCSS, states must start by comparing their current standards to the CCSS. Achieve encourages all states to conduct such an anaylysis so that states know – both by grade level as well as overall – what it will take to move from their current standards-based systems to full implementation of the common standards.

While there are numerous ways that a state may go about conducting such an analysis, Achieve has designed a tool that states can use to facilitate this critical comparison. The Common Core Comparison Tool (CCCTool) offers states a system through which they can compare their existing state standards with the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics and English Language Arts & Literacy. While Achieve designed the CCCTool, the data generated are the result of judgments made by the members of the team within a state who complete the comparison process. The CCCTool aims not only to help states identify the gaps and overlaps between their current standards and the CCSS, but also to facilitate the cross-state and cross-discipline discussions and collaboration necessary to identify implications and ensure a smooth implementation of the CCSS. For more information on the CCCTool, go to http://ccctool.achieve.org[1]

FORMING TEAMS TO COMPARE STANDARDS

Whether a state uses the CCCTool or another method to conduct a gap analysis, Achieve strongly encourages states to create a team in each content area to complete and review the comparison of state standards with the K-12 Common Core State Standards. The teams should include those in the department of education who are charged with standards development and revision. It is also helpful to include content experts, teachers, postsecondary faculty and others who can act as close advisors to the standards review process in the state to ensure there is a broader understanding among key stakeholders. This group will be critical to creating and facilitating implementation. The process provides invaluable professional development for those involved – it will broaden and deepen the understanding of the CCSS and the work ahead among those that participate – and build a state's internal capacity for future work not only on standards but also on curriculum, instruction and assessment.

ANALYZING KEY QUESTIONS

As states complete the comparison of their own standards to the CCSS it is critical that their analysis answers the following key questions:

✓ *Which of the concepts and skills required in the Common Core State Standards are included in my state's standards?* At the most basic level, a state should understand where there is overlap

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[1] The CCCTool is secure: states enter a user name and password provided by Achieve in each content area. Each state can designate specific staff within the department of education as being responsible for distributing the password. Once a state receives its passwords, Achieve will no longer distribute them but will refer all inquiries to the designated "password keeper" in the state. For information on how your state can receive a password or to determine your state's password keeper, go to: http://www.achieve.org/contact_us

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between the content and performance expectations included in the CCSS and the state's existing standards.

✓ *How strong is the match between the two sets of standards?* Once a determination has been made that the CCSS and a state share specific content and performance expectations, it is important to take a deeper look at the shared content and examine the strength of the match. In particular, states need to consider what the implications are between *good* and *weak* matches insofar as curriculum, classroom instruction, assessment and professional development are concerned.

✓ *Which of the concepts and skills required in the Common Core State Standards are not included in the state's standards?* It is important to look closely at the common core content that is not matched by your state standards. In some cases, level of specificity and grain size will be important points of departure for the CCSS. Consider what the implications are for transitioning to the common standards and the impact on teacher training and professional development.

✓ *How similar are the Common Core State Standards and state standards with respect to the grade levels at which concepts and skills are taught? At what grade levels are there differences where state expectations address concepts and skills earlier or later than the CCSS?* A state standard may be an excellent match in terms of content and performance expectations to a common core standard but be required at a different grade level. As your state compares your current standards to the CCSS, it will be important to keep track of current versus future grade-level differences. Consider particular grade-level differences and where your state standards might be introducing content before or after the same content in the common core. These differences will have implications for classroom instruction, assessment, professional development and use of curriculum materials in your state and will need to be included in your communication plan to districts.

✓ *How similar are the Common Core State Standards and the state standards with respect to the expectations that are included in specific strands (English Language Arts) and domains (mathematics)? In what strands and domains are there the greatest differences?* The knowledge, content and skills in the two sets of standards may be different in terms of organization, order and degree of specificity. For this reason, it is important to look at more than just "matches or non-matches" or "strength of matches" – or even "grade-level" differences. By dissecting the data by strand or domain, patterns may emerge that might otherwise be masked in an aggregate- or grade-level analysis.

✓ *Which concepts and skills required in your state's standards are not included in the Common Core State Standards?* At the end of the analysis, states should generate a list of their state standards that were not included in the CCSS. This list will identify the content unique to the state and the state needs to carefully consider whether any of this content rises to the level of consideration for addition per the 15% guideline based on the strategic priorities of the state. States are likely to find that most of the content not included in the CCSS is extraneous and easily discarded.

