

Trends in State Implementation of the Common Core State Standards: Making the Shift to Better Tests

Executive Summary

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for K-12 English language arts/literacy and mathematics, released in 2010, have been adopted by 49 states and territories; the District of Columbia; and the U.S. Department of Defense schools, which serve the children of U.S. service members around the world. The widespread adoption of the CCSS is a major step forward, yet significant work remains for states to successfully implement the new more rigorous and relevant academic standards—notably, the adoption of new tests to measure students' progress against the CCSS. This paper reports on states' challenges and progress in creating and launching assessments of students' learning that are aligned with the CCSS.¹

Tests are an important part of teaching and learning. What is tested and the rigor of those tests influence what is taught. The tests currently in use in most states are neither rigorous nor fully aligned to the CCSS. Two consortia of states are crafting sets of assessments aligned with the CCSS that are being field tested during the 2013–14 school year and will be widely used in the 2014–15 school year. To successfully implement new tests that are aligned with the CCSS, states must address several issues:

- ***Create and implement a transition plan to move teachers and students from existing tests to new assessments.*** For many states, the key short-term choice to be made is whether to add or withdraw content from current state assess-

ments to better align with the expectations in the CCSS, to use a transitional test, or to use one of the two new national consortia assessments being field tested.

- ***Address funding issues related to the new tests.*** For a majority of states, the estimated cost of the new tests will be no greater than those of the tests currently administered by districts and states, so the cost of new tests could be covered by reallocating funds spent on current tests. The reallocation of such funds to the new tests would deliver a better value to taxpayers because the new tests are more rigorous and educationally useful than the tests they would replace. That improved value would also be realized in those states and districts that increase their spending on tests because the new tests will be better aligned to the more rigorous and relevant CCSS and be more useful to educators as they work to advance student learning.
- ***Examine the capacity to offer new tests online, which will require adequate bandwidth and sufficient numbers of computers or tablets.*** Computer-based and online learning are becoming an increasingly large part of the educational experience and many states and districts are investing in those opportunities independent of their efforts to put new tests aligned with the CCSS in place. Although paper-and-pencil versions of the new assessments will be available,

¹ This brief is the third in a series designed to provide a snapshot of states' CCSS implementation activities and remaining challenges. Each brief addresses a policy area for governors. www.nga.org/cms/center/edu.

benefits will be greater and costs lower in the long run if the assessments are administered online with a computer or tablet.

Governors have an important leadership role to play in the implementation of the CCSS and related assessments. Because the new standards and tests affect many different yet interconnected policy areas, governors are essential in shaping the policies and structures required to implement them in a manner that will most benefit student learning. Governors also will need to communicate with educators, parents, and the broader public about what changes are coming, what they will mean, and why they are important. Governors across the country are meeting these new challenges. They are enacting new policies, issuing executive orders, and using the bully pulpit to lead their states' education reforms to improve student learning.

Introduction

In 2010, the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers released the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for K-12 English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics. These academic standards are the culmination of a state-led effort to define the knowledge and skills students need to graduate from high school ready to successfully enter college or a career-training program. The CCSS are evidence and research-based, informed by the most effective models from states and countries across the globe, include rigorous content, and demand the mastery of that content through the application of knowledge and use of essential skills.

As of summer 2013, 49 states and territories; the District of Columbia; and the U.S. Department of Defense schools, which serve the children of U.S. service members around the world, had formally adopted the CCSS. The widespread adoption of the CCSS was an important step—and not without controversy—but

states have now turned their attention toward successfully implementing the new standards.² Governors and other state policymakers can play a critical leadership role in the implementation of the CCSS by addressing several key policy areas—including assessments of student learning and accountability, and improving educator effectiveness—and communicating the rationale and importance of the changes to educators and parents.

This paper reports on the implementation of aligned and rigorous assessments. As described below, two consortia of states are working to develop assessments that meet the needs of the CCSS and are educationally valuable. Governors can lead that work by adjusting budgets to support implementation of the new tests, ensuring that the new assessments are incorporated into the current testing plan and eliminating old assessments, and confirming that plans are in place to provide schools with the computers and training necessary to support the use of the new assessments to improve student learning.

