

# A Compendium of Research on the Common Core State Standards: **Governance & Leadership**

Center on Education Policy  
**Updated February 2015**



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## **Center on Education Policy**

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](mailto: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.

## **Achieve (2013)** *Closing the Expectations Gap*

### **Focus**

The purpose of this study is to examine states' K-12 policies regarding content standards, graduation requirements, assessments, and accountability and data systems.

### **Methodology**

Researchers sent surveys to 50 states and the District of Columbia, and 49 states and D.C. responded.

### **Key Findings**

The report included questions and findings that are not directly related to the Common Core State Standards. For brevity, only key findings that are directly related to the CCSS or the CCSS-aligned assessments are presented.

- **Forty-five states and the District of Columbia had adopted the Common Core State Standards.** The researchers distinguished between adoption and implementation, and report that most states expected that after the standards were adopted it would take three to four years before the CCSS would be fully implemented. The majority of states expected to have implemented the CCSS or their own version of college- and career-readiness (CCR) standards by school year 2013-14.
- **Most states had not raised graduation requirements to the college- and career-readiness level.** Nineteen states and the District of Columbia had adopted graduation requirements that call on students to take courses that prepare them to meet the CCSS or other CCR standards. Of these, seven states and D.C. will require students to participate in courses aligned to the CCR standards to graduate by 2016. (Five of those seven states and D.C. had adopted the CCSS in mathematics and English language arts (ELA), and one state had adopted the CCSS in ELA only.) Twelve states place 9<sup>th</sup> graders into a CCR course of study as the “default” curriculum but allow students to *opt out* of this curriculum or individual courses. An additional seven states offer diplomas or courses of study that are geared to the CCR level, but students must *opt into* them; the default graduation course requirements in these states are below the CCR level.

### **Where to Obtain This Report**

<http://www.achieve.org/files/2013ClosingtheExpectationsGapReport.pdf>

## American Association of School Administrators (2014)

### *Common Core and Other State Standards: Superintendents Feel Optimism, Concern and Lack of Support*

#### Focus

The purpose of this study was to gauge how the implementation of College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) was progressing across the country.

#### Methods

AASA surveyed superintendents and administrators across the country and received 525 responses from across 48 states.

#### Key Findings

- **A large majority of respondents came from states that had decided to adopt a set of CCRS and have started to implement the new standards.** At the time of the survey, 55% of respondents had been implementing their CCRS for two or more years; 7% intended to start implementation in the 2014-15 school year.
- **Superintendents felt directly involved in the implementation of CCRS.** District leaders felt most directly involved in professional development, with 69% directly involved and only 2% not involved. They felt less involved in community support (61% directly involved) and teaching materials (47% directly involved).
- **The majority of districts had administered CCRS-aligned assessments but with difficulty.** Over 60% of districts had started using tests that were aligned to the new standards; of those districts, 60% reported experiencing some or great difficulty with the testing process, while 10% said the testing process was going smoothly.
- **Over 70% of responding districts received state funding for CCRS implementation.** More than half (52%) of responding districts received both state and federal funding for implementation, 22% received state support only, 3% received federal support only, and 22% received neither. Most respondents say state-level support was inadequate.
- **Respondents said that the CCRS are supported by the community.** Over 50% of respondents agreed that the broader community supported the standards. Seventy-eight percent of the participants agreed that the education community supported the CCRS.

#### Where to Obtain This Report

[http://aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/AASA\\_CCSS\\_Report.pdf](http://aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/AASA_CCSS_Report.pdf)

## Center on Education Policy (2013a)

### *Year 3 of Implementing the Common Core State Standards: State Education Agencies' Views on the Federal Role*

#### Focus

The purpose of this study was to report states' strategies, policies, and challenges during the third year of Common Core State Standards implementation. This report focuses on how state leaders view the federal role with regard to the CCSS.

#### Methodology

Researchers sent surveys to state superintendents or their designees in the 46 states that had adopted the CCSS at the time of this study and 40 state administrators responded to the survey. The survey included 43 questions and was used to produce six separate reports.