REPORTING AND COMMUNICATING FINDINGS

A quality comparison between current state standards and the Common Core State Standards is a critical first step towards understanding what will be necessary for states to fully implement the CCSS. As states consider the implementation of the CCSS, policy leaders, administrators and educators must use the data on what standards are common, what standards are new, what standards are changing, what standards will be taught in new grades, and where there are changes in the progression of content and perfomance expectations across grades to determine the impact of the CCSS on the state's curriculum, instruction, assessment, tools and teacher professional development.

ADDING TO THE COMMON CORE: ADDRESSING THE "15%" GUIDELINE

When 48 states and three territories signed on to the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI), it was their goal to create a shared set of expectations in English Language Arts and mathematics. Therefore, states who adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are expected to adopt them in their entirety. While states will not be considered to have adopted the common core if any individual standard is left out, states are allowed to augment the standards with an additional 15% of content that a state feels is imperative. For example, some states may include literature from authors born in the state or about groups or events important to the state. In some cases, these requirements are even written into law. States may also need to add content to courses so that they align with other existing policies. It is important to note, however, that adding to the CCSS is purely optional.

In fact, the 15% guideline should be considered primarily as a *common-sense guideline* to meet specific state needs. States should be judicious about adding content and keep in mind the possible implications of doing so. Remember, a central driver in the creation of the CCSS was to develop standards that were common across states lines – and clear and focused – the opposite of the "mile wide, inch deep" standards so prevalent in many current state standards. A literal interpretation by states of the 15% guideline (that is 15% added at every grade level and in each subject) would undermine the very reason the states developed the Common Core State Standards in the first place. The following chart illustrates the process that states should use to decide whether or not to augment the standards:

Identify content in existing standards not in the Common Core State Standards.

• Achieve's Common Core Comparison Tool (CCCTool) can help with this.

Decide if the CCSS are missing content that the state must include.

• Are there any existing state laws and/or regulations that must be met?
• Are there strategic priorties or other compelling reasons to add content?

Consider implications of adding this content.

• How will this affect assessment?
• How much will this affect commonality with other states?
• Does it dilute the standards?
• What is the impact in the classroom?

Decide to add or not to add additional content to the adopted common standards.

• What preparations need to be made for assessment, intructional materials and professional development?

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IMPLICATIONS TO CONSIDER

Any augmentation to the CCSS should be carefully considered. The CCSS are designed to be focused and rigorous, and were informed by the best state and international standards and the expertise of many individuals and organizations, among other sources. If a state were to add several major topics throughout K-12 in English language arts and mathematics, it would dilute the overall focus of the standards and risk making their standards out of sync with those of other states adopting the CCSS. This would have many implications, particularly around the use of common assessments and instructional materials.

For states considering common assessments aligned to the common core standards, possible scenarios to consider when adding content to state standards include:

✓ *The standards added are not content that would typically be assessed on a large-scale assessment, and might therefore have minimal implications on a common assessment effort.* An example of this might include a requirement that students read literature from their state.

✓ *The standards added represent a topic or set of topics for which a state might create a module to augment a common assessment.* An example might include a state adding a poetry section to one grade-level assessment or including "+" mathematics content (content beyond what is required for college and career readiness) in their high school geometry course.

✓ *The standards added are few enough in number that they will be assessed in other ways.* For example, a state might add a research standard to one grade, but instead of assessing that on a large-scale assessment, indicate that it will be graded by teachers using a rubric.

As states consider their strategies for adopting and implementing the CCSS, they need to carefully and deliberately consider the benefits and trade-offs of augmenting the common standards, rely on their common sense and stay within the spirit of the 15% guideline.

