Appendix

Listening to & Learning From Teachers:
A Summary of Focus Groups on the Common Core and Assessments

CENTER ON EDUCATION POLICY CEP

Appendix A — Focus Group Study Methods

The purpose of the focus group interviews is to investigate and better understand teachers' experiences with the implementation and assessment of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The study was designed to be a companion to two other studies conducted in 2016: a nationally representative survey of public school teachers[1] and a nationally representative survey of school district officials (forthcoming). As part of the suite of studies, the focus group research explores a range of issues related to teachers' views on the CCSS including:

- Preparation to implement the CCSS
- Experiences with developing, revising, and obtaining curricula aligned the CCSS
- Impact of CCSS implementation on instruction and professional autonomy
- Experiences in administering assessments aligned to the CCSS
- Use of data from the CCSS-aligned assessments and their opinions about the helpfulness of that data

To see the specific questions for the focus groups, please refer to the interview protocol at the end of this appendix.

Why Focus Groups

This study was designed as a series of focus group interviews, consistent with the methods described by Krueger (1994). Focus groups are used for this study because the information gathered from group discussions is a suitable approach for conducting preliminary research on an emerging phenomenon, such as implementation of Common Core aligned-assessments. Moreover, as Morgan explains (1997), focus groups provide an in-depth perspective on topics covered in surveys, such as the CEP surveys of teachers and school district officials. Finally, focus groups allow researchers to gather multiple perspectives about a common experience in an expedited manner, as explained by Glesne (2006).

Study Setting and Participants: State and District Selection

States and districts were purposefully selected to represent the "typical" state and school district. This was done to increase the possibility that the experiences described by participating teachers would resonate with teachers elsewhere and would not be shaped from the outset by "outlier" characteristics such as very high populations or very low expenditures. For this study, "typical" was defined as a state or district that was not an outlier given national or state norms on the list of education metrics shown in table A-1. A state or district was considered "typical" if it fell within one standard deviation of the mean for each metric, with a few exceptions as explained below.

When analyzing metrics to determine which states to use, we grouped states by their assessment affiliation. That is to say, states in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium were compared only to other PARCC states, and the same was done for Smarter Balanced states and for states that administered an independent assessment. We then calculated a mean for each metric for each of the state groups. States were selected if they fell within one standard deviation of the group mean for all metrics. In some cases, too few states or districts met the "typical" requirements. As a result, states and districts that met our criteria for all

[1] Center on Education Policy, *Listen to Us: Teacher Views and Voices* (Washington, DC: CEP, 2016). http://www.cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=1456

but one of the metrics were considered; these states and districts are referred to as "relatively close to typical." CEP researchers also considered other criteria for state selection, such as geographic and political diversity.

Table A-1. Metrics used to define "typical" at the state and district levels

	Metric
State selection*	Total state student population
	Percentage of the student population that is white
	Percentage of the student population that qualified for free or reduced-priced meals
	Percentage of the student population identified as English learners
	Percentage of the student population identified as students with disabilities
	Per pupil expenditure
	Change in average scaled scores on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) in math and reading for 4th grade from 2003-2013
District selection	Total district student population
	Percentage of the student population that is white
	Percentage of the student population that qualified for free or reduced-priced meals
	Percentage of the student population identified as English learners†
	Percentage of the student population identified as students with disabilities
	Percentage proficient on state math and reading scores for 4th graders‡

* California, Florida, and New York were not included because our preliminary analysis indicated their student population sizes were outliers and their inclusion would have skewed the total student population indicator—the states were excluded from all metric calculations.

† Metric was unavailable for district selection in Utah.

‡ Metric for Delaware was based on mean scale scores; metric was not available for Wisconsin.

Our analysis for "typical" states identified two states for each assessment grouping:

- Smarter Balanced states: Delaware, Wisconsin (which dropped Smarter Balanced after the 2015 administration)
- PARCC[2] states: Arkansas (which dropped PARCC after the 2015 administration), Illinois
- Independent: Utah, Wyoming

We decided to include Delaware, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Utah in our study because they are geographically diverse.

The process for identifying "typical" districts was similar to that used for states. A mean was calculated for all districts in the state, and districts were selected if they fell within one standard deviation of that mean for all metrics. In Illinois, 145 districts (N=857) were identified as "typical" based on the metrics; Utah had eight "typical" districts (N=41); and Wisconsin had 99 (N=447). Because Delaware had only four districts (N=19) that met all of our criteria, we added two districts that were "relatively close to typical," in that they met the criteria on all but one of the metrics. We were unable to get access to the four districts in Delaware that met the "typical" classification, but we did gain access to a Delaware district that was "relatively close to typical."

[2] PARCC and independent assessment states did not have any states that met all the criteria for "typical" and these states were selected because of the relative closeness to "typical".

Once districts were identified, CEP researchers sent letters to district superintendents to inform them of our study and invite them to participate. After a school district agreed to participate, we conducted focus group interviews with elementary school teachers (see table A-2 for the numbers of teachers participating in the focus groups by state and district).

We focused our study on elementary school teachers who have a CCSS-aligned state assessment in their grade for four reasons:

- When states or districts used a phase-in approach for implementing the CCSS, many started at the elementary school level.
- Elementary schools would provide a larger sample of teachers who taught in a tested grade than would middle or high schools.
- Unlike teachers in middle and high schools, elementary school teachers often teach math *and* English language arts.
- The high school graduation requirements found in many states change the stakes attached to high school assessment results, whereas fewer states or districts use state tests to determine whether elementary school students are promoted to the next grade.

In total, CEP researchers spoke with 26 elementary school teachers who teach grades K-5. The most novice teacher in our study had been teaching for 2 years at the time of the study, and the most experienced had been teaching for 29 years.

Table A-2. Focus group participants and grade taught by state and district

State	District	Participant	# of years teaching	Current grade (s)
Delaware	District A	Participant 1	15	K
		Participant 2	15	2nd
		Participant 3	20	3rd
		Participant 4	11	5th
		Participant 5	9	4th
Illinois	District A	Participant 1	10	4th
		Participant 2	12	5th
	District B	Participant 1	10	3rd
		Participant 2	4	1st
		Participant 3	16	K
		Participant 4	11	K
		Participant 5	9	2nd
		Participant 6	37	2nd
Utah	District A	Participant 1	10	3rd
		Participant 2	10	No response
		Participant 3	4	5th
		Participant 4	2	5th
		Participant 5	17	3rd
		Participant 6	37	4th/5th
		Participant 7	20	2nd
Wisconsin	District A	Participant 1	3	2nd
		Participant 2	15	2nd
		Participant 3	10	5th
		Participant 4	29	2nd
		Participant 5	17	4th

Focus group interviews were conducted on the district site at a location designated by our district contact. In each case, two researchers conducted focus group interviews with one researcher taking the lead. One CEP researcher led the focus groups in Illinois and Wisconsin, while another led the interviews in Delaware and Utah. All focus group interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and cleaned before analysis.

