

# 2. REVIEW SYSTEM CAPACITY

Part of **IMPLEMENTING  
Common Core**  
State Standards and Assessments

A Workbook for State and District Leaders

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## IN THIS SECTION

Diagnostic Tool \_\_\_\_\_ 2.3



## 2. Review System Capacity

The first step for any new implementation effort is to review the system's **current** capacity to deliver its aspiration. Implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will require a clear understanding of the people and organizations that play a part in implementation — as well as an assessment of the extent to which they are already undertaking the essential elements of this work.

The diagnostic tool in this chapter will help you assess your capacity to implement the CCSS. Based on this workbook's organizing framework, the rubric considers the extent and quality of your current implementation plan. It lists the relevant questions and lays out guideposts for what “weak” and “strong” performance look like, ranging from a rating of 1 (weakest) to 4 (strongest). Finally, the rubric defines potential evidence to consider as you rate your own system's capacity.

Complete this assessment with your leadership team before reading further. The pattern that emerges can then guide your use of this workbook — in areas where you rate your planning effort as weaker, you can refer to the relevant section of the workbook, denoted by the page number in the far right column.

### Diagnostic Tool

	Critical question or action	Weak (1)	Strong (4)	Types of evidence to consider	For more, see page ...
Chapters 3 and 4. Organize To Implement	Aspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No aspiration defined for why the CCSS are important</li> <li>Aspiration not widely shared</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has defined an aspiration for how the CCSS will change classroom practice</li> <li>Department has secured wide buy-in for aspiration inside and outside the department</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If asked, how many people inside the department can name the aspiration?</li> <li>What about key players outside the department?</li> </ul>	3.3
	Internal leadership team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ownership of CCSS implementation is haphazard or unclear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has specified a clear point of accountability or defined multiple points of accountability with clearly delineated responsibility for implementing the CCSS, both inside the department and with external stakeholders (e.g., higher education)</li> <li>Those in charge have the leverage and/or relationships they need to coordinate the effort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many people in the department can name the key people responsible for the CCSS effort and their specific responsibilities?</li> <li>What about key players outside the department?</li> </ul>	3.5
	Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timeline is vague or undefined</li> <li>Only real milestone is the rollout of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment in 2014</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has articulated an ambitious but realistic timeline of implementation that will credibly prepare the system for rollout of the PARCC assessments</li> <li>Timeline defines key areas of work and milestones for each, which should enable tracking of implementation on a monthly or quarterly basis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the timeline exist?</li> <li>To what extent do those responsible for implementation use it as the guiding reference document for their deadlines?</li> </ul>	3.9

	Critical question or action	Weak (1)	Strong (4)	Types of evidence to consider	For more, see page ...
Chapters 3 and 4. Organize To Implement	Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A cost estimate may have occurred, but little or no thinking has been done about how various state and federal funds will be used to provide sufficient resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has identified most or all relevant state and federal funds that can be used to fund CCSS implementation</li> <li>Department has built a comprehensive budget for CCSS implementation that allocates all costs to relevant funding sources and takes into account the restrictions on each</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does a budget with allocation of federal and state funding sources exist?</li> <li>How confident are we in its accuracy?</li> </ul>	3.16
	Gap analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little effort has been made to compare the system's current content standards to the CCSS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has performed a detailed gap analysis that shows where new state standards will be added and where existing state standards must be augmented, moved or dropped</li> <li>Department has used this analysis to identify high-priority subject areas and/or grade spans according to the size of the gaps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the gap analysis been performed?</li> <li>Do those responsible for implementation have a clear idea of the highest priority subject areas and grade spans?</li> </ul>	3.23
	Guiding coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no deliberately identified group of external stakeholders who can drive change at all levels, or such a group is limited in its scope</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 7–10 change leaders from key backgrounds share a consistent understanding and are supportive of the aspiration and strategy for CCSS implementation</li> <li>Department consistently consults and works with this group to guide implementation and communicate to the field</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can the leadership team name the members of the guiding coalition?</li> <li>How frequent are the leadership team's interactions with the coalition?</li> </ul>	4.3
	Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communications efforts regarding the CCSS are sparse, uncoordinated and one way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has a clear communications plan for CCSS implementation that details the message and objective, audiences, modes of communication, frequency or timing of communication, and messengers</li> <li>The communications plan includes five-year strategies for ongoing communications with all audiences to maintain support</li> <li>Audiences understand both what will be accomplished and how</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent do teachers, principals and superintendents in the field understand how their work environments are going to change as a result of the CCSS?</li> <li>To what extent do core external players understand their responsibilities to make this happen?</li> </ul>	4.6