IMPLEMENTING THE COMMON CORE LITERACY STANDARDS IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

*The Standards set requirements for English language arts (ELA) but also for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. Just as students must learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas, so too must the Standards specify the literacy skills and understandings required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines. **Literacy standards for grade 6 and above are predicated on teachers of ELA, history/social studies, science, and technical subjects using their content area expertise to help students meet the particular challenges of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language in their respective fields.** It is important to note that the 6–12 literacy standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects are not meant to replace content standards in those areas but rather to supplement them. States may incorporate the standards into their standards for these subjects or adopt them as content area literacy standards.* (Emphasis added)

--- From the Introduction to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) acknowledge the importance of reading, writing, speaking, listening and language in all subjects, not just English Language Arts. The CCSS, therefore, include literacy standards specific to content areas essential for a well-rounded education including history/social studies, science and technical subjects. Skilled teachers trained in a specific discipline are best positioned to teach students how to read, understand, listen, speak and write about their fields: for instance, history teachers are best suited to teach students how to read and write about history, just as English teachers are best suited to teach students how to read literature and write literary analyses.

Literacy standards rarely extend into non-English subjects in current state standards. The CCSS offer guidance on disciplinary reading and writing beyond what occurs in an English class. The college and career readiness expectations in the Common Core State Standards reinforce the importance of these efforts as reading and writing are critical to building content knowledge in a range of disciplines and contexts. In both college and the workplace, for example, individuals must frequently read, comprehend and communicate about complex informational text.

Since state standards in history/social studies, science and technical subjects may not currently include literacy standards, explicit expectations related to disciplinary literacy could represent a significant change for teachers in those fields. What will not be new to teachers in these fields is the need for students to develop disciplinary literacy. In order to move from implicit or informal expectations to establishing connections between standards in history/social studies, science and technical subjects and the CCSS, states will need a strong implementation strategy to ensure their impact in grades 6-12.

TAKING STOCK OF CURRENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES AROUND DISCIPLINARY LITERACY

The first step states should take is to review current expectations regarding disciplinary literacy by identifying existing practices and policies in history/social studies, science and technical subjects. A series of questions to ask include:

- What are the current expectations regarding literacy in current state history/social studies, science and technical subjects standards?

- What are the current teacher practices in history/social studies, science and technical subjects related to disciplinary literacy (including, but not limited to, reading primary source documents, writing laboratory reports and presenting information orally)?

- To what extent do states' assessments (in ELA, history/social studies and/or science) require students to exhibit the skills and knowledge described in these standards?

- How do these formal and informal expectations in history/social studies, science and technical subjects align with the corresponding literacy standards in the CCSS?

- What related professional development materials and opportunities exist for history/social studies, science and technical subject teachers, either individually or with ELA teachers? How will the state explain the necessity of this to history/social studies, science and technical subject teachers?

BRINGING TOGETHER STATE CONTENT EXPERTS TO REVIEW CURRENT AND CCSS EXPECTATIONS

Once a state has identified existing policies and practices, a good next step is to assemble relevant teams of history/social studies, science and technical subject teachers and content experts to consider implications for implementation. These teams should:

- Include representatives from relevant state organizations (National Science Teacher Association and National Council for Social Studies state affiliates, for example), department of education content staff, middle and high school teachers, administrators, and higher education faculty;

- Determine how the expectations in the Common Core State Standards already in practice, but perhaps not explicit in the state standards, can be formalized in the state's standards, assessments, teacher preparation and professional development, and instructional materials;

- Discuss and make recommendations to state policymakers concerning how to assign responsibility for teaching and assessing the disciplinary literacy skills in the CCSS; and

- Develop communications and outreach strategies on suggested professional development for history/social studies, science and technical subject teachers.

Assembling teams of relevant stakeholders will also build goodwill among those who are ultimately expected to carry out the literacy standards. Care should be taken to explain to these teams the value of these disciplinary literacy standards, including the importance of subject matter expertise in teaching students how to read and write about their discipline.

ADOPT AND IMPLEMENT

States should consider formal adoption of these literacy standards as part of their history/social studies, science and technical subject standards, at least during the next revision cycle of those standards. It is also possible that states could include in their current content standards an acknowledgement of these literacy standards and the responsibility of history/social studies, science and other technical subject matter teachers to teach these skills. Having a crosswalk that shows how these literacy standards impact and reinforce history/social studies, science and technical subject standards would be useful for all teachers – and could lead to opportunities for cross fertilization, shared lessons and professional development across the disciplines.

