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Year 3 of Implementing the Common Core State Standards

An Overview of States' Progress and Challenges

educator evaluation

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Year 3 of Implementing the Common Core State Standards

An Overview of States' Progress and Challenges

States are in a crucial phase of implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which outline the knowledge and skills that students in grades kindergarten through 12 are expected to learn in mathematics and English language arts (ELA) to be prepared for college and careers. As of July 2013, 45 states and the District of Columbia have adopted these voluntary, state-developed standards in both subjects, and an additional state, Minnesota, has adopted the CCSS in ELA only.

Assessments aligned to the Common Core are expected to be ready to administer during school year 2014-15, which gives states just one more school year to ensure that teachers and students are fully prepared before the tests start measuring students' mastery of the standards. Once the aligned assessments are in place, many states will tie their accountability systems—including consequences for schools and districts—to performance on the assessments. Teachers and principals will also be directly affected; many states are developing educator evaluation systems that hold these professionals accountable for their students' mastery of the CCSS. Students, too, will be impacted—not only because they will be expected to learn and pass tests on more rigorous academic content, but also because many postsecondary institutions are considering using scores on CCSS-aligned assessments to make decisions about such issues as which students need remedial courses.

To learn more about states' strategies, policies, and challenges in this third year of implementing the CCSS, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) at The George Washington University conducted a comprehensive survey of deputy superintendents of education or their designees in February through May of 2013. Forty states responded, including 39 that had adopted the CCSS in both math and ELA and 1 that had adopted the standards in ELA only. Thus, the survey findings represent the views of a majority of the adopting states at the time of the survey. The responses of specific states have been kept confidential to encourage frank answers.

This report, the second in a series of CEP reports based on the 2013 survey, provides an overview of state efforts to implement the Common Core. This report discusses state views of the rigor of the CCSS, their impact on learning, and necessary changes in curriculum and instruction; state timelines for teaching curricula aligned to the CCSS; state activities to implement the CCSS, including collaborative efforts with other states and the impact of state funding cuts; implementation challenges; and the capacity of state education agencies (SEAs) to carry out CCSS-related activities. The first report in the series focused on states' views of the federal role in supporting CCSS implementation. Later reports take a closer look at CCSS-related professional development, aligned assessments, special populations, and higher education involvement.

The 2013 survey marks the third time that CEP has surveyed state officials about states' progress in implementing the CCSS. The first such survey was conducted in fall 2010, just months after the standards were released; findings are described in the 2011 CEP report, *States' Progress and Challenges in Implementing Common Core State Standards*. The second survey was administered in fall 2011; findings are discussed in a 2012 report, *Year Two of Implementing the Common Core State Standards: States' Progress and Challenges.*

Key Findings

GENERAL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

States are undertaking a variety of planning, professional development, technical assistance, and other activities to implement the Common Core. In addition, 23 of the states surveyed report that a CCSS-aligned curricula is *currently* being taught in at least some of their school districts or grade levels. Many CCSS-adopting states are struggling, however, to provide adequate resources and staffing to implement the standards effectively.

SPECIFIC FINDINGS

- **All of the states participating in the survey—39 in math and 40 in English language arts—agree that the CCSS are more rigorous than their previous standards and will improve students' skills in these subjects.** The vast majority of CCSS-adopting states surveyed also recognize that implementing the Common Core will require substantial changes in curriculum and instruction.

- **In 30 survey states, curricula aligned to the CCSS in math and English language arts are already being taught in at least some districts or grade levels.** Some of these states are phasing in the curriculum by grade span or by school district or both.

- **Most survey states have begun to undertake a variety of specific state-level activities related to the CCSS.** A sizable majority of the states surveyed have already taken steps to develop and disseminate state plans for implementation (39 states), conduct comparative analyses of the state's previous standards and the CCSS (38), and revise or create curriculum guides or materials aligned to the CCSS (29). Eighteen states have begun to revise state assessments to better reflect CCSS content, and 15 more states plan to do so in 2013-14 or later. Eleven states are already recommending or requiring the use of specific CCSS-validated textbooks or other materials, and six more plan to do so in the future.

- **Most survey states are taking specific actions to prepare teachers to teach the CCSS.** A majority of the states surveyed have begun to develop and disseminate professional development materials and guides aligned to the CCSS (37 states); carry out statewide professional development initiatives (36); conduct CCSS briefings for faculty in postsecondary schools of education (34); work with institutions of higher education to align the academic content of teacher preparation programs with the CCSS (33); and encourage school and district professional learning communities on CCSS implementation (33). Additional states plan to take these actions in 2013-14 or later. Fewer states are revising teacher certification requirements to reflect the CCSS or developing induction programs to help new teachers master the CCSS.

- **The vast majority of survey states are working with districts and schools on CCSS implementation activities.** In particular, most of the states surveyed have taken steps to conduct informational meetings about the standards (40 states), provide technical assistance (39), and develop materials and guides to help districts prepare principals to be instructional leaders on the CCSS (36). Most survey states are also sponsoring initiatives to help low-performing schools with their transition to the CCSS (30 states), providing districts with assistance from SEA-supported consultants (27), and requiring districts to implement the CCSS (23). Additional states are planning to undertake many of these activities in the future.

- **Nearly all of the survey states have collaborated with other states on CCSS implementation efforts.** States report that these collaborations have helped to increase their SEA staff expertise, have led them to adopt effective strategies from others states, and have helped them share costs.

- **Cuts or freezes in state funding for general K-12 education and/or SEA operations have negatively affected CCSS implementation activities in some states, although other states with budget problems appear to have been able to protect their CCSS transition efforts.** Altogether, 20 states reported decreased or level budgets for general K-12 education compared with the previous year's funding, and 28 reported decreased or level budgets for SEA operations. Twelve of these states with cuts or freezes reported that they have eliminated or reduced the scope of at least one CCSS-related activity as a result. For example, six states have reduced or eliminated certain technology expenditures related to CCSS-aligned assessments, six have reduced or eliminated statewide meetings on the CCSS, and five have cut CCSS-related technical assistance to districts or schools.

