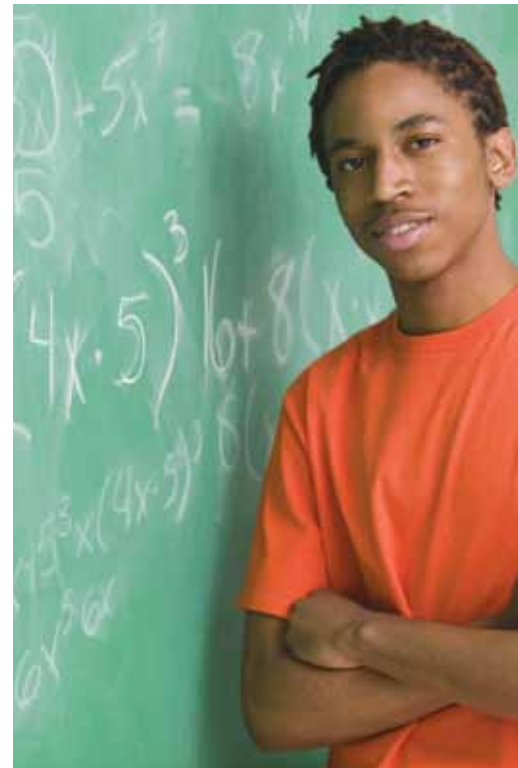
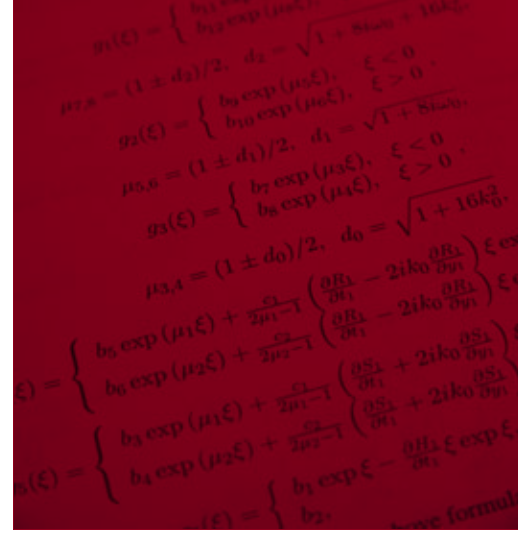


# REALIZING THE POTENTIAL:

## How Governors Can Lead Effective Implementation of the Common Core State Standards



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# **Realizing the Potential:** How Governors Can Lead Effective Implementation of the Common Core State Standards

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**October 2011**



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Tabitha Grossman, Ph.D. and Ryan Reyna are both program directors in the Education Division of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center). Stephanie Shipton is a policy analyst also in the Education Division. Collectively, they compiled background information and wrote this report. Other division staff helped develop the project and contributed to its writing, namely Bridget Curran, former program director in the Education Division. David Wakelyn, formerly of the Education Division also made contributions. In addition, the authors would like to recognize John Thomsian, former director of the NGA Center and Dane Linn, director of the Education Division for their numerous insights and feedback.

The authors would also like to thank the NGA Communications staff, the education advisors in the states featured in this guide for their time and feedback, as well as Hoppity House Designs for the report design and layout.

This report was made possible by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, governors, chief state school officers, business leaders, and college faculty have grown increasingly concerned that American students are not adequately prepared either for college or for the workforce. Governors and chief state school officers understood that the changing economy and persistent achievement gaps required a dramatic shift in academic expectations. Further, they realized their states were no longer well served by a system in which each state had its own standards for what students should know and be able to do.

In 2008, to better prepare all students for college and the workforce, governors and chief state school officers embarked on an historic, state-led effort to create a common core of academic standards in English language arts and mathematics for grades kindergarten through 12 (K-12). They insisted that the standards be based on research and evidence, be internationally benchmarked, and be aligned with college and workforce expectations. The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) led the effort and, in June 2010, the NGA Center and CCSSO released the newly developed Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in arts and mathematics for K-12.

As of September 2011, 44 states, the District of Columbia (D.C.), the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands,<sup>1</sup> serving more than 80 percent of the nation's K-12 student population, had adopted the new standards in both English language arts and mathematics. The development and widespread adoption by states of the CCSS are an historic milestone in American education. Effectively implementing the CCSS in schools and K-12 classrooms has the potential to transform education in the United States by narrowing achievement gaps and ensuring that every student graduates from high school ready for college and work. Implementing the CCSS will be challenging because it will require significant changes in instruction, assessment, educator preparation and development, curriculum and materials, and accountability measures. Much of the work pertaining to implementation of the CCSS will be done in schools and classrooms by teachers and principals and their districts.

Nevertheless, governors and other state policymakers can play a critical leadership role in supporting implementation of the CCSS. Governors' authority over education and the tools with which they can take action vary considerably from state to state, yet all governors should consider taking the following actions to support implementing the CCSS:

- Communicate a vision for reform;
- Identify performance goals and measure progress;
- Engage key leaders from education, business, and philanthropy;
- Build educator capacity;
- Lead transitions in state assessments and accountability policy;
- Support local development and acquisition of new curricula and materials; and
- Maximize resources and share costs.

## Making the Case for the Common Core State Standards

The United States economy has undergone a dramatic shift in recent decades. The shift to a knowledge-based economy, coupled with rapid globalization has resulted in a greater demand for a more educated, skilled workforce. In the coming decade, the share of U.S. jobs requiring some level of postsecondary education is expected to grow to 63 percent.<sup>2</sup> By 2018, it is expected that the United States will need 22 million new college degrees and at least 4.7 million new workers with postsecondary certificates but will produce 3 million fewer degrees than needed.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, there is evidence to suggest that significant portions of the student population in the U.S. are insufficiently prepared for postsecondary education, at a great cost to states.<sup>4</sup>

Students' performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the only rigorous and consistent measure of student achievement nationwide, is an indication of the challenges that states face in trying to prepare students for postsecondary education. For example, 2009 NAEP data indicate that just 38 percent of U.S. 12th graders performed at or above proficiency in reading and only 26 percent performed at or above proficient in math.<sup>5</sup>

Data from international academic assessments further indicate that students in the United States are falling behind their peers in other developed nations. On the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), 15-year-olds in the United States ranked 17th in reading and 31st in mathematics. The United States' highest achieving students are falling behind the highest achievers in other developed countries.<sup>6</sup>

Additional data reveal U.S. students' lack of preparation for college coursework. ACT establishes college readiness benchmarks by examining performance of students in college and identifying the minimum score needed to indicate a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher in the corresponding first-year, credit-bearing college course. In 2011, just 25 percent of high school graduates nationwide who took the ACT standardized test scored at a level that indicates readiness for entry-level, credit-bearing college coursework without remediation in all four core subject areas.<sup>7</sup> A higher percentage, about 28 percent of the U.S. students who took the ACT test met none of the readiness benchmarks.<sup>8</sup> Among U.S. students under the age of 25, 44 percent of those entering public two-year institutions and 27 percent of those entering public four-year institutions, enrolled in a remedial course.<sup>9</sup> Remedial courses are not an effective substitute for more rigorous high school preparation. Students taking remedial courses are only about half as likely to graduate with a postsecondary degree as their peers who do not need remediation.<sup>10</sup> The costs of remediation to prepare students for postsecondary education are significant for taxpayers, postsecondary

institutions, and students. Nationally, the cost of remediation for students enrolled in public institutions in the 2007-2008 school year was \$3.6 billion, a cost taxpayers effectively pay twice, first for the students to learn the material in high school and again for them to learn it in a postsecondary institution. Students bear the cost of additional tuition and fees, and taxpayers bear the cost of grants or tuition relief for low-income students. Finally, there are costs to states and the nation in lost revenues. It has been estimated that the nation could realize as much as \$2 billion in additional earnings if students who did not complete college due to lack of readiness were able to graduate at the same rate as their peers not needing remediation.<sup>11</sup>

## The Road to Developing the Common Core State Standards

In recent years, governors, chief state school officers, business leaders, and college faculty have grown increasingly concerned that American students are not adequately prepared for either college or the workforce. The shortfall of well-educated, highly-skilled workers was essentially an economic and public education problem. In states where governors were approaching economic problems through public education reform, one of the tactics frequently taken was an effort to improve the rigor of the standards for student learning. Over time, however, it has become apparent that having different sets of academic standards for what students should know and be able to do is not serving U.S. students well. As a result, governors decided to take action.

