

A Compendium of Research on the Common Core State Standards: **Cost Analysis**

Center on Education Policy
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Graduate School of Education and Human Development
The George Washington University

About This Compendium

In the spring and fall of 2013, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) convened two meetings of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to discuss ideas for a more relevant and coordinated research agenda on the Common Core State Standards. Participants in these meetings identified several needs and made a number of thoughtful suggestions. Many agreed there was a need for a synthesis of existing research on the CCSS and their implementation and impact.

To help meet this need, CEP has put together this compendium, which very briefly summarizes the published research on many different aspects of the CCSS. Our objective was to create an accessible and readable overview of current research that can inform implementation, policy discussions, and the development of future research on the Common Core. Therefore, we have intentionally limited the description for each study to one page that summarizes its focus, methodology, and key findings and includes a URL, where available, or a citation. The compendium is designed to be a living document and will be updated on a rolling basis—this is the second iteration.

Criteria for Including Studies

Although the compendium includes peer-reviewed research published in academic journals and similar outlets, it is not limited to these types of studies. Also included are studies published by government entities, independent organizations, research universities, and individual researchers and graduate students that provide useful information to practitioners, policymakers, and scholars.

To be included in the compendium, each study had to contain the following components:

- An articulated methodology for data collection and analysis so that others could see how the research was conducted
- An empirical approach (derived from observation or experience)
- A specific focus on the CCSS in math or English (research focused on other education issues that have implications for the CCSS was not included)
- A publication date before December 2014, our cutoff for collecting information for the compendium

We recognize that some important research with a bearing on the CCSS may have been omitted, but we wanted to set clear criteria that would yield a manageable number of the most relevant studies. In addition, the studies that are included are complex; to keep the individual summaries concise and practical, we limited the discussion to a few priority areas. We do not purport to have produced a comprehensive summary of all possible research on the CCSS, but we think this is a good starting point. The compendium was first issued in August 2014. This February 2015 update adds new studies to the compendium that were published after May 2015 and other Common Core research that has come to our attention. If you know about research on the CCSS that should be considered for inclusion in an update, please notify us at CEP by email at cep-dc@cep-dc.org.

Verification of Information

Since these are one-page summaries of longer studies that required us to prioritize the information to be included, we felt it was important to contact each study's author (or the lead author for studies with multiple authors). The authors were contacted by email and asked to provide feedback on the summary of their report.

The compendium includes studies from 55 different authors, including reports from CEP. Of the 55 authors contacted to review our summary, 40 responded, for a response rate of 73%. If a respondent made changes or suggestions to the content of our summary, their comments were considered and incorporated into the original draft (in some cases with minor editing).

We are most grateful to the authors who reviewed and verified the summaries for their studies.

How to Use the Compendium

Studies are categorized by topic then presented alphabetically by author within each topic. Studies that fit into multiple categories have been placed in both categories, so there is some duplication. For an alphabetical list of research studies by author and their assigned categories, please see Appendix A.

Please note the information on the studies contained in this compendium does not reflect all of the findings or topics included in a particular study but rather provides is a very brief overview. For example, we have not included a discussion of the limitations addressed in each study report. If you find the summary of a study compelling, we strongly encourage you to use the URL provided to read the study in its entirety.

Pioneer Institute (2012)

National Cost of Aligning States and Localities to the Common Core Standards

Focus

The purpose of this study was to engage education stakeholders and policymakers in an informed dialogue about the likely cost of Common Core State Standards implementation.

Methods

Researchers focused on specific components of CCSS implementation, including assessment, professional development, instructional materials, and technology infrastructure and support. They also structured their cost analysis around three categories of expenses: one-time costs, year 1 operational costs, and ongoing annual operational costs for years 2-7. While the primary sources of data were “assumptions drawn from experience-based cost estimates by state or local school officials,” data collection for each expense category differed. Researchers tried to present the middle-of-the-road costs and only included mandatory expenses (for example, they included summative assessments but not optional interim assessments offered by testing groups).