- **States face challenges in making the transition to the CCSS, including finding adequate resources for necessary implementation activities and developing evaluation systems that hold educators accountable for student mastery of the standards.** Most states also find it challenging to identify or develop curriculum materials for the standards.

- **Despite state struggles with funding and capacity issues, most survey states report having adequate staff expertise in their SEAs to carry out activities related to the CCSS.** In particular, most survey states said they have sufficient SEA expertise to generally implement the CCSS (27 states), work on the CCSS-aligned assessments (23), and provide professional development (24). Even if they have sufficient expertise, however, fewer states reported having adequate SEA staffing levels and/or fiscal resources for CCSS implementation activities.

States' Perceptions about the Impact of the Common Core

Our survey asked state officials—all of whom are from states that have adopted the Common Core—whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the nature and impact of the CCSS.

RIGOR OF THE CCSS

All of the responding states agreed or strongly agreed that the CCSS in math and ELA are more rigorous than their state's previous standards (see **figure 1**). Although states had the option of disagreeing with this statement or answering "not sure," no state chose either of those responses.

Figure 1. Rigor of the Common Core

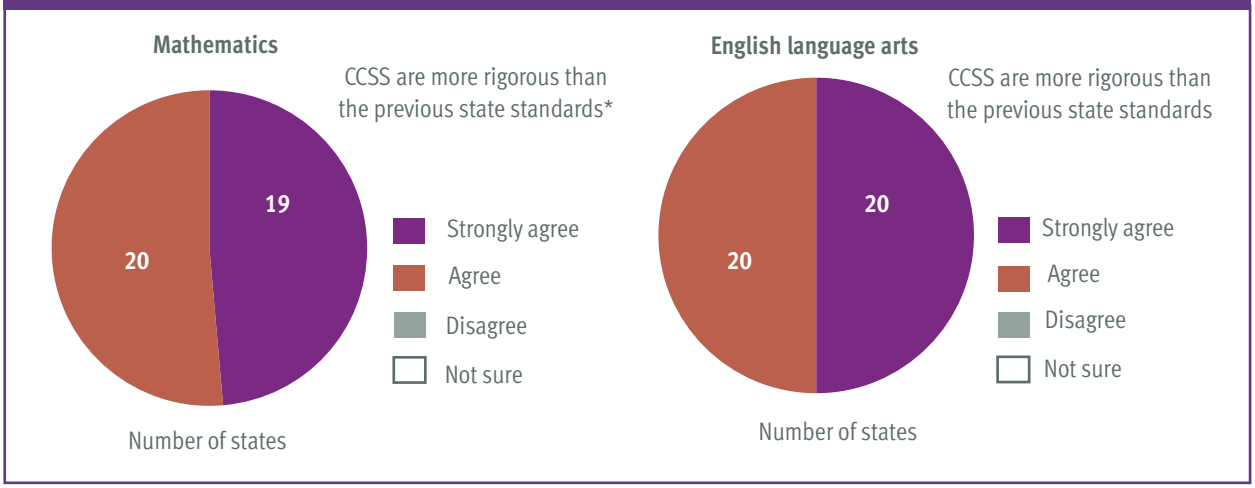

Figure reads: Thirty-nine CCSS-adopting states either strongly agreed (19 states) or agreed (20 states) with the statement, "The CCSS are more rigorous than the previous state standards in mathematics."

* The responses for the math part of this question total 39 rather than 40 because one responding state did not adopt the mathematics CCSS.

This overall perception that the CCSS are more rigorous is generally consistent with state responses to a similar question in our fall 2011 survey. At that time, 30 of the 37 responding states (including D.C.) that had adopted the Common Core in math agreed or strongly agreed that the CCSS math standards were more rigorous than their previous math standards, while 2 states strongly disagreed or disagreed. Similarly, 29 of the 36 survey states that had adopted the Common Core in ELA agreed or strongly agreed that the CCSS in this subject were more rigorous, while 2 states disagreed and 1 was not sure. A few of the states participating in the 2011 survey did not answer this question, which is why the responses did not total 37.

IMPROVED SKILLS

All of the state survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that implementation of the Common Core will lead to improved skills among the state's students in math (39 states) and ELA (40)(see **figure 2**). Although states had the option of disagreeing with this statement or answering "not sure," no state gave either of those responses.