In 2008 the NGA Center, CCSSO, and Achieve, Inc. jointly released the report *Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S. Students Receive a World-Class Education*, which called on states to "upgrade state standards by adopting a common core of internationally benchmarked standards in math and language arts for grades K through 12 to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to be globally competitive."<sup>12</sup>

Following the release of that report, the NGA Center and CCSSO convened governors' advisors and chief state school officers to gauge interest in developing a set of common, internationally benchmarked academic standards. Fifty-one states and U.S. territories signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) committing them to participate in the development process. The stated goal was to develop academic standards that would be based on research and evidence, be internationally benchmarked, be aligned with college and work expectations, and include rigorous content and skills.



Governors and chief state school officers believed that common standards ultimately could better prepare all students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and work; ensure consistent expectations and outcomes regardless of where a student lives; provide educators, parents, and students with clear, focused guidelines; and offer school districts and states opportunities for more efficient use of fiscal resources through the shared development and use of common assessments and other instructional materials.

Once the MOU was signed, the NGA Center and CCSSO began developing the various workgroups and committees that would draft and refine the standards. The process was state led, voluntary, and broadly inclusive of many perspectives. The standards development process included multiple opportunities for feedback from teachers, researchers, higher education officials, business leaders, and members of the public.

On June 2, 2010, the NGA Center and CCSSO released the Common Core State Standards for K-12 English language arts and mathematics. By late-2011, 44 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands, serving more than 80 percent of the nation's student population,<sup>13</sup> had formally adopted the CCSS in both English language arts and mathematics. Further, 45 states and the District of Columbia are participating in one or both of the state assessment consortia developing common assessment systems that will measure student mastery of the CCSS.

### Challenges Ahead

The development and widespread adoption by states of the CCSS mark a significant milestone in American education, but implementing the CCSS is likely to be a long and potentially challenging process. Implementation will require

significant changes in instruction, assessment, educator preparation and development, curriculum and materials, and accountability measures.

Implementing the CCSS will require support and leadership for schools and educators to both learn the standards and change their curricula as necessary. Training educators on the new standards will require state education agencies to think strategically about the resources they will need to create and how to disseminate those resources across the state. At the same time the CCSS were developed and adopted, many states also passed new laws governing the evaluation of educators. While the advances in state policy relative to educator evaluations were needed, consideration must be given to how the implementation of the CCSS will affect the new policies. For instance, in states where student performance is a component of an educator's evaluation, will the state use scores from the first administration of the new consortia-developed assessments in educator evaluations? Implementing the CCSS will also require states to determine how to reallocate funding to ensure that the implementation of the CCSS is well designed, executed, and evaluated. State education agencies will need to determine how funding could be reallocated to ensure that school districts have the capacity they will need to help schools successfully implement the CCSS. Governors can play a role in that process through their budget authority and their unique position as the state's leader of policy development and implementation.

Clearly, much of the CCSS implementation work will have to be done in schools and classrooms by teachers and principals and their districts. It is important to recognize, however, that governors and other state policymakers can play a critical leadership role. Their role will be particularly important given the current state fiscal concerns, which remain substantial and will continue through at least 2013.<sup>14</sup>



### ***Communicating the Need for the Common Core State Standards***

Public understanding of the CCSS, their origin, and their purpose remains uneven. Many myths about the standards still exist. Some incorrectly fear that they are an attempt to control what happens in the classroom or a product of the federal government that amounts to unwanted intrusion in state and local school reform efforts. Also, parents, students, educators, and others in the community may not understand the need for more rigorous standards because they believe their local schools are doing fine.

In a change process as significant as the development and implementation of the CCSS, confusion is to be expected. This means that stakeholders in every state, from the governor down to business leaders and educators, must constantly communicate the need for the CCSS. For instance, explaining to parents that standards set clear and realistic goals for success, and having common standards help ensure that students receive a high-quality education regardless of where they live. The standards do not tell teachers how to teach; rather, they define what students should know and be able to do, so that teachers can design appropriate lessons. The development of the CCSS was state led and implementation of the standards remains a state task. It is also important to note that adoption of the standards was voluntary. At no point, was the federal government involved in the development or adoption process. Without a clear and consistent message, states may find it increasingly difficult to move forward with their implementation plans.

### ***Preparing and Supporting Teachers and Leaders***

Implementing the Common Core State Standards will be a significant change for teachers, principals, and administrators in most states. Teachers will be required not only to teach students new, more rigorous content aligned to the standards, but also to engage students in more challenging work in the classroom. To help students acquire higher-level knowledge and skills, teachers may need to improve their own content knowledge. It is generally agreed that current methods of preparation and professional development of educators do not focus on improving knowledge of content in a way that improves students' learning. Given this situation, teachers and school principals may not be adequately prepared for the dramatic shift in instructional practice that the CCSS will require. Ultimately, K-12 and postsecondary education leaders will have to work cooperatively to identify strategies to improve preparation and professional development of educators.

### ***Building and Aligning State Assessments***

States will need new and improved tests<sup>15</sup> aligned to the CCSS that are more sophisticated measures of students'

learning. Many current assessments are poorly aligned to existing standards and rely too much on low-level questions that do not measure students' acquisition of more sophisticated skills and concepts. Assessments aligned to the CCSS that measure the knowledge and skills necessary for success in college and work are being designed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness in College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) (For information about PARCC and SBAC, see text box on p. 21).

The new assessments are promising for a number of reasons. First and foremost, they have the potential to measure student mastery in a way that has previously been difficult to do, with a specific focus on college and career readiness. Whereas most current assessments are confined to limited item types (i.e., multiple choice) that assess a narrow amount of content, the new assessments will include multiple item types that can more fully capture the application of knowledge and skills across all achievement levels. Second, because multiple states will use common assessments, comparisons can be drawn about student performance across states. Currently, it is virtually impossible to make comparisons of student performance across states because each state has its own standards and accompanying assessments. To further complicate the issue of comparability, states have different benchmarks for what constitutes proficiency on an assessment (e.g., a proficient score on an Algebra I end-of-course assessment might be 60 percent in one state and 40 percent in another state).

While comparability of assessment scores was one of the goals in developing CCSS assessments, there will likely be tensions both within and across states relative to determining what constitutes proficiency. One of the goals of the assessments is to establish a proficiency standard for students' college and career readiness. The process for establishing this will involve many stakeholders, including postsecondary education leaders, across multiple states. These individuals will likely have differing opinions about where to set the target. To further complicate this process, a recent report from ACT estimated that only about one-third to one-half of 11th-grade students currently meet the new standards.<sup>16</sup> Thus, there may be interest within states to set lower proficiency targets to avoid dramatic drops in proficiency compared to student performance on current assessments. Additionally, there may be a difference between the score that means a student is proficient and the score that means a student is college and career ready.

### ***Adapting State Accountability Measures***

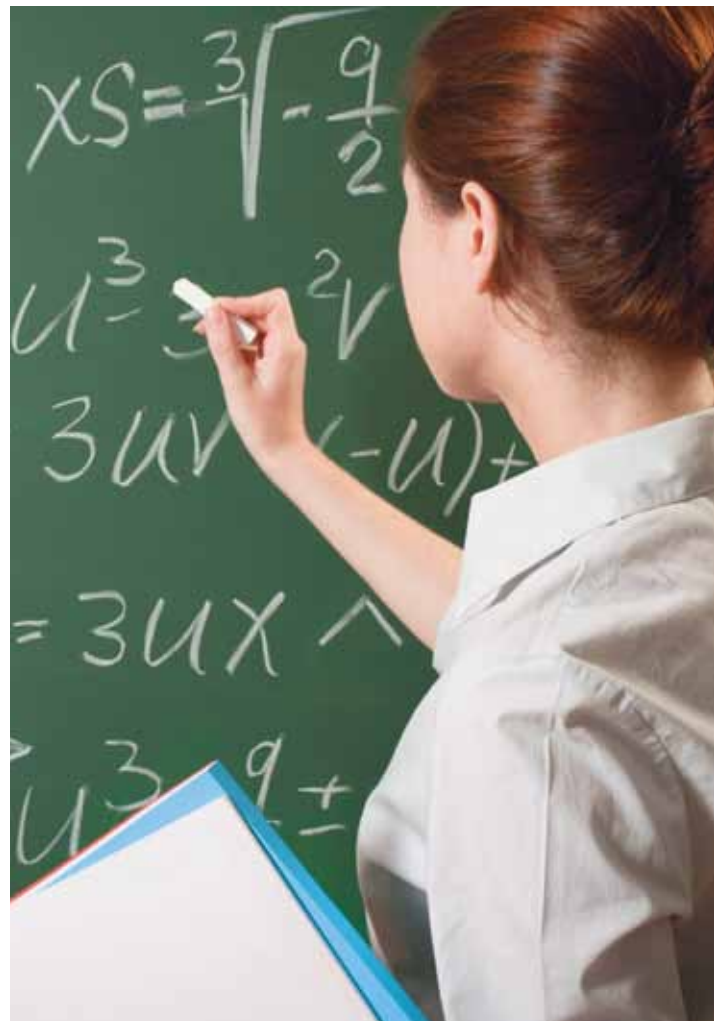
Many state leaders see the implementation of new standards and assessments as an opportunity to examine how states currently hold school districts and schools accountable for student learning. Over the past few years, several states have experimented with changes to their systems for holding schools and districts accountable. For example, several states now measure the growth of students from one year to the next rather than solely base accountability decisions on the performance on a single test. Current federal accountability policy largely shapes state accountability models. Federal accountability requirements have in some cases created perverse incentives. For example, federal law creates incentives for schools and teachers to focus on the students on the verge of proficiency and less on students performing at lower levels who require the most assistance.<sup>17</sup> Recognizing these issues, the U.S. Department of Education recently invited states to apply for waivers from sections of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, including certain accountability provisions.<sup>18</sup> In exchange for waivers, states must agree to implement a host of reform measures.

