C-SAIL | THE CENTER ON STANDARDS, ALIGNMENT, INSTRUCTION, AND LEARNING
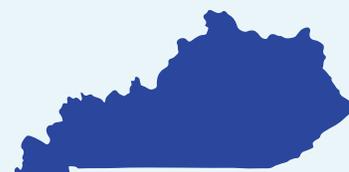
YEAR 1 STATE REPORT:
KENTUCKY

KATIE PAK
University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education

with **NELSON FLORES, T. PHILIP NICHOLS, EMILY PLUMMER, AMY STORNAIUOLO,** and **LAURA DESIMONE**

FEBRUARY 2017

Special Acknowledgements

About the Center on Standards, Alignment, Instruction, and Learning (C-SAIL)

The Center on Standards, Alignment, Instruction, and Learning (C-SAIL) examines how college- and career-ready standards are implemented, if they improve student learning, and what instructional tools measure and support their implementation. C-SAIL is led by Andy Porter, with a team of researchers from the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, University of Southern California Rossier School of Education, American Institutes for Research, and Vanderbilt Peabody College. The Center is funded through a grant from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education.

Introduction

The Center on Standards, Alignment, Instruction, and Learning (**C-SAIL**) examines how college- and career-readiness (CCR) standards are implemented, whether they improve student learning, and what instructional tools measure and support their implementation. Established in July 2015 and funded by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education, C-SAIL has partnered with California, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Texas to explore their experiences with CCR standards-based reform, particularly regarding students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs).

This report examines how the state of Kentucky is continuing CCR standards implementation during a time of transition. As their state legislature mandates a review of the standards and accountability system every six years, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) is in the midst of drafting potential revisions for public review and official implementation by summer 2017. For the purposes of this report and in keeping with C-SAIL's focus, we concentrate on implementation of Kentucky's English language arts (ELA) and math standards.

Kentucky Academic Standards Timeline | At-A-Glance

The adoption, implementation, and revision of Kentucky's CCR standards and assessments is an ongoing process spanning several years. Below is an overview of Kentucky's timeline for this process, beginning with the year that CCR standards were first adopted:

Year CCR standards were adopted	Kentucky adopted the ELA and math Common Core State Standards (CCSS) verbatim in 2010 and added them to the Science, Social Studies, Arts and Humanities, Practical Living and Career Studies standards that were already in place. This set of standards has been renamed The Kentucky Academic Standards.
Year(s) the CCR standards were fully implemented (all schools in the state were required to use the CCR standards)	The Kentucky Academic Standards in ELA and math were fully implemented in the 2011-2012 school year.
Year(s) CCR standards were/will be revised	The KDE is working with content experts, teachers, and education stakeholders to propose revisions to the ELA and math standards. Proposed changes will be posted for public review. Additional changes will be made and presented to the Kentucky Board of Education for approval. The exact timeline is unknown at this time due to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Year(s) CCR-aligned assessments were fully administered across the state	The Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress (K-PREP) test was fully administered in spring 2012.
Year(s) CCR-aligned assessments were/will be revised	The KDE is currently working with multiple state shareholders including educators, legislators, and the public on developing a new accountability system to meet new federal requirements of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). In the future, KDE will issue Request for Proposals for new CCR-aligned assessments.
Major policy developments relevant to standards-based reform in the state	Senate Bill 1, enacted in the 2009 Kentucky General Assembly, addressed educator quality, standards, assessments, accountability, and assistance to low-performing schools. With the passage of ESSA in December 2015 and the development of a new Kentucky accountability system, the Kentucky Board of Education will modify state regulations in spring 2017 and the Kentucky General Assembly is likely to respond with changes to statutes in its 2017 session.

Data Analysis | Our Framework

Drawing on interviews with five key state officials across various KDE offices, the descriptive report synthesizes and analyzes those responses using the policy attributes theory (Porter, Floden, Freeman, Schmidt, & Schwille, 1988), a theoretical framework positing five attributes related to successful policy implementation. The following descriptions of each policy attribute guided this analysis:

- **SPECIFICITY** describes how extensive, detailed, and/or prescriptive a policy is. The explicitness of the goals, guidelines, and resources may help schools implement policies with a greater degree of fidelity.

- **AUTHORITY** describes how policies gain legitimacy and status through persuasion (e.g., rules or law, historical practice, or charismatic leaders). Policies have authority when state and district leaders, parents, community members, and other stakeholders devote time and resources to the reform initiative, which sends the clear signal that the endeavor is an institutional priority. Policies are also deemed authoritative when stakeholders participate in the decision-making processes or when they demonstrate their investment in the reform.

- **CONSISTENCY** describes the extent to which various policies are aligned and how policies relate to each other (or support each other).

- **POWER** describes how policies are reinforced and enacted through systems of reward/sanction.

- **STABILITY** describes the extent to which policies change or remain constant over time.

