Common Core State Standards in 2014:

Curriculum and Professional Development at the District Level

educator evaluation

curricula

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assessment

standards

instruction

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Credits and Acknowledgments

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Background

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in mathematics and English language arts (ELA) outline the knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn throughout their K-12 education in order to be prepared for college and careers when they graduate. As of October 2014, 42 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the standards in both subjects, and one state has adopted the ELA standards only.

It is important to remember that standards are not the same as curriculum. In states that have adopted the standards, districts and schools must still make decisions about the particular curricular materials and instructional strategies to use to help students master the content of the CCSS, which research suggests are more rigorous than many states' previous standards.[1] In addition, teachers and principals need professional development to help prepare them to teach to the CCSS or provide leadership on implementation of the standards.

Districts and schools are making decisions about curricular materials and professional development related to the CCSS at a time when criticisms of the Common Core have escalated, and some states that had previously adopted the CCSS have dropped them outright or paused their implementation. The impact of the Common Core on curriculum and instruction has become a particularly controversial issue. Opponents of the Common Core often characterize the standards as an effort to nationalize—or even federalize—curriculum that will restrict local decisions about what and how to teach.[2] (These discussions often overlook the fact that the federal government is prohibited by law from exercising any control over a state's, district's or school's curriculum.[3]) Supporters of the standards reiterate that the Common Core will provide students, regardless of where they live, with access to rigorous academic content, while still allowing for local flexibility and creativity in curriculum and instruction.[4]

Districts and schools in CCSS-adopting states have a limited window of time in which to develop or adopt curricular materials, prepare teachers to teach to the CCSS, and prepare principals to provide leadership on CCSS implementation. This school year, many CCSS-adopting states will begin administering new assessments that measure students' progress in learning the content of the new standards. Eventually, many states will use the results of these assessments to meet federal accountability requirements and determine which schools are lowest-performing and must undergo interventions. Teachers and principals will also be directly affected; many states are developing educator evaluation systems that hold these professionals accountable for their students' mastery of the CCSS. The

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1 For evidence about the rigor of the CCSS compared with states' previous standards, see, for example, *The State of State Standards—and the Common Core—in 2010 (Fordham Institute, 2010)*. For other studies, see CEP's *A Compendium of Research on the Common Core State Standards*, specifically the Content, Curriculum, and Alignment section.

2 See, for example, http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/04/states-must-reject-national-education-standards-while-there-is-still-time; http://whatis-commoncore.wordpress.com/.

3 Section 9527 of Title IX of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act (P.L. 107-110) states: "Nothing in this Act shall be construed to authorize an officer or employee of the Federal Government to mandate, direct, or control a State, local educational agency, or school's curriculum, program of instruction or allocation of State or local resources, or mandate a State or any subdivision thereof to spend any funds or incur any costs not paid for under this Act."

4 See, for example, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2014/03/common%20core%20state%20standards/bleiberg_west_common%20core%20state%20standards.pdf; http://neatoday.org/2013/05/10/six-ways-the-common-core-is-good-for-students/.

standards will have an impact on students as well. Not only will they be expected to learn and pass tests on more rigorous content, but some states may eventually use student performance on CCSS-aligned assessments as a factor in decisions about college course placement or granting of a high school diploma.[5]

To learn more about districts' strategies, policies, and challenges in implementing the CCSS, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) at The George Washington University conducted a comprehensive survey of a nationally representative sample of school districts in states that had adopted the Common Core at the time of the survey in the spring of 2014. CEP previously surveyed school districts about the Common Core in 2011and surveyed state education officials several times about state implementation of the CCSS, most recently in 2013.

This report, one of three based on the 2014 survey, discusses districts' efforts to develop and put in place CCSS-aligned curricular materials and to provide professional development to teachers and principals to prepare them for the standards. Two other reports address general issues related to district implementation of the CCSS, and district activities to prepare for CCSS-aligned assessments.

Key Findings

CURRICULUM

- More than 80% of districts in CCSS-adopting states report that they have already begun teaching math and ELA curricula aligned to the Common Core, while just over 10% will begin teaching such curricula in school year 2014-15 or later. However, only about one-third of districts report that they have implemented CCSS-aligned curricula in all schools, while two-thirds expect to do so this school year or later.

- In more than 80% of districts in CCSS-adopting states, curricular materials aligned to the CCSS are being developed locally, often by teachers or the district itself.

- Although districts mention a variety of sources of CCSS-aligned curricular materials, 90% of districts indicate that developing or identifying these materials has posed a major (45%) or minor (45%) challenge.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- At least two-thirds of districts report that the vast majority (90–100%) of their teachers and principals had participated in at least some CCSS-related professional development as of school year 2014-15.

- School districts and states were among the entities cited by the greatest proportion of respondents as providers of CCSS-related professional development for teachers and/or principals. Large proportions of districts also reported that teachers themselves are providing Common Core-related professional development.

- The majority of school districts report that their teachers and principals are receiving professional development related to the CCSS on the content of the standards, instructional strategies, and the use of data from CCSS-aligned assessments.

- About one-third of districts report that all of their teachers are prepared to teach the Common Core, while about two-thirds expect that it will take until school year 2014-15 or later before all of their teachers are prepared. Districts gave similar responses about the timeline for when all of their principals will be prepared to be instructional leaders around the Common Core.