States that have attached high stakes decisions to assessment results may need to consider the implications of making the transition from one set of standards, expectations, and performance measures to another. For example, retaining a student who performs poorly on the new high school assessments in the first year the assessments are given could be perceived as unfair because the student has had little opportunity to learn the new standards and may have already been behind as expectations rose. On the other hand, states and districts will not want to graduate students that have not met the new standards during the transition period. The implications of lower student performance during the transition for educators are another consideration—one that is of particular concern given the number of states that have recently passed legislation that ties teacher pay, employment, tenure, and licensure to student assessment scores.

### ***Supporting the Development and Acquisition of Aligned Curriculum and Materials***

The quality and depth of existing curriculum, textbooks, and other instructional tools and materials currently used in classrooms varies by state and district. The CCSS will require revisions, and in some cases, upgrades to these materials. States across the country play different roles with respect to the development or selection of curriculum, textbooks, and other instructional tools and materials. In the implementation of the CCSS, it will be necessary for each state to determine what role it will play in the development and acquisition of CCSS aligned curricula and materials. For example, should the state take the lead in developing new curricula or should districts take on that task with support from the state? It will also be important for a state to decide how, or if, it should evaluate the process that districts put in place to prepare

teachers to use new curricula and instructional tools and materials necessary to meet the CCSS. Finally, and equally important, it will be critical for each state to consider how best to ensure that all districts, regardless of size, location, and affluence have the resources they need to successfully implement the CCSS.



### ***Paying the Cost of Implementation***

The state of the economy has caused revenues in most states to drop in recent years, and state leaders are making cuts in state budgets. For the first time in many years, these cuts include cuts to public education. For the near future, many states will not have new state money available to pay for educator training, new instructional materials, new assessments, and remedial supports for struggling students. Such states will have to adopt creative solutions for marshaling or reallocating existing public and private sector resources to support CCSS implementation. Fortunately, there are opportunities for reducing or controlling costs through policy change and by sharing costs across school districts and states through the joint development of new curricula, materials, professional development, and assessments.

### **What Governors Can Do to Support Effective Implementation of the CCSS**

Governors and other state policymakers can play a critical leadership role in supporting implementation of the CCSS. Governors' authority over education and the tools with which they can take action to support the implementation of the CCSS vary considerably from state to state. Nevertheless, all governors should consider taking the following actions to support implementing the CCSS:

- Communicate a vision for reform;
- Identify performance goals and measure progress;
- Engage key leaders from education, business, and philanthropy;
- Build educator capacity;
- Lead transitions in state assessments and accountability policy;
- Support local development and acquisition of new curricula and materials; and,
- Maximize resources and share costs.

Ultimately, each governor will play a different role in the state they lead relative to implementation; however, in concert with other system actors, the success of the implementation effort will depend largely on three things:

1. Ability to articulate a vision for implementation;
2. Providing opportunities for innovation through state policy; and,
3. Willingness to support innovation relative to financing implementation.

The discussion that follows is intended to help governors and their key policy staff decide how best to lead CCSS implementation efforts in their states. The guide attempts to do that in two ways. First, it includes discussion questions for governors and their staff to consider as they make policy decisions to support the implementation of the CCSS. Second, in Appendix A, state policy makers can find a sample tool developed by the NGA Center to help structure conversations and decisions pertaining to implementation. Although CCSS implementation efforts are only just beginning in most states, some interesting approaches that governors should consider replicating in part or in full are already emerging. Such practices are highlighted in boxes in the discussion that follows.

### ***Communicate a Vision for Reform***

Governors should work with chief state school officers, postsecondary education leaders, business leaders, and national organizations, to develop a coordinated, strategic communications plan in support of the CCSS. The plan should include consistent messages about how the CCSS is a significant change and why it is important for the state's students and for the economic development of the state as a whole. Leaders will need to be clear about how the higher expectations set by the standards will ensure that all students are better prepared to succeed in college and the workforce. Governors and other state leaders can also prepare the public, educators, and other leaders for what could be disappointing initial assessment results by acknowledging the possibility ahead of time and discussing what the state will be prepared to do in response to support both students and educators. The CCSS website (<http://www.corestandards.org/>) includes materials that governors' and their staff may find helpful in communicating about CCSS.

### **GUBERNATORIAL ACTIONS**

- *Develop a coordinated, strategic communications plan*
- *Be clear about the high expectations in the CCSS*
- *Prepare the public for changes in the number of students deemed "ready" for college and work*

## Communicating a Vision for Reform: Tennessee and New York

A comprehensive communications strategy that includes educators, lawmakers, stakeholders, business leaders and parents is critical to building and maintaining support for the implementation of educational reforms.

**Tennessee** and **New York** are among the states that have launched aggressive communications campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of rigorous academic standards and their implications for districts, schools, educators, students, and parents.

### **Tennessee**

In 2008, policymakers in **Tennessee** worked to implement more rigorous academic standards while adopting a new set of aligned assessments. Former Governor Phil Bredesen and other state leaders understood the importance of preparing parents and communities for the expected drop in student assessment results after raising expectations and standards. In response, then-Governor Bredesen, former U.S. Senator Bill Frist, and then-Commissioner of Education Tim Webb partnered to launch an intensive communications campaign to raise awareness of the importance of high academic standards. That public/private partnership, called, the “First to the Top Coalition,” grew to include 30 business, education, and community groups. The Coalition launched the “Expect More Achieve More” campaign in advance of the results from the first assessments aligned to the new standards. The statewide campaign included press conferences with the governor and other education leaders, community meetings, public service announcements, editorials, print resources, and a website ([www.expectmoretn.org](http://www.expectmoretn.org)).

### **New York**

In response to adoption of the Common Core State Standards, the New York Department of Education launched “Engage NY.” The effort includes an online platform for educators to access information and share resources about the new standards, data-driven instruction, and teacher and leader effectiveness. The department maintains a website (<http://engageny.org/>) and has used it as a vehicle to disseminate the implementation timeline, video clips about the standards, links to exemplars, and additional tools and resources developed by outside organizations. The site also includes a blog, Facebook page, and Twitter account to further share information with the general public.



TENNESSEE



NEW YORK



### Questions for Discussion

1. What is the governor’s education goal(s)? How do the CCSS help reach the goal(s)? To what extent is the goal(s) and message about the importance of the CCSS pervasive throughout the state?
2. To what extent has the governor framed the implementation of CCSS as a workforce, equity, and/or international competitiveness issue?
3. Where does the governor’s office plan to target communication about the implementation of CCSS? What opportunities are available to deliver the message throughout implementation?

### **Identify Performance Goals and Measure Progress**

Governors are already leading efforts to collect and report better data on performance indicators, such as high school graduation rates. They are well positioned to lead the effort to identify additional performance indicators and set goals for improvement. Many states collect and report data on key indicators, such as assessment scores, graduation and dropout rates, attendance and chronic absenteeism, course enrollment and completion, and teacher qualifications.

Governors can work with other leaders to identify the most critical indicators to use for monitoring progress. A 2010 NGA Center Issue Brief entitled “Setting Statewide College- and Career-Ready Goals” suggested the following set of “Power Indicators” that can provide an accurate measure of a state’s progress in preparing its students for college and careers.<sup>19</sup>

- Percentage of students completing, or on track to complete, a college- and career-ready course of study;
- Percentage of students demonstrating proficiency on “anchor assessments,” such as a college admissions exam or state assessment designed to measure college readiness;
- Percentage of students obtaining college credit or a career certificate in high school;
- Four-year cohort graduation rate; and
- Percentage of traditional, first-year students enrolling in remedial coursework at a postsecondary institution.<sup>20</sup>

**Delaware** is an example of a state that has set college and career readiness targets. **Delaware’s** core set of indicators and goals for improvement on each are as follows:

- 100 percent of students will meet the standard on the state math and reading exams by 2013-2014;
- 87 percent of students will graduate by 2013-2014;
- 92 percent of students will graduate by 2016-2017;
- 70 percent of students will enroll in college and 85 percent of them will be retained by 2013-2014;
- 60 percent of students will be rated proficient or advanced on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 4th-grade math exam by 2014-2015;
- 55 percent of students will be proficient or advanced on all other NAEP exams by 2014-2015; and,
- The black-white and Hispanic-white achievement gaps on NAEP exams will be reduced by half by 2014-2015.