The report is organized around six focal areas—standards and curriculum, assessment, professional development (PD), students with disabilities (SWDs), English language learners (referred to in this report by the KDE term English learners, or ELs), and communication and outreach. We report on each focal area through the lens of each policy attribute to help readers see how state officials identified areas of strengths and challenges related to standards implementation in Kentucky. However, we do not purport to provide the full depth and breadth of the department's work towards standards-based reform, given the limited nature of our data set. This report is therefore a snapshot of the state's efforts in implementing CCR-aligned curriculum, assessments, PD, ELs, SWDs and communication and outreach. We will integrate these findings with interview data from three districts, which we will conduct in the winter of 2017. Further, we plan to conduct state and district interviews for the next four years of C-SAIL, ending in the spring and summer of 2020; data from these interviews will be continually integrated into our analyses.

Executive Summary

SPECIFICITY

From KDE's vantage point, actions to create local curricula aligned to the standards unfolded in a specific manner to compensate for the inherent openness of the standards themselves. State officials speculate that the limited quantity of the CCR standards, and thus, the lack of curricular specificity prescribed by the standards, may have afforded teachers more time to promote deeper student mastery of ELA and math content. Some of the detailed guidance that KDE provides to assist districts, schools, and teachers with their implementation of CCR standards are the Model Curriculum Framework, supplementary resources that deconstruct the standards, and resource and PD that caters to the specific needs of regional networks, SWDs and ELs. KDE believes these supports are well-received by teachers, partially as a result of the generally broad nature of the standards themselves (note: many more examples of their detailed resources can be found **here**).

AUTHORITY

KDE engages in many activities to lend credence to the authority of standards-based reform. Some of these efforts include offering districts expert support through a grant project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the WIDA consortium, and the Stanford University Understanding Language group. Further, Kentucky's local decision-making structure allows districts to craft instruction customized to their unique student populations and engage practitioners in locally driven PD initiatives through regional cooperatives and networks. KDE has also prioritized inviting stakeholder input on key policy designs such as the accountability model, the professional growth and effectiveness system, and the revision of their standards by hosting a series of town hall meetings and soliciting online feedback. The Commissioner has shareholder advisory groups for students, teachers, principals, superintendents, local school board members, and parents. KDE officials note the increasingly positive feedback they have received over the years and the low impact of the national standardized testing opt-out movement in their state, alongside the strong backing they receive from public leaders, as testament to the legitimacy of their standards-based reform initiatives.

CONSISTENCY

KDE was able to revamp their statewide assessment, the K-PREP, in an effort to align the new test completely to standards and to their students. The creation of an entirely new assessment aligned with the CCR standards signals intensive efforts at the outset to create a consistent system of standards-based reform, even though the first iteration of the test did not reflect fully the evolved understanding of the standards that administrators and teachers developed as time passed. Another concern noted by KDE officials related to the pockets of inconsistency in terms of instruction, as the rigor of teachers' instructional shifts did not quite align with the rigor of the assessment at the beginning of the implementation period. Other efforts to achieve a consistent vision of standards-based reform include forming coalitions with higher education institutions to shape shared expectations of college- and career-readiness. KDE administrators also spoke at length about their strides to make PD consistent with the new teaching and learning expectations

of the CCR standards. They altered their professional learning standards and developed Next Generation Leadership networks to build local capacity by offering each district an opportunity to create teams to analyze the standards and learn about instructional strategies for teaching the standards. Finally, as work groups meet over the course of the summer and fall 2016 periods to recommend changes to the existing accountability model, KDE has established institutional structures to maintain consistent system-wide expectations and strategies. Kentucky anticipates that the Kentucky Board of Education will approve a new accountability model in spring 2017.

POWER

A seldom-mentioned attribute, power appeared in interview responses in reference to the "bragging rights" schools adopted when their students performed well on the K-PREP. The state accountability system was described not as a way of rewarding or sanctioning districts, schools, and teachers for their performance, but as a way of identifying which schools and/or districts needed targeted supports and providing those interventions and resources. Connected to the accountability system are concerns about the achievement scores of ELs influencing school ratings. Districts accept newcomers with "no formal English background," and, based on federal requirements, are still held accountable to these students' K-PREP performance without having much time to work with them academically. KDE administrators are hopeful that the extra guidance they have been providing to districts and the accountability flexibility for ELs provided in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will mitigate some concerns. Further, while all Kentucky teachers are required to attend 24 hours of PD annually, KDE does not require districts to hold particular sessions. The only metric they track is districts that specifically request support from KDE, as they then follow up with request for feedback and updates on their needs. In general, their policy of local control is such that they do not make any of their own opportunities mandatory.

STABILITY

Though teachers had to adapt to major curricular and instructional shifts with the advent of CCR standards, KDE staff report that changes were welcomed over the past six years. While the changes in practice appear to be positive, KDE interviewees did note that the act of aligning resources that met the level of rigor of the standards was difficult at first. In general, however, past and future uncertainties about changes to leadership, and legislation dominated the many references to the stability of standards-based reform. Kentucky welcomed a new State Commissioner of Education and Governor in the last year, which prompted remarks about adaptations that they may make to their public education system. The passage of ESSA and the anticipated changes to Kentucky's accountability model, are also on the forefront of KDE administrators' minds.

Standards & Curriculum

It is evident that, from KDE's vantage point, actions to create local curricula aligned to the standards unfolded in a specific manner to compensate for the broad nature of the standards themselves. Stakeholders came to support the instructional and curricular shifts as state leaders demonstrated their investment in the CCR standards. This authority that the standards have gained, as well as the specificity of the provided curricular supports, is thought to have helped in stabilizing the effects of standards-based reform.