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5 Washington State, for example, has an agreement to use the 11th grade Smarter Balanced assessment results for decisions about placement in state higher education institutions (see http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2014.09.19.CTC.SBAC.Agreement.pdf).New Jersey and Maryland are considering using the results of PARCC assessments as one option for meeting high school graduation requirements (http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/14/10/01/administration-wants-to-be-clear-about-parcc-s-role-in-high-school-graduation/ and http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/education/blog/bs-md-high-school-tests-20140722-story.html).

Report Organization and Study Methodology

The sections that follow discuss efforts by school districts in CCSS-adopting states to obtain math and ELA curricular materials aligned to the Common Core and to provide CCSS-related professional development for teachers and principals.

Regarding curricula, the report describes findings from the CEP survey on these issues:

- Timelines for when districts began or expect to begin implementing CCSS-aligned curricula and for when they expect these curricula will be implemented in all schools

- Sources of CCSS-aligned curricula used by districts

- Challenges districts face in implementing CCSS-aligned curricula

The survey did not define the term "CCSS-aligned," so it was left up to the respondents to provide their own interpretation. The process of validating the extent to which curriculum is aligned with standards requires in-depth studies of actual curricula that go well beyond the kind of survey research on which this report is based.

Regarding professional development, the report describes findings on these topics:

- Percentages of teachers and principals within a district who have participated in at least some CCSS-related professional development

- Anticipated timelines for adequately preparing all math and ELA teachers and principals for the CCSS

- Providers and topics of CCSS-related professional development

- Challenges faced by districts in providing teacher professional development related to the CCSS

The survey did not ask about the quality of professional development provided, since the participants in the professional development activities would be better able to make that judgment than district officials. Also, the survey did not define the term "adequately prepare," so it was left up to respondents to provide their own interpretation.

The percentages in the tables, figures, and narrative in this report are nationally representative of school districts in states that had adopted the CCSS when the CEP survey was administered in the spring of 2014. The responses have been weighted to reflect a nationally representative sample, and therefore the percentages of districts cited are estimates.

In the sections that follow, some of the apparent differences between two estimated responses in the tables and figures are not statistically significant. However, the narrative preceding each table or figure discusses differences that *are* statistically significant and other findings that are notable for various reasons. Some statistically significant differences are not discussed in the narrative but may be of interest to some readers. Users of this report are encouraged to consult the technical appendix accompanying this report, available at www.cep-dc.org, for more details about study methods and confidence intervals and specific information about which differences are statistically significant.

Common Core Curriculum Issues

Researchers and the news media have documented some of the difficulties that districts have faced in obtaining CCSS-aligned curriculum materials and have highlighted that this process is more complicated than simply buying off-the-shelf products. Some textbooks that claim to be aligned with the Common Core have been found to be virtually identical to their pre-standards version, and many of these texts omitted key concepts and content in the stan-

dards while covering topics outside of the standards.[6] In addition, districts have struggled to create their own CCSS-aligned curriculum or find good materials that truly reflect the standards and fit within their limited budgets.[7] The CEP survey provides additional information about districts' efforts to implement a CCSS-aligned curriculum.

TEACHING CCSS-ALIGNED CURRICULA IN MATH AND ELA

The vast majority of districts in CCSS-adopting states have already begun to implement a curriculum aligned to the Common Core in mathematics (83%) and in English language arts (82%). As shown in **figure 1**, smaller proportions of districts (12% in math and 13% in ELA) will not begin teaching an aligned curriculum until school year 2014-15 or later.

Figure 1. **School year when districts began or will begin teaching CCSS-aligned curricula**
Percentage of respondents, 2014

MATH

1% 4%

12%

83%

ELA

1% 4%

13%

82%

- ■ 2013-14 or earlier
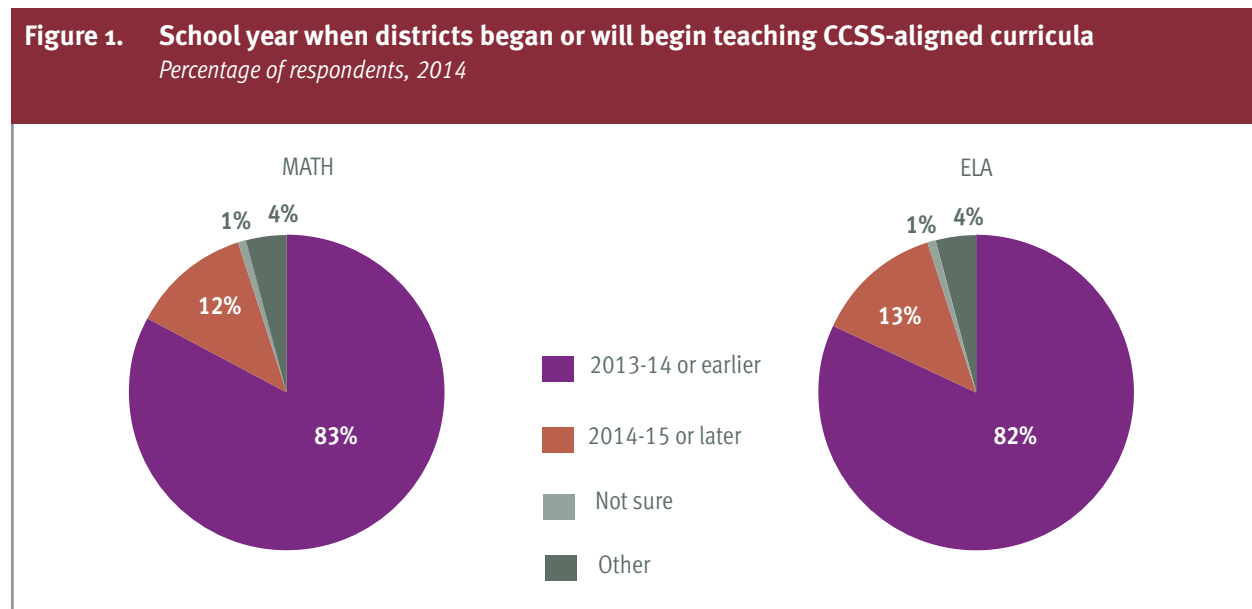- ■ 2014-15 or later
- ■ Not sure
- ■ Other