New Assessments and Supporting Policies

Effective tests are an important part of teaching and learning. They measure student progress and success; provide information to help improve student learning; offer evidence for the evaluation of teachers; and serve as a tool to hold educators, schools, and districts accountable for student learning. To serve these purposes, it is necessary to offer a rich array of tests, including those employed throughout the school year to inform instruction (often called interim assessments) and end-of-year tests used for accountability purposes (known as summative assessments). Moreover, the assessments must be aligned to the academic standards a state has adopted, measure how well students have learned the content they are being taught, and produce accurate and useful information.

² Suggestions for implementation are applicable for governors and other leaders of states that have adopted rigorous standards that will prepare students for success in college or career-training, regardless of whether the standards are the Common Core State Standards or ones developed separately by the state.

In terms of content and rigor at each grade level, the tests that states currently use to measure student learning are not sufficiently aligned with the CCSS. For that reason, most states that have adopted the CCSS belong to one of two consortia of states working to develop new assessments. These consortia—the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers ([PARCC](#)) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium ([Smarter Balanced](#))³—are crafting sets of assessments aligned with the CCSS that are being field tested during the 2013–14 school year and will be widely used in the 2014–15 school year.

Table 1 shows the differences between current state tests and those developed by PARCC and Smarter Balanced (see Page 4).

Offering an assessment that is aligned to the CCSS, both in content and rigor, is a critical piece of implementation. There are a number of related transition issues that will require gubernatorial leadership. Each state and district already has an array of tests in place. Decisions about which tests to phase out and how to transition between assessments must be made. Similarly, the new assessments will need to be funded, preferably with money saved from ending old assessments and/or by reallocating additional dollars in the state budget. Finally, to get the full benefit of the new tests, they need to be offered online. Therefore, states should examine their capacity to provide adequate bandwidth and sufficient numbers of computers and tablets.

Additionally, gubernatorial involvement in implementation of the CCSS and aligned tests is necessary because many states are simultaneously adopting policies that will use the results of student tests to evaluate the performance of teachers, principals, schools, and districts. Although not inherently part of the CCSS, decisions about assessments will be important because they can play a sizable role

in the compensation and promotion of teachers and principals and the allocation of funds among schools and/or districts. Governors should lead the transition and sequencing of major policy changes in assessments and their use as accountability measures if they want to have the desired effect on student learning. No transition of that complexity will be successful without a strong communications plan. Governors can play a critical role in leading communications efforts with students, educators, and parents about the changes taking place and their importance for preparing far more students for success later in life.

Key Issues and Promising Practices

Currently, many states are preparing for the new tests aligned to the CCSS by implementing transition plans. Some governors have allocated additional funding to support new assessments, but few states have reallocated existing resources towards the transition and new tests. A limited number of states have made the large-scale changes necessary to administer the tests online with computers or tablets. For the CCSS and the new assessments to play the desired role in improving outcomes for students, states must coordinate funding and technology policies with their strategies to transition to new assessments. They also must communicate with educators and the public about what the CCSS and new assessments will mean and their importance.

Transitioning to New Assessments

Governors seeking to improve the college and career-training readiness of students in their states can use the transition to tests aligned with the CCSS to examine and re-envision the state's assessment system as a whole. In the short term, key choices to be made include whether to add or withdraw content from current state assessments to better align with the expectations found in the CCSS, to use a transitional test, or to use a PARCC or Smarter Balanced field test. States that

³ Other consortia of states are designing assessments for specific student populations: the National Center and State Collaborative ([NCSC](#)) and Dynamic Learning Maps ([DLM](#)) are developing assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities; and the Assessment Services Supporting English Learners Through Technology Systems ([ASSETS](#)) Consortium is creating tests for English-language learners.