SPECIFICITY

The advent of CCR standards-based reform yielded a dramatic shift in expectations of teaching and learning. A major challenge for teachers, according to KDE staff's perceptions, was that the new standards required "deep cognitive thinking and problem solving…It was not... regurgitating basically what you learned…but it was really…synthesizing multiple sources and us[ing] those skills to think at a higher level." Though the standards demanded more rigorous instruction, KDE cited their limited quantity and specificity as an advantage. The eight foundational understandings listed in the Kentucky Academic Standards, which are fewer in number compared to their previous standards, serve as a "kind of infrastructure to the factual information, the progression of skills and things they do need to know and be able to do from [kindergarten] all the way through [the 12th grade]." As the state officials note, fewer standards allow students to obtain a deeper and more rigorous level of ELA and math mastery at an earlier stage in their academic development, which they can then apply more fruitfully to other content areas. The lack of specificity, or prescriptiveness, in the ELA and math learning goals may have helped teachers feel more freedom in the way they adjusted to rigorous CCR-aligned standards.

In response to the non-prescriptive nature of the standards themselves, KDE quickly initiated the process for rolling detailed curricular materials out to their stakeholders to serve as a resource or guide for local districts determining their own curriculum. Included in these initial supports was the deconstruction of the **ELA** and **math** standards, which outlined what the standards were asking for, how to break them down into learning targets, and how to create lesson plans out of them. They also "introduced a comprehensive process for developing curricula using your standards and the context in which you teach and the needs of the students and your resources" and supplemented this guidance with a **Model Curriculum Framework**. This approach suggests that KDE attempted to make an unspecific product, the Common Core State Standards, into something more concrete and applicable to everyday practice. The "front loading" of these extensive curricular supports at the outset of the CCR standards implementation process helped teachers adjust to a new culture of instructional practice, according to KDE's recollection of these early events.

AUTHORITY

Although the KDE Model Curriculum Framework was developed to help districts create their own curriculum that is "balanced and [keeps] student needs and contextual information… in mind," ultimately the policy is to respect the authority of "school-based decision making at the school level and district level." Each district decides how they would like to see the standards

realized in their schools, and schools in turn provide their own guidance to teachers enacting the standards in their classrooms. The districts were not completely left to their own devices: they had access to the supports provided through partnerships with the **Literacy Design Collaborative** (LDC) and the **Mathematics Design Collaborative** (MDC), provided through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. While there is local curricular autonomy, there is also access to expert guidance to help strengthen local initiatives.

In addition to allocating resources for locally designed curricula, KDE contributed to the authority of the CCR standards by publicizing state officials' and stakeholders' support of these shifts in teaching and learning. Governor Beshear, before he left office in 2015, expressed his support of KDE's efforts in "upping the rigor…to help our students become college- and career-ready and be competitive nationally and internationally." This executive backing of the standards was instrumental in bolstering public acceptance of the shift towards CCR reform. Positive perceptions towards the standards are evident in the data gathered through the **Kentucky Core Academic Standards Challenge**, which invited thousands of stakeholders to submit feedback on each of the ELA and math standards.

Over 75% of the comments expressed their approval, a sign that stakeholders ascribe a significant level of authority to the standards. As state legislators consider how they may want to revise the standards based on this feedback, the intention is that they will retain the substance of the standards while putting a "Kentucky stamp" on them, as "a lot of teachers think there's nothing wrong with [them]."

> **"Collectively… when people say, oh, how do you just adjust to the new standards, everybody's like, they're not new. They're our standards and you know, when you get that answer it's a good sign."**
>
> **—PARTICIPANT 2**

STABILITY

Though teachers had to adapt to major curricular and instructional shifts with the advent of CCR standards, KDE staff report that changes were well-received by teachers over the past six years. In reflecting on their pedagogy, teachers came to "reconsider the materials they were using" and develop their own "deeper, richer vocabulary and an understanding of literary elements." They reexamined their background content knowledge, their understanding of the integrated, not individual, nature of reading, writing, mathematical, speaking, and listening skills, and their expectations of student cognitive thinking. This cultural transition occurred at a slow but steady pace—KDE administrators recall the gradual changes in conversations about what kids "really have the capability of doing and what we expect them to do." Now, Kentucky has teachers who are fluently able to speak to the "X amount of kids who are CCR-ready" and what they need to do to ensure high-quality education for those who have not yet reached the CCR level. Though these changes in practice appear to be positive, KDE interviewees did note the resource challenge that faced teachers. The act of aligning resources that met the level of rigor of the standards was difficult at first, but these concerns have dissipated as educators gained more familiarity with the standards.

As KDE administrators and educators await the new accountability model, the question of stability comes to the fore. As interview participants remark, teachers are "desperate to have stability" given the constant evolution of the education system and the widespread belief that "there's nothing wrong with the standards that [they've] been working on for years."