Data Analysis and Validity

CEP researchers analyzed the audio transcriptions and used two approaches to identify themes for coding the content: the "a priori" approach, which determines themes in advance based on the questions in the focus group protocol; and the "emergent" approach, in which new codes are added to pick up unanticipated themes that emerged while reviewing the transcripts (Creswell, 2013). Researchers reviewed and coded focus group transcripts independently to extract patterns, themes, and exceptions to these themes within and between data sources. Then, we collectively reviewed and compared thematic codes across focus groups. This type of collaboration among researchers provided the benefit of multiple perspectives and fostered the development of themes and patterns. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, researchers spoke frequently about interview findings, coding, and overall content analysis.

Researchers promised participants that in all reporting of the focus group discussions, the names of districts, schools, and teachers would remain anonymous. As is the case with all interview data, we considered the possibility of "reactivity" (Maxwell, 2013), wherein study participants respond to questions with answers they perceive as "correct." Therefore, we paid careful attention to develop and build relationships with participants and emphasized the anonymity of their responses to minimize the potential validity threat. Finally, to help ensure the accuracy of the data collected from the interviews, researchers conducted member checks, in which we asked participants to review a draft of the report resulting from the focus groups for factual accuracy (Creswell, 2013).

Study Limitations

Although we tried to identify "typical" school districts across the country, it is important to note that each school district, school, and classroom is unique. Our selected districts do not represent all districts that are implementing the Common Core, nor do participants represent all teachers who are working to make curricular and instructional changes based on student assessment results from CCSS-aligned tests. Moreover, our focus groups give voice only to teachers; many other education stakeholders—including state and district officials, parents, and students—are involved in implementing the CCSS and aligned assessments.

Conducting focus groups makes it possible to quickly gather the perspectives of several people on a specific topic. However, focus groups participants may not feel comfortable discussing certain issues or refuting another's comments in a group setting. The group dynamic may affect what a person says and how they say it (Morgan, 1997); this is especially true for participants who already knew other teachers in their focus group.

Despite these limitations, findings drawn from this study add depth to the companion national teacher and school district surveys and contribute to the existing literature and knowledge base about how teachers use CCSS-aligned assessments to improve teaching and learning. Our research should inform future studies about this very important and emerging topic. This concept of theory

development by way of qualitative studies is supported in research by Becker (1991), Dumas and Anderson (2014), and Maxwell (2013).

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Teacher Focus Group Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Today we will talk with you about the [name of state's standards] and the aligned math and English language arts assessments administered in 2015-16. We would also like to discuss any support you may have received to implement the standards as well as your perceptions of the standards and assessments. The goal of our focus group is capture your experience implementing the standards and the aligned-assessments—which will ultimately lead to a report for policymakers and practitioners to better understand the implementation of [name of state's standards] and similar standards.

[Researcher introductions]. We are from the Center on Education Policy at The George Washington University located in the District of Columbia. The Center is an independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. We are not doing an audit, evaluation, or any kind of compliance review of you, your school, district, or state; we are completely independent from your district office, state Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Education. We have received support from the Gates Foundation for this study.

Your participation in the study is anonymous. *In our reporting, the names of the districts and schools as well as your names will not be identified. Anything that is shared in this conversation should be considered confidential by your peers and we ask that you do not share any aspects of our discussion with people outside of the group.*

The focus group should last about an hour.

[Ask interviewees if it is OK to record the conversation and assure them the recording will be used for CEP's research purposes only. Note that we can turn off the recording device at any time if they would prefer.]

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Questions

Individual response questions:
[These first couple questions are just for background information.]

1. Would you please briefly introduce yourself and include A) how long have you been in the teaching profession B) how long you have been teaching at this school and C) what grade(s) you teach.

2. Is everyone here teaching math and/or English language arts?
   If not, ask which subjects they teach.

Group response questions:

3. If I were a new teacher in your school, how would you describe the whole school's climate?

4. [Name of state] adopted their current math and ELA standards in June of 2010. Were you teaching in [name of state] prior to the transition to the current math and ELA standards?

5. How would you describe the impacts, if any, of the [name of state's standards] on your autonomy over curriculum and instruction in your classroom?

[These next questions are about curriculum development.]

6. Did the implementation of the [name of state's standards] require you replace or revise your curriculum? Can you talk about the process of making these changes?

[These next few questions are about the state assessments aligned to the Common Core]

7. With a show of hands,

A. Did you receive student tests scores from the spring 2015 assessment?

B. Did you find the data easy to understand?

C. Did you find the data was useful in guiding your instruction with students?

D. Is the assessment being given in 2016 also a [type of assessment (Smarter Balanced, PARCC, independent)] assessment?

8. If you have received the student test data, what was the most helpful resource for making sense of the scores?

Follow-up: If teachers respond that they did not have a helpful resource: What types of resources would have been helpful in understanding the student data?

9. In what ways, if any, do you think the results of the 2015 assessment have influenced instruction in your classroom?

Follow-up: Can you think of a time when you made instructional or curricular changes in response to last year's test results?

10. In general, how many days a year would you say you spend doing test preparation activities in order to prepare your students to take the state-level math and ELA assessments?

Follow up: Can you talk about the types test preparation of activities you use to help students prepare for state-level math and ELA assessments?

11. Overall, how do you feel about the assessment in [name of state]?

Follow up: Do you have any opinions about the assessment's cut scores? Too high? Too low? Just right?

[This next question will have the base question and then I will ask about specific elements individually.]

12. Thinking about all of the tests students take at your school, if you could reduce or eliminate some of those assessments, which would you cut and which would you keep?

A) If you want to reduce the length of an assessment or the frequency of its administration, which one(s) and why?

B) If you want to cut an assessment, which one(s) and why?

C) If you want to keep an assessment, which one(s) and why?

Follow-up: In many cases, state assessments are used for school accountability purposes to make sure that the state's most disadvantaged students are receiving high-quality education

opportunities. If those state assessments were to get reduced or eliminated, how would you ensure educational opportunities?