#### Key Findings

- **In 37 of the CCSS-adopting states participating in the survey, officials considered it unlikely that their state would reverse, limit, or change its decision to adopt the standards during 2013-14.** In addition, very few respondents said that overcoming various types of resistance to the Common Core posed a major challenge in their state.
- **A majority of CCSS-adopting states indicated support for particular legislative changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that would directly assist state and district efforts to transition to the Common Core.** Thirty states or more responded that legislative changes to authorize and appropriate federal funds for the following activities would help their state's efforts to transition to the CCSS:
  - *Generally assisting states and school districts with CCSS implementation-related activities*
  - *Providing state and district professional development activities for teachers and principals regarding the CCSS*
  - *Helping states with the costs of implementing the CCSS-aligned assessments being developed by the PARCC and Smarter Balanced assessment consortia*
  - *Supporting the updating and maintenance of the CCSS-aligned assessments being developed by the PARCC and Smarter Balanced consortia*
- **Only two survey states reported that they did not want any federal assistance with CCSS implementation.**
- **The Obama Administration's waivers of ESEA/No Child Left Behind Act provisions appear to have helped some states with their efforts to transition to the CCSS and meet federal accountability requirements.**
- **If ESEA is not reauthorized during the 113th Congress, many states that received waivers saw the need for additional non-legislative actions on ESEA to help them implement the CCSS.**

#### Where to Obtain This Report

<http://cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=420>

## Center on Education Policy (2013e)

### *Year 3 of Implementing the Common Core State Standards: State Education Agencies' Views on Postsecondary Involvement*

#### Focus

The purpose of this study was to report states' strategies, policies, and challenges during the third year of Common Core State Standards implementation. This report focuses on the state education agencies' (SEAs) partnerships with postsecondary education institutions regarding collaboration and partnerships around CCSS initiatives.

#### Methodology

Researchers sent surveys to state superintendents or their designees in the 46 states that had adopted the CCSS at the time of this study and 40 state administrators responded to the survey. The survey included 43 questions and was used to produce six separate reports.

#### Key Findings

- **The majority of state education agencies responding to the survey reported that they have forged formal partnerships with postsecondary education officials to implement the CCSS.** Only five states said they have not established any of these types of partnerships.
- **A large majority of the SEAs surveyed said that working with higher education institutions in their state to transition to the CCSS is a major (16 states) or minor (19) challenge.** In addition, 27 respondents indicated that aligning the content of college and university teacher preparation programs with the CCSS was a challenge.
- **Nearly all of the SEA respondents had provided or are preparing to provide briefings on the CCSS for school of education faculty in colleges and universities.** The majority of SEAs also reported they have worked with postsecondary institutions to align the academic content of teacher preparation programs with the CCSS, or are planning to do so.
- **The majority of SEAs surveyed reported that postsecondary institutions have reviewed or will review the CCSS in English language arts and math to determine if mastery of the standards indicates college readiness.** In addition, more than half of the responding SEAs said that postsecondary institutions in their state are considering making decisions about placing students in courses or exempting them from remediation based on their performance on the CCSS-aligned assessments.

#### Where to Obtain This Report

<http://cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=424>

**Consortium for Policy Research in Education (2013b)**  
*Slowing Entropy: Instructional Policy Design in New York City, 2011-12*

**Focus**

The purpose of this study was to look at how New York City designed and implemented its Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIEs), which gave principals and teachers specific tasks or activities related to implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards<sup>1</sup> (CCLS).

**Methodology**

The researcher coded the 2011-12 CIE policy statement and identified specific elements that reflected “deliberate decisions” by policymakers to influence implementation. Interviews were also conducted with eight central office employees who were instrumental in developing the CIE policy. The interviews were conducted as a foundation for another study (see Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 2013a).

**Key Findings**

- **In the 2011-12 CIE policy, the researcher identified eight components where policymakers used deliberate phrasing to influence the implementation of the CCLS.** These phrases explicitly encouraged principals and teachers to—
  - Work as teams
  - Emphasize student work
  - Connect student work to the CCLS
  - Get all students to experience two CCLS-aligned tasks, one in math and one in ELA
  - Incorporate the CCLS within their curriculum
  - Focus on specific Common Core standards
  - Reiterate emphasis on collaborative inquiry
  - Share lessons learned
- **Based on the analysis of the 2011-12 CIE policy and interviews, the researcher found five attributes that might make instructional policy more resilient and less likely to disintegrate during implementation.** These include—
  - Focusing on a few manageable goals
  - Focusing the policy toward activities that are likely to encourage meaningful change in instructional practices
  - Designing activities so that implementers have an understanding of the larger instructional process
  - Having focused goals and activities that align with previous districtwide reforms
  - Anticipating the needs of the implementers and beginning to build resources and support structures to meet the need

**Where to Obtain This Report**

<http://www.cpre.org/slowng-entropy>

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<sup>1</sup> Some states that adopted the CCSS added up to 15% of state specific content to the standards and/or changed the name of the standards. New York did both, and calls its standards the CCLS.