Assessment

The passage of **Senate Bill 1** in 2009 set in motion the development and implementation of a new accountability program, which included the creation of an entirely new assessment. The accountability program is now known as the **Unbridled Learning Accountability Model**, which incorporates student achievement data and results from program reviews into the final ratings for districts and schools. The opportunity to test students with a new assessment consistent with revised CCR standards presents both advantages and disadvantages. However, KDE attests to the authority of the Unbridled Learning model and its positive influence on educators, though the new Commissioner of Education's views on the system's complexity is consistent with what the Commissioner heard from Kentuckians during his listening tour in spring 2016. An accountability system that can be communicated more simply is a goal of the new development. A similarly complex portrait of stability emerges as state testing administrators make changes to the standardized assessments based on their evolving understandings of identifying and measuring CCR-aligned student performance.

AUTHORITY

KDE officials testify to the authority of the tests. One stated that in Kentucky, "people see it as a very serious business of how they do on the assessment." The "fairly low-level impact" of the national opt-out movement in Kentucky may also be an indication of this sentiment. KDE believes that this past year, a very small number of students opted out of taking the assessment, while fewer than five individuals called the department to ask questions about opting out. Interview participants speculated that the home-grown nature of the assessment—"it's a Kentucky test, it's produced for Kentucky, it involved Kentucky teachers"—as well as students' familiarity with the four-year-old assessment led to the "relatively minor and small-scale" nature of the opt-out movement within the state. Additionally, Kentucky law does not allow for an opt-out process for public school students on state-required assessments.

Enhancing the authority that KDE administrators attribute to the tests is perhaps the institutional backing stemming from Senate Bill 1 of 2009 and the No Child Left Behind waiver approved by the U.S. Department of Education. Both laws were the products of stakeholder engagement. As legislators worked on Senate Bill 1 in particular, KDE conducted extensive outreach to various stakeholder groups, "laying out the model, asking for feedback." They also went to superintendents, regional cooperatives, district assessment coordinators, and the **Prichard Committee**, which consists of parents and community members. These stakeholders were "very much invited to the table and many times it's on the regulation development more so than the initial statute development," while their legislative staff were involved in giving input on the development of the statutes. The resulting statewide assessment program and accountability system outlined in Senate Bill 1 is not only legitimized through institutional authority, but also through normative authority.

The **Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES)**, which KDE included in its waiver to the U.S. Department of Education, is also authoritative due to the input provided by the teacher-driven steering committee. Other members of the steering committee included, but were not limited to, the Kentucky Association of Schools Administrators, superintendents, school board officials, and school and district leaders. This group issued recommendations for evaluating teachers and principals based on local measures, state measures, and student growth. KDE ended up limiting the weight of the student growth percentile because the steering committee "didn't feel like it was appropriate… nor did they like that it was only representing 20% of the teachers," as it would only apply to ELA and math teachers of 4th through 8th grades and may discourage people from wanting to teach in those tested areas. Ultimately, KDE did not want the teacher evaluation measures to feel like a "gotcha" system, but more of a "growing system." They therefore utilized stakeholder feedback to emphasize multiple sources of evidence to capture professional practice. How PGES operates within the state accountability system acts in reality remains to be seen, however, as KDE delayed using the PGES scores as a measure of accountability.

Though KDE attests to the authority of the accountability model, the Commissioner of Education's public remarks about the overly complex nature of the measurement mechanisms may support the need for change to the Unbridled Learning system (a need that is also reinforced by ESSA). The assessments provide "a great amount of detail" for the district and school as publicly shown in the school report card system. Reported are (K-PREP) results in five content areas: reading, math, science, social studies, and writing. With the exception of reading and math, not all subjects are tested at every grade in elementary and middle school. In addition, students (primarily at high school level) complete end-of-course exams in Algebra II, English II, Biology, and U.S. History. All students in the 11th grade also complete the full battery of ACT tests. Students receive reports that place their performance in each content area into the categories (from low to high) of Novice, Apprentice, Proficient, and Distinguished (NAPD). The Unbridled Learning Accountability Model also includes annual public reporting of student performance disaggregated by various student groups. The scores relate to their students' achievement levels, their growth, their college- and career-readiness, their graduation rates, and the percentage of proficient or distinguished students in achievement gap groups. This "multi-component system" indicates to constituents if their districts and school have made annual measurable progress and how they are doing against that goal. Anyone has the ability to download data sets by topic and manipulate them as they wish. However, reports on individual students are not released to the public but are submitted to schools who then keep the information confidential. Supplementing these varied tiers of report card scores are workbooks that help people decipher and analyze the data. However, State Commissioner of Education Dr. Pruitt acknowledges that perhaps this system should be simplified. In fact, he has "shared publicly that he really would like to see a more simplified system…It's gotten so complex that if our own… schools and districts can't explain it well in the line of Walmart… then it's too complex. And it shouldn't be that difficult." These impending revisions to the accountability formula as a result of Kentuckians' desires for simplicity, a widespread sentiment that emerged from the Commissioner's listening tour in spring 2016, also hold authority, as they reflect public feedback.

