

## The Common Core: Are state implementation plans enough?

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As Common Core states shift their focus from creating implementation plans to carrying them out, it has become clear that the information and support available to educators varies greatly from state to state. So, although *what* teachers teach has been standardized, *how* they teach—the approaches they are learning, the professional development they are receiving, and the resources and tools available to them—has not.

One concern is that the professional development and resources offered to educators won't focus enough on what's new in the standards or on the needs of individual teachers. McREL has written a series of [“quick-start” guidebooks](#) (published by ASCD) that anticipate the needs of teachers at all levels in developing lesson plans and classroom activities that support the standards and learning objectives, including aspects that are most likely to be new to them. For example:

- In the mathematics standards—the organization by conceptual area rather than by course, the importance of students' conceptual understanding of mathematics, explicit emphasis on reasoning, and a focus on skills such as advanced statistics that appear infrequently in other standards documents
- In the English language arts standards—an increased emphasis on expository and literary non-fiction reading, an increased emphasis on close reading and citing textual evidence to support claims, greater reliance on text-based questions, higher expectations with respect to logic and persuasion, and the need to increase the number of activities related to gathering and synthesizing research

To illustrate the myriad approaches states are taking in providing training for their teachers, here's a look at the implementation plans of 15 states. (Note: This information is current as of publication.)

### **California**

The California State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in August 2010, and the California Department of Education (CDE) plans for full implementation by 2013–14 (California Department of Education [CDE], 2012a). The CDE implementation plan includes workshops, conferences, webinars, and the development of five CCSS professional development modules, which cover topics such as instructional strategies for critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving (CDE, 2012a). Other resources will include revised curriculum frameworks in mathematics and ELA, content-specific professional learning opportunities, instructional materials aligned to the CC-mathematics and CC-ELA standards, summer institutes on the CCSS, standards crosswalks, and subject-specific instructional guidance related to skills such as mathematical modeling and transformational geometry (CDE, 2012a; CDE, 2012b).

## **Connecticut**

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) adopted the CCSS in July 2010 with plans for full implementation by 2013–14 (Connecticut State Department of Education [CSDE], 2012a). To ensure educators continue to be effective and are successful in implementing the CCSS, teachers are required to complete a specific number of continuing education units, (CDSE, 2012b). The CSDE also provides a variety of face-to-face and online opportunities for professional development, through which CCSS information is widely disseminated and educators are able to familiarize themselves with the purpose and content of the new standards (CSDE, 2012a). The CSDE's professional development also includes strategies for teachers and principals to use instructional materials aligned with the new standards, evaluate student work relative to the new standards, and use multiple measures of student performance data to inform instruction (CDSE, 2012a). The CSDE website provides educators unlimited access to crosswalks to determine similarities and differences between the state's existing content standards and the CCSS standards, comparative studies, district implementation guides, transition plans, CCSS toolkits, ELA and mathematics development frameworks, and grade-specific criteria for CC-ELA and CC-mathematics (CSDE, 2012a).

## **Florida**

The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) adopted the CCSS in July 2010 with plans for full implementation by 2014–15 (Florida Department of Education [FLDOE], 2013). To prepare for CCSS implementation, the FLDOE is providing professional development resources and technical assistance on a local level primarily through local education agencies (LEAs). Participating LEAs create teams of principals, teachers, and administrative staff, who will attend face-to-face workshops with national experts in the spring and summer (FLDOE, 2011). To provide further support, FLDOE contracts staff to provide onsite team visits and conference calls when requested by LEAs. Webinars and technical assistance conference calls are also held with all LEAs throughout the CCSS development and implementation period (FLDOE, 2011).