13. The purpose of this work is to focus on your experiences with implementing the [name of state's standards] and how you make use of the assessments as part of that implementation process. With that in mind, is there anything else that you would like to share about [name of state's standards] in your school? Are there any materials or documents that you would like to share with us related to the topic?

[If you have anything that you would like to share that you were unable to, please feel free to contact me by e-mail or phone.]

[Thank the group for sharing their time]

Appendix B — Teacher Survey Study Methods

This section describes the sampling procedures used to select teachers to participate in the *Center on Education Policy's 2015 Survey of Public School Teachers*. In addition, it describes the methods used to develop and administer the survey and the analytic process used to obtain population estimates from the survey responses. Finally, this appendix includes a brief profile of teachers' current teaching status and educational background.

The survey was developed, administered, and analyzed with support from Policy Studies Associates, CEP's contractor for this project.

Survey Sample

We worked with an education data company (EDC) to draw the sample and to retrieve contact information for the traditional public school teachers included in the sample. First, we requested the total number of teachers for whom the EDC had contact information, disaggregated by the cells formed by crossing our three sampling strata (see table B-1 below) to create mutually exclusive categories. We then verified that the distribution of teachers across sampling strata in the EDC's database was reflective of the true distribution of the population of public school teachers, using data from the National Center of Education Statistics' (NCES) 2012-13 Common Core of Data Local Education Agency Universe Survey and the 2010-11 Schools and Staffing Survey for school-level and urbanicity distributions.

The poverty categories used by the EDC do not match those used by NCES. We used U.S. Census Bureau data to confirm that the EDC's poverty categories conformed to the standard breakouts used for Census data, and further, that the distribution of teachers in the EDC's poverty categories was in line with expectations given Census data for the distribution of school- age children living in poverty.

In our sample request to the EDC, we stipulated that the sample be limited to only teachers working in traditional public schools, excluding charter school and private school teachers. The first question on the survey served as an additional filter to reinforce this exclusion rule, asking respondents to confirm that they taught in a public, non-charter school.

Table B-1. Sample strata

School-level[1]	Urbanicity[2]	Poverty (percentage of students from high poverty backgrounds)[3]
Elementary school	Urban	High poverty (More than 31.0%)
Middle / junior high school	Suburban	Medium-high poverty (16.0 to 30.9%)
High school	Town	Medium-low poverty (6.0 to 15.9 %)
K-12 or other grade configuration	Rural	Low poverty (Less than 6.0%)

[1]Grades included in grade spans varied by district.
[2]Urban, suburban, town, and rural definitions are from NCES's Common Core of Data locale codes
[3]Definitions of poverty are from the U.S. Census.

Survey Development

The survey included 67 questions that covered a variety of topics including teachers' current teaching status, views on the teaching profession, preparation and support, other roles and responsibilities, performance evaluations, efforts to teach the current math and ELA standards, views on student testing, efforts to collaborate with other teachers, views on students' college and workplace readiness, educational background, and classroom characteristics.

As part of survey development, we sent a draft of the instrument to 200 teachers to serve as a pilot test. We asked the teachers both to respond to the survey and to provide feedback on the appropriateness and clarity of the wording and on the focus of the survey questions. We also asked them to estimate the amount of time required to complete the survey. The final version of the survey included revisions reflecting the teacher feedback that we received.

Survey Administration

In November 2015, we emailed the sampled teachers to explain the purpose of the survey, to provide background information on CEP and its work as a nonpartisan organization advocating for the improvement of public schools, to invite their participation in the online survey, and to explain that completing the survey would result in their automatic entry into a drawing to receive one of four $500 Amazon.com gift cards. A link to the online survey was imbedded in the email. We sent a total of four reminder emails to non-responding teachers.

Teachers completed the online survey between mid-November and mid-December 2015. We received completed responses from 3,328 teachers. In addition, we received 341 partial responses plus responses from an additional 261 teachers who were ultimately disqualified because they indicated that they were not currently teaching in a public school. Teachers who completed the survey were entered into a drawing to receive one of four-$500 gift cards.

Data Analysis

To obtain the population estimates from the sample responses, we developed survey weights that took into account the number of teachers in the population and the number of teachers who responded to the survey in each of the sixty-four cells formed by crossing the three survey strata. For example, a teacher who taught in an elementary school located in an urban district in which over 30% of the students were living in poverty (i.e., a high-poverty school) received a weight determined by multiplying the weight for elementary schools (0.50), urban schools (0.28), and high-poverty schools (0.7) by the population of all teachers (N=3,030,435), divided by the number of teachers from elementary, suburban, high-poverty schools who responded to the survey (N=66). These weights were used for all analyses presented in the report. Table B-2 shows, by sampling strata, the number of teachers responding to the survey, the number of teachers included in the sample, and the number of teachers in the population.

Table B-2. Survey respondents, sample, and population frequencies

	Respondent N	Sample N	Population N
Total	3,328	129,735	3,030,435
School-level			
Elementary school	1,321 (39.7%)	65,510 (50.5%)	1,530,226 (50.5%)
Middle school	675 (20.3%)	24,143 (18.6%)	563,943 (18.6%)
High school	1,169 (35.1%)	35,968 (27.7%)	840,165 (27.7%)
Other/K-12 school	163 (4.9%)	4,114 (3.2%)	96,101 (3.2%)
Urbanicity			
Urban	1,123 (33.6%)	35,840 (27.6%)	837,179 (27.6%)
Suburban	1,425 (42.8%)	55,164 (42.5%)	1,288,555 (42.5%)
Town	325 (9.8%)	16,316 (12.6%)	381,113 (12.6%)
Rural	455 (13.9%)	22,415 (17.3%)	523,588 (17.3%)
Poverty			
High poverty	427 (12.9%)	16,678 (7.4%)	224,262 (7.4%)
Medium-High poverty	1,632 (49.0%)	57,176 (35.7%)	1,081,047 (35.7%)
Medium-Low poverty	1,099 (33.0%)	46,280 (44.0%)	1,335,562 (44.0%)
Low poverty	170 (5.1%)	9,601 (12.9%)	389,564 (12.9%)

Table reads: One thousand three hundred and twenty-one survey respondents (or 39.7%) reported that they teach in an elementary school.