Figure reads: An estimated 83% of districts in Common Core-adopting states reported that they began teaching a CCSS-aligned curriculum in mathematics in school year 2013-14 or earlier, while 12% indicated that they will begin teaching such a curriculum in school year 2014-15 or later.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this figure are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

Most of the "other" responses in figure 1 came from district leaders who wanted to clarify how their district was phasing in the curriculum. For example, one respondent explained that the district had fully implemented a CCSS-aligned curriculum in grades K-2 and had partially implemented it in grades 3-12. Another district started implementing an aligned curriculum in high school and is working down through the elementary grades over a two-year period. Still another district official noted, "The elementary schools have been teaching this way for five years. The high school has not implemented yet."

6 Herald, B., & Molnar, M. (2014, March 3). Research questions Common-Core claims by publishers. *Education Week*. http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/03/05/23textbooks_ep.h33.html; and Polikoff, M. (2014). *How well aligned are textbooks to the Common Core State Standards in mathematics?* http://www.pelhamschools.org/download.axd?file=4b3d1f3d-d615-4798-ab7f-f4eae52ce1bc&dnldType=Resource.

7 Gewertz, C. (2014, April 21). Two districts, two approaches to Common-Core curriculum. *Education Week*, http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/04/23/29cc-curriculum.h33.html?qs=common+core+curriculum. Torres, Z. (2014, March 23). Colorado schools struggle to teach standards with inadequate books. The Denver Post, http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_25401651/colorado-schools-struggle-teach-standards-inadequate-books#ixzz2xINJiz4g.

Curriculum and Professional Development at the District Level

ESTIMATED TIMELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF CURRICULA IN *ALL* SCHOOLS

The survey also asked district leaders when they expect their district to implement CCSS-aligned curricula in math and ELA in *all* of their schools. As shown in **figure 2**, only about one-third of districts in CCSS-adopting states are already teaching a CCSS-aligned curriculum in all schools in math (37%) or ELA (36%). Another third of districts expect to implement aligned curricula in all schools in school year 2014-15, and similar proportions of districts project this will occur in 2015-16 or later. Small proportions of districts were not sure when CCSS-aligned curricula will be taught in all schools.

Figure 2. School year when districts expect to implement CCSS-aligned curricula in *all* schools
Percentage of respondents, 2014

MATH

ELA

- 2013-14 or earlier
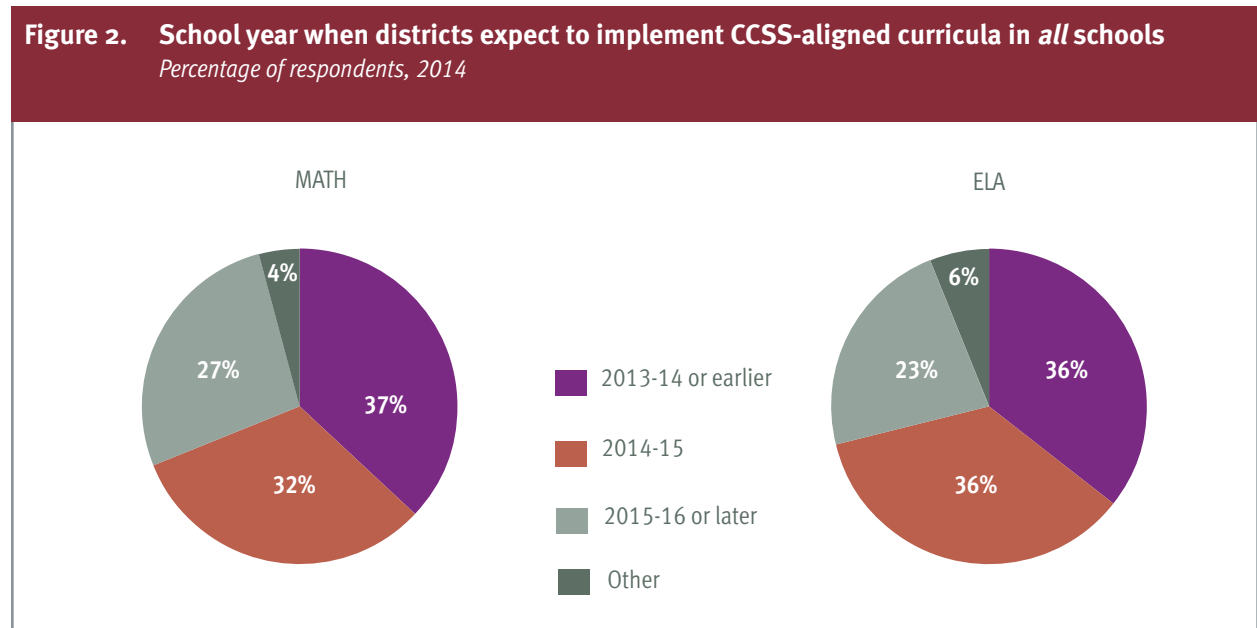- 2014-15
- 2015-16 or later
- Other

Figure reads: An estimated 37% of districts in Common Core-adopting states reported that they have already implemented a curriculum aligned to the CCSS in math in all of their schools. An estimated 32% expect to do so in school year 2014-15, and an estimated 27% do not expect to do so until school year 2015-16 or later. An estimated 4% of districts were unsure when they would implement a CCSS-aligned curriculum in math in all of their schools.