## Gallup and Education Week (2013)

### *Gallup-Education Week Superintendent Panel – Inaugural Survey Findings*

#### Focus

The purpose of this study was to track and understand the opinions of K-12 superintendents on important educational topics. This is the baseline survey, and future surveys will take place every quarter.

#### Methods

Gallup administered 2,586 online surveys to a sample of school district leaders throughout the country.

#### Key Findings

This poll included questions and key findings that are not directly related to the Common Core State Standards. For brevity, only key findings that are directly related to the CCSS or the CCSS-aligned assessments are presented below.

- **The majority (58%) of respondents said that the CCSS will improve the quality of education in their district.** Fewer participants said that the CCSS would decrease the quality of education (8%) or have no effect on education (30%).
- **The majority (54%) of district participants disagreed that the CCSS would prevent individualized learning.** Conversely, 21% of respondents agreed that the CCSS would prevent individualized learning, while 22% selected a neutral response.
- **Most respondents (80%) said that the federal government was not providing adequate funding to implement the CCSS.** Only 5% responded that their district had received adequate federal support for CCSS implementation, and 10% selected a neutral response.
- **The majority (68%) were not collaborating with local postsecondary institutions around CCSS implementation.** About a quarter (28%) of respondents were working with local postsecondary institutions around the implementation of the CCSS.
- **The majority (56%) of district respondents said that the CCSS would help make education in the U.S. more globally competitive.** Only 5% said the CCSS would make the U.S. less globally competitive, and 33% foresaw no impact on the global competitiveness of U.S. education.
- **Most district officials (75%) responded that the CCSS would provide more consistency in the quality of education across school districts and states.** Twenty-one percent of the respondents said that the CCSS would not provide more consistency.

#### Where to Obtain This Report

<http://www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/162926/gallup-superintendents-panel-inaugural-report.aspx>

**Kendall, J., Ryan, S., Alpert, A., Richardson, A., & Schwols, A. (2012)**  
*State Adoption of the Common Core State Standards: The 15 Percent Rule*

### **Focus**

The purpose of this study was to identify how states and other regions that have adopted the Common Core State Standards are engaging their freedom to add 15% of their own content to the CCSS.

### **Methods**

Researchers examined CCSS-adoption policies in all states and regions that had adopted the standards. Information culled from policies was coded. This process was completed twice, once when researchers were focused explicitly on references to the 15% rule and again when researchers reviewed websites and documents without explicit reference to the 15% rule.

### **Key Findings**

- **Most states and regions had not yet added content to the CCSS.** Thirty states and regions that had adopted the CCSS had not publicly stated their intention to employ the 15% rule, and their standards do not contain additional content. Eight states have publicly available statements saying they decided to not implement the 15% rule—four of those states have reserved the right to add content to their standards in the future.
- **Eleven CCSS-adopting states had taken advantage of the 15% rule.** The states that added content are Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New York, and New Mexico.
- **There is no prescription for how standards are to be added.** Since states are able to add different content in a variety of ways, there is variance between what states added and how they chose to incorporate new content. For example, states may have added content to one set of standards but not the other, or states may have added content that was designed to be targeted to a subgroup of students through optional courses and are not required of all students.
- **Researchers included a list of the specific academic content that was added by each state to the CCSS under the 15% rule.**

### **Where to Obtain This Report**

[http://www.mcrel.org/products-and-services/products/product-listing/01\\_99/product-17](http://www.mcrel.org/products-and-services/products/product-listing/01_99/product-17)

## Kornhaber, M., Griffith, K., & Tyler, A (2014)

*It's Not Education by Zip Code Anymore—But What is It? Conceptions of Equity under the Common Core*

### Focus

The purpose of this study was to ascertain how CCSS “policy entrepreneurs” viewed the role and meaning of equity within the reform.