For each survey item, we estimated both the standard error and the confidence interval for each estimated response frequency. The estimated standard error of a proportion provides information about the accuracy of the percentage estimate. The size of the standard error is influenced by the distribution of responses, the number of respondents, and the size of the population. Estimated standard errors are used to construct 95% confidence intervals for the estimated percent. The confidence interval for a proportion indicates the degree of certainty that the true value for the population of all public school teachers in the nation—or a teacher who teaches at a particular school-level; in a geographic region characterized as urban, suburban, or rural/town; or in a school that serves a high, medium, or low percentage of students living in poverty—lies within the upper and lower bounds of the confidence interval. Confidence intervals provide information about the accuracy of the estimated percentages. If the confidence intervals for two percentages do not overlap, then the difference is statistically significant.

For proportions, the confidence interval is not symmetric relative to the estimated percent (except in the case where the estimated percent equals 50); this is because a proportion has a lower and upper bound (0 and 1, respectively), and the boundary affects the calculation of the interval.

Teacher Profile

The following provides a general profile of the teachers who participated in the survey. Specifically, it provides a summary of teachers' work status, the current grade level they teach, the special student populations they serve, the subject areas they teach, their teaching experience and educational background, and their average class size.

Work Status

Almost all teachers were working full time (98%). This estimate did not vary significantly by school level, urbanicity, or school poverty.

Current Grade Level

Teachers were well distributed across grade levels (i.e., pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12), with between approximately 10% and 20% of teachers reporting teaching in each grade.
About half the teachers (48%), however, reported teaching just one grade-level and the other half (52%) reported teaching multiple grades. This estimate varied somewhat by school level, however. That is, the vast majority of high school and Other/K-12 teachers reported teaching multiple grades (85% and 79%, respectively) whereas the majority of elementary and middle school teachers reported teaching a single grade (66% and 53%, respectively).

Special Student Populations Served

The vast majority of teachers reported teaching all special student populations, including English language learners (ELLs) (72%), students with special needs (89%), and students who are economically disadvantaged or low-income (95%). These estimates varied in some respects, however, by school level, urbanicity, and poverty level. For example, more middle school teachers reported teaching students with special needs (95%) compared with elementary school (87%) and high school (89%) teachers. With regard to urbanicity, fewer teachers in rural districts or towns reported teaching ELLs (54%) compared with teachers in urban (80%) and suburban districts (79%). In addition, fewer teachers in low-poverty schools (68%) reported teaching ELLs compared with teachers in medium-poverty schools (74%).

Subjects Taught

The teachers responding to the survey were well distributed across subject area. That is, as shown in table B-3, slightly more than a third of teachers reported teaching early childhood or general elementary subjects. With regard to the core subjects, an estimated 10% of teachers reported teaching English/language arts, 8% teach mathematics, 9% teach the natural sciences, and 8% teach the social sciences. As a check on the representativeness of the survey data, we looked at the distributions of teachers by subject against the distributions reported in NCES's 2012 Schools and Staffing Survey of Teachers, which used a nationally representative sample of teachers. Although the questions were asked slightly differently (e.g., the CEP survey included more subjects), the final distributions of teachers by subject area are fairly similar, with no obvious subject areas that are significantly over- or under-represented in the CEP sample.

Table B-3. Distribution of Teachers, by Subject Area Taught, by Survey Sample

Subjects Taught	CEP Survey of Teachers (2015)	SASS Survey of Teachers (2012)
Early Childhood or General Elementary (multiple subjects)	35	32
ELA	10	11
Mathematics	8	8
Natural sciences	9	7
Social sciences	8	6
Secondary (multiple subjects)	4	---
Visual and Performing Arts	9	6
Foreign Languages	3	3
PE/Health	3	5
Special Education	6	13
ELL	3	2
CTE/Vocational/Technology	3	5
Other	1	2

Teaching Experience

Teachers responding to the survey were also well-distributed with regard to their teaching experience, with significant percentages of teachers representing each category of experience. Specifically, 7% of teachers had taught for one to three years, 15% had taught for 6-10 years, and 19% reported having taught for 16 to 20 years. The distribution of teachers by teaching experience did not vary significantly by school-level, urbanicity, or school poverty. See table B-4 for the distribution of teachers by years of teaching experience.

Table B-4. Distribution of Teachers by Years of Teaching Experience

Years of Experience	Percent of ALL Teachers
1 to 3 years	7%
4 to 5 years	6%
6 to 10 years	15%
11 to 15 years	18%
16 to 20 years	19%
21 to 25 years	14%
26 to 30 years	11%
More than 30 years	9%

Educational Background

All responding teachers reported holding at least a bachelor's degree, and a majority had advanced degrees, with 64% reporting having earned a Master's degree and 3% having earned a Ph.D, J.D., or higher. The distribution of teachers by educational background varied somewhat by school level, with slightly more middle school teachers reporting having a Master's degree (70%) compared with elementary school teachers (62%). In addition, more high school teachers reporting having earned a Ph.D, J.D., or higher (5%) compared with elementary and middle school teachers (2% each). Also, slightly fewer teachers in high-poverty schools and in rural districts or towns had Master's degrees compared with teachers in low-poverty schools or in urban or suburban districts. That is, 68% of teachers in low-poverty schools reporting having earned a Master's degree compared with 59% of teachers in high-poverty schools. Among teachers in rural districts or towns, 59% reported having earned their Master's degree compared with 66% of teachers in urban and suburban districts.

With regard to certification, the vast majority of teachers reported having earned their certification in the area that they currently teach (97%), with no significant variation by school- level, urbanicity, or poverty level.

Average Class Size

Teachers reported teaching a range of class sizes, from fewer than 15 students to more than 34 students. The highest percentage of teachers (34%) reported teaching classes of 25 to 34 students, and the fewest (5%) reported teaching classes of more than 34 students. With regard to small class size (i.e., fewer than 15 students), 14% of teachers reported teaching this class size overall, but more teachers in elementary schools (22%) reporting teaching this class size than did teachers in middle schools (12%) and high schools (15%). By contrast, more middle school and high school teachers reported teaching large class sizes of more than 34 students (9% and 8%, respectively) compared with elementary school teachers (2%). Interestingly, fewer teachers in rural districts reported teaching large class sizes (1%) compared with teachers in urban and suburban districts (6% and 7%, respectively). Distributions of teachers by class size did not very much by school poverty, with the exception of teachers in high-poverty schools, many more of whom reported working with a class size of 15-20 students (25%) compared with teachers in low-poverty schools (15%).

Appendix C — Confidence Intervals and Statistical Significance

Many of the tables, figures, and footnotes in the report provide information about whether the difference between estimated percentages is statistically significant. Statistical significance signals whether this difference is likely due to chance. If it appears that the difference in estimated percentages is due to chance (i.e., the difference is not statistically significant), then we cannot say with confidence that the percentage of teachers reporting one thing was higher than the percentage of teachers reporting doing another.