CONSISTENCY

The theory behind standards-based reform is that the alignment of standards, assessments, and accountability will create a coherent system that will ultimately produce learning gains for students (Mehta, 2013; Smith & O'Day, 1991). Similarly, when the CCR standards were adopted in 2010, KDE saw the desire of educators for consistency as a valuable opportunity to "start fresh" and initiate a bid process with a vendor to create a fully aligned assessment for grades 3-8 and for high school writing that is completely customized for students and vetted by Kentucky teachers. As they developed new items, they consulted with classroom teachers, the KDE Curriculum and Instruction staff, university researchers, and principals to look for potential misalignment of questions with standards. In addition to field testing all of their items, they have a process for teachers to report back on operationalized questions that still seem to be off the mark. As a result of this iterative alignment procedure, the updated test item bank now contains "a reasonable sampling of what the standards are asking for," with prompts to synthesize, analyze, and respond to longer, more complex pieces of text rather than prompts that merely ask students to recall facts. This same process will be used for high school end-of-course assessments in ELA and math in the near future.

While the KDE assessments for grades 3 through 8 are home grown, linked to the standards, and are locally supported, the high school assessments are designed to align to high school course content. KDE purchased **end-of-course shelf tests** that have not been customized to match Kentucky's standards in the same way K-PREP has been. As a result, some teachers share that the test is sometimes given more weight than the standards. However, as the KDE officials state, the end- of-course tests represent just one checkpoint in English, math, science, and social studies—they do not fully capture (nor are they meant to fully capture) the "depth and breadth that you'd like to see covered by your standards."

POWER

The idea of power is usually associated with accountability systems that reward districts, schools, and teachers for exemplary performance and sanction them for poor performance. This was more the case with Kentucky's first accountability system, which allocated financial rewards to schools based on their performance. KDE has since then removed the financial incentives from the system: accountability in Kentucky now is more about the supports they provide to struggling districts and schools than the consequences associated with high or low ratings. Priority schools, or those that are determined to be the lowest performing, work with an assigned KDE staff person who helps identify the needs of the school and then equips them with the appropriate resources. Schools that do well, on the other hand, experience "bragging rights" and media coverage for having students that score high on the tests. KDE administrators note that the motivation to do well on K-PREP is intrinsic and not necessarily the result of extrinsic rewards or sanctions. When testing season arrives, schools often showcase signs and banners that highlight their status in the accountability system, as depicted in the quote below:

> If you drive around the state of Kentucky, it is not uncommon… around the time score reports come out to see banners and signs on school buildings; they talk about what their standing is in the system.

Recognition for high performance is a reward in and of itself, according to these anecdotal reports.

KDE officials express understanding of the possibility of unintended consequences associated with their accountability system. This is known to social scientists as Campbell's law, "the more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor" (Koretz, 2008, p. 237). In recognition of this possibility and to address it, KDE has formed a "consequential review" work group charged with anticipating the unintended consequences that may come to fruition with the new accountability system that is currently under development.

STABILITY

Efforts to make CCR assessments more consistent with the standards influence the stability of the testing program, though some growing pains associated with educational change are to be expected. Kentucky's relatively smooth process for rolling out new standards and assessments gained national recognition. At the same time, it did take some educators time to get used to the changes. As people directly encountered the new assessments, for example, KDE initially fielded some concerns relating to revised portions of the exam. They received calls about teachers' first reactions to the newly implemented K-PREP, especially regarding the ELA portion of the exam. The length and complexity of the ELA passages and questions were concerning at first, but the reaction has "mellowed over the last few years." Though educators and students have become familiar with assessment, the impending expiration of the current contract means that bids for the next version of state assessments (2017-2018 and beyond) will open within the next year. As KDE officials explain, "this is the time of change to the accountability model as well as the assessment, which they are able to predict as they have been refining or replacing the assessments every 6 to 8 years since the early 1990s (a practice that is **common** in most U.S. states). The difficulty with the constant expectations for changes in assessment and accountability is, of course, in helping schools "have some stability for planning and working within that structure where you're sort of constantly thinking about the next piece."

> **"There is certainly change afoot in assessment accountability, but we don't know what that change looks like yet."**
> **—PARTICIPANT 1**

Professional Development

Educational cooperatives and KDE field coaches emerged most frequently as the providers of PD customized to meet local needs. Other PD resources that made standards-based reform more specific and consistent are the access to online tools, content coaches, and support from external partners aligned to the standards. Power was seldom discussed as a lever of PD implementation.

SPECIFICITY

The provision of myriad PD resources reflects an attempt to make implementation of standards-based reform as specific and clear to districts as possible. One particularly useful form of PD is to provide targeted and intensive coaching to districts. Those that were chosen through an application process were assigned a coach that helped them "deep dive into implementation" and scale-up strategies for CCR-aligned instruction. Regional coaches, as well as free, online resources that reinforced coaching supports, were also available to districts. Another PD strategy is to partner with leadership networks and educational cooperatives that include members from multiple districts. The aforementioned LDC and MDC (page 7) work with 28 districts, as well as the work provided through the regional content networks, has significantly impacted "students that we've had a hard time reaching before," which is a professional learning plan that KDE wishes to scale up. From an authority perspective, teachers, administrators, and directors of the cooperatives have expressed their investment in the PD offered through these collaborations by asking KDE to please not "take the networks away. We are not ready," even though some of them were "naysayers early on."