Table 1. Comparison Of Current And New State Assessments

Feature	Typical Current State Test	Assessments Developed by PARCC or Smarter Balanced
Rigor	Rigor of current tests varies from state to state but is significantly lower than what is needed to be on a path to being successful in college or a career-training program.	New assessments, anchored in measuring readiness for college or career-training level work, will have greater rigor than current state tests.
Alignment/focus to standards	Current tests typically measure a random sample of a state's standards at each grade level.	New assessments measure the CCSS for each grade; because CCSS are more focused at each grade level, aligned assessments are more focused.
Time after tests taken for results to be reported	Results reported 4–6 months after testing—typically in the early fall of the next school year	Results reported within approximately 2–4 weeks of testing, which enables teachers to improve their practice and their students' learning
Educational value of time spent taking the tests	Minimal educational value	Higher educational value (test will measure what teachers are asked to teach, so time students spend taking tests will be of higher educational value than time spent on tests that are not aligned to classroom content).
Reports to teachers/parents	Reports seldom provided to teachers/parents	Highly informative and actionable reports provided to teachers/parents
Usefulness in assessing performance of students/schools and influencing compensation/ promotion of teachers and principals	Not useful because current typical tests do not measure progress of student learning	More valuable because tests will measure what teachers are asked to teach, and fast turn-around will show progress of student learning
Assesses writing	A few grades or not at all	Every grade, 3–8, and high school
Range of testing	Emphasis on measuring knowledge and skills of students around the cut scores	Measures learning of all students—from students who struggle to students who excel
Value to postsecondary (higher education and workforce training) institutions	Limited value to postsecondary institutions	Provides information about readiness for entry-level, credit-bearing courses
Comparable from state to state	No	Yes, which will allow educators and policy-makers to utilize best practices from one district and one state to another

wish to use a PARCC or Smarter Balanced test for the 2013–14 school year can work with the U.S. Department of Education to request a “double-testing flexibility” waiver from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.⁴ The waiver will allow the schools within the state to administer either a consortium field test or the current state test without having to administer both.

For the longer term, states should think through which state- and district-level assessments should no longer be offered and eliminate those tests that are not adequately measuring student learning or that will be duplicative of the tests offered by PARCC and Smarter Balanced. To that end, governors should set the vision for change and work collaboratively with other stakeholders to ensure that good decisions about assessments are made and their implementation is smooth. Throughout the transition, it will be important for governors and other state leaders to [communicate](#) extensively with educators and parents about the changes and the value the new standards and assessments will have on their students’ learning.

Some states are making long-term policy plans to pave the way for the new assessments developed by PARCC and Smarter Balanced. **Arizona** Governor Jan Brewer signed a bill eliminating the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) assessment, which has been administered as a graduation requirement since 2006. With the adoption of the CCSS in Arizona, the AIMS test is no longer aligned to the content being taught in schools. The class of 2016 will be the last group of Arizona students to take the AIMS test.⁵

Louisiana recently released a decade-long assessment

and accountability transition plan. During the 2012–13 and 2013–14 school years, students have been taking tests with more ELA and math questions that require short written answers, rather than the typical multiple choice questions. The PARCC assessment will then be used in the 2014–15 school year for students in grades 3–8. High school students will not take the new assessments until later so that they have enough time to prepare to meet the new expectations. To help students and teachers make the adjustment, the Louisiana Department of Education released sample items aligned to the CCSS. Over the next 10 years, Louisiana will phase in increased expectations and accountability measures, with scores from tests taken in 2015 used as a new baseline.⁶

Some states are adjusting their current state assessments so that the content is more closely aligned to the CCSS while they await the full PARCC and Smarter Balanced releases. In the 2012–13 and 2013–14 school years, 18 states added new items to state assessments that align to the CCSS, 19 states removed unaligned items, and 9 states created more short-answer questions.⁷ For example, **Tennessee** is transitioning their current Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) assessments by removing multiple choice questions that are not aligned to the CCSS and replacing them with questions that better reflect the content of the new standards.⁸ They also have expanded access to CCSS-aligned assessments to inform instruction during the school year, including the Constructed Response Assessment in mathematics and Writing Assessment in ELA. Those tests provide students with practice and help educators better understand the expectation of the CCSS.