Key Findings

- **Professional development: \$5.26 billion across CCSS-adopting states**
 - This is a one-time projected cost for experienced teachers and can be phased in over a period of years leading up to assessments intended to hold students accountable for learning the standards. This figure does not include professional development estimates for new teachers, and it is assumed that teacher training programs will take responsibility for preparing teacher candidates for the CCSS.
- **Instructional materials: \$2.47 billion across CCSS-adopting states**
 - This is a one-time projected cost and should be secured before teachers are expected to implement the CCSS in their classrooms. Researchers did not consider this an ongoing expense because textbooks and instructional materials need to routinely be replaced regardless of the standards.
- **Assessments: \$177.2 million for consortia-member states.**
 - This is the projected total cost of assessment per year for states that are members of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) or the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. These anticipated costs are annual rather than one-time and do not include the start-up costs that were funded by the federal government.
- **Technology infrastructure and support: \$6.87 billion for consortia-member states**
 - The projected \$6.87 billion includes \$2.8 billion in one-time costs, \$326 million in year 1 operational costs, and \$624 million in ongoing costs for years 2-7. This component includes computers, wiring and bandwidth, training and technical support, and power.

Where to Obtain This Report

http://www.accountabilityworks.org/photos/Cmmn_Cr_Cst_Stdy.Fin.2.22.12.pdf

Thomas B. Fordham Institute (2012b)

Putting a Price Tag on the Common Core: How Much Will Smart Implementation Cost?

Focus

This report outlines various approaches to implementing the Common Core State Standards and evaluates the potential costs and advantages of each approach.

Methodology

Data was collected from seven school districts¹, state Race to the Top applications (1st and 2nd round), state School Improvement Grants plans, state Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver applications (first round), budgetary data from state and district websites, and interviews with organizations associated with education or curriculum development. Researchers used this data to examine the cost of developing new instructional materials; administering, scoring, and reporting the results of new CCSS-aligned assessments; and providing professional development to principals, teachers, and support staff. These three costs were then categorized under three approaches to implementation: “business as usual,” “bare bones,” and “balanced implementation.”²

Key Findings

- **Business as usual (also known as the “traditional” model) was the most expensive implementation model.** The least expensive model was the bare bones. Balanced Implementation fell in between the other two models.
- **Business as usual implementation of the CCSS would equal about 3% of yearly K-12 spending.** This figure could potentially drop to 1.5% if states’ implementation strategies took advantage of technology to replace costs associated with purchasing hard-copy textbooks and providing in-person professional development. Since implementation is likely to span several years, these figures would be spread across all implementation years, further reducing the annual cost.
- **Regardless of the implementation model, the current expenditures for developing instructional materials; administering, scoring, and reporting the results of state assessments; and conducting professional development will comprise a significant share of CCSS implementation costs.**
- **The CCSS may give states the chance to evaluate and redesign standards implementation and/or the delivery of education as a whole.** These changes could include collaboration across states, across schools, or between traditional and charter schools.

Where to Obtain This Report

<http://www.edexcellence.net/publications/putting-a-price-tag-on-the-common-core.html>

¹ The seven districts that participated in this study were Albuquerque, Atlanta, Boston, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Chicago, Cleveland, and Jefferson County (Kentucky).

² Because this was a transitional look at CCSS implementation, researchers purposely omitted the costs of remedial services, innovations in personnel management, development of assessment tools, upgrading of schools of education, realignment of learning expectations in early childhood education and postsecondary education, and any technological infrastructure needed to accommodate online assessments.

Credits and Acknowledgements

Studies included in this compendium were compiled and summarized by Matthew Frizzell, CEP research associate and Tara Dunderdale, CEP graduate research assistant. Nanami Yoshioka, CEP graduate research assistant, checked the summaries for accuracy. Diane Stark Rentner, deputy director, Jennifer McMurrer, senior research associate, and Nancy Kober, editorial consultant, reviewed and edited the compendium. Maria Ferguson, CEP's executive director, provided advice and assistance on the compendium's content.

We are tremendously grateful to the authors of the original studies who took time to review and respond to the summaries. Thank you for providing critical feedback and helping us ensure that we are accurately reflecting the content of your research.

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