

Trends in State Implementation of the Common Core State Standards: Educator Effectiveness

Introduction

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

As of June 1, 2012, 48 states and territories, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity had formally adopted both sets of standards. Although the development and widespread adoption by states of the CCSS mark a significant milestone in American education, successful implementation is necessary if students across the country are to realize the benefits.

Governors and other state policymakers can play a critical leadership role in the implementation of the new standards. All governors, if they have not already done so, should consider taking the following actions to support implementation of the CCSS:

- Communicate a need and a vision for reform, and engage parents and key leaders from education, the community, business, and philanthropy;
- Improve educator effectiveness through policies to prepare, license, evaluate, and develop teachers and principals;

- Lead transitions in state accountability policies, state assessments, and interventions to help improve low-performing schools and struggling students; and
- Use existing state agencies or create a structure to coordinate implementation activities, and support their work by advancing the necessary policies and reallocating state resources.

For more information on what governors can do to support successful implementation of the Common Core State Standards, see the NGA Center report [*Realizing the Potential: How Governors Can Lead Effective Implementation of the Common Core State Standards*](#).

To assess the progress of implementation efforts, the NGA Center interviewed staff in governors' offices and state education agencies from a geographically and politically diverse sample of states. The material from those discussions will inform a series of briefs capturing the trends in state implementation of the CCSS across the country, focusing around the four action areas identified above. The series is designed to provide a snapshot of state implementation activities, recommend promising practices, and call attention to the remaining challenges. This brief focuses on policy levers to build educator effectiveness: (1) preparation programs; (2) licensure/certification; (3) evaluation; and (4) professional development.

Preparing and Supporting Teachers and Principals

Just as the CCSS establish benchmarks for student understanding and achievement, professional standards

for teachers and principals define the knowledge-base and skill set required to successfully educate students, across all subjects and grades, and to lead a school effectively. Governors should work with their chief state school officers and state boards of education to ensure that professional standards articulate the elements that make effective educators. Once delineated, all of the critical supporting policies—training and preparation, licensure, evaluation, and professional development—should align to those professional standards and to the CCSS.

Governors also play an important role in shaping the four policy levers of educator effectiveness. Through their executive agencies, governors oversee the accreditation of preparation programs and the licensing of educators. Integrating the CCSS into teacher preparation programs, and requiring proof of content knowledge and technical skills to teach at the rigorous level demanded by the standards to become licensed, helps ensure that educators are ready to educate their students when they enter the classroom.

Similarly, governors can lead changes to improve the usefulness of educator evaluations. Mandating high-quality evaluations and enacting policies that increase the likelihood that each school will have a highly effective principal, allows for the rigorous evaluation of teachers and identification of low performers. Principals can then help teachers improve, or remove the weakest ones. Since evaluation is increasingly tied to student performance, high-quality evaluations also act as a check as to whether students are learning the knowledge and skills identified in the CCSS. Finally, governors can affect professional development through their budget authority. Funding should be tied to student performance or reallocated toward ongoing, high-quality training for educators to correct shortcomings identified through their evaluations.¹

Emerging Trends and Promising Practices

All of the state education staff who were interviewed

are working to prepare and support educators in various ways, but some challenges remain in connecting that work to the implementation of the CCSS. Many of the states surveyed have made meaningful progress in integrating the standards into teacher preparation programs and professional development. However, changes to licensure requirements and the creation of evaluation systems to include the CCSS lag behind.

Educator Preparation

Research suggests that increasing teachers' content knowledge is the most important in-school factor for improving student achievement.² For the CCSS to have a positive effect on student achievement, teachers must know the material and be prepared to deliver the content. Fortunately, many states are using the new standards to revamp teacher preparation programs.

New Jersey is developing a system to link information about school of education graduates to student achievement data from their current classrooms. The information will inform institutions of higher education about how well their teacher preparation programs are preparing educators to teach the CCSS.

Tennessee has linked school of education graduates to student achievement data for the past four years. Currently, they are using those data to inform decisions around program improvement and increased effectiveness, including integration of the CCSS into preservice training. The Ayers Institute for Teacher Learning and Innovation, a newly created institute that focuses on the improvement of teacher preparation and professional development, is working with an advisory council comprised of deans of education and arts and sciences as well as cross-disciplinary faculty. Collectively, they are developing training for faculty, curricular resources, online content modeling best teaching practices around the CCSS, and assessment for teacher preparation programs.