### Methodology

Researchers interviewed 11 CCSS policy entrepreneurs who were active in moving the CCSS from a conceptual reform idea to state adoption. The interview transcripts were coded by three researchers. They devised a framework for characterizing policy entrepreneurs’ views on equity:

- An “equal” view, which assumes that equal inputs—especially standards, expectations, opportunities, curriculum resources, and instruction—will generate more equal student outcomes
- An “equalizing” view, which assumes that varying school inputs across educational setting are required to attain more equal educational outcomes
- An “expansive” view, which assumes that achieving more equal outcomes requires broad educational, social, health, and economic inputs that vary with educational contexts.

### Key Findings

- **Interviewees defined equity in terms of school inputs that would equalize student outcomes.** All participants held an equal view. Several also held an equalizing view. One mentioned an expansive view.
- **Equity played a central role in the CCSS.** All interviewees said that equity for disadvantaged students was a major factor in the formation and goals of the reform.
- **Educational equity was linked with economic benefits.** Interviewees agreed that individuals would benefit from a stronger education, and the nation would benefit from greater international competitiveness. They also held that common standards would create economies of scale and promote more efficient and equitable distribution of school resources. They stated that common standards would also promote better teacher preparation and professional development.. However, participants acknowledged that resources and capacity would still be unequal between and within states.
- **The CCSS alone will not fix the problem.** Participants understood that the CCSS alone would not reduce educational inequities and that federal and state funds would need to be targeted to high-risks districts and schools. Participants had conflicting views about whether the CCSS may provide a legal platform for targeting additional resources to high-needs students.
- **The CCSS will not improve equity outside school walls.** Interviewees acknowledged that the CCSS would not likely reduce educational inequity in communities with needs beyond those addressed by K-12 schooling. The authors maintain that to produce more equitable student outcomes, reforms will need to build on an expansive view of equity.

### Where to Obtain This Article

<http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/1308www.edweek.org/link>

## McLaughlin, M., Glaab, L., & Carrasco, I. (2014)

### *Implementing the Common Core State Standards in California: A Report from the Field*

#### Focus

This study examined early implementation of the Common Core State Standards in California districts.

#### Methods

Researchers interviewed educators and administrators from 10 county Offices of Education, 20 school districts, four Charter Management Organizations, and two state-level organizations.

#### Key Findings

- **Educators and administrators are “uniformly enthusiastic” about the CCSS.** This enthusiasm seems to be coupled with anxiousness about proper implementation of the standards, however.
- **CCSS implementation has helped to create new partnerships and relationships.** These include collaborations among teachers, between local schools and/or school districts, and between school districts and local businesses or community colleges.
- **Two universal challenges to CCSS implementation include insufficient time and “broader ambiguities and uncertainties associated with the CCSS.”**
- **Interviewees also cited other challenges to and concerns about CCSS implementation:**
  - **Curriculum and materials:** California’s Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) gave school districts more responsibility for a unified implementation plan, professional development, and instructional resources, while limiting the state’s role. Interviewees said they were unsure how reliable or helpful privately developed instructional materials were. Many districts are relying on teachers to make decisions about instruction and materials—a role traditionally carried out by central offices in California.
  - **Capacity:** Participants agreed that the CCSS would require a dramatic shift in teaching styles and techniques, and many worried that teachers had not yet developed the necessary skills. Affluent districts were concerned with students’ ability to utilize technology, while high-poverty and small districts raised concerns about technological infrastructure. Interviewees reported a lack of knowledge about CCSS-aligned assessments and how to evaluate student performance or use data from formative assessments. They also said that simultaneously addressing the requirements of new state finance policies exacerbated capacity issues.
  - **Preparation:** Interviewees saw a need for professional development for both administrators and teachers. Administrators wanted professional development to help them understand the CCSS and facilitate standards implementation and support teachers. Teachers wanted more hands-on accessible professional development on concrete instructional practices.
  - **Other concerns** cited by interviewees include pushing middle school students to prepare them for high school, integrating and aligning curriculum across schools in the same district, and accommodating the rigor of the new math standards.

#### Where to Obtain This Report

<http://www.edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/PACE%20CCSS%20McLaughlin.pdf>

## McDonnell, L. & Weatherford, S. (2013b)

### *Evidence Use and the Common Core State Standards Movement: From Problem Definition to Policy Adoption*

#### Focus

The purpose of this study was to examine how research and other types of evidence were used in the development and adoption of the Common Core State Standards.