Figure 2. Impact of the Common Core on student skills

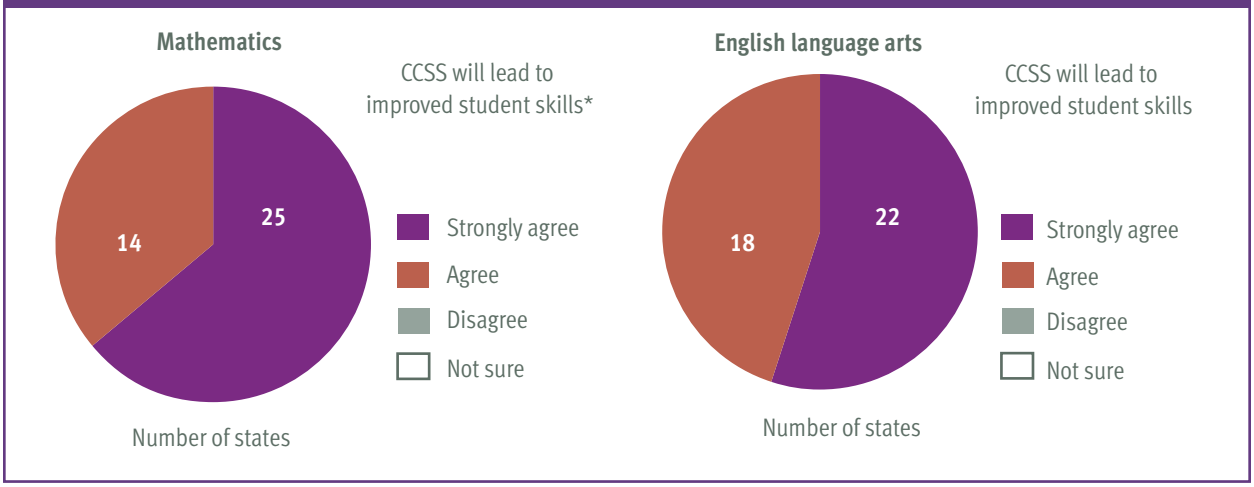

Figure reads: Thirty-nine CCSS-adopting states either strongly agreed (25 states) or agreed (14 states) that implementation of the CCSS in mathematics will lead to improved student skills in their state.

* The responses for the math part of this question total 39 rather than 40 because one responding state did not adopt the mathematics CCSS.

NEW OR REVISED CURRICULUM MATERIALS

Nearly all of the states surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that implementing the CCSS in math and ELA will require substantially revised curriculum materials (see **figure 3**). For math, just two states disagreed that substantially revised curriculum materials would be needed and one state was not sure; in ELA, two states also disagreed and one was not sure.

Figure 3. Need for new or revised curriculum materials to implement the CCSS

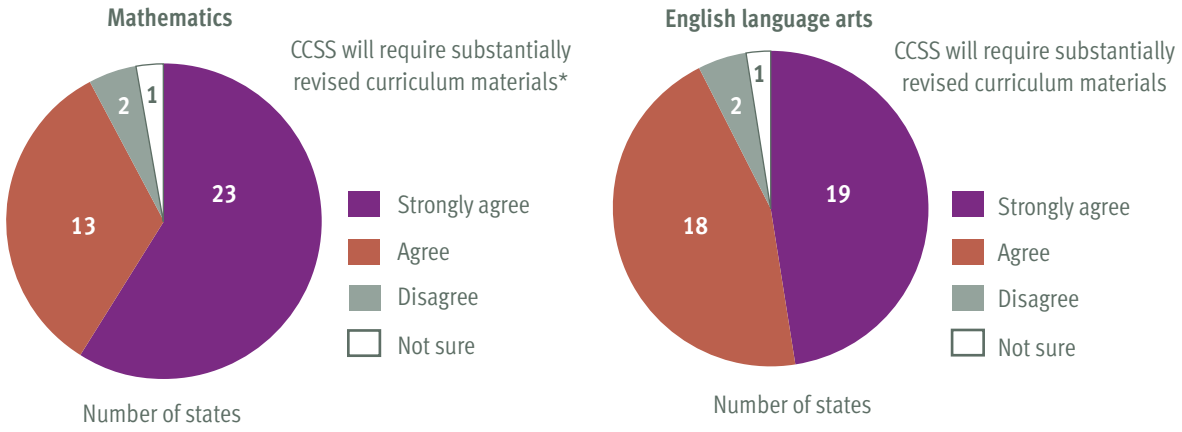

Figure reads: Twenty-three CCSS-adopting states strongly agreed and 13 states agreed that implementation of the mathematics CCSS will require substantially revised curriculum materials in their state, while 2 states disagreed and 1 state was not sure.

* The responses for the math part of this question total 39 rather than 40 because one responding state did not adopt the mathematics CCSS.

CHANGES TO INSTRUCTION

Nearly all of the states surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that implementing the Common Core will require fundamental changes in instruction in math (36 states) and reading (37 states) (see **figure 4**). A few states were unsure whether fundamental change would be needed (3 states in math and 1 in ELA), and 2 disagreed that this would be the case in ELA.

Figure 4. Need for fundamental changes in instruction to implement the CCSS

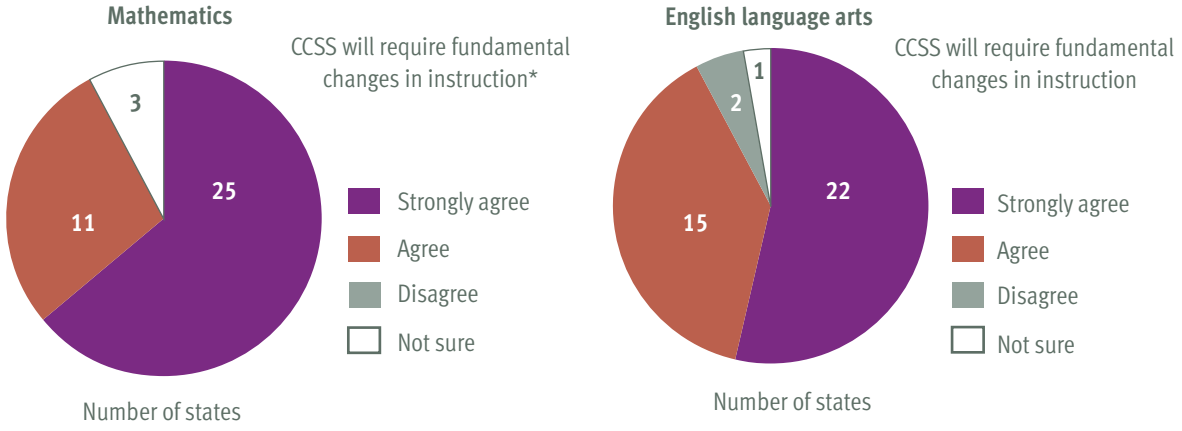

Figure reads: Twenty-five CCSS-adopting states strongly agreed and 11 states agreed that implementation of the mathematics CCSS will require fundamental changes in instruction in their state.