⁴ Deborah S. DeLisle, Undersecretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education, letter to chief state school officers, Sept. 17, 2013, <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/secletter/130917.html>.

⁵ State of Arizona, Office of the Governor, “Governor Jan Brewer Signs Measure to Improve Arizona Education Standards,” Mar. 28, 2013, http://azgovernor.gov/dms/upload/PR_032813_HB2425Signing.pdf; House Bill 2425, 51st Arizona Legislature, 1st sess. (2013), <http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/51leg/1r/bills/hb2425h.pdf>.

⁶ Louisiana Department of Education, “Louisiana Believes: Time to Learn: Louisiana Transitions to Higher Expectations,” 2013, <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/webinars/transition-plan-summary-2013.pdf?sfvrsn=2>.

⁷ Achieve, *Closing the Expectations Gap: 2013 Annual Report on the Alignment of State K-12 Policies and Practice with the Demands of College and Careers* (Washington, DC: Achieve, 2013), 23, <http://www.achieve.org/files/2013ClosingtheExpectationsGapReport.pdf>.

⁸ TNCore, “The Common Core State Standards: Tennessee’s Transition Plan,” http://www.tncore.org/sites/www/Uploads/files/Common_Core_Plan.pptx.

Although states will make different decisions regarding transitions, governors seeking to implement the new standards would benefit from working together to ensure that test results from the PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessments, or other tests, are comparable in order to learn best practices from one another. Currently, state assessments are not comparable across state lines because states use different standards, tests, and definitions or levels for what constitutes proficiency—often called the “cut score.”⁹ Setting a common cut score on the same learning standards would allow educators to look at student performance across states and identify promising policies and programs to achieve greater results for far more students more efficiently.

Moreover, for the CCSS and related tests to be most effective in driving improvements in student learning, cut scores should be set based on the level of learning needed for success at the next grade or next educational level. Since the objective of the CCSS is to have students ready for success in college or a career-training program regardless of the state in which they continue their education, the common cut score would increase the likelihood that more students will be successful in their postsecondary education and not be forced to take remedial courses. Governors, by working with state boards of education, higher education, and business leaders, can provide important leadership in ensuring that a meaningful and uniform cut score is established and widely adopted in order to provide all students and educators a common definition of success at the end of high school.

Governors also will be essential in communicating the changes in tests and cut scores, and the implications for the results being reported. As states raise the rigor of what they determine is proficient to a more relevant level, the percentage of students reported as

proficient will drop (see box). Unless educators, parents, and the media are well informed and prepared for this, a public backlash may occur. To prepare for that transition in **Tennessee**, a statewide nonpartisan organization launched a [communications campaign](#) with a strong role for the governor in explaining the changes. Until recently, the state had experienced little pushback from the public, largely because of those efforts. Even now, with mounting opposition, the coalition of education stakeholders—ranging from the business community to the Parent Teacher Association—has been able to actively engage communities and leaders from across the state. The focus of the campaign has been dispelling misconceptions and giving context for why standards needed to rise. In contrast, **New York** students took a new assessment aligned to the CCSS for the first time during the 2012–13 school year. The number of students who scored at or above grade level expectations dropped significantly from previous years. Even though the state department of education produced [communications materials](#) to explain the changes, efforts to prepare the public were limited and the reaction was predominately negative.¹⁰ In response to confusion and frustration from students, parents, and educators, Governor Andrew Cuomo convened a [Common Core Implementation Panel](#) to make recommendations to help ensure successful implementation of the CCSS.

Funding New Assessment Systems

States intending to offer the new assessments aligned with the CCSS must address the issue of funding. The effect of the new assessments on state budgets will vary, depending on the approach states take to implementing them and on whether existing funds for current assessments are reallocated. For a majority of states, the projected cost of the new tests will be no greater than the cost of the tests currently administered by districts and states. In such states, the cost of new tests could be covered by reallocating funds from spending on current assessments to the new assessments. For a minority of

⁹ This paper uses the term “proficiency” to mean grade-level readiness, because it is easily understandable to states and education stakeholders in the era of No Child Left Behind assessments and accountability. The term will have diminished meaning in the CCSS-aligned consortia assessments, but the concept will remain under such terms as “performance level” and “college- and career-ready determination.”