ALIGNING INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS WITH THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Along with education policymakers, educators and the public, the nation's publishers of instructional materials, including textbooks, have been watching the rollout of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) closely. With domestic sales of elementary and secondary textbooks and instructional materials accounting for $5.2 billion in 2009, according to the Association of American Publishers, the industry has as much of a stake in the implementation of CCSS as their state and district customers do.

About half of the states adopt instructional materials/textbooks statewide, while the others largely leave adoption to districts. Whether it occurs at the state or district level, there is much that can be done to plan for a smooth, transparent and productive transition to instructional materials that reflect the CCSS, whether in print or online. The review of instructional material should also include frequently-used open educational resources (OERs). States and districts should view this as an opportunity and look for ways to work with other states and districts on the analysis and adoption of materials – the kind of collaboration that the CCSS make possible. Below are steps states and districts can take as they consider the adoption of new textbooks and materials in light of the CCSS.

SET THE GOAL

States should begin with the endgame in mind – adoption of instructional materials that are aligned with the CCSS and new assessments – and work backwards. States should weigh the timing of the following tasks when planning for new materials:

- Previously scheduled textbook adoption cycles.
- The introduction of new aligned assessments.
- Project budgets.
- Online versus printed materials (including OERs, whether developed by teachers, curriculum developers or non-profits).
- Professional development on the new standards, assessments and materials.
- The changes to accountability system brought on by new standards and assessments.

All of these will play a role in when – and what type of – instructional materials get purchased and/or developed to ensure a smooth implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

CONSIDER DEVELOPING RUBRICS FOR STATE AND DISTRICT USE

Even in states that leave material adoptions to districts, the state should consider leading the development of (with a team of teachers and content experts) high-quality tools such as rubrics to support districts' adoption of aligned materials. A good rubric can identify strengths and weaknesses with the instructional materials under consideration and can provide teachers with valuable information that allows them to make appropriate instructional decisions. While organization and usage are always important, there is more to textbook evaluation than the order of chapters. Providing a tool such as this will provide an invaluable service to districts and schools and communicate the philosophy of the CCSS. The rubric can be arranged in a variety of ways, categories should include at the least:

- *Content/Goals* – Key questions to consider would include: Does the material represent appropriate rigor? Does the material display clear development of conceptual understanding? Is the content language appropriate? Does the content lead students toward appropriate content discourse? Does the material support appropriate skill development and problem-solving skills?

- *Supplemental Materials/Classroom Assessments* – Most instructional materials include assessment resources for teacher uses. It is imperative that these be reviewed using the same measures as the materials themselves. Key questions to consider would include: Are the assessments representative of appropriate rigor and expectations? Are multiple types of assessments available? Does the material include application-level assessment as well as developmental level? Does the material provide guidance to teachers regarding the integration of assessment into classrooms? Are the purposes of the assessments clear, measurable and usable?

- *Student Experiences* – Key questions to consider would include: Does the material support multiple opportunities for students to experience the content? Is it engaging to the student? Does it allow for multiple learning styles? Is technology available for use with or in lieu of the hardcopy material?   Is the reading level appropriate for students?

- *Teacher Support* – Key questions to consider would include: Does the material support differentiation of instruction? Does the material support and model equity? Does the material support all learners?

MIND THE GAP

States and districts should do a comparative analysis of their current instructional materials and the CCSS. States should convene panels of teachers, administrators and content experts to examine instructional materials alongside the CCSS and determine what needs to change and what can stay the same.

This task can be time consuming. Yet states and districts should resist the temptation to paper over gaps and should be candid about whether and how their materials need to change to reflect the new standards. States that leave materials adoption to local districts can assist by drawing up lists of model materials or books that they have determined are aligned. In states that are legislatively prohibited from identifying materials or books should develop a list of "must haves" that districts can look to when determining CCSS alignment with their materials. Conversely, if districts are doing the comparisons on their own, states can make those results widely available to other districts in the state. Panels or committees that accomplish this work should summarize whether alignment exists in different grades and subjects, and if not, what changes will be necessary. Any state-developed rubrics will be invaluable to this process. Publishers also are likely to undertake this task, but it is wise for states and districts to take their own look as well, either individually or collaboratively to ensure alignment of content and cognitive demand and, of course, quality.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OERs)