Those two approaches demonstrate different ways to integrate the CCSS into preparation programs. Gov-

ernors should expand on those examples and work with their state education chiefs and state boards of education to increase emphasis on content knowledge and rigor in preparation programs. Governors should hold educator preparation programs accountable for the performance of the graduates they produce.³ States must also go beyond teacher preparation and focus on principal preparation. Evidence indicates that an effective principal is essential to improving low-performing schools and is key to increasing the success of individual teachers. Current progress in that area is slow in most states.

Key policy questions for governors and their staff: To what extent are your schools of education effectively preparing future teachers to help their students meet the CCSS? To what extent are your schools of education effectively preparing future principals to improve teaching and learning across their entire school? How is your state measuring a teacher’s knowledge of, and ability to teach, the CCSS? How is your state using the accreditation process to hold schools of education accountable for the quality of their preparation programs?

Licensure Requirements

To date, state progress in altering licensure requirements is limited. Only a handful of the states surveyed indicated an intention to change licensure requirements to include the CCSS. That consists of two elements—recertifying current teachers and certifying future teachers. The two may require different approaches. **Indiana** is one of the few states addressing the issue. In 2010, the state developed new teacher standards aligned to the CCSS, then created licensure exams tied to the teaching standards. Those exams will be used in fall 2012 for initial licensure of teachers, and may also be used by any current license holders who would like to add an additional teaching area to their existing license. **Maine** is considering requiring educators to serve as scorers for student assessments to obtain recertification. That would help familiarize teachers with the CCSS and allow them to calibrate to

common grading. Other states should follow those examples and require educators seeking license renewals to complete professional development or other activities that specifically address the CCSS.

States should also work on aligning preparation programs and initial educator certification requirements to ensure that new teachers are trained in the CCSS before they enter the classroom. Governors can ask the state chief and state board of education (or other entity responsible for educator licensing) to change requirements to mandate that educators seeking initial licensure demonstrate their mastery of the standards. They can do that through an assessment or by submitting a professional portfolio showing increased emphasis on content in clinical or internship experiences.⁴

Key policy questions for governors and their staff: What policies have been added or changed to require educators to demonstrate mastery of the CCSS for initial licensure, as well as for renewal of a license? How is the state assessing the effect of its licensing process?

Evaluation Systems

Recently many states have made significant changes to their teacher evaluation systems, and as of mid-2012, 33 states required evaluations to be linked to student growth or value-added data.⁵ As most states focus on teacher evaluation, however, they are overlooking the need to evaluate principals to improve teacher effectiveness and student learning. States must also address the role of the standards in evaluations. **Colorado** is including an element in its new evaluation system that examines how well teachers are helping students master the content of the CCSS. **Louisiana** is also integrating the CCSS into its evaluation system by creating a rubric that will focus on a subset of teacher actions that aim to increase the rigor within classrooms. These actions include setting goals, questioning and engaging students, and using tailored assessments.

Because the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter

Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) will not release their assessments until the 2014–15 school year, some states are delaying creation of new evaluation systems that incorporate the CCSS. Governors in states that have not yet changed policies on educator evaluation can form a commission or task force to recommend how to incorporate the CCSS, better evaluate educators, and use the data from evaluations to improve teaching quality and school leadership. They can also work with legislators to enact laws that bolster the rigor and the quality of the teacher evaluation process. The states that have new state policies on educator evaluation should consider how to make determinations about educator effectiveness (specifically, measures of student performance that are tied to assessments) during the transition from current state standards and assessments to the new ones. For example, a few states are considering instituting a “hold harmless” year, in which student scores would not count toward educator evaluations, while everyone adjusts to new assessments aligned to the CCSS.⁶

Key policy questions for governors and their staff: To what extent will teachers be evaluated based on the instructional shifts required by the CCSS? How will your state ensure that districts use evaluations that provide useful information and that they incorporate the results into the professional development offered to teachers and principals? To what extent do the people who will be responsible for evaluating and developing teachers and principals have sufficient time and knowledge to do it well? How does your state plan to incorporate the new assessments, aligned with the CCSS, into teacher and principal evaluations in 2014–15 and beyond?

Professional Development Delivery and Support

The majority of states are focusing their CCSS implementation efforts around professional development. Most states are conducting trainings, posting online tools to support those events, and creating networks to disseminate information and assist with problem solving as educators learn about the CCSS and develop

their ability to help their students meet or exceed the new, more rigorous standards.