The expansion in the use of technology has also influenced KDE's PD strategy and subsequently, the specificity of standards reform. All the support offered to regional cooperatives are placed online, which has especially benefitted teachers and administrators living in Kentucky's most rural areas. The people who are far away from their cooperative, as well as those working in small districts that cannot afford to lose administrators traveling for a full day for a one- to two-hour PD, are now able to immediately access information without needing to leave their place of work. The online PD is especially helpful in training teachers to understand the English Language Development (ELD) standards for ELs. Kentucky educators can view **webinars** and download resources on the 2012 amplification of the ELD standards, though KDE also provided face- to face-trainings in Louisville, Frankfort, and Bowling Green. KDE's membership in the WIDA consortium, which is a national organization that advances academic language development and achievement for linguistically diverse students, also provides educators access to live workshops and follow-up webinars on differentiated pedagogy for ELs. These various opportunities are available because the "state has made great investment in technology to allow for communications, and…as a result, you're seeing a lot of [online] activities that qualify as PD."

CONSISTENCY

When PD is consistent with state-mandated reform initiatives and offers specific assistance, teachers increase their buy-in of the changes they are expected to adopt. In other words, consistency is a precursor to teachers recognizing the authority of policy changes. One example of KDE aligning their PD expectations with their implementation of CCR standards is their alteration of **professional learning standards** so that PD was not just a one-time event, but something that is ongoing, embedded, and instrumental in deepening teachers' understanding of the instructional shifts. Another example of consistency is KDE working with various networks to ensure that local implementation of the standards was consistent with state leaders' intentions. For three school years after KDE adopted the CCR standards in 2010, the agency worked with three math representatives and three ELA representatives from each district to form math and ELA teacher leadership networks respectively. In other words, KDE helped acclimate its 173

districts to new curricular, pedagogical, and assessment expectations by creating content-specific networks that built members' capacity to teach their colleagues back in their districts how to deconstruct the standards, think about standards progression when designing unit plans, and help their districts consume this large amount of information. The intent was to "build capacity within [the districts] and make [the learning] ongoing." Parallel to this network was the Instructional Support Leadership Network (ISLN), which consisted of district leaders who learned how to work with teachers on their implementation of the standards. These initiatives are all a part of Kentucky's system of Leadership Networks, which also contains opportunities for social studies and science networks and the **Next Generation Leadership Networks** (launched in summer 2016).

While the networked PD approach was designed to equip local practitioners with the specific tools to read, apply, and communicate the standards to ensure greater fidelity of implementation, KDE administrators posit that its success was contingent on the type of district infrastructure in place that facilitated information sharing. They acknowledge that some teacher leaders returned to their districts and were able to disseminate what they had learned in an established feedback loop, while others were not necessarily afforded the same opportunities.

POWER

While all Kentucky teachers are required to attend 24 hours of PD annually, KDE does not have requirements about the content or focus of the PD—districts are given the autonomy to decide that for themselves. Rather, KDE provides support through the leadership networks and service to districts, and they measure whether districts specifically request support from KDE, so they can follow-up with requests for feedback and updates on district needs. KDE PD is a "service that we offer…it is not anything that [districts] would get in trouble for or get rewarded for, it is truly just to support them in scaling, scaling the work." An example of the few times they would make something mandatory is when they asked districts not meeting their annual goals for ELs or districts that served high numbers of ELs to participate in their **Stanford Understanding Language** training in the years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. In 2016-2017, all districts received an open invitation to send one EL teacher and one general education teacher to these trainings. The intention was to make sure that general education teachers also had the resources to differentiate and scaffold instruction for EL students. For the most part, however, they leave it to the districts to decide on the PD they offer to teachers.

Students with Disabilities (SWDs)

An ongoing debate in the standards-based reform movement is how educators should provide SWDs with access to a common core aligned curriculum, given the "pretty high rate of inclusion in general education" and the very few students Kentucky has in special schools or self-contained classrooms. Should Kentucky educators hold these students accountable to grade-level standards or should they focus on student growth? KDE administrators note the specific resources and PD that may have contributed to the authority of standards-based reform for all students, regardless of ability or achievement.

SPECIFICITY

Kentucky's **System of Interventions** is the state framework that draws upon the national Response to Intervention (RtI) model and outlines tiered supports for students with learning differences. Every student receives the requisite core academic instruction, which signifies the first tier. Students will be moved into Tier 2 and receive more targeted interventions, or Tier 3 and experience individualized support, based on student achievement data and indications that more academic interventions are necessary. The goal is that school staff will monitor the progress of every child so that each individual can be meeting grade-level standards, unless significant cognitive disabilities call for otherwise. While the state offers the contours of this framework, districts are ultimately the deciders of the type of tiered supports they offer to their SWDs.

Curricular materials and supports provided for SWDs appear to offer specific guidance in accommodating different needs in a standards-based classroom. While the actual curriculum that a student encounters is based on local district discretion, KDE provides an array of resources to assist teachers in its implementation. Some of these resources include technical assistance to meet compliance, guidance documents to identify and accommodate disabilities, or progress monitoring tools, especially when students undergo the aforementioned RtI process. The KDE RtI team even walks through classrooms to report their outside perspectives on the RtI process's strengths and areas of growth to individual districts. Finally, KDE is developing and piloting CCR standards specific to students of low incidence disabilities who may not be on a traditional high school diploma path. As SWDs have historically underperformed compared to their peers in standards-based classroom settings, having access to specific differentiation guidance from KDE is all the more necessary.