Educators across the state also have unlimited access to the FLDOE website's resources, which include CCSS instructional videos, professional learning workbooks, links to subject-specific development toolkits, model content frameworks, and access to the resource of partners such as the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), and CPALMS (FLDOE, 2013). CPALMS is an electronic, collaborative platform connecting all Florida education stakeholders, allowing them to share and access resources and interactive tools that support CCSS- driven instruction. CPALMS initiatives include lesson plan development, model activities development, vetted instructional and education resources, lesson study toolkits and support systems, peer and subject-area expert reviews and feedback, unpacking and mapping of standards, CCSS cognitive complexity ratings, and videos featuring CCSS standards discussed by experts (FLDOE, 2012).

## **Hawaii**

Hawaii's Board of Education adopted the CCSS in June 2010. As part of its implementation plan, the Hawaii State Department of Education (HIDOE) required teachers to deliver CC-aligned instruction by 2011–12 (Hawaii State Department of Education [HIDOE], 2012a). During the same year, teachers incorporated the major priorities of the CC-ELA and CC-mathematics standards into their practice with the goal of full implementation by 2013–14 (HIDOE, 2012a). To support CCSS implementation, HIDOE has widely disseminated resources and used a train-the-trainer professional development model. To date, all of Hawaii's public ELA and mathematics teachers have received face-to-face training on the new standards (HIDOE, 2012a). HIDOE is also training principals to lead job-embedded professional development (HIDOE, 2012a). Other resources available to teachers include CCSS summer institutes, crosswalk documents, grade-specific ELA and mathematics guidance, model lesson plans, webinars, video clips from model classrooms, and overviews of CC-aligned courses (HIDOE, 2012a; HIDOE, 2012b).

## **Idaho**

The Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE) adopted the CCSS in January 2011 with full implementation scheduled to take place in 2013–14 (Idaho State Department of Education [ISDE], 2012a). To support the implementation of CCSS, the ISDE, in partnership with state universities, will provide professional development workshops and resources including leadership networks and support from regional specialists. Support will be available through asynchronous training and resources, including face-to-face training, use of a train-the-trainer model, and online webinars (ISDE, 2012b). To support professional development at the local level, district implementation teams attend workshops in which members learn how to design CC-aligned lessons as well as how to replicate the training in each of their districts. Throughout the year, monthly interactive webinars on CC-Mathematics and CC-ELA subjects will be available (ISDE, 2012b). All notes and resources used during training sessions will be archived and made available on Schoolnet. In addition, the ISDE will sponsor scholarships for selected, pertinent higher educational courses that promote the continuation of local professional development in support of CCSS implementation (ISDE, 2012b).

## **Kansas**

In October 2010, the Kansas State Board of Education adopted the CCSS with support from the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) and the state's standards committees and plans for full implementation by 2013–14 (Kansas State Department of Education [KSDE], 2012a). As part of its CCSS implementation plan, KSDE trains educators using a train-the-trainer model and by offering summer institutes for educators (KSDE, 2012a). As part of this strategy, KSDE has collaborated with the Kansas Teachers of Mathematics Association and the Kansas Reading Association to offer professional learning opportunities on the new standards, how they differ from previous standards, and the necessary shifts in content and instructional strategies (KSDE, 2012a). Further, KSDE offers targeted support to districts and school leaders as they, in turn, assist teachers with CCSS implementation. This support includes guidance on curriculum mapping, evaluating instructional materials, producing CC-aligned lesson plans, and ensuring the development of 21st century skills (KSDE, 2012a). Other resources include flipbooks that unpack the CC-ELA and CC-mathematics standards and related instructional strategies, webinars, Kansas educator blogs and wikis, and sample lesson plans (KSDE, 2012b).