¹⁰ Ken Slentz, Deputy Commissioner, Office of P-12 Education, New York State Education Department, “Field Memo: Transition to the Common Core Assessments,” Mar. 6, 2013, <http://engageny.org/resource/field-memo-transition-to-common-core-assessments>.

Expected Student Proficiency Drop When New Tests Are Implemented

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) establish higher expectations for students than nearly all current state standards. Consequently, when the results of new tests aligned with the CCSS are released, the percentage of students reported to be proficient will decrease from current rates.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as the “Nation’s Report Card,” though not aligned to the CCSS, provides a reasonable estimate of proficiency levels on the new CCSS-aligned assessments. In 2013, only 27 percent of students in the median state scored proficient or above on NAEP’s fourth-grade reading exam. However, 71 percent of students in the same state and year scored proficient or above on the state’s own fourth-grade reading assessment. That amounts to a 44 percentage point difference in reported performance. Some states can expect an even greater decline.

If the public is not prepared for and understanding of those changes with the new tests, there may be strong political backlash and frustration on the part of educators and parents, which could hinder the implementation of the CCSS and the needed improvement in student learning. Building coalitions and communicating with the public about the importance of the standards and the value to students, families, employers, and the state’s economy will be a crucial role for governors to lead.

states, the new tests will be more expensive, but at the same time for all states the new tests will have many added benefits. In addition to being aligned to the CCSS and of high quality, the new assessments will provide diagnostic indicators and faster turnaround on test results for teachers to inform instruction more quickly. As part of the funding decision-making process, governors and other state policy leaders should consider the educational return on spending for the new assessments.

To decide on a path forward, states should examine current spending and the projected costs of admin-

istering the test in the future. Current state expenditures on ELA and math assessments vary widely. A study conducted by Smarter Balanced found that costs ranged from \$7 to \$110 per student (combined for both ELA and math, with most not including writing in cost estimates), with an average of \$31 per student for the 32 states reviewed.¹¹ A PARCC survey found that the median cost of current year-end assessments in states that are members of PARCC is \$29.95 per student.¹² A third analysis evaluated 45 states but only focused on grades 3–9, determined that states spend between \$13 and \$105 per student on assessments for

¹¹ Patrick Murphy and Elliot Regenstein, *Putting a Price Tag on the Common Core: How Much Will Smart Implementation Cost?* (Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2012), 30, <http://edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2012/20120530-Putting-A-Price-Tag-on-the-Common-Core/20120530-Putting-a-Price-Tag-on-the-Common-Core-FINAL.pdf>

¹² Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), “Cost: PARCC Summative Assessments,” 2013, <http://www.parc-conline.org/cost>

ELA and math, again with most states not including writing tests.¹³

A recent Brookings Institution report concluded that states will experience substantial savings related to assessments if they share the development costs and use one of the two consortia-developed test systems.¹⁴ Smarter Balanced estimates that a complete assessment system—including mid-year and end-of-year tests—will cost each state \$27.30 per student for each grade tested in reading, writing, and math. That consortium estimates that a basic system that provides only tests in reading, writing, and math administered at the end of the school year would cost approximately \$22.50 per student for each tested grade.¹⁵ PARCC estimates that a similar assessment will cost \$29.50 per student.¹⁶ If states choose not to use the PARCC or Smarter Balanced assessments, they will have to determine which tests they will use, how the tests will be developed and paid for, and how to ensure that the tests are high quality, aligned to the CCSS, and comparable to those used by other states.