For example, we estimate that 70% of public elementary school teachers received student performance data from the spring 2015 administration of their state's new math assessment. An estimated 25% of public elementary school teachers have not received data from the new math assessment and 5% do not know. The differences between the responses are all statistically significant, which indicates that the differences are larger than is likely to be explained by chance alone. Therefore, we can say that a higher percentage of elementary school teachers have received data from the spring 2015 administration of their state's new math assessment relative to those who have either not received that data or elementary school teachers who do not know if they have received data from the math assessment.

One method of determining the statistical significance of the difference between two percentages is to compare their confidence intervals. Confidence intervals provide information about the accuracy of the estimated percentages. If the confidence intervals for two percentages do not overlap, then the difference is statistically significant. Table C-1 below uses responses to a question from our survey to illustrate how to interpret confidence intervals and determine if there is a statistically significant difference between responses.

In this case, the bars depicting the confidence intervals for the estimated percentage of elementary school teachers who (1) have received student performance data from the spring 2015 administration of their state's new math assessment, (2) have *not* received student performance data from the spring 2015 administration of their state's new math assessment, and (3) do not know whether they have received student performance data from the spring 2015 administration of their state's new math assessment do not overlap, indicating that the differences between these three percentages are statistically significant.

Table C-1. Confidence intervals for paragraph under Resources for Understanding State Assessment Results (p. X)

Elementary school teachers who have or have not received student performance data from the spring 2015 administration of their state's new math assessment

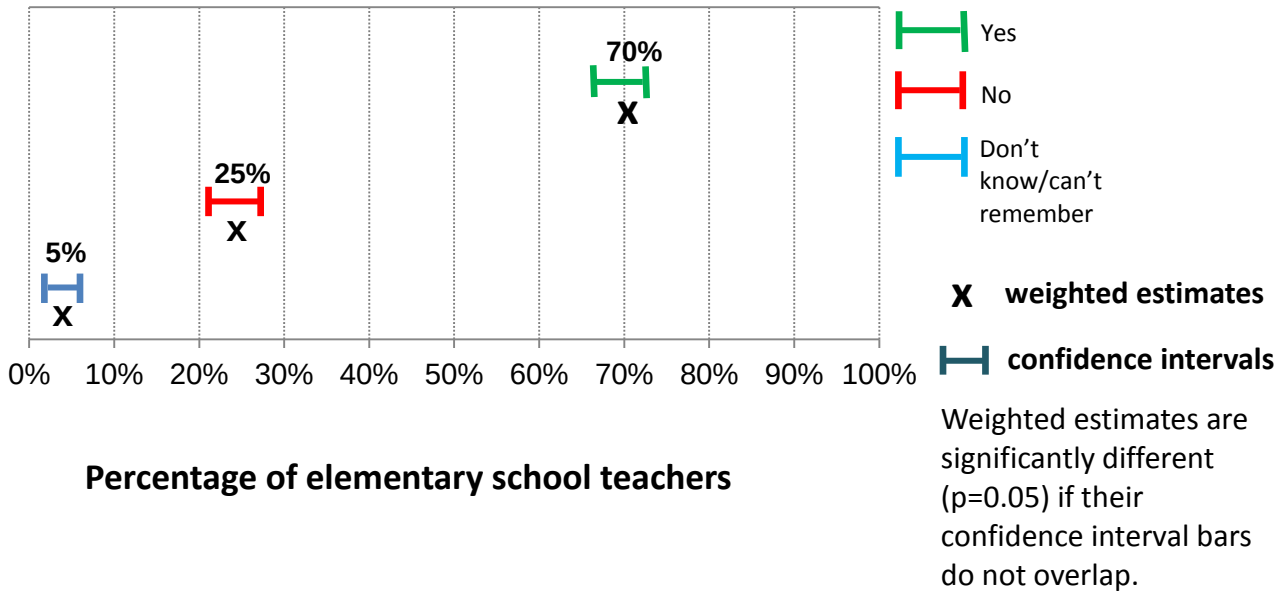

Table reads: An estimated 70% of public elementary school teachers reported that they had received student performance data from the spring 2015 administration of their state's new math assessment, while and estimated 2% said they had not and an estimated 5% responded that they did not know.

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95% certain that the actual percentage of elementary school teachers who received student performance data from the spring 2015 administration of their state's new math assessment is between 67% and 74%.

What follows are the confidence intervals and standard errors for all the estimates, figures, and tables that are reported in the main body of the report.

Confidence intervals for estimates presented on p. 1, paragraph 2

Secondary school teachers' perceptions of the types of knowledge and skills—other than mastery of core academic subjects—that are the most important for students to develop in order to be college- and career-ready

Most important knowledge and skills needed to be college- and career- ready	
Critical thinking and problem solving skills	63.9 (1.2) [61.4, 66.3]
Life and career skills (e.g., flexibility and adaptability; initiative and self-direction; social and cross-cultural skills; productivity and accountability; leadership and responsibility; collaboration; creativity and innovation)	57.7 (1.3) [55.2, 60.1]
Social-emotional skills (e.g., self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making)	57.2 (1.3) [54.7, 59.6]
Communication skills (e.g., oral written, non-verbal)	32.4 (1.2) [30.1, 34.8]
Information, media, and technology skills	13 (0.9) [11.4, 14.9]
Knowledge of non-core academic subjects (e.g., art, gym, music, foreign language)	5.3 (0.6) [4.3, 6.5]
Financial management skills (e.g., paying bills on time, balancing a checkbook, saving, investing, etc.)	17.3 (1.0) [15.5, 19.3]
Executive function skills (e.g., organization, preparation, planning)	17.3 (1.0) [15.5, 19.3]
Professionalism/work ethic	30 (1.2) [27.7, 32.3]
Don't know/not sure	1.0 (0.3) [0.6, 1.7]

Confidence intervals for estimates presented on p. 1, paragraph 2

Teachers' perceptions that their voice is factored into decision-making process at least most of the time by governance level

	Yes	No	Don't know
At the school level	52.6 (0.9) [50.8, 54.4]	44.7 (0.9) [42.9, 46.5]	2.8 (0.3) [2.2, 3.4]
At the district level	19.2 (0.7) [17.7, 20.7]	76.3 (0.8) [74.7, 77.8]	4.6 (0.4) [3.9, 5.4]
At the state level	2.4 (0.3) [1.9, 3.0]	93.5 (0.5) [92.5, 94.3]	4.1 (0.4) [3.5, 4.9]
At the national level	1.3 (0.2) [1.0, 1.8]	93.9 (0.4) [93.0, 94.7]	4.8 (0.4) [4.1, 5.6]

Table reads: An estimated 53% of public school teachers report that they believed that their voice was factored into decision making at least most of the time at the school level.