OERs are quickly becoming important classroom tools. OERs are generally freely available, dynamic resources, which can be edited by their communities of users and shared with others. Ranging from wholly contained instructional modules, to units of study with lesson plans and assessments, to worksheets for use in a single lesson, OERs are gaining momentum among teachers, districts, and state

agencies alike. Like any instructional resource, though, OERs will need to be reviewed to ensure alignment with the Common Core State Standards. In recognition of the growing role of OERs, some states' and districts' current content adoption procedures allow for the consideration of OERs. In addition, some states are actively working towards the incorporation of OERs into their recommended instructional materials libraries. If your state and/or district does not yet have policies around OERs, alignment of the CCSS to instructional tools provides the perfect opportunity to address this emerging issue as well.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CROSS-STATE COLLABORATION

Once states and districts have determined their vision for their aligned materials, they should check with other states and districts about their own materials adoption and alignment process. States already in contact with their peers from other states on issues regarding CCSS implementation could also be discussing textbooks and instructional materials. The opportunities for efficiencies that come with multiple states and districts conducting alignment reviews and buying materials will be attractive both to purchasers and publishers. In particular, collaboration can be very helpful in ensuring that new textbooks and instructional tools cover the CCSS and little else, moving beyond the bloated, "mile wide, inch deep" approach publishers now typically take in developing materials that will work for a multitude of states with differing standards. Policymakers should not miss this chance for cooperation and collaboration with other states to improve the quality of textbooks and instructional materials.

CONSIDER TIMING

States will face questions as to how aggressively they can afford to adopt new materials, especially if they just underwent an adoption cycle as it may be unrealistic and expensive to repeat the process. In that case, reviewing OERs and acquiring supplemental materials that publishers can change more quickly to meet the CCSS, such as websites, teachers' guides, lesson planning materials, CD-ROMs and other classroom tools are options. It will be important for states to ensure that their books and materials support the common core. This is why streamlining adoption procedures and working with other states and districts can make sense, even if a state cannot afford to purchase new, aligned materials immediately.

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

Finally, when states and districts are ready to purchase new materials, they should proceed with the same "buyer beware" outlook that they have used during previous adoptions. They should be ready to compare publishers' alignment and correlation materials with their own, and they should be wary of materials that boast of CCSS alignment too soon. Here again, states and districts should partner with their peers across state lines; the strength in numbers will give them the upper hand.

With planning, incorporation of other timelines, and close collaboration with other states and districts, the purchase of new materials aligned with the CCSS can and should be accomplished successfully.

Achieve

ON THE ROAD TO IMPLEMENTATION

SECTION 4:
Broadening Awareness and Deepening Support
for the Common Core State Standards

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

Implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) presents a unique opportunity to revolutionize student achievement with next-generation approaches to curriculum, professional development and assessment. Yet, in order for this to occur, it is critical that the CCSS do not just sit on a shelf, but are fully utilized and inform classroom instruction. This requires strong collaboration between states, districts, schools and key stakeholders; open lines of communications; and public engagement to ensure everyone is fully informed and on the same page. All too often, implementation stalls and well-intentioned reforms fail to achieve their intended impact because of a lack of collaboration, shared understanding, and open, ongoing communication between policymakers and stakeholders.

That is why it is critical that in addition to having an implementation plan, states also have a complimentary communications and outreach plan in support of the CCSS. To that end, below are some key issues states should consider as they craft their communications and outreach strategies and engage important stakeholders in informed conversations about the Common Core State Standards, common assessments and the broader college- and career-ready agenda.[1]

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS & COORDINATION

Perhaps an obvious first step, but an important one, is to assemble the core communications team of people you will need to promote and gain support for the common standards. While having a compact team makes sense early on as states develop their initial communications and outreach planning, over time you want to make sure your core communications team includes, at a minimum, policy and communications specialists from the:

- Governor's office;
- State education agency;
- Higher education system/community;
- Business community; and
- Other public and third-party advocacy organizations.

Because this team is intentionally cross-sector, it is important to have an individual or agency identified as the lead coordinator, ultimately responsible – and accountable – for the development and execution of a communications plan. Given every entity is likely going to do something around the CCSS, it is critical that there is one individual or agency who is aware of the multiple efforts and can play a role in coordinating them to ensure the best use of resources and time.