* The responses for the math part of this question total 39 rather than 40 because one responding state did not adopt the mathematics CCSS.

Teaching a Curriculum Aligned with the Common Core

MATHEMATICS

In a majority (30) of the states surveyed, a math curriculum aligned to the Common Core is being taught in at least some districts or grade levels. As displayed in **figure 5**, nine states began implementing a CCSS-aligned math curriculum throughout their K-12 systems in school year 2012-13 or earlier. In 21 more states, a CCSS-aligned math curriculum is being taught to some extent, but implementation varies by grade span (10 states), by school district (9), or both (2).

Eight states will begin implementing a CCSS-aligned math curriculum in school year 2013-14, and one state will begin in 2014-15.

Figure 5. Years in which states began or will begin implementing a math curriculum aligned to the CCSS

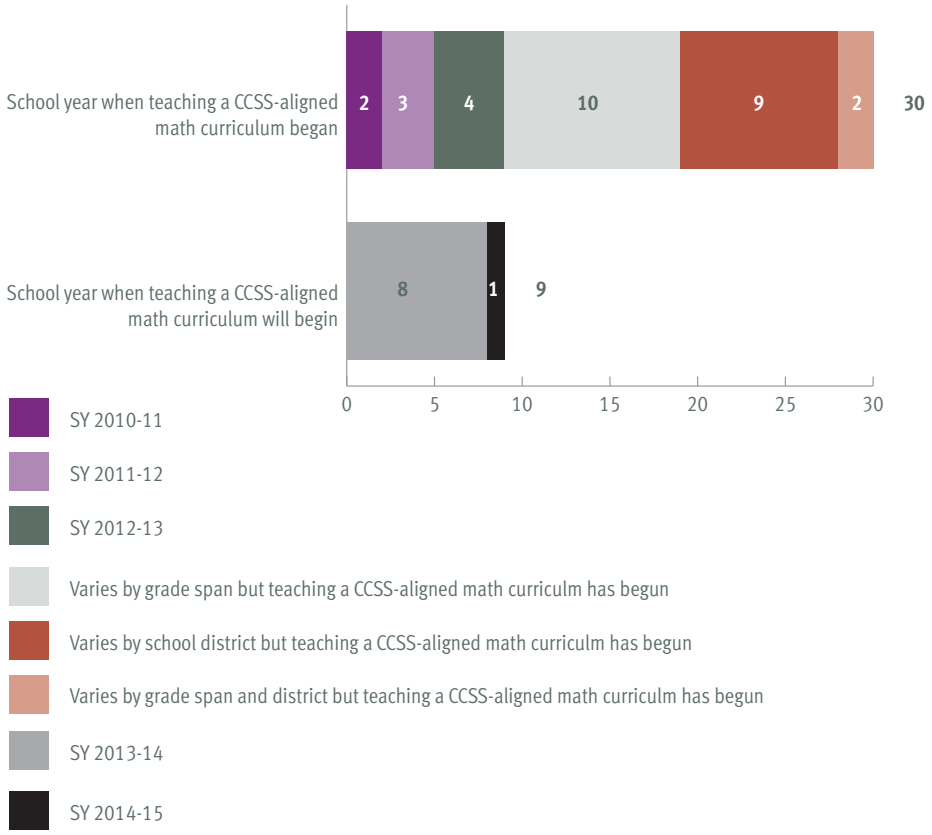

Figure reads: Two CCSS-adopting states began implementing a CCSS-aligned mathematics curriculum in school year 2010-11.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

As in math, a majority (30) of the states surveyed have begun to implement an ELA curriculum aligned to the Common Core in at least some districts or grade levels. As shown in **figure 6**, 12 states began implementing a CCSS-aligned ELA curriculum in their K-12 systems in school year 2012-13 or earlier. In an additional 18 states, a CCSS-aligned ELA curriculum is being taught to some extent, but implementation varies by grade span (7 states), by district (9) or both (2). Nine states will begin implementing a CCSS-aligned curriculum next school year, in 2013-14, and one more state will do so in school year 2014-15.

Figure 6. Years in which states began or will begin implementing an English language arts curriculum aligned to the CCSS