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95% certain that the actual percentages of teachers who believe that their opinions are factored into decision making at the school level is between 51% and 54%.

Confidence intervals for estimates presented on p. 1, paragraph 2

Resources being used by public school teacher to understand student assessment data

	Yes, I have used/am using this resource for to inform *math* instruction	**Yes, I have used/am using this resource for to inform *ELA* instruction**
Working with other teachers in my school	83 (1.4) [80.1, 85.6]	83.3 (1.3) [80.6, 85.7]
Self-study	73.4 (1.7) [69.9, 76.6]	77.9 (1.5) [74.8, 80.6]
School- or district-sponsored professional development	69.5 (1.8) [65.9, 72.9]	70.1 (1.6) [66.8, 73.2]
Online resources	60.5 (1.9) [56.8, 64.2]	58.6 (1.8) [55.1, 62.1]
Working with my principal	58.3 (1.9) [54.5, 62]	60.2 (1.7) [56.7, 63.5]
Working with other teachers in my district	45.6 (1.9) [41.9, 49.4]	48.8 (1.8) [45.2, 52.3]
Coach/instructional facilitator	41.7 (1.9) [38, 45.5]	40.1 (1.8) [36.6, 43.6]
Online professional networks that are not affiliated with a teachers' union	23.6 (1.7) [20.5, 27]	23.9 (1.5) [21.1, 27.1]
Professional development sponsored by another entity such as the teachers' union	17.8 (1.5) [15, 20.9]	16.5 (1.4) [14, 19.3]
State-sponsored professional development	17.3 (1.5) [14.5, 20.4]	17.7 (1.4) [15.2, 20.7]
Teacher mentor	17.0 (1.5) [14.3, 20.2]	18.3 (1.4) [15.7, 21.3]
Other	3.8 (0.9) [2.4, 6]	4.5 (0.8) [3.1, 6.4]

Table reads: An estimated 73% of public school teachers report that they are using self-study to understand student performance data in math to inform their classroom instruction. An estimated 78% of public school teachers are using this resource to understand student performance data in ELA.

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95% certain that the actual percentages of teachers who are using self-study to understand student performance data in math to inform their classroom instruction is between 70% and 77%.

Confidence intervals for estimates presented in table 1 (p. 12)

Curricular resources for teaching state math and ELA standards in 2015-16

	Math	ELA
My state provided me with curricula/curriculum frameworks	38.2 (1.6) [35.1, 41.5]	38.6 (1.6) [35.5, 41.9]
My district provided me with curricula/curriculum frameworks	76.6 (1.4) [73.7, 79.4]	73.9 (1.5) [70.8, 76.7]
My school provided me with curricula/curriculum frameworks	29.4 (1.5) [26.5, 32.5]	28.5 (1.5) [25.7, 31.6]
I developed or revised curricula myself or with other teachers, or adapted curricula from online resources or existing materials	49.5 (1.7) [46.2, 52.7]	53.9 (1.6) [50.7, 57.2]

Table reads: An estimated 38% of public elementary school teachers who reported that they teach the math standards report that their state provided them with curricula/curricular frameworks as a resource for teaching their state's math standards in 2015-16.

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95% certain that the actual percentages of elementary school teachers who teach the math standards and who were provided with curricula/curriculum frameworks by their state for teaching the math standards in the 2015-16 school year is between 35% and 42%.

Confidence intervals for estimates presented in figure 1 (p. 17)

Elementary school teachers' autonomy under current state standards compared with previous standards

Area of professional practice	Autonomy increased	Autonomy stayed the same	Autonomy decreased	Don't know
Math standards				
Determining instructional strategies	28.9 (1.7) [25.7, 32.3]	32.7 (1.7) [29.4, 36.2]	36.5 (1.8) [33.1, 40.0]	1.9 (0.5) [1.1, 3.2]
Developing curriculum	23.4 (1.6) [20.5, 26.7]	34.0 (1.8) [30.6, 37.5]	40.3 (1.8) [36.8, 43.8]	2.3 (0.5) [1.5, 3.7]
Collaborating with other teachers	30.9 (1.7) [27.7, 34.4]	41.4 (1.8) [37.9, 45.0]	25.7 (1.6) [22.7, 28.9]	2.1 (0.5) [1.2, 3.4]
ELA Standards				
Determining instructional strategies	29.9 (1.7) [26.7, 33.3]	33.5 (1.7) [30.1, 36.9]	34.2 (1.7) [30.9, 37.7]	2.4 (0.6) [1.5, 3.8]
Developing curriculum	26.2 (1.6) [23.2, 29.5]	33.1 (1.7) [29.8, 36.6]	38.1 (1.8) [34.6, 41.6]	2.6 (0.6) [1.7, 4.1]
Collaborating with other teachers	30.8 (1.7) [27.6, 34.2]	41.3 (1.8) [37.8, 44.9]	25.7 (1.6) [22.7, 29.0]	2.2 (0.5) [1.3, 3.5]

Table reads: An estimated 29% of public elementary school teachers who taught math standards that were in place in their state prior to when the state adopted the current standards—and who teach the current math standards—reported that the level of autonomy they have over their instructional strategies has increased since their state adopted their current standards.

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95% certain that the actual percentages of elementary school teachers who taught the math standards that were in place in their state prior to when the state adopted the current standards, who teach the current math standards, and who believe the level of autonomy they have over their instructional strategies has increased since their state adopted it current math standards is between 26% and 32%.

Confidence intervals for estimates presented on p. 19, first paragraph under "Resources for Understanding State Assessment Results"

Elementary school teachers who teach math or ELA *and* who received student performance data from their state's spring 2015 math and ELA assessment administration

	Math	ELA
Yes, I received student performance data	70.4 (1.7) [67.0, 73.5]	70.5 (1.7) [67.2, 73.7]
No, I have not received student performance data	25.0 (1.6) [22.0, 28.2]	25.1 (1.6) [22.1, 28.3]
Don't know/can't remember	4.6 (0.8) [3.3, 6.4]	4.4 (0.7) [3.1, 6.1]

Table reads: An estimate 70% of public elementary school teachers who reported that they teach the math standards and that their state had administered new math assessments to measure student mastery of its new math standards reported that they had received student data from the spring 2015 administration of their state's new math assessment.