Before any efforts are taken to formally engage key stakeholders and local actors, it is critical that states recognize that communicating internally – among yourselves and your team members – is where all efforts must begin. No strategy can be successful unless its own members and supporters are focused, energized and activated to help communicate the campaign's key themes and messages. The key to the "internal then external" communications strategy is to prevent any surprises. You never want one of

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[1] Achieve has developed a suite of tools to help states in their communications and outreach planning, found at **www.achieve.org/communicationstools**

your internal team to read about something you have done in the morning paper or hear about it first from a supervisor in their office.

There are a number of strategies states can take to coordinate their internal communications efforts:

- Host regular in-person meetings with your core communications team;
- Schedule conference calls when you cannot meet in person to allow for information-sharing and brainstorming as a team;
- Send a regular update to your core team, which can be as simple as an email news alert or electronic newsletter;
- Establish an email distribution list of those principal internal people who must be reached out to frequently to ensure they are informed and on board with your efforts. Send them relevant news coverage, new studies and reports, and other related materials. Using an email listserv is a no-cost way to keep other team members in the loop on current events and engaged; and
- Encourage team members to communicate within their organizations more broadly (e.g., the department of education's communications director can send information to department staff on the CCSS, including information collected by the state's higher education communications point person).

CONSISTENT MESSAGING: KEY-THREE MESSAGES

You should be able to boil down what you want to communicate to three central messages – the "key three." Typically, the first message will define the issue, the second will outline the problem, and the third will explain the solution. The key three should be distributed to all internal team members and communicated consistently, without variation, at all times.

The discipline of repetition should be carried across all communication channels, and by all public messengers. And while you may develop sub-messages for each target audience, those sub-messages should fit under the key three, and the overarching messages should be communicated at all times by all leaders/members to all media.

SAMPLE KEY-THREE MESSAGES:

- Currently, each state is responsible for setting its own standards. This leads to a nation with 50 different standards despite the fact that the expectations of colleges and employers in math and English are nearly universal and are not bound state lines.

- In addition, far too many students drop out or graduate from high school without the knowledge and skills required for success, closing doors and limiting their post-high school options. In our state *XX* percent of students are dropping out before earning a high school diploma and *XX* of first-year college students are enrolled in remedial (non-credit bearing) courses.

- Implementing the Common Core State Standards offers an opportunity to anchor our system in college and career readiness for all students, providing a common foundation for students across the country that will prepare them for college, careers and life.

Generally, research suggests that there is broad, but not necessarily deep (or intense), support for common standards across the country, among registered voters. This support provides an excellent starting point for driving messages about the need for consistent expectations across and within states,

and high standards – and therefore equal opportunity – for all students. The lack of intense support also suggests, however, that the public may be swayed by opposition messages. The best way to ensure this does not occur is to play offense – make sure your messages and goals reach key audiences first and are regularly reinforced by credible messengers.

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

Through Adoption: The What and the Why
Once the state has identified its lead individual/entity for coordinating communications and outreach, its core, cross-agency team of communications leads, and its key three messages, it is time to begin to reach out to the target audiences most critical to the success of the common standards, such as those responsible for adopting the CCSS (e.g., the state legislature or state board of education) and those ultimately responsible for implementing the CCSS (e.g., state policymakers, district and school administrators, local boards, teachers and teachers unions, school counselors) who should remain informed about the CCSS throughout the implementation process.

At this stage in the process, is it important to provide clear, transparent information on *what* the new standards encompass (e.g., K-12, anchored in college and career readiness, reflect lessons from high-performing countries and states, were developed by states, etc.) and *why* your state should adopt such common standards (e.g., they reflect an improvement over the current standards, allow for comparability across states, etc.). Any information or materials developed should be shared as widely as possible, from the State House down into the classroom, and should be as instructive and straightforward as possible.

The Indiana Department of Education, for example, has created a very simple yet informative **fact sheet** that provides general background on the Common Core State Standards Initiative, how it fits into Indiana's system, and what will come next for Indiana (including target adoption and implementation dates). In only two pages, Indiana lays out a clear and compelling case for adopting and implementing the common standards.