Note: Percentages do not always total 100% due to rounding.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this figure are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

SOURCES OF CCSS-ALIGNED CURRICULAR MATERIALS

As discussed in more detail in the CEP report *Common Core State Standards in 2014: Districts' Perceptions, Progress, and Challenges*, a large majority of district officials agree that new or substantially revised curriculum materials will be needed to implement the CCSS in math (88% of districts) and in ELA (82%). Recognizing this need, school districts are obtaining and/or developing CCSS-curriculum materials to support their implementation efforts.

To learn more about these efforts, CEP's survey asked school district leaders about the various sources from which they have obtained or planned to obtain CCSS-aligned curricular materials. Possible sources included the state education agency (SEA), the school district itself, school districts within and outside of the state, teachers, and for-profit and nonprofit organizations. Districts were not limited to one response and could select all the sources from which they are obtaining curricular materials.

District sources

Districts appear to be looking locally for their CCSS-aligned curricula (**table 1**). In roughly two-thirds of districts, for example, teachers have developed or are developing their own curricular materials in math (66%) and ELA (65%). About half of the districts have developed or are developing their own CCSS-aligned materials in math (51%) and ELA (50%). Less than one-third of districts have worked or are working with other districts in their state to develop CCSS-aligned materials in math (31%) and ELA (27%). Altogether, more than four-fifths of districts have obtained or are obtaining CCSS-aligned curricular materials in math (83%) or ELA (84%) from at least one local source—the district itself, teachers in the district and/or other districts in the state (not shown in the table).

In addition, small proportions of districts are using curricular materials developed by districts in *other* states.

Table 1. District sources of CCSS-aligned curricular materials *Percentage of respondents, 2014*		
Source	**Math CCSS-aligned curricula**	**ELA CCSS-aligned curricula**
Teacher-developed materials	66%	65%
Materials developed by the district itself	51%	50%
District has worked/is working with other districts in the same state to develop materials	31%	27%
District is using materials developed by other districts in the same state	18%	16%
Materials developed by districts in other states	11%	8%

Table reads: An estimated 66% of districts in Common Core-adopting states reported that teachers in their district have developed or are developing CCSS-aligned curricular materials for mathematics, while 65% indicated that teachers have developed or are developing these types of materials for English language arts.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this table are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this table can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

State sources

State education agencies are also sources of CCSS-aligned curricula (**table 2**). About 40% or more of districts reported that they are using or plan to use CCSS-aligned materials developed by their SEA, while lower proportions are using or plan to use materials developed by other SEAs.

Table 2. State sources of CCSS-aligned curricular materials *Percentage of respondents, 2014*		
Source	**Math CCSS-aligned curricula**	**ELA CCSS-aligned curricula**
Materials developed by *our* SEA	43%	40%
Materials developed by SEAs in *other* states	13%	10%

Table reads: An estimated 43% of districts in Common Core-adopting states reported that they will use or are using CCSS-aligned curricular materials developed by their SEA for mathematics, while 40% responded that they will use or are using such SEA- developed curricula for English language arts.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this table are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this table can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

For-profit and nonprofit entities

Slightly more than one-third of districts are using or will use CCSS-aligned curricular materials developed by for-profit entities, while 13%-14% are using or will use materials developed by nonprofit organizations (**table 3**).

Table 3.	**CCSS-aligned curricular materials from for-profit and nonprofit organizations** *Percentage of respondents, 2014*		
		Math CCSS-aligned curricula	**ELA CCSS-aligned curricula**
Materials developed by for-profit entities		39%	35%
Materials developed by private, nonprofit organizations		14%	13%

Table reads: An estimated 39% of districts in Common Core-adopting states reported that they will use or are using CCSS-aligned curricula developed by for-profit entities for mathematic while 35% indicated that they are using such curricula developed by for-profit entities for English language arts.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this table are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this table can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

COLLABORATION ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Many districts are active participants in the development of CCSS-aligned curriculum materials. According to CEP's report *Common Core State Standards in 2014: Districts' Perceptions, Progress, and Challenges*, which was drawn from the same survey as this report, 75% of districts in CCSS-adopting states indicated that they are working with at least one other entity on developing curriculum aligned to the CCSS.

As shown in **table 4**, greater proportions of districts were collaborating on curriculum development with other districts in their state and/or with their SEAs than were collaborating with nonprofit organizations, higher education institutions, and/or districts in other states. Seventeen percent of districts did not collaborate with any entity to develop CCSS-aligned curriculum materials.