Georgia is working with Georgia Public Broadcasting to create and disseminate CCSS Professional Learning videos. The collection features training in English language arts, math, science, and social studies. In addition to the videos, the standards [website](#) also features a portal that connects educators to collaborative groups and allows them to access information on best practices, instructional strategies, lesson plans, and other instructional resources.⁷ **New Mexico** held a CCSS Summit for educators and administrators to discuss the standards. Together colleagues developed an understanding of the statewide transition plan and began creating their own strategies for delivery of content and support. All of the presentations from the conference were then posted on the New Mexico Public Education Department’s CCSS [website](#).⁸

Kentucky created Leadership Networks to support learning about the CCSS. Each district brings leaders from the elementary, middle, and high school levels to meetings in one of the state’s eight geographic regions. The regional groups meet once a month to build capacity, review and develop CCSS resources, and network with one another. **Oklahoma** uses a train-the-trainer model—in which a small group learns content and instructional strategies, then takes that material back to their district to train others—in its Regional Educators Advancing College Career and Citizenship Readiness Higher (REAC³H) networks. The networks are composed of 70 volunteer districts across the state, which serve as coordinating agents for professional development, capacity-building efforts, and feedback collection on CCSS implementation initiatives. The state education agency oversees the work and hosts summits, delivers webinars, distributes toolkits, and provides technical support to REAC³H districts.

Although it is encouraging that so many states are incorporating the CCSS into professional development programs, states must also be more active in ensur-

ing that the professional development being offered is high quality. Professional development programs must be assessed to determine whether they are effective and consistent with both the content and rigor of the CCSS. Professional development is both the primary way that teachers are supported professionally and the way that assistance is provided when their effectiveness is low or stagnant. However, most states are neither collecting nor analyzing data to ensure that professional development is having the desired effect on teacher practice, and more important, on student performance. Evaluation of those programs could be facilitated by electronically linking educators and the professional development that they participate in over the course of the school year.⁹

Key policy questions for governors and their staff: To what extent are teachers and principals receiving professional development on the CCSS? What feedback loops are in place to measure the effectiveness of the professional development being offered? How does the state support schools and districts in their efforts to tie professional development to individual demonstrated need, as identified through evaluation?

Resource Section

For more information on the governors' role in successful implementation of the CCSS and in preparing and supporting educators, contact the NGA Center and see the following briefs, reports, and websites.

NGA Resources

- [Realizing the Potential: How Governors Can Lead Effective Implementation of the Common Core State Standards](#)
- [Building a High-Quality Education Workforce: A Governor's Guide to Human Capital Development](#)
- [Preparing Principals to Evaluate Teachers](#)
- [State Policies to Improve Teacher Professional Development](#)

Additional Resources

- [A Strong State Role in Common Core State Standards Implementation: Rubric and Self-Assessment Tool](#) (Achieve)

- [Evaluation Resources](#) (TNTP)
- [Resources](#) filtered by effectiveness and evaluation, certification and licensure, preparation, or professional development (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality)
- [Reports](#) (National Council on Teacher Quality)

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Endnotes

1. Tabitha Grossman, Ryan Reyna, and Stephanie Shipton, *Realizing the Potential: How Governors Can Lead Effective Implementation of the Common Core State Standards* (Washington, DC: National Governors Association, 2011), 6, 13–14, <http://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/1110CCSSIIMPLEMENTATIONGUIDE.PDF>.
2. Tabitha Grossman, *Building a High-Quality Education Workforce: A Governor's Guide to Human Capital Development* (Washington, DC: National Governors Association, 2009), 12, <http://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/0905BUILDINGEDUWORKFORCE.PDF>.
3. Ibid.
4. Grossman, Reyna, and Shipton, *Realizing the Potential*, 13–14.
5. National Council on Teacher Quality, *State of the States: Trends and Early Lessons on Teacher Evaluation and Effectiveness Policies* (Washington, DC: National Council on Teacher Quality, October 2011), ii, http://www.nctq.org/p/publications/docs/nctq_stateOfTheStates.pdf; “Bringing Flexibility and Focus to Education Law,” White House fact sheet, September 23, 2011, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/fact_sheet_bringing_flexibility_and_focus_to_education_law_0.pdf (accessed July 31, 2012).
6. Grossman, Reyna, and Shipton, *Realizing the Potential*, 14.
7. For more information on the Georgia Department of Education Standards, go to <https://www.georgiastandards.org>.
8. For more information on the New Mexico Public Education Department Common Core State Standards, go to <http://newmexicocommoncore.org/>.
9. Grossman, Reyna, and Shipton, *Realizing the Potential*, 14.