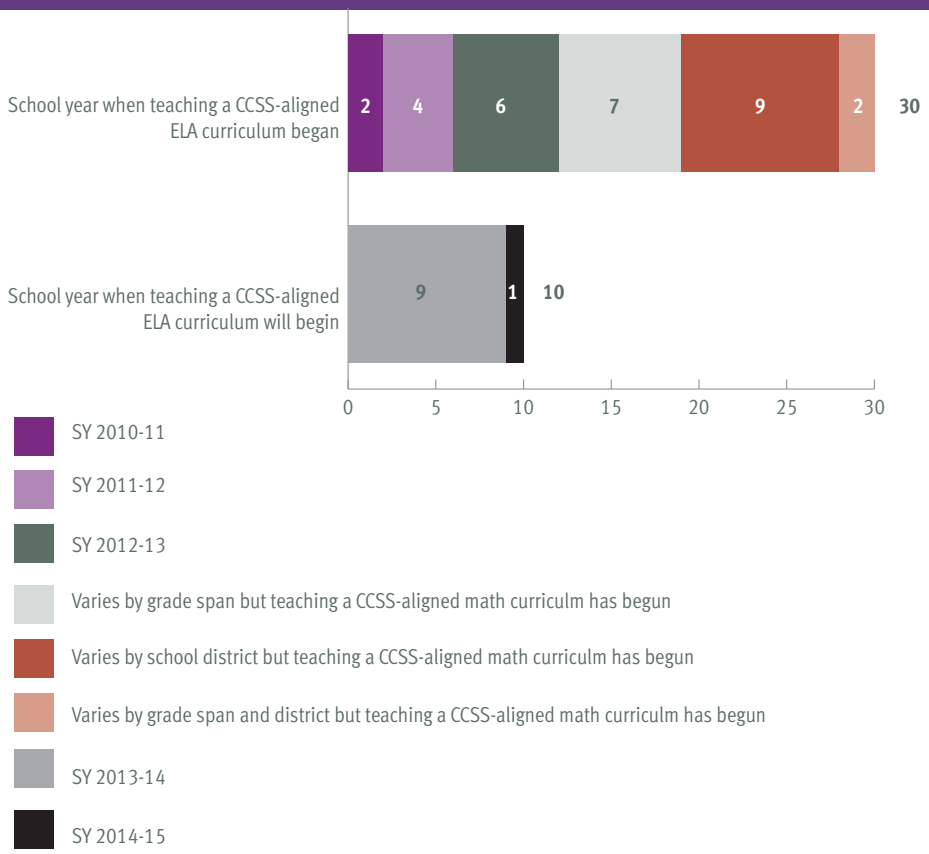

Figure reads: Two CCSS-adopting states began implementing a CCSS-aligned English language arts curriculum in school year 2010-11.

State-Level Implementation Activities

The 2013 survey included a series of questions about the status of possible state-level activities to implement the Common Core. In particular, we asked whether a specific activity was underway in the state, planned in the future, not a focus of state CCSS implementation efforts, or not within the authority of the SEA to carry out.

STATE PLANNING, ASSESSMENTS, AND CURRICULUM

Table 1 shows state actions related to state planning, assessments, and curriculum. Nearly all (39) of the survey states reported that they have taken steps to develop a comprehensive, long-term state plan for implementing the CCSS. Nearly all (38) have analyzed the similarities and differences between the state's previous math and ELA standards and the Common Core. Twenty-nine survey states have already revised or created curriculum guides or materials aligned to the CCSS, and two more plan to do so in school year 2013-14 or later. Eighteen states have modified their current state assessments to better reflect the content of the CCSS, and 15 more plan to do so.

Fewer states are recommending or requiring their districts or schools to use specific materials, such as textbooks, that have been validated by the state as being aligned to the CCSS: 11 states have already implemented such a policy, and 6 more plan to do so in 2013-14 or later. Sixteen states, however, said it is not within the SEA's authority to require or recommend specific CCSS-aligned materials.

Table 1. State-level policies and practices to generally facilitate CCSS implementation

CCSS-related activity	Implemented in 2012-13 or earlier	Will implement in 2013-14 or later	Not a focus of SEA's CCSS efforts	Not within the SEA's authority	Don't know
Develop and disseminate comprehensive, long-term state plan for implementing the CCSS)	39	0	0	0	1
Conduct an analysis of the similarities and differences between the state's previous standards and the CCSS	38	0	2	0	0
Revise/create curriculum guides or materials aligned to the CCSS	29	2	3	6	0
Modify current state assessments to better reflect the content of the CCSS	18	15	5	0	0
Recommend or require the use of specific materials (such as textbooks or digital curriculum materials) that have been validated by the SEA as aligned to the CCSS	11	6	4	16	2

Table reads: Thirty-nine CCSS-adopting states reported that they had developed and disseminated a comprehensive, long-term state plan for implementing the CCSS in school year 2012-13 or earlier, while one state respondent did not know if the state had developed and disseminated such a plan.

STATE ACTIVITIES RELATED TO TEACHERS

Nearly all of the survey states have undertaken or plan to undertake a variety of state-level activities to help prepare teachers to teach the Common Core. As shown in **table 2**, 37 states have developed and disseminated professional development materials to help teachers master the CCSS, and 2 plan to do so in 2013-14 or later. Most states surveyed have also implemented or plan to implement the following activities: carrying out statewide teacher professional development on the CCSS (38 states); providing CCSS briefings for higher education faculty (37); working with higher education institutions to align the academic content of teacher preparation programs with the CCSS (37); and encouraging schools and districts to collaborate on CCSS implementation by using professional learning communities (34).

Twenty-six states have modified or created evaluation systems or requirements that hold educators accountable for student mastery of the CCSS, and 9 more states plan to do so next school year or later. Many states have revised (14) or will revise (10) teacher certification requirements to reflect the Common Core. However, four states reported that this was not a focus of the SEA's efforts, four other states reported that this activity was not within the SEA's authority, and respondents in seven states did not know if their state was revising teacher certification requirements. Similarly, 12 states have developed and implemented teacher induction programs to help new teachers master the CCSS and another 12 plan to do so next school year or later, while 4 states reported that this is not a focus of the SEA's efforts and 7 said it was not within the SEA's authority. Five state respondents did not know if the state was developing and implementing teacher induction programs related to the Common Core.

A related report in this series will contain more detailed information about professional development for teachers and principals.

Table 2. State-level policies and practices to help teachers implement the CCSS standards

CCSS-related activity	Implemented in 2012-13 or earlier	Will implement in 2013-14 or later	Not a focus of SEA's CCSS efforts	Not within the SEA's authority	Don't know
Develop and disseminate professional development materials and guides for school districts to help teachers master the CCSS and use them to guide instruction	37	2	0	1	0
Carry out statewide professional development initiatives to help teachers master the CCSS and use them to guide instruction	36	2	0	2	0
Provide CCSS briefings for school of education faculty in colleges and universities	34	3	2	0	1
Work with institutions of higher education to align the academic content of teacher preparation programs with the CCSS	33	4	2	1	0
Encourage schools and districts to use professional learning communities as a way to foster collaboration on CCSS implementation	33	1	2	4	0
Modify/create educator evaluation systems and/or requirements for these systems that hold educators accountable for student mastery of the CCSS	26	9	2	2	0
Revise teacher certification requirements to reflect the CCSS	14	10	4	5	7
Develop and implement teacher induction programs that help new teachers master the CCSS and use them in instruction	12	12	4	7	5

Table reads: In school year 2012-13 or earlier, 37 CCSS-adopting states developed and disseminated professional development materials and guides for school districts to help teachers master the CCSS and use them to guide instruction, while 2 states will do so in 2013-14 or later. One state reported that it was not within the SEA's authority to develop and disseminate professional development materials and guides.