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95% certain that the actual percentages of elementary school teachers who teach the math standards in a state that had administered new math assessments to measure student mastery of it new math standards, and who had received student data from the spring 2015 administration of their state's math assessment, is between 67% and 74%.

Confidence intervals for estimates presented in figure 2 (p. 20)

Resources being used by elementary school teachers to understand student assessment data

Resources	Math	ELA
Working with other teachers in my school	83.9 (1.6) [80.4, 86.9]	85.0 (1.6) [81.5, 87.9]
Self-study	73.6 (2.0) [69.4, 77.4]	78.6 (1.9) [74.8, 82.1]
School- or district-sponsored professional development	70.4 (2.1) [66.1, 74.3]	70.1 (2.1) [65.8, 74.0]
Working with my principal	62.6 (2.2) [58.1, 66.9]	64.9 (2.2) [60.6, 69.1]
Online resources	59.9 (2.3) [55.3, 64.3]	57.3 (2.3) [52.7, 61.8]
Working with other teachers in my district	44.2 (2.3) [39.8, 48.8]	47.3 (2.3) [42.8, 51.8]
Coach/instructional facilitator	44.4 (2.3) [39.9, 48.9]	42.3 (2.3) [37.9, 46.9]
Online professional networks that are not affiliated with a teachers' union	23.0 (2.0) [19.3, 27.1]	22.4 (2.0) [18.8, 26.5]
Professional development sponsored by another entity such as the teachers' union	18.3 (1.8) [15.0, 22.1]	16.4 (1.7) [13.3, 20.1]
State-sponsored professional development	17.3 (1.8) [14.0, 21.1]	17.1 (1.8) [13.9, 20.9]
Teacher mentor	17.4 (1.8) [14.1, 21.2]	18.6 (1.9) [15.2, 22.6]
Other	4.4 (1.2) [2.6, 7.4]	5.0 (1.2) [3.1, 7.8]

Table reads: An estimated 84% of public elementary school teachers who reported that they teach the math standards and that they had received student data from the spring 2015 math assessments reported that among the resources that are available to them, they had worked or were working with other teachers in their school to understand how to use the student performance data in math to inform their classroom instruction.

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95% certain that the actual percentage of elementary teachers who teach the math standards, who had received students' math data for the 2015 administration of the state math assessments, and who have worked or are working with other teachers in their school as a resource to understand how to use the student performance data in math to inform their classroom instruction is between 80% and 87%.

Confidence intervals for estimates presented in figure 3 (p. 23)

How elementary school teachers used spring 2015 state test data to modify their practice

Activity	Math	ELA
To differentiate instruction based on student needs	75.8 (2.1) [71.5, 79.7]	74.4 (2.1) [70.0, 78.4]
To improve whole class instruction	65.4 (2.4) [60.6, 69.8]	64.5 (2.4) [59.7, 69.0]
To revise the curriculum I use for the subject I teach	42.4 (2.4) [37.7, 47.2]	46.1 (2.4) [41.3, 50.9]
To build supportive relationships with parents	11.9 (1.5) [9.2, 15.3]	13.1 (1.6) [10.3, 16.6]
To improve classroom management	8.9 (1.3) [6.5, 11.9]	9.3 (1.4) [7.0, 12.4]
Other	4.3 (1.0) [2.7, 6.7]	4.2 (0.9) [2.7, 6.5]

Table reads: An estimated 76% of public elementary school teachers who reported that they teach the math standards and that the student data from the spring 2015 assessment caused them to change or modify their practice (to a great extent, somewhat, or minimally) reported that they are suing the 2015 state math assessment data to differentiate instruction based on student needs.

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95% certain that the actual percentage of elementary teachers who teach the math standards, have received students' math data for the 2015 administration of the state math assessments, who believe that those data had caused them to change or modify their practice, and who are using those data to differentiate instruction based on student needs is between 72% and 80%.

Confidence intervals for estimates presented on p. 26, paragraph 1

Average number of days[3] elementary school teachers estimate preparing student for mandated tests

Test	Average number of days
District-mandated tests	13.7 (0.3) [13.4, 14.3]
State-mandated tests	14.8 (0.3) [14.2, 15.5]

Table reads: On average, elementary school teachers reported spending an estimated 13.7 days over the course of the school year preparing their class to take district-mandated tests.

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95%t certain that the actual number of days teachers spend preparing their students for district- and state-mandated tests was between 13.4 and 14.3 days.

[3] To estimate the number of days teacher spent on preparing students for mandated tests, each day range was ascribed a number that best fit the range description. For example, one week equals 5 days—more than one week but less than two weeks equaled 7.5 days. About a month was considered to be 19 days and more than a month, 24 days. These values were totaled and then divided by the number of respondents for that question.

Confidence intervals for estimates presented in figure 4 (p. 26)

Elementary school teacher-estimated time per year spent preparing students for mandated tests

	District-mandated tests	State-mandated tests
One week or less a year	30.1 (1.6) [27.0, 33.4]	24.3 (1.6) [21.3, 27.5]
More than one week but less than 2 weeks a year	12.1 (1.2) [10.0, 14.6]	12.2 (1.2) [10.1, 14.8]
More than 2 weeks but less than a month a year	14.0 (1.2) [11.8, 16.4]	14.8 (1.3) [12.5, 17.4]
About a month out of the school year	13.3 (1.2) [11.1, 15.9]	14.2 (1.3) [11.9, 16.9]
More than a month out of the school year	30.5 (1.6) [27.4, 33.7]	34.5 (1.7) [31.2, 38.0]

Table reads: An estimated 30% of public elementary school teachers who reported that they had spent some time preparing their class for district-mandated tests reported that they spend one week or less a year preparing their class to take these tests.

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95% certain that the actual percentage of elementary school teachers who spend one week or less a year preparing their student for district-mandated tests was between 27% and 33%.

Confidence intervals for estimates presented on p. 26, paragraph 3

Elementary school teachers' views on whether the time spend preparing students for mandated tests is appropriate

	District-mandated tests	State-mandated tests
Too much	54.0 (1.8) [50.5, 57.5]	66.3 (1.8) [62.8, 69.7]
About the right amount	37.0 (1.7) [33.6, 40.5]	23.9 (1.6) [20.9, 27.1]
Too little	4.6 (0.7) [3.3, 6.2]	5.2 (0.8) [3.8, 7.0]
Don't know	4.4 (0.7) [3.2, 6.1]	4.6 (0.1) [3.3, 6.4]

Table reads: An estimated 54% of public elementary school teachers who reported that they had spent some time preparing their class for district-mandated tests reported that they spend too much time preparing their students for these tests.