	Critical question or action	Weak (1)	Strong (4)	Types of evidence to consider	For more, see page ...
Chapter 5. Implementation Action i: Align Instructional Materials to the CCSS	Strategies to achieve success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No specific activities have been identified for alignment of instructional materials, or activities are uncoordinated and siloed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department and external stakeholders have identified and laid out a balanced and coordinated set of activities that will credibly align instructional materials with the CCSS</li> <li>Activities are benchmarked against best practices both within and outside the state</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Among those responsible for instructional materials, how many could name the core priority activities?</li> <li>How confident are we that these activities are the ones with the highest potential for impact?</li> </ul>	5.3
	Understanding how the strategies will be implemented through the field to the classroom (i.e., delivery chain)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has not yet articulated how the reform strategy will reach the field — that is, how materials will actually reach and influence teachers and their behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For all relevant activities, department has explicitly laid out the “delivery chain” that runs from the state through regions and local education agencies to schools and classrooms</li> <li>Delivery chain consists of strong relationships that create a credible path for aligned materials to reach the field, or department has identified weaknesses in the chain and has a plan for addressing them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can we explain, in one minute or less, exactly how new instructional materials will be developed or identified and delivered to every classroom in the state?</li> </ul>	5.9
	Connecting strategies to expected outcomes (i.e., targets and trajectories)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metrics and targets for success have not been identified or are not meaningfully connected to the overall aspiration</li> <li>No clear path is drawn between the planned activities and the achievement of any targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has identified a range of metrics — from outcome measures to implementation milestones — that define “success” in aligning instructional materials to the CCSS</li> <li>Department has set annual targets for each metric through 2014</li> <li>The targets and metrics provide feedback on whether the aspiration is being achieved on time and whether the right steps are being taken to achieve it</li> <li>Activities are sequenced to show how achieving implementation milestones will help department hit the outcome targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can we articulate how we will know whether we are successful with our instructional materials strategy?</li> <li>Has an analysis been done to show how completing this strategy successfully will result in improved outcomes for students? How credible is it?</li> </ul>	5.13

	Critical question or action	Weak (1)	Strong (4)	Types of evidence to consider	For more, see page ...
Chapter 6. Implementation Action II: Train Educators on the CCSS and Related Assessments	Strategies to achieve success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No specific activities have been identified for training educators, or activities are uncoordinated and siloed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department and external stakeholders have identified and laid out a balanced and coordinated set of activities that will credibly train educators to use the CCSS</li> <li>Activities are benchmarked against best practices both within and outside the state</li> <li>A sustainability strategy is in place to support long-term implementation of aligned professional development (e.g., creating systems for training trainers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Among those responsible for professional development, how many could name the core priority activities?</li> <li>How confident are we that these activities are the ones with the highest potential for impact?</li> </ul>	6.4
	Understanding how the strategies will be implemented through the field to the classroom (i.e., delivery chain)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has not yet articulated how the reform strategy will reach the field — that is, how professional development for educators will be identified, adapted and deployed to have an impact on educator behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For all relevant activities, department has explicitly laid out the delivery chain that runs from the state through regions and local education agencies to schools and classrooms</li> <li>Delivery chain consists of strong relationships that create a credible path for professional development to reach the field, or department has identified weaknesses in the chain and has a plan for addressing them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can we explain, in one minute or less, exactly how new professional development will be identified, adapted and delivered to every educator in the state?</li> </ul>	6.8
	Connecting strategies to expected outcomes (i.e., targets and trajectories)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metrics and targets for success have not been identified or are not meaningfully connected to the overall aspiration</li> <li>No clear path is drawn between the planned activities and the achievement of any targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has identified a range of metrics — from outcome measures to implementation milestones — that define “success” in training educators on the CCSS</li> <li>Department has set annual targets for each metric through 2014</li> <li>The targets and metrics provide feedback on whether the aspiration is being achieved on time and whether the right steps are being taken to achieve it</li> <li>Activities are sequenced to show how achieving implementation milestones will help department hit the outcome targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can we articulate how we will know whether we are successful with our professional development strategy?</li> <li>Has an analysis been done to show how completing this strategy successfully will result in improved outcomes for students? How credible is it?</li> </ul>	6.14