### **GUBERNATORIAL ACTIONS**

- *Identify critical indicators to monitor progress*
- *Set annual performance targets*
- *Link multiple data systems to track outcomes*

**Delaware’s** leaders acknowledge the ambitious nature of the state’s college and career readiness targets. It is important to note, however, that those targets represent a “mid-point” in the effort to achieve the goal of college and career readiness for all students in the state. The goals are the guiding force behind the state’s Race to the Top grant activities, of which implementation of the CCSS is a critical component.

To set goals such as those established by **Delaware**, leaders in other states can collect baseline data; set specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely goals for improvement; establish annual or biannual targets to monitor progress; and publicly report performance measures annually.<sup>21</sup> State leaders can then make adjustments in policy to better support progress. It is important to note that outcomes data should be part of the communications effort to help build public support and sustain momentum.

For many states, adding new performance measures means making changes to their existing data system, collecting additional data, and/or establishing and improving linkages between data systems, such as those between K-12 education and early childhood education, postsecondary education, and employment. The agencies involved could face significant challenges in creating the linkages (e.g., privacy concerns and legislation could limit what data can be shared across state agencies). Governors can encourage various agency leaders to collaborate by helping them understand the benefits to both the state and to their individual institutional missions.



## Questions for Discussion

1. What measures will the state use to annually track student performance during the implementation of the CCSS? How will the implementation impact state performance targets?
2. What role can the governor play in establishing and improving linkages between data systems, from early childhood through workforce?

### **Engage Key Leaders from Education, Business, and Philanthropy**

For the CCSS to have a lasting and meaningful impact, key leaders from various sectors within and outside education will need to work together to help align policies and programs, build and sustain public support, and target resources to support implementation of the standards. To start, governors should ensure that an existing state-level group with broad stakeholder representation, such as a P-20 Council, is helping to oversee, monitor, and evaluate CCSS implementation. Governors in many states chair a P-20 council. In other states, they appoint many of the council's members and charge them with taking action on key priorities. If a P-20 Council does not exist, states may want to consider making use of another existing group that brings together key leaders from divergent parts of the education system, including early childhood and postsecondary education, as well as business and philanthropic leaders.

Whatever form the state-level group takes, the most important features are that it engages key leaders from various sectors, empowers them to take action and/or advise its member agencies and institutions, and makes the CCSS implementation a top statewide priority. State leaders need both the input from and support of such key leaders as the initiative moves forward. For higher standards to take hold, the CCSS must affect policies and programs throughout the education system, from early childhood through postsecondary education. For example, if postsecondary education leaders do not change policies around college course placement to align with the CCSS and the new assessments, their significance and impact could diminish. Similarly, representatives from the early childhood education community must be engaged to help ensure students arrive in kindergarten ready for the higher expectations laid out in the CCSS. Business and philanthropic leaders can play a critical part in building community support for CCSS implementation as well as in lending financial resources to the effort.

The state council or commission should start by developing a strategic state plan for making the transition to the new standards and assessments. The strategic plan should identify areas for policy action at the state level on issues

### **GUBERNATORIAL ACTIONS**

- *Empower a multi-stakeholder state group to oversee, monitor, and evaluate implementation*
- *Develop an implementation plan with input from outside education on transitions to new policies*

such as developing a communications strategy, reallocating state resources, building educator capacity, supporting the development and acquisition of new curricula and materials, transitioning from old assessments and accountability measures, and setting goals and tracking progress. The council or commission could help identify the most important areas for state action but also help support efforts at the local level, including making recommendations about how existing funds can be reallocated to strategically support implementation. Equally important, members of the council or commission can contribute to the strategic communications effort to build and sustain support for the CCSS as challenges arise.

**Tennessee's** implementation efforts are guided and supported by multiple stakeholder groups and outside entities. The First to the Top Leadership Team is the basis for the overall management structure for implementation. It is comprised of the First to the Top staff, who are housed at the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), and lead staff implementing the work of the grant at Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), Tennessee Consortium on Research, Evaluation, and Development (TN CRED), the Educational Delivery Unit, and the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network. The First to the Top staff also meet regularly with staff from the Governor's office, and Finance and Administration as needed. The First to the Top staff have primary responsibility for oversight of implementation both at TDOE and across all external projects, overall grant management including budgets, monitoring and reporting, and external relations with education stakeholders across the state and nationally.

The team's objective is to work across agencies and sectors to implement and evaluate all aspects of the Race to the Top grant. The implementation work is also guided by an advisory council made up of a broader set of stakeholders, including mayors, foundation representatives, state legislators, and local superintendents.

The advisory council provides strategic guidance and communications support. In addition, the state's First to the Top Coalition, comprised of 30 business, community

and education organizations, including local chambers of commerce, philanthropies, SCORE, the state department of education, the Tennessee Education Association, and many others is helping support grant implementation, primarily by helping communicate the vision and goals of the reform effort around raising expectations. The coalition provides support and helps communicate the importance of higher standards and college and career readiness for all students.



### Questions for Discussion

1. How will the state engage a wide-reaching coalition of critical stakeholder groups to drive and support implementation of the CCSS in the short- and long-term? How will the state use external groups to support communications and implementation?
2. To what extent does your state plan to share information on its implementation plan and impact with the general public?
3. How will the state leverage existing reform efforts to coordinate the implementation of CCSS?





## The Importance of Strong Coalitions: Massachusetts

Strong leadership from governors, legislators, education commissioners, business leaders, and advocates has led to **Massachusetts'** tightly aligned system of high standards, rigorous assessments, and educator supports. Steady support of high academic expectations has enabled the state to maintain public support, overcome opposition, and effectively implement the sweeping changes that were necessary to make the commonwealth's schools among the nation's best.

The turnaround in **Massachusetts** education began in the early 1990s when the governor, lawmakers, educators, and business leaders worked together to build statewide support for systemic change, and in 1993 urged the state legislature to pass the landmark Massachusetts Education Reform Act. The act promised an improved funding formula to more equitably distribute state aid, and called for the development of a system built on high standards, demanding assessments and accountability for student progress.

Full implementation of the act took years, and was mobilized and strengthened by the continued support of coalitions of stakeholders, including business leaders and advocacy groups. With the new law in place, the state developed frameworks for curricula in all major content areas to inform the development of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. Implementation of the frameworks was strongly encouraged but remained voluntary for schools and districts.

A coalition that came together to support adoption of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act played a critical role in maintaining the state's dedication to reform as the policy was implemented. Student proficiency rates dropped initially, as the result of higher standards and more rigorous assessments. Strong leadership from the governor's office, bipartisan coalitions and the ongoing support of advocacy organizations and business leaders kept the state from lowering expectations in the face of lowered test scores. Since then, the percentage of students testing proficient or higher has risen steadily. Dropout rates in **Massachusetts** decreased to the lowest in a decade and graduation rates inched steadily upwards.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, "Statewide Dropout Rate Falls Below 3 Percent." Available at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=5374>. See also, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, "For Fourth Consecutive Year, State's 4-Year Graduation Rate Rises." Available at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=6000>.

## MASSACHUSETTS



### **Build Educator Capacity**

The implementation of the CCSS affords an opportunity for governors to address a range of issues relative to human capital management. Chief among them, as discussed below, are the licensure of educators, professional development for educators, and the evaluation of educators. All of these issues will require attention as the CCSS are phased in.

### **Licensure of Educators**

Each state has sole authority over the licensure of educators. That authority can be used by governors to drive important changes in the way educators are licensed to ensure that they are ready to teach new curricula aligned to the CCSS. Governors can ask the state board of education (or the entity responsible for overseeing educator licensure), to change licensure requirements to require educators seeking initial licensure to demonstrate their mastery of the standards. That could be done in a number of ways. As an

example, licensure regulations could be changed to require teacher and principal candidates to pass an assessment that measures their mastery of the standards before they receive an initial license. Another option would be to require programs that prepare educators to place an emphasis on the mastery of content of the CCSS in the prospective educator's clinical or internship experience and require the candidate to demonstrate their mastery through the submission of a professional portfolio.