Table 4.	**Collaborations to develop CCSS-aligned curriculum materials** *Percentage of respondents, 2014*						
	Other districts in the state	**The SEA**	**Nonprofit organizations**	**Higher education institutions**	**Districts in other states**	**Did not collaborate with others**	**Not sure**
Entities with which district is collaborating to develop CCSS-aligned curriculum materials	49%	40%	16%	11%	7%	17%	7%

Table reads: An estimated 49% of districts in Common Core-adopting states reported that they have collaborated with other districts in the state on the development of CCSS-aligned curriculum materials.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this table are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this table can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

PERCENTAGE OF DISTRICTS FACING CURRICULUM-RELATED CHALLENGES

Although districts are turning to a variety of sources for CCSS curriculum materials and are working with other entities to develop them, the vast majority still face challenges with identifying and/or developing curriculum materials necessary to implement the Common Core. An estimated 45% of districts in CCSS-adopting states reported major challenges with this task, and the same percentage faced minor challenges (**figure 3**). Relatively few districts said that curriculum was not a challenge or that it was too soon to tell. Other studies have found that districts not only face difficulties in developing their own CCSS-aligned curricular materials, but also struggle with finding textbooks and other CCSS materials that are truly aligned and affordable.

Figure 3. Challenges in identifying and/or developing curriculum materials necessary to implement the CCSS

Percentage of districts facing curriculum challenges

- Major challenge
- Minor challenge
- Not a challenge
- Too soon to tell

Figure reads: An estimated 45% of districts in Common Core-adopting states reported facing major challenges in identifying and/or developing curriculum aligned to the CCSS, and an additional 45% viewed this as a minor challenge. An estimated 9% did not consider CCSS-aligned curriculum a challenge, and 1% said it is too soon to tell.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this figure are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

Curriculum and Professional Development at the District Level

Professional Development for Teachers and Principals on the Common Core

The CEP survey asked school district leaders about several aspects of CCSS-related professional development for teachers and principals, described below.

PARTICIPATION IN CCSS-RELATED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

About two-thirds of school districts in Common Core-adopting states estimated that 90% to 100% of their math and ELA teachers had participated in at least some CCSS-related professional development as of school year 2013-14 (**figure 4**).

Nearly four-fifths of districts estimated that 90% to 100% of their principals had participated in at least some CCSS-related professional development as of school year 2013-14.

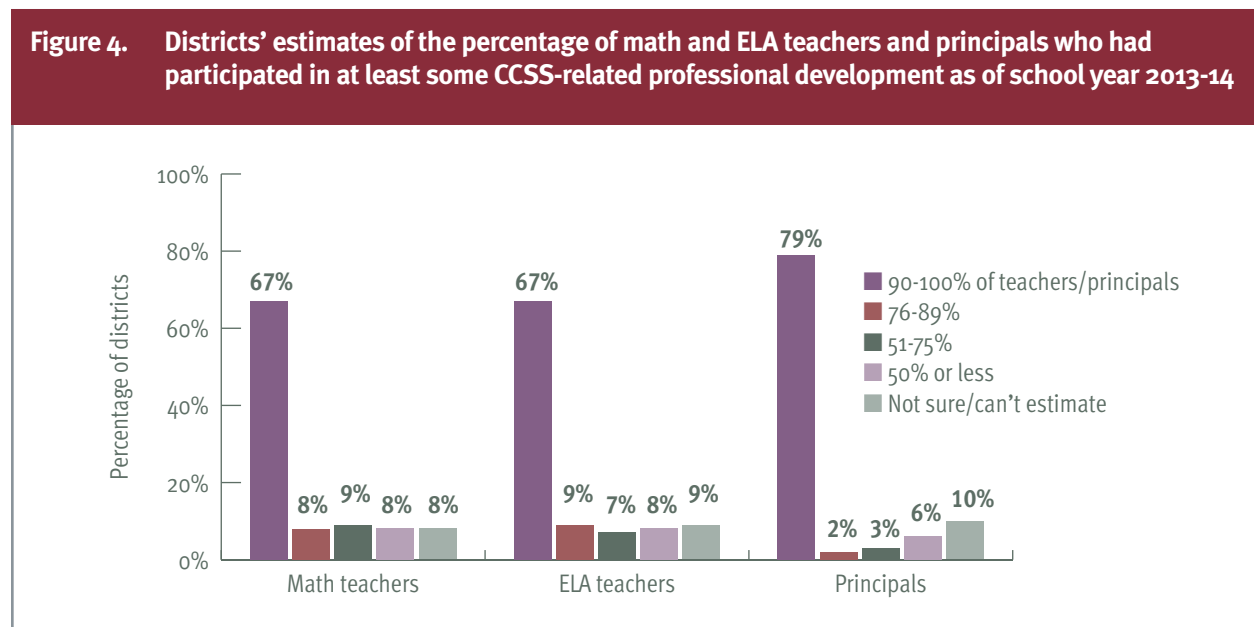| Figure 4. | Districts' estimates of the percentage of math and ELA teachers and principals who had participated in at least some CCSS-related professional development as of school year 2013-14 |

Figure reads: An estimated 67% of districts in Common Core-adopting states reported that approximately 90% to 100% of their math teachers had participated in at least some CCSS-related professional development activities as of school year 2013-14.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this figure are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

TIMELINES FOR ADEQUATELY PREPARING TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS FOR THE CCSS

Although the majority of districts in CCSS-adopting states indicated that a large share of their math and ELA teachers and principals have participated in at least some CCSS-related professional development, it will take more time to adequately prepare these staff and leaders for the Common Core, according to survey responses.