#### Methodology

Researchers interviewed 111 CCSS stakeholders, including leaders of the CCSS, members of the work groups and committees that wrote and validated the CCSS, national and state education policy makers, education policy researchers, and members of groups that are critical of the CCSS. Interview data was categorized by the policy stage in which the interviewee participated. (Three policy stages were used: problem definition/solution, policy design, and policy enactment.) The recorded accounts of types of evidence used were compared to hypotheses that researchers derived from policy analysis literature.

#### Key Findings

- **The research used to define the problem and pose a potential solution for the CCSS included international comparisons and state standards comparisons.** More specifically, the people associated with initiating the discussion of the CCSS cited low achievement on international assessments; the link between education and global economic competitiveness; national achievement gaps in educational achievement depending on race, social class, or geographical location; and state standards that vary in rigor and depth.
- **Four factors shaped evidence use during the development and validation of standards.** The first was the assertion that the development of the CCSS needed to be driven by research to avoid ideological debates. Second, a lack of peer-reviewed research to help shape the CCSS meant that standards writers would need to use other forms of evidence; the final product was based on “research and evidence.” Third, there was a desire to include stakeholders in addition to educational researchers in the CCSS creation process, such as teachers, teacher union leaders, and state department of education personnel. Fourth, “a grounding in the available research and evidence” was one of the guiding principles used by the validation committee. Because of the lack of research some of the decisions made by committee members were based on professional judgment.
- **During the state adoption stage, stakeholders often customized previously used evidence to address various state audiences.** Researchers point out that evidence was tailored to address the need for states to adopt standards quickly to meet federal requirements and the need for state policymakers to see the rigor of the CCSS compared with their previous state standards.

#### Where to Obtain This Report

McDonnell, L. & Weatherford, S. (2013). Evidence use and the Common Core State Standards movement: From problem definition to policy adoption. *American Journal of Education*, 120(1), 1-25.

**Michigan State University (2013a)**  
*Implementing the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics:  
A Comparison of Current District Content in 41 States*

**Focus**

The purpose of this study was to assess district curriculum directors' awareness and familiarity with the Common Core State Standards in mathematics (CCSS-M) and to document the progress of local efforts to implement the CCSS-M.

**Methodology**

Through surveys administered online or by phone, researchers gathered data from 698 district curriculum directors (CDs) about their awareness of the CCSS-M, their level of knowledge about the CCSS-M topics, and their districts' progress in implementing the new math standards. The sample of CDs came from the 41 states that had adopted the CCSS-M by the spring of 2011 and was drawn to be proportional to district size and to be representative of each state.

**Key Findings**

- **Most CDs said that common standards were a good idea.** When prompted with frequently cited benefits of CCSS-M implementation, most CDs focused on those items that benefited students. For example, 88% of CDs agreed that the CCSS-M were extremely important in order to “provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn.”
- **Ninety-three respondents reported having read the CCSS-M. Of this group, 58% thought that the new standards were “somewhat” or “pretty much” similar to their previous state mathematics standards.** Nearly half of CDs also reported that their districts' current practices were only “moderately different” from the practices required by the CCSS-M, and 28% said there were “major” or “large” differences between the practices based on the two sets of math standards.
- **CDs expressed concerns about the alignment of assessments to the new standards during the transition period.** Thirty-five percent of respondents anticipated this as a challenge because misaligned assessments would not provide adequate feedback to teachers on their classroom practices. Furthermore, at the time of the study, assessments created by PARCC and Smarter Balanced were still underway and “little information about the assessments under development had been made public.”
- **Overall, there is a lack of alignment between what is taught or intended to be taught and the CCSS-M grade level recommendations at all grades.** For example, the CCSS-M task of representing and solving mathematical problems that involve addition and subtraction is recommended only in grades 1 and 2. However, between 50% and 70% of CDs report covering that topic in grades 3 and 4, and between 10% and 49% of CDs report covering that topic in grades 5 through 12. This finding varied by district.

**Where to Obtain This Report**

<http://education.msu.edu/epc/publications/documents/WP32ImplementingtheCommonCoreStateStandardsrevised.pdf>

## Southern Regional Education Board (2014)

### *State Implementation of Common Core State Standards: Summary Report*

#### Focus

This study reports on the efforts of states to support local implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The Summary Report discussed here is accompanied by five reports with detailed state profiles on 1) timeline and approach to standards and assessments, 2) CCSS-aligned teaching resources, 3) professional development, 4) evaluation of teachers and leaders, and 5) accountability.