## **Kentucky**

Kentucky Senate Bill 1, signed into law in 2009, required a revision to all Kentucky content standards based on national and international benchmarks. In response to this law, Kentucky adopted the CCSS in February of 2010, becoming the first state to do so. As part of its implementation strategy, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) created Leadership Networks—composed of faculty members, district officials, and other experts—to support districts and schools with transition to the CCSS (Holliday & Smith, 2012). These networks include experts in the CC-ELA and CC-mathematics standards who develop professional learning experiences for teachers (Holliday & Smith, 2012). Using Leadership Networks and other means, KDE has provided a variety of CC-ELA and CC-mathematics resources: face-to-face and online professional development, crosswalks between the state's former standards and the new standards, guides that help educators select texts that meet the rigor of the new standards, and various documents tied to expectations in writing (Kentucky Department of Education [KDE], 2012). Further, Kentucky's new Continuous Instructional Improvement Technology System allows high school and middle school teachers to access CC-aligned resources and professional development on-demand via a personalized technology platform (KDE, 2012).

## **Louisiana**

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) adopted the CCSS in July 2010 with plans for full implementation by 2014–15, (Louisiana Department of Education [LDOE], 2013). The LDOE will engage educators and education stakeholders in a variety of professional support formats. Opportunities will include face-to-face trainings, online courses, webinars, planning guides, student learning target workshops, and exemplar tools (LDOE, 2012). Additionally, the LDOE will partner with LEA personnel directors to strengthen local understanding of the CCSS and state policy. Enhanced understanding will allow these personnel to provide feedback on additional needs and recommendations on how best to aid districts with readiness and implementation (LDOE, 2012). The LDOE has also established network teams, comprised of LDOE staff, which provide districts with strategic support for implementation (LDOE, 2012). A communication strategy is also in place to ensure all educators understand the expectations that coincide with the CCSS. Communication includes LEA superintendent newsletters, teacher newsletters, websites, videos, and face-to-face meetings with the state superintendent (LDOE, 2012).

## **Massachusetts**

The Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted the CCSS in July 2010 with plans for full implementation by 2013–14 (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [ESE], 2012a). Prior to adoption, staff at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) played a major role in crafting the CCSS; therefore, ESE staff expect the transition to be simpler than it may be in other states (ESE, 2012a). To support CCSS transition, ESE has provided conferences, professional development opportunities, and regional events that introduce the new standards (ESE, 2012a). ESE has also worked with its professional development providers to align their courses with CCSS expectations, thus incorporating the CCSS into the state's regular professional development offerings (ESE, 2012a). Further, ESE is working with educators across Massachusetts to develop model curriculum units, curriculum maps, and lesson plans aligned to the CCSS that will be made available to all educators via the Edwin Teaching and Learning System (ESE, 2012b).

## **Nevada**

The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) began formulating a CCSS implementation plan in the summer of 2010, anticipating the Nevada State Board of Education's formal adoption of the standards in October of that year (Nevada Department of Education, [NDE] 2012a). As part of this plan, NDE worked with Regional Professional Development Providers and others to introduce Nevada educators to the CCSS, provide credit-bearing coursework and summer institutes on the new standards, and offer professional development to school leaders as they assist teachers with implementation (NDE, 2012a). Moreover, Nevada offers CC-aligned curricula and instructional materials and job-embedded professional development, and every school has formed literacy teams that support data-based decision-making (NDE, 2012a). Other resources available to Nevada teachers include grade-specific crosswalks respectively between the CC-ELA and CC-mathematics and Nevada's former standards, resources related to new requirements, and guidance on Nevada's CCSS transition plan (NDE, 2012b).

## **New Mexico**

The New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) adopted the CCSS in October 2012, with plans for full implementation by 2014–15 (New Mexico Public Education Department [NMPED], 2013). To jump start CCSS implementation, an alignment study comparing the previous state standards and the CCSS determined the professional development and technical support required for educators to be successful with the new standards (NMPED, 2012). Additionally, a statewide planning committee was created by the NMPED to generate recommendations for the CCSS implementation plan (NMPED, 2012). The NMPED also conducted regional

professional development trainings for district leadership. These trainings were scheduled to correlate with the implementation of the CCSS in specific grade levels and for specific subject content (NMPED, 2012). NMPED has also provided state educators with electronic resources such as CCSS transition timelines, instructional support tools, CCSS guides, content-specific crosswalks, professional development modules and the CCSSO Common Core Newsletter, (NMPED, 2013).