In terms of specific instructional support, co-teachers with SWDs in the general education setting receive PD through Kentucky's **Co-Teaching for Gap Closure initiative**. This opportunity began three to four years ago, as more SWDs were included in general education classes. Even the coaches receive coaching so that the teachers they mentor encounter the appropriate background on "how to co-teach, what that looks like, how you work with other teachers." KDE acknowledges that it is still a challenge to adequately prepare every teacher to work with all students, but the financial and human capital investment in improving co-teaching indicates the specificity with which KDE looks to make sure each child is able to access CCR-aligned curriculum at each of his or her respective grade levels.

AUTHORITY

The networked learning PD approach has also benefitted SWDs. The nine **special education cooperatives** provide "ongoing trainings [and] technical assistance… align[ed] clearly with the academic standards." Some of the supports offered by the cooperatives, in partnership with KDE, are trainings for each new Director of Special Education and quarterly conferences, workshops, and institutes offered to practitioners. Teachers of SWDs received additional assistance through the state's personnel development grant, which focused on building the capacity of special education teachers to increase academic outcomes for students with low-incidence disabilities and on building communication and services to these same students. The state's investments in professionally developing teachers of SWDs represent even more institutional authority of CCR-aligned instruction.

English Learners (ELs)

ELs represent another student subgroup receiving additional supports under standards-based reform. This reality is especially true given the reported increases of EL populations in Kentucky schools in recent years. KDE's involvement in the **WIDA** consortium makes CCR standards implementation more consistent with the **English Language Proficiency** (ELP) standards, specifically attainable, and institutionally authoritative. Upcoming guidance on ESSA regulations concerning ELs will help KDE clarify how it will employ the power element of standards reform for their EL population, which is currently a weak point for the department.

AUTHORITY

Another partner organization is the Stanford University Understanding Language group, which signals even more specificity, and also institutional authority, of CCR standards for ELs. Their **Persuasion Across Time and Space unit** was introduced to teachers in a two-day, live session. Participants then received a two-day follow-up session a few weeks later to get feedback on their lessons and unit plans. The teachers involved in this PD also were able to upload their lessons to share with others. The ongoing and collaborative nature of this support to EL teachers reflects the specificity attribute of CCR standards policy, as it helps educators implement CCR-aligned instruction with fidelity to this important student sub-group. The credibility of the Stanford University Understanding Language's resources is further enhanced by their proven successes in North Carolina, Denver, Oakland, "and a couple other places that they had used it and [KDE] heard very many positive things about it," which also adds authority to the CCR standards' impact across different contexts and student abilities.

CONSISTENCY

An oft-mentioned challenge of exposing ELs to these new standards is addressing their academic vocabulary gap. The heightened emphasis that the Kentucky Academic Standards place on language development puts teachers of ELs in the difficult position of getting "kids up to speed." However, as one KDE administrator noted, "kids are not the products of their environment, they're products of expectations." Kentucky's partnership with WIDA helps educators maintain high expectations and rethink their pedagogy so that it is better suited for ELs. Dr. Gary Cook's alignment study of the Kentucky Academic Standards and WIDA's ELP Standards demonstrated the consistently rigorous academic expectations for ELs. WIDA trainings help teachers then design unit plans, lesson plans, and differentiation strategies that incorporate both sets of standards. These trainings are ongoing and occur both in person and online. Such efforts demonstrate not only the consistent nature of CCR-aligned expectations for ELs, but also the specificity of the PD designed to help teachers properly implement standards.

POWER

One concern relating to the power attribute is the integration of ELs, in the state accountability system. One challenge is that students enter the district with "no formal English background," but districts are held accountable for these students' K-PREP performance without having much time to work with them academically. Furthermore, one KDE official reports that some of the

districts that do not receive Title III funding for EL programs believe that they do not have to meet as many federal regulations. These non-Title III districts have therefore not taken the necessary steps to meet EL needs. KDE administrators are hopeful that making districts aware of the plethora of online EL program resources will help everyone evaluate the strengths of their services. They are also hopeful that ESSA flexibility will allow KDE to include the scores of not just current ELs, but also those that have exited the program to see how they achieve for the next four years as a non-EL student. The ultimate hope is that districts "think more about the student and how they can best be served," rather than serving EL populations because they are held accountable to their achievement.

Communication and Outreach

Concerns about the stability of changing leadership and policies spawned the intensification of KDE's communication to stakeholders regarding standards-based reform in order to persuade the public to stay committed to their efforts. Built into these outreach strategies are opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback, another source of authority that legitimizes KDE's planning for future policy activities. It was also to the state's advantage to form coalitions with partner organizations to determine consistent goals and sustain initiatives in the face of these changes.