#### Methodology

Researchers collected and reviewed publicly available information about 15<sup>2</sup> states' CCSS implementation and conducted interviews with people familiar with CCSS implementation strategies in their state. Interviewees included state department of education leaders, principals, teachers, local superintendents, governors' staff, and union leaders, among others. The data represents states' work between 2010 and the fall of 2013. The report describes states' efforts in each of the five areas listed above.

#### Key Findings

- **All 15 states were taking comprehensive steps to guide and support CCSS implementation.** Researchers identified Kentucky and New York as leaders in the category of timeline and approach to standards and assessments.
- **All 15 states were working to support districts and schools in their use of high-quality resources aligned to the CCSS.** Leaders in the category of CCSS-aligned teaching resources were Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, and New York.
- **All 15 states were engaged in providing educators with professional learning opportunities to support successful implementation of the CCSS.** Leaders in the professional development category were Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Tennessee.
- **All 15 states plan on having their new evaluation system in place by 2015-16.** Colorado, Louisiana, and Tennessee were identified as leaders in evaluation of teachers and leaders.
- **All 15 states administer annual, summative assessments in English language arts and mathematics.** These assessments are or will soon be aligned to the CCSS. A majority of states also reported administering CCSS-aligned English language proficiency assessments to English language learners. Georgia, Kentucky, and North Carolina were identified as leaders in accountability.

#### Where to Obtain This Report

[http://www.sreb.org/page/1600/benchmarking\\_ccss.html](http://www.sreb.org/page/1600/benchmarking_ccss.html)

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<sup>2</sup>These included 12 southern states (Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia) and 3 other states (Colorado, New York, and Pennsylvania).

## Watt, M. (2011)

### *The Common Core State Standards Initiative: An Overview*

#### Focus

The purpose of this study was to detail national and state decision-makers' choices throughout the creation, development, diffusion, and adoption of the Common Core State Standards.

#### Methods

The researcher reviewed documents and verified the analysis through communication with national and state officials involved with the CCSS. The analysis was shaped by a decision-oriented evaluation model that included decisions at four stages: planning, structuring, implementing, and recycling.

#### Key Findings

- **Planning decisions:** Multiple organizations made different but significant contributions at the planning stage, including convening conferences, producing research, and publishing recommended next steps. Watt highlights as key actors the American Diploma Project, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the International Benchmarking Advisory Group, the National Research Council of the National Academies, the James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy, and the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government.
- **Structuring decisions:** This stage was led by CCSSO and the National Governors Association (NGA), which together developed a process and timeline for standards creation and implementation and an agreement that established the purpose, background, and benefits to participating states.
- **Implementing decisions:** The implementation stage consisted of multiple segments:
  - The work of **developing college and career ready standards** was coordinated by CCSSO and NGA, and content experts were drawn primarily from Achieve, ACT, and the College Entrance Examination Board. Draft standards were internally and publicly reviewed.
  - The work of **developing K-12 standards** was coordinated by CCSSO and NGA, and content experts were drawn primarily from schools, state education agencies, and postsecondary institutions. Drafts were internally and publicly reviewed, and the final set of standards was validated by a panel of national and international experts selected by governors and chiefs.
  - The standards were **disseminated** through conferences of the National Association of State Boards of Education, National Parent Teacher Association, and Council of State Governments.
  - Many education stakeholders were involved in **adopting the CCSS**, including CCSSO, NGA, Achieve, the Alliance for Excellent Education, local organizations which developed curricula and assessments, and the Albert Shanker Institute, among others.
- **Recycling the initiative decisions:** This stage was spearheaded by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, which funded five papers about governance models that could influence the CCSS during and after implementation, and made recommendations for future governance.