State licensure policies also should be changed to require that any educator seeking licensure renewal be required to complete professional development that addresses CCSS specifically. The professional development requirements for educators should be focused on acquiring content knowledge and learning new instructional strategies that will help teachers teach the CCSS. States will have to decide how much professional development will be required to complete the requirements for re-licensure. The amount will likely vary depending on what subjects a teacher teaches; however, all educators, including principals should complete some professional development related to the CCSS for re-licensure.

### **GUBERNATORIAL ACTIONS**

- *Direct state board of education to change licensure requirements to focus on CCSS for incoming and current educators*
- *Create a professional development strategy for supporting CCSS*
- *Evaluate the impact of professional development*
- *Reallocate resources to implement new educator evaluation systems*

### **Professional Development for Educators**

Although it is important to tie educators' professional development to licensure, the state should play a greater role in ensuring that the professional development offered is of high quality. Governors can play an important role with respect to improving the quality of professional development for educators. As an example, governors can use their budget authority to reallocate funds towards professional development for educators that focuses on CCSS implementation (at least for the next two years), improves the performance of students, is of high-quality, meets national standards for professional learning, and is cost effective. To meet those criteria, states have to evaluate the professional development they invest in,

which is something not done in most states. The evaluation could be facilitated by electronically linking educators and the professional development they participate in over the course of the school year.<sup>22</sup>

Governors also can ask their state superintendents of schools to work with school and district education leaders to ensure the state provides a strategy for professional development in support of the CCSS. In most instances veteran teachers and principals will need immediate, intensive professional development pertaining to what the CCSS requires of students and how the CCSS are different from current standards. Some veteran teachers may also need to improve their content knowledge specific to the content they teach. Professional development for veteran teachers should focus on building content knowledge and teaching content to diverse groups of students through instructional strategies that are innovative and engaging. Some veteran principals will need assistance developing and identifying ways to support teachers as they start to teach the new standards. Additional support will have to be provided to principals and other supervisors who are charged with evaluating teachers. Such support is of particular importance given the recent changes in educator evaluation policies across the country.

### **Evaluation of Educators**

Governors should consider how they can advocate for changes in how educators are evaluated—a step necessary to ensure that all students have access to effective teachers and principals. While many states have taken action to improve the evaluation of educators, some have not. In states where policies relative to teacher evaluation have not been changed, governors could form a commission or task force to make recommendations for how to better evaluate educators and use the data from evaluations to improve the quality of teaching and school leadership. They can also work with legislators to draft bills that improve the rigor and the quality of the teacher evaluation process—an approach many governors have taken over the past eighteen months.

Implementation of new educator evaluation policies is challenging, especially with the implementation of CCSS. Many new state policies regarding educator evaluation tie high-stakes decisions, such as employment, tenure, compensation, and licensure to evaluation results. In many states, state law stipulates that some percentage of an educators' effectiveness is tied to student performance on assessments. Given the high-stakes attached to educator evaluations and the introduction of CCSS and their accompanying assessments, states should consider how they will make determinations about educator effectiveness (specifically, measures of student performance that are tied to assessments) during the transition from state standards and assessments to CCSS and assessments.

**Delaware** is addressing teacher and principal quality on all three fronts—improving professional development, preparation, and evaluation and linking evaluation results to decisions about professional development. **Delaware** has provided initial training on CCSS to 9,000 teachers. In addition, the state department of education has trained 350 instructors to provide additional professional development to teachers. The state has also adopted state standards for professional development and educator evaluation.

Starting in fall 2011, **Delaware** will use participant evaluation forms and student achievement data to evaluate the impact of professional development on educators' behavior and students' learning. Once available, it will also incorporate educator evaluation data. The state is also providing a development coaches program to help improve the consistency and rigor of educator performance evaluations at the same time it is working toward a new educator evaluation system for both teachers and principals. The new evaluations will incorporate measures of student

achievement and tie directly to professional development. In addition, the state is providing separate data coaches to help teachers, principals and administrators develop their ability to analyze student data and use it to adjust instruction, monitor progress, and intervene with struggling students.<sup>23</sup> **Delaware** also has plans to begin assessing the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs, including providing programs and the public with information about graduates' evaluation ratings and awarding annual expansion grants of \$150,000 to successful preparation programs.<sup>24</sup>



### Questions for Discussion

1. What course(s) or practical experience requirement(s) can the governor can ask the state board of education (or the accrediting body in the state) to add to or change in the preparation program approval standards to ensure that educators get the information they need to successfully teach or supervise teaching of CCSS?
2. What policies regarding licensure (both initial and renewal) can be added or changed to require educators to demonstrate mastery of CCSS for initial licensure as well as renewal of a license?
3. What funding does the state need to provide to support the transition to more rigorous educator evaluation systems that include the CCSS?
4. What flexibility can be provided for the transition to CCSS and assessments relative to educator evaluation?
5. Does the state have standards for professional development? Are they aligned to national standards? How are current professional development funds spent in the state? To what extent is the state evaluating the effectiveness of the professional development? If the state does not evaluate the effectiveness of professional development, what steps can be taken to begin to do this?
6. How can the governor push for placing a greater emphasis on measuring the effect of professional development on student learning and using that information to:
  - a. improve the quality of professional development offered to educators;
  - b. improve the overall return on the state's investment in professional development; and
  - c. increase transparency and accountability for local education agency use of state funds to support professional development?

## Using Data to Produce Effective Educators: Louisiana

Ensuring that educators are prepared to teach the depth and rigor required by the Common Core State Standards is critical to achieving gains in student learning. **Louisiana** Governor Bobby Jindal and the state's Board of Regents have recognized the importance of high-quality teacher preparation and implemented a range of reforms to ensure that new teachers who enter the classroom have the knowledge and skills they will need to be effective.

For more than a decade **Louisiana** has supported a Blue Ribbon Commission for Educational Excellence, which is housed in the governor's office, and co-chaired by a member of the state's Board of Regents and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. This commission has been instrumental since its inception in 1999 in driving changes to the state's accreditation and licensure standards for both teachers and principals. For example, the commission recommended changes to the state's accreditation standards for teacher and principal preparation programs. The changes required all university and alternative providers of educator preparation to redesign their programs to meet the new requirements and maintain their accreditation.

Since the redesign, the Blue Ribbon Commission has made additional recommendations that include the creation of a system of accountability for teacher preparation programs. The value-added teacher preparation assessment model was developed as a response to the accountability recommendation and can be a model for other states. The process involves analyzing value-added results of first- and second-year teachers in the 4th – 9th grades who teach math, science, social studies, reading or language arts and then linking them to the preparation program each teacher attended. Using value-added data, the state examines and publicly reports the effectiveness of every preparation program in the state.

**Louisiana** uses value-added data to examine and publicly report on the effectiveness of every preparation program in the state. Providers that are unable to produce effective teachers lose their state accreditation. To address the growing number of online providers, the state recently passed legislation that requires out-of-state online providers to participate in the teacher preparation assessment model as well.

With a robust data system that links educators, their students, and their preparation programs, **Louisiana** was uniquely positioned to pass legislation to change educator evaluation policies in the state. With the governor's support, House Bill 1033 was signed into law in 2010.<sup>25</sup> The bill requires all teachers and principals to be evaluated annually and also requires educator evaluations to be linked to student growth measures.



LOUISIANA

### ***Align State Assessments to the Common Core State Standards***

The development and adoption of the CCSS have set the stage for the development of assessments that measure the skills students need in college and work, such as critical thinking, collaboration, and communication; accurately predict college and career readiness; and, provide results that are comparable from state to state. However, without clear gubernatorial leadership, the promise of new, aligned assessments may not be realized. Governors should focus their efforts on four key areas: comparability of assessment scores between the states and two consortia; determining the assessment score (commonly referred to as a “cut score”) that indicates a student is ready for college and work;<sup>26</sup> postsecondary course placement decisions; and the transition to new assessment systems aligned to the CCSS.

Governors and other state leaders should keep pressure on the two assessment consortia to build assessment systems that will allow comparability across states regardless of which consortia a state has joined (additional information about the

assessment consortia can be found in the text box on page 21). Governors offer two main reasons for wanting to ensure that new tests are comparable across states. First, states want to benchmark against one another and internationally, to both inform policy and improve performance. Governors want to be able to learn from states with high performance on CCSS assessments. Without comparable scores it is difficult to understand a particular state’s deficiencies within a national and international context. Second, governors want to bring an end to varying definitions of proficiency from state to state. When a student moves from **Utah** (a member state of SBAC) to **Arizona** (a member state of PARCC), parents and teachers need to be confident that the understanding about a student’s knowledge and skills gleaned from the state test means the same thing in both places.