STATE ACTIVITIES TO HELP DISTRICTS IMPLEMENT THE CCSS

State education agencies are working with school districts on various issues related to Common Core implementation. As displayed in **table 3**, all 40 survey states have conducted meetings to provide superintendents, principals, and teachers with information about the CCSS and answer questions. In 39 states, SEA staff have provided districts with advice and assistance about Common Core implementation, and 1 more state plans to do so in the future. Nearly all (39) survey states have developed and disseminated—or plan to develop—materials and guides for school districts to use in providing professional development for principals.

Three-quarters (30) of the survey states have carried out special initiatives to ensure that the CCSS are fully implemented in the state's lowest-performing schools, and 4 more plan to do so in 2013-14 or later. Twenty-seven states have provided districts with advice and assistance from SEA-supported consultants.

Table 3. State-level policies and practices to facilitate school districts' implementation of the CCSS

CCSS-related activity	Implemented in 2012-13 or earlier	Will begin implementing in 2013-14 or later	Not a focus of SEA's CCSS efforts	Not within the SEA's authority	Don't know
Conduct meetings with superintendents, principals, and teachers to provide information about the standards and answer questions	40	0	0	0	0
Provide districts with advice and assistance from SEA staff	39	1	0	0	0
Develop and disseminate materials and guides for school districts to use in providing professional development to help principals serve as instructional leaders on CCSS implementation	36	3	0	0	1
Carry out special initiatives to ensure that the CCSS are fully implemented in the state's lowest-performing schools	30	4	3	0	2
Provide districts with advice and assistance from SEA-supported outside consultants	27	0	7	4	2
Require districts to implement the CCSS	23	10	0	7	0
Require districts to develop long-term comprehensive plans for local implementation of the CCSS	16	3	2	14	4

Table reads: In school year 2012-13 or earlier, 40 CCSS-adopting states conducted meetings with superintendents, principals, and teachers to provide information about the CCSS and answer questions.

With regard to state-mandated activities, 33 states have required or will require school districts to implement the CCSS, while 19 states have required or will require districts to develop long-term comprehensive state plans for local CCSS implementation. However, 7 and 14 states, respectively, reported that these two requirements are not within the SEA's authority.

State Collaboration

A purpose of the Common Core is to bring more consistency across states to the math and ELA content students are expected to learn. This will make it easier for states to work together on professional development models, curriculum materials, and educator evaluation systems, in addition to the collaborations already occurring on CCSS-aligned assessments. In theory, these collaborations should result in some economies of scale, shared expertise, and other benefits. Among our survey states, 37 reported that they had collaborated with one or more states on some aspect of CCSS implementation, while 3 states reported that they had not.

These collaborative efforts appear to have had some positive impacts. As shown in **table 4**, 29 states reported that interstate collaborations have enabled them to increase their SEA staff expertise, while 26 have adopted effective strategies from other states, and 20 have realized economies of scale and shared costs. One state respondent said that through the state's experience with collaboration it "learned what DIDN'T work." Another said, "We are anxious to achieve economies of scale, but, as of yet, joint state efforts have been largely centered in the testing consortium."

Table 4. Outcomes of state collaborative efforts to implement the CCSS

How collaboration with other states has shaped CCSS implementation efforts	Number of CCSS-adopting states
We have increased our SEA staff expertise by being able to collaborate with other staff from other SEAs	29
We have adopted effective strategies from other states	26
We have realized economies of scale and shared cost	20
The collaborations have not shaped my state's implementation of the CCSS	0
Other (please explain)	2

Table reads: Twenty-nine CCSS-adopting states reported that the expertise of their SEA staff increased through collaboration with other states.

State Funding for Education and Common Core Implementation

Many states are still in the process of restoring state funding following the recent economic downturn. We were interested in learning how state funding cuts may have affected state efforts to implement the CCSS. Our survey looked at two areas where reduced or stagnant state funding could impact CCSS implementation. The first was general state funding for K-12 education; cuts in this area could make it difficult for districts to fulfill state activities related to the Common Core, such as requirements to purchase the technology needed to administer CCSS-aligned assessments. The second area was funding for SEA operations; cuts in this area could lead to SEA staff layoffs or reductions in CCSS-related services to districts and schools.

Among our survey states, 16 reported that state funding for K-12 education in the current fiscal year has increased compared to last fiscal year. Eleven states said that K-12 funding has stayed the same, and nine said it has been cut (see **table 5**).

State funding for SEA operations has fared less well in many states than general K-12 funding: only 8 states saw increases in their SEA operations budgets in the current fiscal year, while 19 were level-funded and 9 experienced cuts.

Table 5. State funding for general K-12 education and SEA operations

	Number of states reporting				
	Increased	Stayed the same	Decreased	Don't know	Other (please explain)
State funding for *K-12 education* in current fiscal year compared with last fiscal year	16	11	9	4	0
State funding for the *state education agency's operations budget* in current fiscal year compared with last fiscal year	8	19	9	3	1

Table reads: Sixteen CCSS-adopting states reported that general state funding for K-12 education increased for the current fiscal year compared with last fiscal year. Eight states reported that state funding for SEA operations increased in the current year.

Looking across both of these spending areas, we found that six states had spending increases in both K-12 funding and SEA operations. Seven states saw level funding for both, while four states experienced cuts in both areas. In two states, state funding for K-12 education increased while state budgets for SEA operations decreased.