AUTHORITY

KDE administrators frequently mention national and state policy changes, which have the potential to compromise the stability of KDE's work. In less than six months, Kentucky welcomed a new Commissioner of Education and Governor. They also witnessed the landmark passage of the ESSA in December 2015, which directs more decision-making power to state education agencies. This major transitional period has caused KDE to be "really intentional about our communication and where we really stand on things." They also took on an elaborate communication and outreach strategy during milestone events in order to actively maintain the support of the public. Right before the first release of K-PREP scores, for example, KDE educated the general assembly, the business community, parents, schools, and teachers about the inevitability of scores declining after the first year of CCR standards implementation. They also provided sample parent letters to superintendents so they could pass them to principals. The letters explained why standards needed to be more rigorous, how they benefit students, and how their children's scores may not seem as high at the beginning of the implementation process.

In an effort to solicit feedback from parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and community partners, the newly appointed Commissioner of Education hosted a series of town hall meetings, which spanned 2,200 miles across the state of Kentucky and were attended by approximately 3,000 people. The intent of these town hall meeting was to assess the state of standards-based reform, six years into the implementation of the Kentucky Academic Standards, in order to form ad hoc committees charged with rethinking the state accountability model based upon the public's experiences. KDE officials note that five core work teams "bubbled up, either through ESSA requirements or what we were hearing from the town halls": 1) a CCR group that is examining how Kentucky defines CCR in the accountability system; 2) an assessment group that is "looking at a number of topics around assessments;" 3) an opportunity and access group, which

explores opportunity gaps that the current system may be perpetuating by promoting certain accountability measures, such as participation in advanced placement coursework; 4) a school improvement group, which addresses how schools that need support are identified, supported, and exited; and 5) an educational innovations group, which will consider new approaches that could be integrated into a revised accountability model. Chairing each of these groups is a superintendent or assistant superintendent, while KDE administrators operate as support staff. The act of assigning leadership to a practitioner familiar with local challenges may add to the authority of these committees.

KDE officials explain that these groups will produce recommendations to a steering committee, which consists of approximately 40 members representing superintendents, principals, teachers, and other key stakeholder groups in Kentucky. This committee will craft potential changes to the state accountability model so that the public can react and offer additional feedback. The multiple tiers of feedback that KDE has built into their communication and outreach campaign regarding a revised accountability system is indeed an authoritative mechanism for respecting and acting on the opinions held by those who are directly influenced by CCR standards-based reform.

CONSISTENCY

As KDE transitioned to a new system in the earlier years of CCR standards implementation, KDE worked toward establishing a coherent and systemic vision for standards-based reform, as evidenced by their collaboration with the Kentucky Educators Association (the state's teachers' union), approximately 15 higher education institutes, and other key leaders in the state. These stakeholders decided together on a united vision of college- and career-readiness and how it may help focus the vertical alignment of preschool through graduate-level education in Kentucky. Their vision has consistently grounded the multiple initiatives that KDE has introduced, including the assessment and accountability program, according to the interview participants.

KDE's aforementioned process for collecting and integrating feedback for a new accountability model contains many elements reflecting consistency as well. A systems integration group is currently in place to consider each of the five committee's (i.e. the CCR, assessment, opportunity and access, school improvement, and educational innovation work groups) recommendations and how they fit together in a system. As one administrator remarks, "no matter where you push on something, you will have movement somewhere else," leading to tradeoffs and prioritization. A consequential review group, a new structure that has also recently been established, will help KDE in determining the unintended consequences of certain decisions that may be made to the accountability system. Finally, a third group will examine whether the recommendations align with ESSA's final regulations and Kentucky's own educational statutes. The oversight of these three bodies play an important role in ensuring that KDE is heading in a new direction that is consistent with each other, with institutional priorities and commitments to equity, and with legal mandates, while still significantly driven by the feedback they received in their massive communication and outreach campaign.

Conclusion

State departments of education are charged with prioritizing and implementing numerous policy activities to facilitate standards-based reform. Using the policy attributes theory as an organizing framework helps states see how individual initiatives contribute to a system of standards-based reform. Understanding how each reform component impacts the specificity, authority, consistency, power, or stability attributes of the implementation of reform will uncover strengths, opportunities, patterns, and variations in each state's strategic roll-out of CCR-aligned standards.

Given the specific, consistent, authoritative, powerful, and stable aspects of Kentucky's standards-based reform initiatives of the past six years, one can see how scholars have branded Kentucky as a **leader in CCSS implementation**. Challenges do exist, as do uncertainties regarding impending changes to the standards and accountability system. C-SAIL's district, principal, and teacher surveys and interviews with key district administrators will provide further insights into Kentucky's experiences in bringing rigorous standards to the classroom.

References

Koretz, D. (2008). *Measuring up: What educational testing really tells us*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Mehta, J. (2013). *The allure of order: High hopes, dashed expectations, and the troubled question to remake American schooling.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Porter, A., Floden, R., Freeman, D., Schmidt, W., & Schwille, J. (1988). Content determinants in elementary school mathematics. In D. A. Grouws & T. J. Cooney (Eds.), *Perspectives on research on effective mathematical teaching* (pp. 96-113). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Smith, M. S., & O'Day, J. (1991). Systemic school reform. In S. H. Fuhrman & B. Malen (Eds.), *The politics of curriculum and testing: The 1990 yearbook of the Politics of Education Association* (pp. 233-267). Bristol, PA: Taylor & Francis.