About one-third of districts reported that as of school year 2013-14 they had adequately prepared all math and ELA teachers to teach the Common Core (**figure 5**). About two-thirds of districts expect that it will take until school year 2014-15 or later before all of their math and ELA teachers are adequately prepared to teach the Common Core.

Similarly, 36% of districts reported that as of school year 2013-14, they had adequately prepared all their principals to be instructional leaders around the CCSS. Over half expect that it will take until 2014-15 or later for all of their principals to be adequately prepared to lead on the Common Core.

The survey did not define "adequately prepared" for either teachers or principals, so it was left up to the individuals responding to the survey to provide their own interpretation.

Figure 5.   School year in which districts estimate that *all* of their math and ELA teachers and principals will be adequately prepared for the CCSS
Percentage of respondents, 2014

Math teachers | ELA teachers | Principals

Legend:
- SY 2013-14 or before
- SY 2014-15
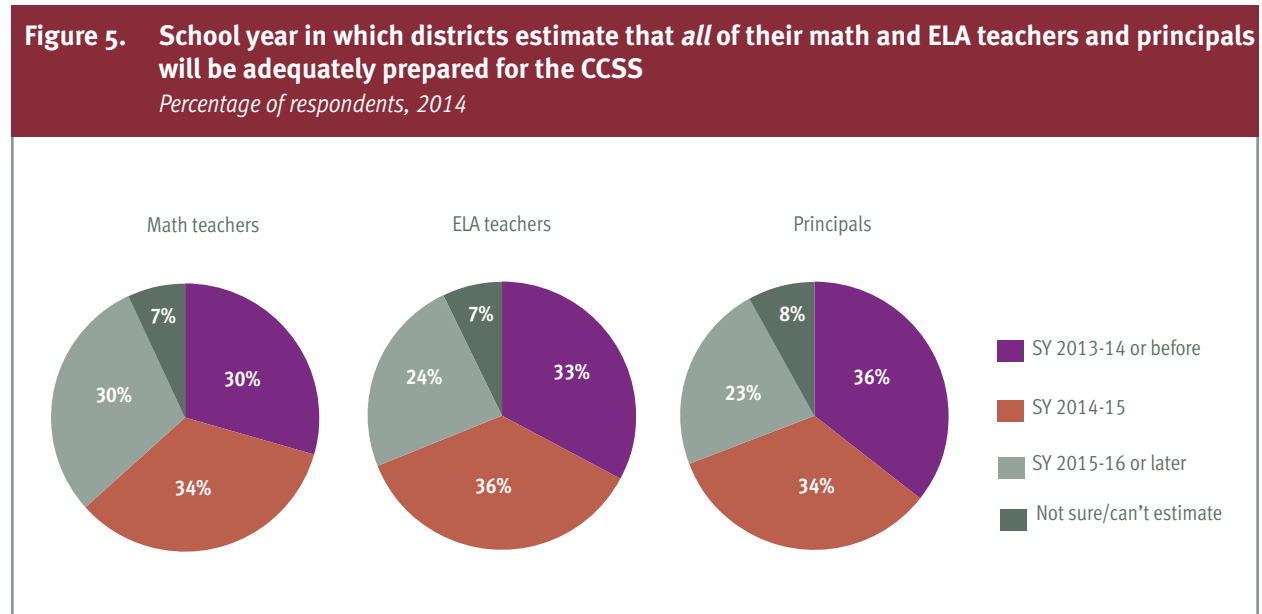- SY 2015-16 or later
- Not sure/can't estimate

Figure reads: An estimated 30% of districts in Common Core-adopting states reported that all of their math teachers had been adequately prepared to teach the CCSS in SY 2013-14 or before.

Note: Percentages do not always total 100% due to rounding.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this figure are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

OVERVIEW OF PROVIDERS AND TOPICS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON THE CCSS

To learn more about CCSS-related teacher professional development, CEP's survey asked school district leaders which entities or individuals are providing professional development to their teachers and principals. Possible providers listed in the survey included the school district itself, other districts within the state, the state education agency, state regional service agencies, teachers, teacher unions, institutions of higher education, and for-profit and nonprofit organizations. Districts could select as many providers as applied.

The survey also asked districts about the topics of the CCSS-related professional development being provided. For both teachers and principals, the topics listed in the survey included professional development on the content of the standards, CCSS-aligned instructional strategies, and the use of data from CCSS-aligned assessments to inform instruction and improve student learning. An additional topic was listed for principals: professional development to help principals become instructional leaders on CCSS implementation. Districts could select as many topics as applied.

This section of the report gives an overview of the entities that are providing any type of professional development to teachers and principals, and an overview of the percentages of districts whose teachers and principals received professional development on particular topics, regardless of provider. The next section breaks down these data by particular types of providers and topics.

Overview of providers

Table 5 shows the percentages of districts that reported a particular entity was providing any type of professional development on the Common Core to their teachers and principals.