	Critical question or action	Weak (1)	Strong (4)	Types of evidence to consider	For more, see page ...
Chapter 7. Implementation Action III: Transition Technology and Assessment System	Gap analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little effort has been made to set a standard for readiness and compare current technological capacity to that standard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State readiness team has defined what readiness looks like</li> <li>Team has performed gap analysis against this definition of readiness for each district</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the team have a clear idea of what readiness looks like?</li> <li>Has the analysis been performed to identify the specific readiness gaps in each district?</li> </ul>	7.4
	Differentiation of districts according to their individual readiness needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department treats all districts similarly</li> <li>Department has not been deliberate about segmenting districts according to their various technology needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has used data on technology gaps in every district to differentiate its districts into groups that have different areas of need</li> <li>This differentiation drives the way the department interacts with districts on this issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have districts been segmented according to varying needs?</li> <li>Is the method of segmentation useful for differentiating the type of support that each district would get?</li> </ul>	7.5
	Plan for working with districts to close gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department does not have a plan for closing gaps that is operationally driving its work in this area</li> <li>Few or no specific activities have been identified for helping districts fill technology gaps</li> <li>Those activities that have been defined are insufficient to close the gaps at the scale required across the state</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has laid out a specific and actionable plan for achieving readiness in 100 percent of districts</li> <li>The plan includes a balanced and coordinated set of activities to close readiness gaps</li> <li>Activities are targeted toward districts or segments of districts according to their identified needs, with a clear delivery chain for how to reach each district or segment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a coherent plan in place for making the technology transition?</li> <li>Does the plan include priority strategies for filling readiness gaps in every district?</li> <li>How confident are we that these strategies are the ones with the highest potential for impact?</li> <li>How confident are we that we can reach every district or segment of districts with these strategies at scale?</li> </ul>	7.12
	Connecting strategies to expected outcomes and milestones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Milestones and targets for success have not been identified</li> <li>No clear path is drawn between the planned strategies and the achievement of targets or milestones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State readiness team has set semiannual targets through 2014–15 that align with the PARCC/Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium readiness tool data collection windows</li> <li>The milestones and targets reflect the sequencing of priority strategies and when they are expected to have an impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can we articulate, based on our planned activities, what level of readiness we should expect to see following each of the readiness tool testing windows?</li> <li>How confident are we that the expected changes in readiness levels will result from the strategies we are undertaking to fill gaps?</li> </ul>	7.17
	Establishing feedback loops and routines for monitoring progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The state readiness team has not established regular practices for gathering feedback from the field on readiness progress or checking in as a team on that progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The state readiness team has established methods for gathering all necessary feedback from the field on readiness progress (including, but not limited to, the readiness tool)</li> <li>The state readiness team has established regular routines to monitor the information provided through feedback loops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will we know how well prepared each district is between now and 2014?</li> <li>In particular, how will we know this for elements of readiness not included in the readiness tool?</li> <li>Do we meet regularly as a team to monitor progress and problem-solve if we are off track?</li> </ul>	7.19

Chapter 8. Implementation Action IV: Transition Accountability and Data Reporting System	Critical question or action	Weak (1)	Strong (4)	Types of evidence to consider	For more, see page ...
	Setting statewide performance goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goals are tied to expectations below college and career readiness or not aligned to the CCSS</li> <li>No connections have been made between strategies and meeting the goals</li> <li>Goals are set only at the state level and are not recognized at the local level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statewide performance goals are tied to the CCSS and other college and career readiness expectations</li> <li>Goals are used to focus CCSS implementation strategy</li> <li>Goals are set at the state, district and school levels and by subgroup</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do state leaders routinely reference goals?</li> <li>Does the state tie the CCSS implementation strategy to meeting the goals?</li> <li>Does progress toward the goals frame conversations between the state and districts?</li> </ul>	8.12
	Transitioning the differentiation and classification system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System relies on indicators not linked to the CCSS and college and career readiness</li> <li>System classifies only top- and bottom-performing schools and districts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System clearly differentiates all schools and districts based on status and growth metrics aligned to CCSS and other college and career readiness indicators</li> <li>System classifies all schools and districts with clear implications for recognition, support and intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the indicators and metrics with the most weight within the system?</li> <li>Is it clear how each classification ties to support and intervention?</li> </ul>	8.24
	Aligning the statewide system of support and intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diagnostic reviews do not consider college and career readiness indicators</li> <li>System is operated by personnel and processes disconnected from CCSS implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports and interventions are aligned to the intensity and type suggested by school or district capacity to implement the CCSS</li> <li>CCSS implementation efforts are strongly linked to the personnel and processes in the system of support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What data and questions are asked to tailor support and intervention?</li> <li>How are CCSS implementation strategies differentiated to schools and districts based on classification?</li> </ul>	8.29
	Reporting timely and actionable data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The state report card for districts and schools does not align to the state's priority goals and classification system</li> <li>Indicators of student progress on the CCSS and other college and career readiness measures are not prominent in state reporting</li> <li>Educators and parents do not have aggregate or individual information about student performance on the CCSS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State report card for districts and schools clearly shows progress on CCSS-aligned assessments and other college and career readiness indicators</li> <li>State report card displays progress toward statewide student performance goals and reports the classification of each district and school</li> <li>State ensures that educators can access and use data indicators that predict student performance and diagnose specific needs on the CCSS</li> <li>Parents access and use aggregate data about school and district performance as well as individual data about student performance on the CCSS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What indicators are emphasized on the state's report card for districts and schools?</li> <li>Does the report card show progress on the statewide performance goals?</li> <li>Does the report card include information about a school and district's classification?</li> <li>What data resources do parents and educators have to track individual student progress on the CCSS?</li> </ul>	8.29