In addition to target audiences, you should also consider what other leaders and groups in your state (or nationally) are saying about the CCSS. Who is supportive and who is opposed? Where are opportunities for partnerships and coalitions, and from where (and from whom) is pushback most likely to come? While you may not be able to win all groups over, knowing the opposition – and their particular messages, audiences and level of influence – is extremely important when crafting your own communications and outreach strategy in support of common standards.

Post-Adoption: The How
After the state has successfully adopted the Common Core State Standards – ideally with support of local education leaders – leaders must immediately turn their attention to how they can best go about ensuring the standards are implemented consistently and with fidelity across their districts and schools. Communicating the *what* and the *why* of the common standards will only take a state so far; ensuring stakeholders that you have a clear plan for *how* the standards will be implemented moving forward will quickly become critical to the success of the standards. While the state should undoubtedly be communicating with district leadership, once the adoption phase is over, it is of the upmost importance that district and school leaders are fully engaged and fully aware of what the CCSS will mean for them and their students.

There are a number of ways in which the state can provide the actionable information and support districts need to successfully implement the common standards. For one, a state can conduct an analysis to compare its existing state standards to the new CCSS (see Achieve's Common Core Comparison Tool at http://ccctool.achieve.org/). Given many districts use their state standards and related curricular materials to guide their own instruction, demonstrating where the CCSS overlap, add new content, or eliminate content from the existing state standards could be extremely helpful in making local leaders understand what the true implications of the new standards will be on various classroom and instructional materials and practices. Results of such an analysis may also be useful in making the case for adoption, if policymakers are hesitant to adopt the CCSS without knowing how they compare to existing state standards.

In addition, state leaders in charge of developing a full implementation strategy for common standards (of which communications and outreach is a significant element) should definitely vet that strategy with district and school leadership at key times. For example, in any such implementation plan, the state will need to identify key phase-in dates for the new standards and related materials. Getting district buy in on these dates and the fuller timeline can go a long way; other district leaders may be more accepting of a rigorous phase-in timetable if they know it has been signed off on by their peers. Creating a mechanism for feedback is an important early action.

Thirdly, keeping lines of communications open and being upfront about the plan moving forward is another fairly simple strategy that can go a long way toward building good will for the Common Core State Standards. It should be easy for local and district educators and administrators to find information on the CCSS and your state's strategy for implementing and sustaining those new standards and related materials and practices. Creating a webpage with the facts and timeline clearly laid out, with an identified point person to contact with questions about the CCSS generally or your state's implementation strategy, is a relatively easy and straightforward way of ensuring transparency and mitigating confusion in the long run. Also, creating or using a listserv or engaging with math and English curriculum specialists at the district level, as a way to reach the teachers they may supervise, are other strategies for ensuring communications goes both ways.

BROADENING SUPPORT STATEWIDE AND AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Beyond the critical stakeholders discussed above who need to be engaged throughout the implementation processes to ensure the common standards reach the classroom, there are many other individuals and organizations who need to be informed about what the CCSS will mean for their local school systems including, but not limited to local boards of education, parents, students, business leaders, higher education, civil rights groups and community-based organizations.

While there are sure to be efforts at the state level to build awareness of and support for the CCSS, district and school leaders are also likely going to need to answer questions about the new common standards from the groups described above and need to be prepared to respond. Ensuring any and all messengers are well armed with accurate and compelling information, offering opportunities for open dialog among interested stakeholders, and maintaining momentum throughout the implementation the CCSS are all critical to a state's broader engagement strategy.

For example, a few activities a state could engage in are:

- Provide educators and administrators with templates, materials and example assessment items to share with students and parents on the CCSS and what it will mean in the following years;
- Host regional meetings to ensure other stakeholders have the opportunity to ask questions and get information;
- Run web, radio and/or television PSAs on the new standards and the broader reforms the standards are designed to support; and
- Place op-eds from attention-getting leaders (e.g., current or former governors, major state-based CEOs, local administrators or educators, etc.) in support of the CCSS and a successful implementation of the new standards.

There are also a number of national efforts underway to build support for the CCSS including a five-state partnership being coordinated by the National Parent and Teachers Association (PTA). States should leverage these and other initiatives whenever possible.

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

Communications and implementation must go hand in hand. Often the best communications strategy is simply having a clear and easily articulated implementation strategy that ensures an open dialog with critical stakeholders and transparency of intentions on the part of the state.