All told, two-thirds of states in Smarter Balanced and one-half of states in PARCC are expected to realize savings based solely on costs, not taking into account that the new PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessment systems are offering higher quality tests with greater educational value than existing state assessments. Specifically, the new tests include the assessment of writing. Many states do not currently offer writing assessments in every grade because it is expensive to score the results. Given the importance of writing to students' education, writing assessments are included in the PARCC and Smarter Balanced tests, and their costs are reflected in the consortia's overall estimates

of test costs. It also should be noted that the costs of PARCC and Smarter Balanced tests are borne at the state level. Many districts currently spend substantial amounts of money on assessments that could be reallocated towards other efforts to implement the CCSS if they eliminate their current assessments and use the results from the consortia-developed tests to improve their students' learning.

Preparing to Administer Tests Online

States intending to offer the new assessments aligned with the CCSS should also prepare to administer them online. Computer-based and online learning are an increasingly large part of the educational experience. Investing in computers, tablets, and Internet connections can help students, teachers, and schools take advantage of the growing benefits of online learning, including the ability to take the new tests aligned with the CCSS on a computer or tablet.

PARCC and Smarter Balanced plan to offer a paper-and-pencil testing option during the transition years, but the new tests will be most effective if administered online. Online administration of the new tests will make it possible to score students' tests quickly and provide results to students, teachers, and parents in a timely manner. It also will allow for the tests to provide accurate measures of learning for all students across the full range of the achievement continuum.

Many states will need to assist their districts in improving their technology capabilities to administer the new tests, ensuring among other things that schools have sufficient access to the Internet and computers or tablets. A few states experimented with online assessments in spring 2013 and encountered technical problems.¹⁷

¹³ Matthew M. Chingos, *Strength in Numbers: State Spending on K-12 Assessment Systems* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2012), http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2012/11/29%20cost%20of%20assessment%20chingos/11_assessment_chingos_final_new.pdf.

¹⁴ Chingos, 2012.

¹⁵ Joe Willhoft, Executive Director, Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, "Smarter Balanced Assessments: Implementation and Sustainability," presentation via webinar, June 26, 2013, <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/resources-events/webinars/>.

¹⁶ Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), "PARCC Tests: An Investment in Learning," 2013, http://www.parc-conline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCCCostEstimates_07-22-2013.pptx.

¹⁷ Michelle R. Davis, "States' Online Testing Problems Raise Common-Core Concerns," *Education Week*, May 3, 2013, http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/05/03/30testing_h32.html?tkn=NZBFBUSSY0hpDfeVwT0bmK%2BN8tXPR4SY%2FV0d&cmp=clp-ecseclips.

It is important for states to begin working on technical issues immediately to fix any glitches before the widespread launch of the new assessments in the 2014–15 school year.

PARCC and Smarter Balanced have issued guidance to states on hardware and network requirements. Some schools, districts, and states have already used the [Technology Readiness Tool](#) to assess their capacity to administer the tests. To date, however, roughly half of all school districts have not taken that important step, and only a small handful of states have pressed each of their districts to gauge where they stand. Governors can supply necessary leadership by urging the remaining districts to complete the self-diagnosis. That information can be used not only in preparation for the new assessments, but also by state leaders as they determine future infrastructure investments to meet the learning needs of all students across the state.

If states have technology gaps, the costs to update those systems will have to be added to the costs associated with offering the new tests. States that are tackling the gaps are viewing their investment as a means to improve student learning, as well as testing. Using the data generated from the Technology Readiness Tool, **Louisiana** estimated that schools would need a 7-to-1 ratio of students to devices. Although schools in the state have nearly 200,000 devices available for online testing, only one-third of them met the required criteria. The state is working with districts to make small upgrades and investments so that more schools are ready to use technology both to bring student learning into the 21st century and for the new assessments. As part of that endeavor, the state is helping districts find refurbished computers, assisting with cooperative purchasing, and encouraging the sharing of technology knowhow.¹⁸

Rhode Island Governor Lincoln Chafee signed a [budget](#) allocating \$20 million for the Wireless Classroom Initiative, which will reimburse the cost of providing wireless Internet access to public school students. The funding will allow for e-learning opportunities, online textbooks, and online assessments. To support access to technology and high-quality online resources, the Rhode Island Department of Education created a master price agreement for bundled technology, which includes computers and tablets, support, and maintenance.¹⁹