### **North Carolina**

The North Carolina State Board of Education approved adoption of the CCSS in English language arts and mathematics in June 2010, and implementation of the new standards is underway. To support educators with the transition to the CCSS, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) uses a blended professional development model that relies on online modules, professional learning communities, face-to-face training, and other means to provide educators with the content knowledge and instructional strategies necessary for successful implementation (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2012a). NCDPI also offers Leadership Institutes to build the capacity of school and district teams that, in turn, train educators across the state on the CCSS. Further, regional professional development leads, content experts, and other support staff are available to provide targeted training and guidance on specific aspects of the CCSS (NCDPI, 2012a). Resources designed for mathematics and ELA teachers of all levels include standards crosswalks; guidance documents on mathematical functions as well as ELA progression; and graphics organizers (NCDPI, 2012b).

### **Ohio**

The Ohio Department of Education (OHDE) adopted the CCSS in June 2010 with plans for full implementation by 2014–15 (Ohio Department of Education [OHDE], 2012). To ensure successful CCSS implementation in the classroom, the OHDE will be shifting to Ohio's New Learning Standards during the 2013–2014 school year (OHDE, 2012). This shift will include four trainings for curriculum and instruction supervisors, professional development facilitators, and other district leaders about subject-specific instructional shifts and how to implement the shifts at the district and classroom levels. They will also take away modules they can use to facilitate implementation in their districts, be given examples of model classroom units based on the instructional shifts, and be able to join colleagues in designing their own high-quality instruction (OHDE, 2012). These trainings will take place throughout the year in various regional locations across the state. Additionally, educators will have online access to the facilitator and discussion guides and planning sheets as well as links to OHDE expert partners and their resources (OHDE, 2012).

### **South Dakota**

In November 2010, the South Dakota Board of Education adopted the CCSS, and the South Dakota Department of Education (SD DOE) began work to transition to the standards. Bolstered by a commitment of \$8.4 million from Governor Dennis Daugaard for professional development, SD DOE offers a CCSS professional development program that includes summer workshops, school-year workshops, online learning, and district-created professional development (South Dakota Department of Education [SD DOE], 2012). These offerings include modules specific to the ELA standards and the mathematics standards, higher-order instructional practices, and higher-order thinking assessments (SD DOE, 2012). A curriculum curation team is currently developing a blueprint for CC-aligned instruction that will provide specific guidance for each subject at each grade level (SD DOE, 2012).

### **Wisconsin**

Wisconsin Stat. § 115.28(10) charges the state superintendent of public instruction with the development of assessments aligned to standards. Under this and other authorities granted in Article X, section 1 of the Wisconsin Constitution, Wisconsin's state superintendent adopted the CCSS in June 2010 (Wisconsin Department of Public

Instruction [DPI], 2012b). Since then, Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has worked with regional service providers to offer professional learning for educators while producing guidance documents on the CCSS (DPI, 2012b). Resources produced include those that address text complexity, 21st century ELA and mathematics learning, and global literacy in the context of the CCSS (DPI, 2012a). DPI is also establishing a Center for Standards, Instruction, and Assessment (SIA), which will bring together resources and content experts to support educators with CCSS implementation and instructional improvement (DPI, 2012b). The SIA Center will provide content-driven professional learning to teachers of all grade levels and disseminate high-quality instructional materials aligned to CC-ELA and CC-mathematics (DPI, 2012b).

As the examples above illustrate, states are working to support educators with the transition to CCSS. However, much of this support relates to the broader goals of the CCSS rather than to the specific needs of high school and middle school teachers. As teachers gain general familiarity with the CCSS, they will likely require more specific support related to the content areas where they need additional development. [McREL's Common Core quick-start guides](#) for high school and middle school English language arts and mathematics can supplement the broader CCSS training that many educators around the country are now completing.

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