Table 5.	Entities providing any type of CCSS-related professional development to teachers and principals in responding districts *Percentage of respondents, 2014*	
Provider	**Provides CCSS-related PD to teachers/principals**	**Does *not* provide CCSS-related PD to teachers/principals**
Teacher professional development		
School district itself	92%	8%
State regional service agencies	83%	17%
State education agency	73%	27%
Teachers are developing their own professional development	67%	33%
For-profit entities	49%	51%
Other school districts in the state	39%	61%
Institutions of higher education	36%	64%
Nonprofit organizations	34%	67%
Teachers' unions	11%	89%
Principal professional development		
School district itself	81%	19%
State regional service agencies	80%	20%
State education agency	73%	27%
For-profit entities	39%	61%
Principals are developing their own professional development	38%	62%
Other school districts in the state	35%	66%
Nonprofit organizations	35%	65%
Institutions of higher education	34%	66%

Table reads: An estimated 92% of districts in Common Core-adopting states reported that they are providing CCSS-related professional development for teachers in their district while an estimated 8% indicated that they do not provide such services.

Note: Percentages do not always total 100% due to rounding.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this table are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this table can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

For *teachers*, half or more of districts reported that the district itself, state regional service agencies, the state education agency, and teachers themselves were providers of CCSS-related professional development. Lower proportions of districts said that for-profit entities, other districts in the state, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, and teachers' unions were providing CCSS-related professional development to teachers.

For *principals*, half or more of districts reported that the school district itself, state regional service agencies, or the state education agency were providers of CCSS-related professional development. Lower proportions of districts said that for-profit organizations, principals, other districts in the state, nonprofit entities, or institutions of higher education are providing CCSS-related professional development to principals.

An open-ended part of this survey question allowed district leaders to elaborate on or mention other providers or topics of professional development services for teachers and principals in their district. Examples of other providers included the intermediate school district, the county office of education, and professional learning communities.

OVERVIEW OF TOPICS

Three-fourths or more of districts reported that their *teachers* participated in CCSS-related professional development on each of the three teacher topics in the survey—CCSS content, instructional strategies, and the use of assessment data to inform instruction and improve student learning (**table 6**). A greater proportion of districts said that professional development for teachers was focused on CCSS content (93%) than on the use of CCSS assessment data (75%).

A large majority of districts reported that their *principals* participated in CCSS-related professional development on content, instructional strategies, the use of assessment data to inform instruction, and instructional leadership on implementation of the Common Core. Higher percentages of districts reported said professional development for principals focused on CCSS content and/or instructional strategies than on instructional leadership.

Table 6.	Topics of CCSS-related professional development	
Topic	**Percentage of districts reporting that teachers received PD on this topic**	**Percentage of districts reporting that principals received PD on this topic**
CCSS content	93%	86%
CCSS-aligned instructional strategies	85%	82%
Use of data from CCSS-aligned assessments to inform instruction and improve student learning	75%	71%
Instructional leadership on CCSS implementation	NA	65%

Table reads: An estimated 93% of districts in Common Core-adopting states reported that one or more entities provided professional development on the content of the CCSS to their teachers.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this table are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this table can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

In the open-ended part of this question, several districts mentioned other topics of CCSS-related professional development for their teachers and principals. Among them were intervention strategies to help struggling learners, interpretation and use of growth-oriented assessment data, leadership in creating and maintaining professional learning communities, and using software programs to organize and implement lessons aligned to the CCSS.

We also broke out the survey data to determine which entities were providing CCSS-related professional development to districts' teachers and principals on each of the particular topics described in the previous section.

Districts as providers

Many districts reported that they are providing their own CCSS-related professional development to their teachers and principals on content, instructional practices, and/or the use of assessment data to inform instruction and improve student learning (**table 7**). For all three topics, higher percentages of districts are providing professional development themselves than are obtaining professional development from other districts in the state.

In addition, higher proportions of districts are providing professional development to principals on instructional leadership around the Common Core than are obtaining these services from other districts in the state.

Table 7.	Districts as providers of CCSS-related professional development *Percentage of respondents, 2014*		
		Providers of professional development	
Topic of professional development		**The school district**	**Other districts in state**
Teacher professional development			
CCSS content		80%	26%
CCSS-aligned instructional strategies		70%	20%
Use of data from CCSS-aligned assessments to inform instruction and improve student learning		63%	15%
Not sure		1%	21%
Principal professional development			
CCSS content		64%	19%
CCSS-aligned instructional strategies		64%	17%
Use of data from CCSS-aligned assessments to inform instruction and improve student learning		56%	13%
Instructional leadership on CCSS implementation		47%	10%
Not sure		5%	29%

Table reads: An estimated 80% of districts in Common Core-adopting states reported that the district has provided professional development to its teachers on the content of the CCSS, while 26% indicated that other districts in the state have provided this type of professional development to their teachers.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this table are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this table can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

Teachers and principals as providers

Less than half of the districts reported that their teachers are providing their own professional development on the CCSS-related topics shown in **table 8**. Just one-fourth or fewer districts report that principals are providing their own professional development on these topics.

Table 8.	Teachers and principals as providers of CCSS-related professional development *Percentage of respondents, 2014*		
		Providers of professional development	
Topic of professional development		**Teacher-provided PD for teachers**	**Principal-provided PD for principals**
CCSS content		45%	25%
CCSS-aligned instructional strategies		42%	23%
Use of data from CCSS-aligned assessments to inform instruction and improve student learning		33%	14%
Instructional leadership on CCSS implementation		NA	7%
Not sure		12%	22%

Table reads: An estimated 45% of districts in Common Core-adopting states reported that teachers are providing their own professional development services, and 25% indicated that principals are providing professional development to principals.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this table are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this table can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

State-sponsored professional development

State education agencies and state regional service agencies are providing CCSS-related professional development to teachers and principals in a large proportion of districts, according districts responses to the CEP survey (**table 9**). A majority of districts report that state regional service agencies and/or the SEA are providing teachers and principals in their district with professional development on CCSS content. Further, a majority report that the state regional service agency is providing professional development to teachers and principals on CCSS-aligned instructional strategies.