On a larger scale, in 2002 **Maine** launched a program to provide all public middle school students with a laptop. Today, all seventh- and eighth-graders have their own laptop and half of the state's high schools also participate in the program. Building on the success of this program, Maine worked with **Hawaii** and **Vermont** to craft a request for proposals that would benefit multiple states in their effort to access technology. The proposal asks contractors to provide devices, wireless services, professional development for educators, and technology repair services. This [Multi-State Learning Technology Initiative](#), led by Maine, includes Hawaii and Vermont as partners, with **Massachusetts**, **Montana**, **New Jersey**, **Oklahoma**, and **South Carolina** expressing interest. The goal of the initiative is to leverage financial savings in purchasing by aggregating several states, and possibly individual districts.²⁰

Idaho is a leader in expanding access to technology through the [Idaho Education Network \(IEN\)](#). The IEN has already connected high schools in 131 school districts and charter schools—all but two districts in the state, which opted out of the program—with high-speed bandwidth. That work was completed a year and a half ahead of schedule and below the proposed budget. Phases two and three of

¹⁸Michelle R. Davis “Are You Tech-Ready for the Common Core?” *Education Week*, Oct. 15, 2012, <http://www.edweek.org/dd/articles/2012/10/17/01readiness.h06.html>.

¹⁹H 7323, Rhode Island General Assembly, (February 1, 2012), <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText12/housetext12/h7323aaa.pdf>.

²⁰Sean Cavanaugh, “Maine Leading Initiative for Multistate Tech Buys,” *Education Week*, Mar. 12, 2013, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/03/13/24maine.h32.html>.

the IEN will connect middle and elementary schools, as well as libraries, to the network. The program is managed at the state level and a technical team monitors bandwidth usage and trends to support wireless access and technology initiatives. Funding for this program was primarily provided by the federal [e-Rate](#) program, with additional contributions from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and private foundation funding.²¹ **Maine**, **North Carolina**, and **Utah** also have developed statewide broadband networks.²² Beyond the immediate need for offering assessments online, increased bandwidth and access to computers and tablets will help teachers, schools, districts and states as they transition to more effective digital learning opportunities and online materials to increase student learning across entire states.

Governors Leading the Change

As states move forward with the implementation of the CCSS and related assessments, it is essential for governors and other state policymakers to lead policy change and communications efforts with the public. Many governors are already doing that work by calling for funding for CCSS implementation and discussing the issue in a range of venues.

Recently, governors in several states issued executive orders delineating the individual state role in implementation of the CCSS and underscoring the importance of tying better assessments to the more rigorous standards. **Arizona** Governor Brewer [affirmed](#) that a new

assessment would be procured to align to Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards. **Oklahoma** Governor Mary Fallin [directed](#) the Secretary of Education and Workforce Development to ensure that all assessments used to evaluate Oklahoma students be developed with input from Oklahomans. **Iowa** Governor Terry Branstad [declared](#) that the state will choose assessments to measure the Iowa Core and that school districts may select additional assessments to measure student progress. **Nevada** Governor Brian Sandoval [created](#) the Common Core State Standards Steering Committee and directed it to provide plans and resources for students in response to a college and career readiness assessment, which will be selected by the State Board of Education.

Conclusion

The governors in these and other states consider the assessments to be an important part of the implementation work related to the CCSS and are taking a strong leadership role in that process. Governors are adjusting budgets to support implementation of the new tests, ensuring that the new assessments are incorporated into the current testing plan and eliminating old assessments, and confirming that plans are in place to provide schools with the computers and training necessary to support the use of the new assessments. Each of those steps will enable educators, schools, and districts to work towards effective implementation of both the CCSS and the related assessments, in order advance the effort to improve student learning across all states.

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²¹ Julie Best, Director of Communications, Idaho Education Network, Boise, ID, email to author, April Apr. 8, 2013.

²² Michelle R. Davis, "School Districts Seek Faster Internet Connections," *Education Week*, Mar. 11, 2013, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/03/14/25broadband.h32.html>.