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PRESS RELEASE

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States Prepare for Common Core Tests but Worry about Pass Rates, Study Finds

Majority of state education leaders are positive about Common Core tests, but many have no plans to align their current state tests to Common Core

WASHINGTON, D.C. — August 28, 2013 — Education officials in 27 states, a majority of those that have adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), say they have already taken steps to start assessing students' mastery of the Common Core by modifying their state's tests or will do so before consortia-developed assessments are ready in school year 2014-15, according to a report from the Center on Education Policy at George Washington University. But about a quarter of the states surveyed are not currently changing their tests to better align them with the new standards.

The report, *Year 3 of Implementing the Common Core State Standards: States Prepare for the Common Core Assessments*, is based on a survey of state deputy superintendents or their designees in 40 of the 46 states that have adopted the CCSS in math or English language arts or both subjects. The survey was conducted in February through May of this year.

Responding officials in 30 states—a majority of those participating in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and/or the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium—expect the assessments being developed by these two state consortia to do a better job of measuring higher-order analytical and performance skills than their current state tests. Twenty-seven states belonging to the consortia say the new assessments will drive instruction in positive ways. And a majority of member states view the consortia assessments as an improvement over their current state tests in math (26 states) and English language arts (25).

“Most of the states we surveyed have positive feelings about the new and unique features of the consortia-developed assessments,” said CEP’s Executive Director Maria Ferguson. “It appears most states are aware that these consortia-developed tests have different characteristics and feel those features will drive instruction in positive ways.”

Still, 17 survey states are considering using other CCSS-aligned assessments in addition to or instead of the PARCC or Smarter Balanced tests, including three states that do not belong to either consortia and 14 that were members of one or both consortia at the time of the survey.

Anticipating that student passing rates may decline on tests aligned to the CCSS, which are widely perceived as more rigorous than most current state standards, 19 survey states have begun working with districts and schools to provide both extra assistance for students who need help passing the tests and remediation for those students who fail the exams on the first try. Also, 20 states report that they are starting to prepare teachers to interpret the results from consortia-developed assessments.

“Many states are taking steps even before the CCSS tests are administered to prepare the public, parents, and students for fewer students passing the exams,” said Diane Stark Rentner, CEP’s deputy director and author of the report. “Clearly states are concerned about what lower pass rates may mean for public support for the standards in the long run.”

Many of the responding states report facing challenges in preparing to administer CCSS-aligned assessments. These include general challenges in developing, adopting, and implementing new or revised tests; providing the technology and related support needed to administer the online consortia-developed assessments; and ensuring the state education agency has sufficient staffing, expertise, and funding to implement a CCSS-aligned testing system.

The report can be accessed free of charge at www.cep-dc.org.

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Based in Washington, D.C., and founded in 1995 by Jack Jennings, the Center on Education Policy at The George Washington University is a national advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center works to help Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. The Center does not

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