Governors should work to engage postsecondary education leaders in the decisions being made by the two assessment consortia about the college- and career-ready cut score.



## Building Educator Capacity: Maryland and North Carolina

### Maryland

Governor Martin O'Malley has championed education reform in **Maryland**, including strategies to increase the rigor of standards and improve support for educator training and development. Looking ahead to the challenges of preparing **Maryland's** teachers to teach the CCSS, the Maryland Department of Education has developed a series of regional academies for teams of educators from each school in **Maryland**. The academies focus on building educators' understanding of the new standards; highlighting differences and similarities between the Common Core State Standards and **Maryland's** former state standards; and mapping out the state's timeline for implementation of the standards. The sessions at the regional academies for educators also include time for school teams to develop one-year implementation plans for their school. In addition to offering in-person sessions, **Maryland** also offers online sessions. The first series of sessions reached 6,000 educators. Additional sessions are planned for 2011 and 2012.

### North Carolina

Governor Beverly Perdue began pushing the state board and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to think about how the state could support implementation of the Common Core State Standards shortly after the state adopted the standards in June 2010. In response, local education agency (LEA) professional development leadership teams in **North Carolina** began training on the CCSS in the summer of 2011 through regional summer institutes. As a follow-up to the training, LEA professional development leadership teams will now begin to develop implementation plans and design local curricula resources. To assist them in that process, NCDPI has developed online modules and tools that help teachers understand the differences in the CCSS and the old standards. Additionally, the NCDPI have provided resources to districts to help guide the inclusion of the CCSS in the state's evaluation processes.

**North Carolina** has committed to providing professional development to educators on the Common Core State Standards for the next three years. Using the state's Education Regional Service Alliances (RESA), professional development will not only be provided to educators but will be evaluated and refined to improve its quality and delivery. For additional information about the **North Carolina's** professional development plans, see the Facilitator's Guide for Common Core State Standards and North Carolina Essential Standards.

A map of the state of Maryland, colored in a light green color, positioned on the right side of the page. It is partially overlaid by a dark blue horizontal bar containing the word 'MARYLAND' in white capital letters.

MARYLAND

A map of the state of North Carolina, colored in a light orange color, positioned on the right side of the page. It is partially overlaid by a dark blue horizontal bar containing the word 'NORTH CAROLINA' in white capital letters.

NORTH CAROLINA

Leaders in postsecondary education were involved in drafting the CCSS, and their involvement in the assessment conversation is equally critical. As the consortia work to develop the CCSS assessments, postsecondary leaders have a vested interest in the content of the assessments to ensure that it reflects the knowledge and skills that students need to succeed in college and work. The establishment of a college- and career-ready cut score is a decision the states that comprise each consortium will make. However, higher education leaders should be part of the decision, as ultimately, the college- and career-ready cut score will be used by institutions of higher education to determine whether a student is ready to enroll in a credit-bearing course in the particular subject area. For too long state assessments have not been effectively connected to whether a student was ready to enroll in college-level coursework; governors and their postsecondary leaders must work to ensure that is no longer the case.

### **GUBERNATORIAL ACTIONS**

- *Convey the importance of comparable scores to both assessment consortia*
- *Insist on the inclusion of postsecondary leaders in the development of a single college- and career-ready cut score*
- *Persuade IHEs to adopt the college- and career- ready cut score for placement decisions*
- *Decide which assessments the state will no longer offer*
- *Communicate to the public the likelihood of fewer students deemed college and career ready early in the transition period*

Ultimately, the cut scores set collectively by the states comprising SBAC and PARCC will have to be approved in each state by the state board of education or other entity charged with the task of establishing policies relative to assessments. Ideally, every institution of higher education in every state will work with their respective consortium to develop and ultimately adopt the college- and career-ready cut score for placement decisions. However, governors will likely have to play a lead role in influencing in-state higher education officials, governing or coordinating board members, and other state education leaders to use the assessment scores for placement consistently across all institutions. In states with university systems, adoption of the assessment consortia cut scores might be easier given that university systems have governing responsibility over

multiple institutions of higher education. In states without a university system, governors may have to work to convince each institution that for purposes of consistency and comparability, adoption of the assessment consortia cut score for college readiness is in the state's best interest. The work currently underway by the two assessment consortia and their state partners may be wasted if only a few institutions use the assessment scores.

The CCSS assessments offer states an opportunity to upgrade the quality of their assessments without increasing the assessment burden on students and teachers. In fact, many states will realize cost savings from the joint development of assessment items and technology. Gubernatorial leadership is necessary to ensure that the next-generation assessments are not merely an add-on to existing state tests. Failing to do so could result in over-testing—something that educators, parents and policymakers almost universally agree is already a problem in schools. Once the common assessments are developed, state leaders must decide which of their current assessments will continue to be used, and how all of the assessments fit into the state's accountability system.

Of even greater concern to governors and other state leaders is the stark reality that large numbers of students will not be deemed college and career ready in the first few years after the transition. On the basis of current student performance on assessments that estimate college and career readiness, states can expect fewer than half of their students—and in some states fewer than one-quarter of their students—to score at the college-and career-ready level on the 11th grade assessment. Governors and state leaders from in and outside government should begin communicating with the public about the expected changes immediately. Moreover, states should plan to provide additional supports in 12th grade, and potentially even earlier, for students who do not meet the college- and career-ready threshold.



## Questions for Discussion

1. To what extent has the governor engaged with public postsecondary institutions to secure a commitment for using a common college- and career-readiness benchmark?
2. How will the state determine which assessments are duplicative and no longer necessary after the CCSS assessments are ready to use? How will the need to use student assessments scores to make determinations about educator effectiveness be part of the decision-making process?
3. How will the state address the potential of a large number of students not being deemed college- and career-ready? What is the communications strategy? What stakeholders will need to be involved in developing the communications strategy?
4. What role can the governor play in ensuring that school districts have funding to address the needs of 12th grade students who are not college- and career-ready? What role should higher education play in this effort?
5. What cost savings, if any, will be realized by using CCSS assessments? How can those savings be re-allocated to help struggling students become college- and career-ready?

## Updating Assessments: Rhode Island and North Carolina

Governors have an important role to play in leading the transition to new assessments aligned to the CCSS. Because the assessments being developed by SBAC and PARCC will not be fully available until the 2014-15 school year, governors and other stakeholders will have to decide on the extent to which the state will incorporate a transitional assessment. **Rhode Island** Governor Lincoln Chafee and **North Carolina** Governor Beverly Perdue are both closely monitoring the development of the common assessments. Each state has developed a transition plan for updating their assessments. Although both plans end with the state fully incorporating a new assessment in the 2014-15 school year, their paths to adoption differ substantially.

**Rhode Island** is a governing state for PARCC. Over the next several years the state will phase out assessment questions aligned with current standards and phase in new questions aligned with the CCSS. That phased-in transition will allow the state time to gradually ramp up expectations, identify challenges and provide the tools and supports that will be necessary to overcome them.

**North Carolina**, a governing state for SBAC, is on a faster implementation schedule. The state plans to implement and assess the CCSS in the 2012-13 school year, using current resources and testing contracts to develop an assessment based on the CCSS until the SBAC assessment is complete. The state believes that process will avoid confusion over what should be taught, provide students with a clear picture about what they should be learning and what will be assessed, and allow the state to accelerate its implementation of the CCSS.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> August 17, 2011 interview with Angela Quick, Deputy Chief Academic Officer, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.



RHODE ISLAND



NORTH CAROLINA



### **SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)**

The SBAC is comprised of 28 states with 19 governing states. **Washington** serves as the lead state. The major components of SBAC's planned assessment system include the following.

- Optional, computer adaptive, interim or benchmark assessments. These would provide almost instant results on student progress and provide teachers with possible formative strategies and professional development options tailored to the results. Decision making power on the scope, sequence, timing, and number of interim assessments is left to the states.
- Performance tasks or events in reading, writing, and mathematics that are completed each year during the consortium testing window. The tasks must involve "student initiated planning, management of information and ideas, interaction with other materials and/or people, and production of an extended response." Extended response options include an oral presentation, exhibit, product development, or extended written piece. Teachers and machines will be used to score the tasks.
- End of year comprehensive (summative) assessment with 40-65 questions in each content area. The assessment will be computer adaptive and include selected response, constructed response, and technology enhanced items. Teachers and machines will be used to score the assessment with a distributed, online scoring system.

The SBAC will also produce a digital library of formative assessments, publicly released items and tasks, model instructional units, tools and resources for training educators and providing professional development, training modules for scoring, and tools to support teacher collaboration. An online reporting and tracking system will allow users to access key information on student progress. For more information, visit: <http://www.k12.wa.us/smarter/>.