We asked the states that reported decreased or stagnant budgets for K-12 education and/or SEA operations whether they have eliminated or reduced certain CCSS implementation activities as a result. Altogether, 12 of these states reported eliminating or reducing the scope of at least one CCSS-related activity due to funding issues. However, 19 states with decreased or level funding selected "none of the above" when asked whether they have reduced or eliminated any of the CCSS-related activities listed in the survey. This suggests that many states have been able to maintain their CCSS implementation efforts even amid funding challenges.

As shown in **table 6,** funding issues have negatively affected CCSS-aligned assessments in some states. For example, six states reported curtailing their purchase of technology-related materials necessary to administer the CCSS-aligned assessments, and six states reported reducing or eliminating activities to create or maintain the technology infrastructure for the CCSS-aligned assessments. Five states said they have reduced or eliminated their participation in state consortia to develop CCSS-aligned assessments, and four states have reduced or eliminated training to state, district, and/or school personnel on administering CCSS-aligned assessments.

Funding cuts and freezes have also affected some states' efforts to help districts and schools make the transition to the Common Core. As shown in table 6, six states have reduced their statewide or regional meetings on the CCSS, and five have reduced or eliminated CCSS-related technical assistance for districts and schools. Fewer states have cut back on CCSS activities related to teachers and principals or higher education, as indicated in the table.

In addition to the responses shown in table 6, seven states selected "other" when asked whether they had reduced or eliminated CCSS-related activities. These states elaborated in comments such as the following:

> *While state funding for common core implementation has not been reduced, there has not been a significant investment to date.*
>
> *We have done all we can with the internal resources we are allocated. We are asking the legislature for a $3.7 million line item for the Common Core implementation.*
>
> *Alignment of activities to the common core has been unfunded—work done has been completed by repurposing existing funding and collaboration with other state funded entities.*
>
> *We had Race to the Top for implementation.*

Table 6. Impact of reduced or level state funding on CCSS implementation activities

CCSS-related activity	Total	Number of states reporting that certain state CCSS-related activities have been reduced or eliminated due to...		
		decreased or level state funding for *K-12 education*	decreased or level state funding for *SEA operations*	decreased or level state funding for *K-12 education* and *SEA operations*
Assessments				
Acquisition of computers, software, and other technology-related materials that are needed for the administration of the CCSS-aligned assessments	6	2	1	3
Creation or maintenance of the technology infrastructure necessary to support the administration of CCSS-aligned assessments	6	2	1	3
Participation in state consortia to develop CCSS-aligned assessments	5	2	0	3
Training to support state, district, and/or school personnel in the administration of the CCSS-aligned assessments	4	2	1	1
Assistance for districts, schools, and teachers				
Statewide or regional meetings regarding the CCSS	6	1	1	4
Technical assistance to districts or schools related to the transition to the CCSS	5	2	1	2
Professional development related to the CCSS for current classroom teachers	3	1	1	1
Development or implementation of programs that help new teachers master the CCSS and use them in instruction	2	0	1	1
Development or implementation of teacher and/or principal evaluation systems that hold educators accountable for student mastery of the CCSS	1	1	0	0
Development of CCSS-aligned curriculum guides or materials	1	0	0	1
Higher education activities				
Higher education activities related to the transition to the CCSS	3	0	2	1
None of the above	19	1	13	5

Table reads: Among the CCSS-adopting states surveyed that reported decreased or level funding for K-12 education and/or for SEA operations, six pared down or eliminated activities to acquire computers, software, and other technology-related materials necessary to administer the CCSS-aligned assessments. Of these six states, two took this action due to decreased or level general funding for K-12 education; one took this action due to decreased or level funding for SEA operations; and three states took this action because funding decreased or stayed the same for both K-12 education and SEA operations.

Implementation Challenges

States face several challenges in implementing the Common Core. As displayed in **table 7**, 34 states reported that finding adequate resources to support all of the necessary CCSS implementation activities is a major (22 states) or minor (12) challenge. Thirty-two states said that developing educator evaluation systems to hold teachers and principals accountable for student mastery of the CCSS is a major (21 states) or minor (11) challenge. Fewer states (26) responded that identifying and/or developing the curriculum materials necessary to implement the CCSS was a major or minor challenge, and 8 states said this activity was not within the SEA's authority.

Table 7. State challenges in implementing the CCSS

Potential challenge	Major challenge	Minor challenge	Not a challenge	Not an SEA activity	Not within SEA's authority	Too soon to tell	Don't know
Finding adequate resources to support all of the activities necessary for implementing the CCSS	22	12	3	0	0	3	0
Developing educator evaluation systems that hold teachers and/or principals accountable for student mastery of the CCSS	21	11	5	1	1	1	0
Identifying and/or developing the curriculum materials necessary to implement the CCSS	13	13	3	1	8	1	0

Table reads: Twenty-two CCSS-adopting states said it was a major challenge to find adequate resources to support all of the activities necessary to implement the CCSS, while 12 states indicated this was minor challenge. Three states did not consider finding adequate resources for CCSS implementation to be a challenge, while three other states said it was too soon to tell whether this would be a challenge.

State Education Agency Capacity

More states reported having adequate expertise in their state education agencies to carry out various CCSS-related activities than reported having adequate staff or fiscal resources. This finding is consistent with the results of CEP's state surveys in 2009, 2010, and 2011 on implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

As displayed in **table 8**, 27 states responding to our 2013 survey said they have adequate staff expertise to support state implementation of the CCSS, while 24 states said they have adequate expertise to provide professional development, and 23 have adequate expertise to support the development and implementation of a new CCSS-aligned assessment system. Seventeen states responded that they have adequate staff expertise to support district implementation of the CCSS, provide technology support for CCSS-aligned assessments administered online, and/or develop curriculum materials.