Table 9 shows the percentages of districts that said their teachers or principals received professional development on various topics from state entities.

Table 9.	State sources of CCSS-related professional development *Percentage of respondents, 2014*		
Topic of professional development		**State regional service agencies**	**State education agency**
Teacher professional development			
CCSS content		69%	62%
CCSS-aligned instructional strategies		62%	44%
Use of data from CCSS-aligned assessments to inform instruction and improve student learning		49%	37%
Not sure		8%	7%
Principal professional development			
CCSS content		60%	58%
CCSS-aligned instructional strategies		55%	47%
Use of data from CCSS-aligned assessments to inform instruction and improve student learning		49%	40%
Instructional leadership on CCSS implementation		42%	35%
Not sure		6%	7%

Table reads: An estimated 69% of districts in Common Core-adopting states reported that their state regional services agencies are providing their teachers with professional development on the content of the CCSS, while 62% said that state education agency is providing this type of professional development for teachers.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this table are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this table can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

Other professional development providers

One-third or fewer districts reported that for-profit entities, institutions of higher education, and nonprofit organizations are providing CCSS-related professional development services for teachers or principals in their district. **Table 10** shows the percentages of districts in which these entities provided professional development on specific topics.

Small percentages of districts said that teachers' unions were providing professional development to teachers on the CCSS-related topics in table 10.

Table 10. Other entities providing CCSS-related professional development *Percentage of respondents, 2014*				
Topic of professional development	**For-profit entities**	**Institutions of higher education**	**Nonprofit organizations***	**Teachers' unions**
Teacher professional development				
CCSS content	33%	21%	21%	5%
CCSS-aligned instructional strategies	28%	17%	18%	3%
Use of data from CCSS-aligned assessments to inform instruction and improve student learning	22%	11%	16%	3%
Not sure	26%	24%	27%	32%
Principal professional development				
CCSS content	25%	17%	21%	NA
CCSS-aligned instructional strategies	20%	14%	20%	NA
Use of data from CCSS-aligned assessments to inform instruction and improve student learning	17%	12%	17%	NA
Instructional leadership on CCSS implementation	14%	11%	17%	NA
Not sure	27%	22%	27%	NA

Table reads: An estimated 33% of districts in Common Core-adopting states reported that for-profit entities are providing their teachers with professional development on the content of the CCSS, while 21% indicated that institutions of higher education are providing this type of professional development.

*Nonprofit organizations were defined as state and national professional organizations.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this table are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this table can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

CHALLENGES WITH PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO TEACHERS

The vast majority of districts reported facing challenges with providing professional development to teachers. An estimated 46% said it is a major challenge to provide high-quality professional development and other supports to ensure teachers are able to implement CCSS instructional activities, and a similar proportion (42%) considered this a minor challenge. Ten percent said that teacher professional development is not a challenge, and 2% indicated that it is too soon to tell whether or not it will become a challenge.

Conclusion

The CCSS may be setting a new bar for what students are expected to learn in math and ELA, but states and school districts must still make decisions about curriculum and professional development. The actions they take in these two areas are among the most important to the long-term success of the CCSS. Local district officials and teachers—and to a lesser extent principals—are playing active roles in deciding what a curriculum aligned to the standards looks like, how teachers are prepared to teach this curriculum, which instructional strategies are used to teach students to the standards, and how principals can provide instructional leadership.

Although some opponents of the Common Core characterize the standards as an effort to create a nationalized curriculum, findings from CEP's district survey indicate that many districts are taking a "localized" approach to developing curriculum aligned to the CCSS. Leaders in a majority of districts report that the district itself and teachers in the district are the primary sources of curricular materials for the Common Core. State education agencies and regional state agencies are also important sources of CCSS-aligned curricular materials. The reasons for this are likely varied and are based on local needs and concerns.

Likewise, a majority of districts are also relying on themselves and their state for CCSS-related professional development for teachers and principals.

The CEP survey also highlights the timing problems facing districts as they introduce CCSS-aligned curriculum and prepare teachers to teach to the Common Core. These are demanding and time-consuming tasks, particularly in light of the rigor of the CCSS. Although a majority of districts have begun teaching a math and ELA curriculum aligned to the Common Core and are providing teachers with some professional development, many districts still have a way to go in implementing these curricula in all schools and adequately preparing all of their teachers to teach to the standards. Survey results suggest that many districts will not have fully achieved these goals by the time CCSS-aligned assessments are administered later this school year in many states. This process becomes even more complicated when states attach consequences, such as decisions about school interventions or teacher evaluation, to the results of new CCSS-aligned assessments. If fewer students pass these assessments than previously did or if teachers' performance ratings hinge on their students' scores on new tests, this could create blowback from many stakeholders and further diminish support for the Common Core.

As districts continue to implement the standards and begin measuring student mastery of the standards, issues related to curriculum and professional development will surely remain at the forefront of their work. In time, as more states and districts develop and use curricular materials and professional development strategies, we may see education leaders looking farther afield and drawing on resources from outside their own districts and state.