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95% certain that the actual percentage of elementary school teachers who believe that too much time is spent preparing students for district-mandated tests is between 51% and 58%.

Confidence intervals for estimates presented on p. 28, paragraph 3

Average number of days[4] elementary school teachers estimate student spend taking mandated tests

Test	Average number of days
District-mandated tests	10.5 (0.2) [10.0, 11.0]
State-mandated tests	9.1 (0.2) [8.7, 9.6]

Table reads: On average, elementary school teachers estimate that their students spend approximately 10.5 days over the course of the school year taking district-mandated tests.

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95% certain that the actual number of days elementary schools teachers estimate that their students spend taking district-mandated tests is between 10.0 and 11.0 days.

[4] To estimate the number of days teacher estimated students spent taking mandated tests, each day range was ascribed a number that best fit the range description. For example, one week equals 5 days—more than one week but less than two weeks equaled 7.5 days. About a month was considered to be 19 days and more than a month, 24 days. These values were totaled and then divided by the number of respondents for that question.

Confidence intervals for estimates presented in figure 5 (p. 28)

Elementary school teacher-estimated time per year that students spend taking mandated tests

	District-mandated test	State-mandated tests
One week or less a year	38.5 (1.7) [35.3, 41.8]	45.8 (1.8) [42.3, 49.2]
More than one week but less than 2 weeks a year	19.6 (1.4) [17.0, 22.4]	21.6 (1.5) [18.9, 24.6]
More than 2 weeks but less than a month a year	20.7 (1.3) [18.2, 23.5]	18.1 (1.3) [15.6, 20.9]
About a month out of the school year	11.0 (1.1) [9.1, 13.3]	8.0 (1.0) [6.3, 10.1]
More than a month out of the school year	10.2 (1.0) [8.4, 12.3]	6.5 (0.8) [5.1, 8.4]

Table reads: An estimated 39% of public elementary school teachers who reported that the average student in their class spent some time taking district-mandated tests reported that the average student spent one week or less a year taking these tests.

Note: The 9% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95% certain that the actual percentage of elementary school teachers who estimate that their students spent one week or less taking district-mandated tests was between 35% and 42%.

Confidence intervals for estimates presented in figure 6 (p. 29)

Elementary school teachers' views on whether the time students spend taking tests is appropriate

Too much	83.9 (1.3) [81.2, 86.3]
About the right amount	14.2 (1.2) [12.0, 16.8]
Too little	0.2 (0.1) [0.0, 0.8]
Don't know	1.7 (0.4) [1.0, 2.8]

Table reads: An estimated 84% of public elementary school teachers who reported that the average student in their class spend some time taking district- and or state-mandated tests reported that they spend too much time taking these tests.

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95% certain that the actual percentage of elementary school teachers who estimate that their students spend one week or less taking district-mandated tests was between 81% and 86%.

Confidence intervals for estimates presented in figure 7 (p. 30)

Elementary school teachers' views about which tests to keep, reduce, or eliminate

	Keep	Reduce	Eliminate	Don't know
Teacher-created quizzes	84.4 (1.4) [81.5, 87.0]	10.4 (1.2) [8.3, 13.0]	1.9 (0.5) [1.1, 3.3]	3.3 (0.7) [2.1, 5.0]
Teacher-created tests	82.3 (1.5) [79.3, 85.1]	12.7 (1.3) [10.4, 15.4]	2.1 (0.6) [1.2, 3.6]	2.9 (0.7) [1.8, 4.5]
District-mandated tests	13.7 (1.4) [11.2, 16.7]	69.3 (1.8) [65.6, 72.8]	15.3 (1.4) [12.8, 18.3]	1.6 (0.5) [0.8, 3.0]
State-mandated tests	7.1 (1.0) [5.4, 9.3]	59.5 (1.9) [55.7, 63.3]	31.1 (1.8) [27.6, 34.8]	2.2 (0.6) [1.3, 3.7]
Other exams, such as language proficiency tests or college entrance exams	32.2 (1.8) [28.7, 35.8]	31.0 (1.8) [27.6, 34.7]	6.8 (1.0) [5.1, 9.0]	30.1 (1.8) [26.6, 33.8]
Other	9.3 (1.3) [7.1, 12.1]	6.6 (1.1) [4.8, 9.0]	5.4 (0.9) [3.8, 7.6]	78.7 (1.7) [75.1, 81.9]

Table reads: An estimated 84% of public elementary school teachers who reported that the average student in their class spent too much time taking district- and/or state-mandated tests reported that they would keep teacher-created quizzes.

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95% certain that the actual percentage of elementary school teachers who would keep teacher-created quizzes was between 82% and 87%.

Note: Only elementary school teachers who reported that the average student in their class spent some time taking district-mandated assessments reported on "district-mandated tests" and only teachers who reported that the average student in their class spent some time taking state-mandated assessments reported on "state-mandated tests." This excluded any elementary school teacher who reported "don't know" or "other" regarding how much time the average student in their class spent on district- and/or state-mandated tests.

Confidence intervals for estimates presented on in the first paragraph under "(2) Engage in outreach around the standards"

Teachers' perceptions of the impact from their uncertainty about their state's plans to continue using current math and ELA standards

	Percentage of teachers
The lack of certainty significantly challenges my efforts to teach to the standards (EXPLAIN)	43.9 (1.7) [40.6, 47.2]
The lack of certainty somewhat challenges my efforts to teach to the standards (EXPLAIN)	36.4 (1.6) [33.2, 39.6]
The lack of certainty minimally challenges my efforts to teach to the standards	11.3 (1.1) [9.3, 13.5]
The lack of certainty does not challenge my efforts to teach to the standards	8.5 (0.9) [6.9, 10.5]

Table reads: An estimated 44% of public school teachers who reported that they were not certain about their state's plans to continue using its current math and/or ELA standards and aligned assessments reported that the lack of certainty significantly challenges their efforts to teach to the standards.

Note: The 95% confidence intervals for the estimates in the table mean that, for example, we are 95% certain that the actual percentage of elementary school teachers whose lack of certainty about their state's plans to continue using current state math and ELA standards significantly challenges their efforts to teach the standards was between 41% and 47%.