#### Where to Obtain This Report

<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED522271.pdf>

**Wohlstetter, P., Buck, B., Houston, D., and Smith, C. (In Press)**  
*Common Core, Uncommon Theory of Action: CEOs in New York City*

### Focus

With attention focused on three foundational pillars that were designed to facilitate the autonomy of principals (called “CEOs”), researchers analyzed New York City’s efforts to implement the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).<sup>3</sup>

### Methodology

Researchers conducted roughly 30 semi-structured interviews across the entire NYC education system between 2011 and 2013. Interviewees included NYC Department of Education (DOE) staff; Children First Network (CFN) cluster leaders, individual leaders, and coaches for English, math, special education, and English language learners; and CEOs, school administrative personnel, and teachers. Interviews were transcribed and coded; the resulting analysis was triangulated with archival documents and policies.

### Key Findings

- **Two NYC DOE policies facilitated the role of the CFNs in supporting schools’ implementation of the CCSS.** The first, a set of Citywide Instructions Expectations (CIE), placed a priority on important reforms and provided yearly outlines for implementation strategies. The second policy was a shift in the Quality Review process that reflected the CIE requirements as they pertained to the CCLS. These two policies provided clarity and consistency to schools as they implemented the CCLS.
- **The CFNs played key roles in supporting schools with CCLS implementation.** The first role the CFNs played was to improve communication between NYC DOE and individual schools; researchers found that the CFNs enhanced communication in both directions—from the top-down and bottom-up. The second key role the CFNs played was to develop and provide professional development supports for individual schools as they implemented the CCLS.
- **Researchers found two main challenges with CCLS implementation.** First, the NYC DOE placed too much emphasis on student assessment tools but not enough emphasis on curriculum support. Second, the relationships between CFNs and individual schools were complicated by structural and organizational features of the program; researchers specifically cited geography and the large number of member schools in some CFNs as challenges.

### Where to Obtain This Report

Wohlstetter, P., Buck, B., Houston, D., & Smith, C. (In Press). *Common Core, uncommon theory of action: CEOs in New York City*. In A. Daly & K. Finnigan (eds.) *Thinking systematically: Improving districts under pressure*. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

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<sup>3</sup> Some states that adopted the CCSS added up to 15% of state specific content to the standards and/or changed the name of the standards. New York did both and calls its standards the CCLS.

**Wohlstetter, P., Houston, D., & Buck, B. (2014)**  
*Networks in New York City: Implementing the Common Core*

**Focus**

This study described how networks facilitated early implementation of the Common Core State Standards in New York City in order to uncover how different network structures advance large-scale institutions.

**Methodology**

Researchers conducted interviews with organizational and instructional leaders at two Children First Networks (CFNs) and two charter management organizations (CMOs), Empire and Liberty. Both CFNs were part of an ongoing study and worked with schools with average student performance compared with schools in other CFNs.

**Key Findings**

- **The CFNs were better designed to support schools in navigating city policies than to help them establish and implement curriculum aligned to the CCSS.** The CFNs were successful at clarifying district expectations, prioritizing policies for school leaders, and piloting new CCSS-aligned rubrics. However, they were less helpful with curriculum and professional development designed to help teachers create curriculum—something many school leaders requested. CFNs used a “coach-the-coaches” model to reach the most teachers with limited CFN staff, and achievement coaches conducted in-school professional development sessions. Other challenges faced by CFNs included limited district resources, too little time to develop implementation strategies tailored to schools, and long travel times to reach schools that were far apart.
- **The Empire CMO set implementation targets and served as a resource for curriculum and instructional materials, but allowed school leaders to decide the best methods for meeting the targets.** Empire’s curriculum and instruction department created CMO-wide instructional expectations and assessments that matched the scope and sequence of the CCSS. The process included “star teachers” who wanted to be involved. Empire also arranged workshops provided by a third-party, and the curriculum and instruction department hosted weekend retreats that offered professional development opportunities. A survey conducted by the CMO showed that teachers liked the support because it allowed them to focus on teaching.
- **Liberty CMO, which did not have the equivalent of a curriculum and instruction department, afforded individual schools much more autonomy with CCSS implementation.** Liberty’s central office did not have a defined plan for implementation and focused on teacher-led professional development through a coach-the-coaches model. The CMO also used third-party providers and held workshops every Friday with instructional specialists. With limited support from the central office and a reliance on trickle-down instructional strategies, Liberty “had difficulty finding the right balance of authority and relative autonomy within their networks.”

**Where to Obtain This Report**

[http://www.cpre.org/sites/default/files/journal/2039\\_educationalpolicy-2014.pdf](http://www.cpre.org/sites/default/files/journal/2039_educationalpolicy-2014.pdf)

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