Table 8. Adequacy of SEA expertise, SEA staffing levels, and state fiscal resources to carry out CCSS implementation activities

CCSS-related activity	Adequate staff expertise	Adequate staffing levels	Adequate fiscal resources	Not currently a state priority	Don't know
Support state implementation of the CCSS	27	13	14	0	2
Support district implementation of the CCSS	17	7	5	0	4
Support development and implementation of a new assessment system aligned to the CCSS	23	12	11	2	4
Provide technology support for CCSS-aligned assessments administered online	17	8	7	1	8
Develop curriculum materials	17	5	6	6	2
Provide professional development	24	11	10	1	3

Table reads: Twenty-seven CCSS-adopting states reported that they have adequate staff expertise to support state implementation of the CCSS, while 13 have adequate staffing levels, and 14 have adequate fiscal resources. Two states did not know if they had adequate expertise, staffing levels, or fiscal resources to support state implementation of the CCSS.

One way to gauge how well-equipped SEAs are to lead the transition to the Common Core is to look at the number of states reporting that the SEA had the capacity across all three dimensions—staff expertise, staffing levels, and resources—to carry out each CCSS-related activity listed in the survey question. As shown in **table 9**, less than one-quarter of the survey states reported having all three dimensions of capacity available in their SEA.

Finally, five states did not check any of the responses to the survey question about state capacity. Because the question directed respondents to leave items blank if the SEA did not have the listed dimension of capacity for a given CCSS-related activity, it could be that these non-responding states generally lack the capacity to lead the CCSS transition efforts and provide assistance to districts and schools.

Table 9. Number of CCSS-adopting states with all three dimensions of state capacity (adequate expertise, staffing levels, and fiscal resources)

CCSS-related activity	Number of states reporting adequate staff expertise, staffing levels, and fiscal resources
Support state implementation of the CCSS	9
Support district implementation of the CCSS	5
Support development and implementation of a new assessment system aligned to the CCSS	9
Provide technology support for CCSS-aligned assessments administered online	6
Develop curriculum materials	3
Provide professional development	7

Table reads: Nine CCSS-adopting states report having adequate expertise, staffing levels, and fiscal resources to support state implementation of the

Conclusions

Supporters of the Common Core hold that these standards will raise the bar for student learning in adopting states. Preparing students to meet what are generally perceived as more rigorous standards will require important shifts in curriculum and instruction. Our survey suggests that states that have adopted the Common Core are in sync with these aspirations. All of the adopting states view the CCSS in math and ELA to be more rigorous than their previous state standards. They also believe the CCSS will lead to improved student skills. In addition, nearly all CCSS-adopting states recognize that implementing the Common Core will require substantial changes in curriculum and instruction in their state.

States report that they are carrying out a variety of activities to help prepare teachers, principals, and students for the Common Core. Specifically, states are engaged in CCSS-related professional development activities for teachers and principals; informational meetings with various stakeholders; activities to prepare districts and schools for the CCSS-aligned assessments; and technical assistance related to the standards. Many states have collaborated in these efforts and, as a result, have realized economies of scale and increased state education agency expertise. Furthermore, a majority of our survey respondents report that schools in their state have begun teaching a CCSS-aligned curriculum; in nine states, however, this process will not begin until school year 2013-14 or later.

Although most adopting states support the CCSS and have initiated various activities to implement them, many lack adequate resources to effectively carry out all CCSS-related activities. With 34 states reporting that adequate resources are a major (22 states) or minor (12) challenge to CCSS implementation, it is not yet known whether SEAs will have the fiscal capacity to maintain assistance for implementing the standards. Further, less than a quarter of the SEAs in our survey report having adequate staff expertise, staffing levels, and resources to implement various aspects of the CCSS.

State education agencies' general lack of capacity, combined with concerns about adequate funding, may create greater implementation challenges as the adopting states move closer to administering the CCSS-aligned assessments in school year 2014-15. If the Common Core is going to succeed, governors, state legislators, and state boards of education need to examine whether more resources are needed to implement the standards. These state leaders also need to pay close attention to staffing and operating budgets for their SEA to ensure it has adequate staff and expertise to support CCSS-related activities. Unfortunately, these leaders may have different opinions about how state resources should be spent. With 36 gubernatorial elections slated for 2014, political will may complicate the ability of SEAs to provide leadership on the Common Core.

Supporters of the Common Core outside of state government—such as nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, the business sector, and philanthropic organizations—could help states by providing assistance and/or support for CCSS implementation activities. For example, some states may need free and open access to proven CCSS professional development models for teachers and principals. Other states might find it helpful to have a place to direct districts and schools for information about CCSS-aligned curricula and related materials. Some SEAs may welcome efforts to expand their capacity to implement the Common Core, either through direct grants from charitable organizations or through efforts to coordinate and share expertise and staffing across states.

Appendix: Study Methods

The preliminary instrument for CEP's state Common Core State Standards survey was developed after considering information from prior CEP surveys and studies as well as other reports and media coverage about the CCSS. The CEP survey team also sought advice on the preliminary survey from staff at the Alliance for Excellent Education, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Council of Chief State School Officers, National Center for Learning Disabilities, and the National Governors Association. In January 2013, the survey questions and response items underwent further review and systematic pretesting. The survey team obtained feedback from state-level officials in three states about the questions and response items. The survey was revised based on their input. In February 2013, CEP staff mailed a letter to the state chiefs/commissioners of education containing information about the CEP CCSS survey.

The CEP survey was administered electronically in February through May of 2013 to deputy state superintendents of education or their designees in the 46 states (plus D.C.) that had adopted the CCSS in English language arts and/or mathematics at that time. Forty of these states completed the survey for a response rate of 85%. The survey responses were imported to an Excel file and the data were cleaned and checked for duplicate entries or missing response times. Additional follow-up via e-mail and telephone was necessary for some survey submissions. Most of the items in the survey were closed questions, and response item frequencies were totaled and percentages calculated using the formula functions in Excel.

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