### **Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)**

The PARCC consortium is comprised of 24 states and the District of Columbia with 15 governing states. **Florida** serves as the lead state. The major components of PARCC's planned assessment system include the following.

- Optional diagnostic and formative assessments that range from tasks to be completed in a single class periods to deeper assessments that range across several classes. The diagnostic assessments will be accessible to teachers at any time during the school year and will generate data that can be used to identify student strengths and weaknesses and modify classroom instruction as necessary. The optional mid-year assessment will be largely performance based, and provide data that can be used to improve instruction and inform professional development for teachers as they score student work.
- Performance-based assessments in English language arts/literacy and mathematics that may span multiple sessions/class periods and include computer-enhanced items and tasks that focus, among other things, on critical thinking, reasoning, writing, and extended problem solving, and result in a product.
- End of year comprehensive (summative) assessment in each content area with 40-65 questions. The assessment will be computer based and will likely include selected response, constructed response, and technology enhanced items. Automated scoring will be utilized as much as possible to ensure timely results and drive down costs.
- Required assessment of Speaking and Listening that will not be used in the determination of the summative score.

All of the PARCC assessments will incorporate constructed response items, performance tasks, and computer enhanced and scored items. PARCC will also produce a digital library of publicly released test items, formative assessments, model curriculum frameworks, additional curriculum resources, tutorials and practices tests for students and teachers, training modules for scoring, and professional development materials. For more information, visit: <http://www.parcconline.org/about-parcc>.

### **Rethink State Accountability**

Governors should be aware of potential implications that changes in assessment system will have for their state's accountability system. The transition to new standards and assessments will affect districts, schools, and students to the extent that student test scores on the new assessments could be lower in the first few years of implementation. Lower student assessment scores will impact the ratings (sometimes referred to as "accreditation status" or "grades") districts and schools are assigned in state accountability systems.

To prepare for the potential decline in student tests scores and school ratings, governors can lead efforts to make temporary changes in state accountability policy to govern the transition to the CCSS and assessments. In particular, governors should consider if the high-stakes measures within the state's accountability system are fair during the transition to CCSS and assessments. In the past few years, many states have created temporary flexibility or relief from aspects of their accountability system when new state standards are adopted and new assessments are introduced. For example, a state may weight student test scores on a newly introduced assessment lower than normal to phase in the new assessment design and test items. Moreover, flexibility regarding student graduation requirements and promotion and retention policies may be necessary during the transition.

Governors may also consider if there are permanent changes that should be made to the state accountability systems. For example, as an alternative to sanctions for low-performing districts and schools, governors may want to explore the option of incentivizing districts and schools that help struggling students, recover students who have dropped out, and close achievement gaps. Incentives could be effective considering that some students will initially struggle with meeting more rigorous standards and will require additional support. Higher standards will create challenges for students with disabilities and the growing number of students who do not speak English as a first language as well.

Given the intent of the CCSS is to ensure that students are college-and career-ready, once implementation begins, states may want to consider incorporating measures into the state accountability system that addresses college and career readiness specifically. For example, the number of students that earn dual enrollment credits or the number of students that take Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Some states, like **Florida** have already made changes to their accountability systems to incorporate measures of individual student achievement of academic standards and progress towards college and career readiness. In 2009, **Florida** modified its school accountability system with new measures.

### **GUBERNATORIAL ACTIONS**

- *Design a new state accountability system that places greater emphasis on college and career readiness and creates incentives for schools to help struggling students*
- *Make changes to state accountability systems to incorporate CCSS and assessments and provide temporary relief, where appropriate to districts and schools during the transition to CCSS and assessments*

Under the new system, schools earn a letter grade "A" to "F" based on:

- Performance on Florida's Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT);
- Participation and performance in accelerated courses (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Dual Enrollment, Advanced International Certificate of Education, and industry certification);
- Performance on the SAT, ACT, or college-placement test;
- Graduation rate of students who performed at or below a "level 2" on the eighth grade math assessment; and
- School level growth or decline in the components listed.<sup>27</sup>

Overall, measures within an accountability system should be measures over which schools and educators have some ability to influence and improve through direct action at the school-level, with the appropriate support from local education agency (LEA) and state education agency (SEA.). This concept of tiered assistance will require governors to re-think two important things. First, the extent to which the SEA provides support to the LEA and second, the extent to which the LEA provides support to the schools within the district. While monitoring and oversight are important, both the SEA and LEA will have to provide more direct assistance to ensure that educators have the resources and support they need to ensure that students learn the CCSS and are successful.

1. On what timeline will the state incorporate new assessments into its accountability system? Does the state plan to incorporate other measures of college and career readiness beyond assessments into its system? How does the state plan to identify and communicate the transition?
2. How can incentives be used to encourage districts and schools to help struggling students and recover high school dropouts?
3. What role can the governor play in encouraging the SEA and LEA to provide more direct support to schools?
4. What role, if any will higher education play in providing supports to struggling students while in high school?
5. How can the governor allocate (or reallocate) resources to support the assessment and accountability transition and provide additional supports to struggling students?
6. To what extent will accountability policies that govern student promotion and retention, graduation requirements, students with disabilities, students who are English language learners need to change to incorporate CCSS and assessments? How does the state plan to identify and communicate the transition?

### **Support Local Development and Acquisition of New Curricula and Materials**

Although the development and acquisition of new curricula and materials is often seen as a local issue, state leaders have a critical role to play in ensuring that districts develop and acquire rigorous curricula and materials aligned to the CCSS. State leaders will need to decide how much and what kind of role they will play in the development of new curriculum and materials. Regardless of the nature and extent of the role the state ultimately plays, governors and chief state school officers can encourage districts within the state and across states to reduce costs by working together voluntarily to acquire or develop new curricula and instructional tools and materials, including instructional tools, course syllabi, and model lessons. State leaders also should consider the role that technology can play in providing teachers and students with access to additional sources of information and materials beyond traditional textbooks. Significant cost savings could be achieved in this area if districts and states were willing to share technological resources. For example, states could work together to create a common electronic test item bank to store old test items that teachers can use on formative assessments administered throughout the year. Another example might be a group of states working together to videotape model lessons that would be posted on a website for teachers across states to view and use to improve their instruction.

State leaders may also help by developing criteria for ensuring that locally developed or selected curricula and materials are aligned to the CCSS. For example, state

leaders might consider developing model curricula that could be used by districts voluntarily, or by making textbook selections at the state level. States could also provide a list of options or criteria for districts to help guide their selection of textbooks. Statewide committees of teachers, principals, and other administrators could be used to develop new curriculum frameworks, pacing guides, scope and sequence guides or sample lesson plans. Engaging teachers in the effort would also provide a strong professional development opportunity while also generating needed new materials and resources.



For example, **North Dakota** is working with content and curriculum specialists from around the state to develop a common curriculum template and additional instructional guides that will be made available free of charge to all local school districts for their voluntary use. State leaders hope that by providing such a framework at the state level, they can shorten development timelines, increase cost effectiveness, improve collaboration among districts, and produce better products than any one district could do alone.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, **California** has published curriculum guides for Kindergarten to grade six that are organized by grade and describe what a student should know upon entering each grade. The curriculum guides also include notes about the shift in topics between grade levels, new expectations for English language learners, and charts that highlight the difference between the previous state standards and CCSS.

The model curricula include grade-level breakdowns of standards, expectations for learning, instructional strategies and resources, and connections to related standards in other grades.<sup>29</sup>

## GUBERNATORIAL ACTIONS

- *Define state role in supporting the development of new curriculum and materials*
- *Encourage costs savings through cross-district partnerships*
- *Direct education agency to develop selection criteria to measure the alignment of new curriculum and materials to the CCSS*

### A Multistate Collaboration to Develop Quality Curricular and Instructional Materials

The adoption and implementation of the Common Core State Standards presents a challenge for all states to develop and identify curricular and instructional materials aligned with the CCSS. That common need also presents an unprecedented opportunity for states to collaborate on high quality materials, and to take advantage of recent advances in electronic and open source technology.

**New York, Illinois, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Colorado** are currently collaborating to design and pilot an open-source “platform” that enables teachers to access, download, and create resources aligned to the new standards. The Shared Learning Collaborative platform will provide educators with no-cost supports aligned to the standards, including lesson plans, diagnostic tools, and curricular units, as well as an opportunity to network, collaborate, problem-solve and share their own resources. Once complete, the platform will also include “apps” that teachers and students can download to help track student progress against the heightened expectations. Similar to online recipe web sites like Epicurious, the platform will also allow teachers to rate and comment on the materials to identify the most useful and effective items.

Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Shared Learning Collaborative platform will be open to all states at no cost in 2014.



### Questions for Discussion

1. How can the governor use his/her budget authority to direct the development or adoption of high quality, aligned, curricular and instructional materials?
2. What policies regarding open educational resources can be added or changed to support scalable resources aligned to the CCSS?
3. What policies address opportunities for cross-district and/or cross-state collaboration on the development and/or purchase of curricular and instructional materials, and the building of technology infrastructure?

### **Maximize Resources and Share Costs**

Governors are already leading efforts to reexamine the current allocation of state resources and to strategically reallocate funds that are not effectively spent. Governors might also consider temporarily focusing existing funding on activities that more directly support implementation of the CCSS, such as professional development funds or funds used to create instructional tools and curricular resources for teachers. To the extent that it is possible, such decisions should be grounded in data about which programs and policies are more or less effective relative to improving student achievement. For example, a state could decide that all professional development efforts funded with state dollars need to be focused only on the CCSS for some specified period of time and should meet standards for what constitutes effective professional development.

Governors and other policy makers must focus on how schools organize personnel and time to ensure that the right conditions exist to improve efficiency at the local level. More than 80 percent of a school district's expenses are for educator and support personnel compensation. Often that compensation is based on longevity and degree attainment. Research indicates both have little correlation with student performance.<sup>30</sup> States can improve students' achievement and realize efficiencies by tying compensation to factors that more directly impact achievement such as teacher effectiveness. Similarly state policies that limit class sizes in all grades hinder district efforts to achieve cost savings and do not produce the gains in student achievement thought to be associated with smaller class sizes. Research indicates that improvements in students' achievement as a result of class size reduction have only occurred in elementary schools where classes were reduced to fewer than 17 students. Class size reduction policies are costly and should be applied only to the grades in which research indicates they are beneficial.

States can also enable districts to direct resources to CCSS implementation efforts through the creation of policies and funding strategies that offer flexibility for course completion. For example, states should consider eliminating seat time requirements for credit accumulation. New policies should focus on whether or not a student achieves proficiency in both the course and on a corresponding assessment. Such policies should also allow students to gain credit through a demonstration of mastery in all courses, including core courses. Significant cost savings could occur by allowing students to earn credits at their own pace with greater consideration given to students that are able to master course content in less than one school year. Doing so would allow schools to focus their resources on students that require additional support to meet the increased expectations of the CCSS.

Further, governors can promote the opportunity for states and districts to share costs in new ways. Rather than having each of the 50 states developing their own assessments, states have already come together in two consortia (PARCC and SBAC) and secured federal funds to support the development of new assessment systems aligned to the CCSS. States and districts can also share the costs of developing new curricula and instructional tools and not each develop their own at greater expense for each.

Finally, governors can lead efforts to secure additional resources from other sources, such as the philanthropic and business communities. Business leaders were actively involved in the development of the CCSS, and many are eager to sustain the effort. Major foundations have helped support the CCSS to date; regional and state-based foundations may be interested in supporting local implementation efforts. Governors are able to bring these groups together to think differently about how to make use of existing resources within the state to better support ramped up teaching and learning of the new standards.

### **GUBERNATORIAL ACTIONS**

- *Focus existing funding on activities to support CCSS implementation*
- *Create policy conditions that enable improvements in efficiency*
- *Create incentives for cross-district or -state cost sharing*
- *Secure additional resources from philanthropy and business to support implementation*

1. What services can be consolidated by the state (e.g., purchasing) to free up resources for implementation?
2. How can the governor, through policy or budget authority, create incentives for districts to share or consolidate services?
3. What policies around time (e.g., seat time, school day) and class size can be changed to free up additional resources, provide flexibility for students, and target additional resources to struggling students?
4. What policies can create flexibility at the school or district levels that can enable administrators to reallocate resources to support the implementation of the CCSS?
5. To what extent does the state monitor the relationship between student achievement data and where resources are spent in districts for benchmarking purposes?

## CONCLUSION

The advent of the Common Core State Standards is an historic event in American education. The CCSS is not solely an attempt to teach students more; rather, it is an attempt to teach students content and higher-order skills in a new and more rigorous manner. The effort is intended to ensure that students are better prepared for postsecondary education and the workforce. The CCSS set a higher expectation for all students, not just the more advantaged or easily taught.

Without effective implementation of the CCSS—including significant attention to communications, resources, educator capacity, curriculum and materials, assessments and accountability, engagement of key stakeholders, and efforts to set goals and measure progress—the potential of the CCSS may never be fully realized. The implementation challenges are significant but not insurmountable. Governors can lead the effort to confront the challenges and embrace the opportunities and begin a transformation in American education that could start to close achievement gaps, improve graduation rates, and improve the productivity of our economy.

The CCSS offer states an opportunity to rethink how the education system is structured and supported from kindergarten through high school and postsecondary education. Some of the changes, such as assessments and professional development, need to be immediate, and others, such as more effective educator recruitment and retention strategies, can take shape over the longer term. Some, such as changes in resource allocation, may require action in the state legislature. Others, such as assessment and accountability policies, may require action by the state board of education. Still others, such as changes in instruction, will require action in the classroom.

Working together, and with support from national organizations, governors and state leaders can support effective implementation and fully realize the potential of the Common Core State Standards to help ensure that American students are adequately prepared for the future.

## APPENDIX A.

### A Sample Tool to Organize State Policy Decisions Pertaining to the Implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

#### Guiding Questions on Education Capacity:

1. What course(s) or practical experience requirement(s) can the governor can ask the state board of education (or the accrediting body in the state) to add to or change in the preparation program approval standards to ensure that educators get the information they need to successfully teach or supervise teaching of CCSS?
2. What policies regarding licensure (both initial and renewal) can be added or changed to require educators to demonstrate mastery of CCSS for initial licensure as well as renewal of a license?
3. What funding does the state need to provide to support the transition to more rigorous educator evaluation systems that include the Common Core State Standards?
4. What flexibility can be provided for the transition to CCSS and assessments relative to educator evaluation?
5. Does the state have standards for professional development? Are they aligned to national standards? How are current professional development funds spent in the state? To what extent is the state evaluating the effectiveness of the professional development? If the state does not evaluate the effectiveness of professional development, what steps can be taken to begin to do this?
6. How can the governor push for placing a greater emphasis on measuring the effect of professional development on student learning and using that information to:
  - a. improve the quality of professional development offered to educators;
  - b. improve the overall return on the state's investment in professional development; and
  - c. increase transparency and accountability for local education agency use of state funds to support professional development?

## APPENDIX A. EDUCATOR CAPACITY WORKSHEET

ISSUE	GOALS & OBJECTIVES	POLICY CHANGE /ACTION	RELATED PROJECTS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	BUDGET & FUNDING SOURCES	TIMELINE	STATUS
LICENSURE	Ensure that all educators in the state have knowledge of the CCSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require teacher and principal candidates to pass an assessment that measures their mastery of the standards before they receive an initial license</li> <li>Require that any educator seeking licensure renewal be required to complete professional development that addresses CCSS specifically</li> </ul>	<p>Educator preparation program approval standards that incorporate CCSS</p>	State board of education			<input type="radio"/>
EDUCATOR PREPARATION							<input type="radio"/>
EDUCATOR EVALUATION							<input type="radio"/>
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT							<input type="radio"/>

### WORKSHEET: Status Key

- No Progress
- Some Progress (or Just Started)
- A Lot of Progress (Some Work Remains)
- Complete



## NOTES

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## NGA CENTER DIVISIONS

The NGA Center is organized into five divisions with some collaborative projects across all divisions.

- **Economic, Human Services & Workforce** focuses on best practices, policy options, and service delivery improvements across a range of current and emerging issues, including economic development and innovation, workforce development, employment services, research and development policies, and human services for children, youth, low-income families, and people with disabilities.
- **Education** provides information on best practices in early childhood, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education. Specific issues include common core state standards and assessments; teacher effectiveness; high school redesign; science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education; postsecondary education attainment, productivity, and accountability; extra learning opportunities; and school readiness.
- **Environment, Energy & Transportation** identifies best practices and provides technical assistance on issues including clean energy for the electricity and transportation sectors, energy and infrastructure financing, green economic development, transportation and land use planning, and clean up and stewardship of nuclear weapons sites.
- **Health** covers a broad range of health financing, service delivery, and coverage issues, including implementation of federal health reforms, quality initiatives, cost-containment policies, health information technology, state public health initiatives, and Medicaid.
- **Homeland Security & Public Safety** supports governors' homeland security and criminal justice policy advisors. This work includes supporting the Governors Homeland Security Advisors Council (GHSAC) and providing technical assistance to a network of governors' criminal justice policy advisors. Issues include emergency preparedness, interoperability, cyber-crime and cyber-security, intelligence coordination, emergency management, sentencing and corrections, forensics, and justice information technology.



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