	Critical question or action	Weak (1)	Strong (4)	Types of evidence to consider	For more, see page ...
Chapter 10. Implementation Action V: Student Transitions to Higher Education	Collaborative working team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No identified group of internal and external stakeholders has been identified to manage the higher education system's adaptations as a result of the CCSS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The higher education system has specified a clear point of accountability or defined multiple points of accountability with clearly delineated responsibility for transitioning the CCSS</li> <li>A balanced, diverse, motivated team with appropriate spheres of influence and understanding has committed to the effort</li> <li>Those in charge have the leverage, time and/or relationships they need to coordinate the effort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many people in our higher education system can name the key people responsible for the CCSS alignment effort and their specific responsibilities?</li> <li>What about key players outside the department?</li> </ul>	10.5
	Delivery plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ownership of the plan to align first-year courses, developmental modules/courses and the CCSS is haphazard or unclear</li> <li>No specific activities have been identified for alignment of courses, or activities are uncoordinated and siloed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal and external stakeholders have identified and laid out a balanced and coordinated set of activities that will credibly align</li> <li>Leadership and stakeholder engagement, level of awareness and shared understanding, criteria for quality, and logic and coherence of plan are addressed</li> <li>A clear timetable and set of milestones to measure progress has been established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent do our content faculty understand how the CCSS will improve the work they do in their developmental modules/courses and their first-year, credit-bearing courses?</li> <li>Among higher education faculty responsible for providing in-service training for veteran teachers, how many have a deep understanding of the CCSS?</li> <li>Can we articulate, based on our plan, specific areas or ideas for strengthening the coherence of our course offerings?</li> </ul>	10.6
	Evaluating past and present course alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No coordinated effort to inventory the universe of first-year and developmental modules and courses offered at the postsecondary level has been completed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher education system has performed an inventory of all courses implicated by the CCSS and their level of alignment</li> <li>The higher education system has prioritized courses and modules to cull, adapt, etc. in light of the CCSS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can we articulate, based on the alignment exercise, a timeline for phasing in changes to courses?</li> <li>Do we meet regularly as a team to monitor progress and problem-solve if we are off track?</li> <li>Are there specific challenges should be addressed outside of our working group?</li> </ul>	10.6

	Critical question or action	Weak (1)	Strong (4)	Types of evidence to consider	For more, see page ...
Chapter 11. Put It All Together: Establish Routines To Monitor Performance and Solve Problems	Monitoring data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance dialogues make little reference to data</li> <li>Data may occasionally be brought up but not in a systematic and consistent way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance dialogues center on the range of metrics that department has used to set its priority targets</li> <li>More frequent data (leading indicators, intermediate metrics, process milestones) are discussed when outcome data are unavailable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How frequently are performance data discussed by the system leader and those who are accountable?</li> </ul>	11.3
	Sharing progress with the system leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance dialogues are haphazard and often take place only in the context of addressing immediate and urgent issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance dialogues are true routines: They are scheduled regularly and given consistent priority by the system leader and key senior managers</li> <li>Routines balance frequency and depth to give the system leader a comprehensive view of all priorities regularly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How regular and/or consistent are performance dialogues:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From the point of view of the chief?</li> <li>From the point of view of those accountable?</li> </ul> </li> <li>In the course of a given month, are these routines giving the system leader the right performance information at the right level of depth to drive decisionmaking?</li> </ul>	11.3
	Regularly solving problems to get implementation back on track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problem-solving may occur but only on an ad hoc basis to "fight fires"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Routines surface problems that may require additional attention</li> <li>As problems arise, the system categorizes and allocates resources to them according to severity and urgency</li> <li>Department staff exhibit a culture of problem-solving in addressing both large and small issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When an issue arises at the leadership level, how is it handled? Is there a standard operating procedure that effectively gets the issue resolved with minimal disruption?</li> <li>If we had to guess, what percentage of issues are resolved at the leadership level vs. lower down?</li> </ul>	11.8

**EXERCISE: DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT**

**Purpose:** Use this template to assess your capacity to implement the CCSS.

Chapter	Critical question or action	Rating (1–4)	Evidence
Chapters 3 and 4. Organize To Implement	Aspiration		
	Internal leadership team		
	Timeline		
	Budget		
	Gap analysis		
	Guiding coalition		
	Communications		
Chapter 5. Implementation Action I: Align Instructional Materials to the CCSS	Strategies to achieve success		
	Delivery chain		
	Targets and trajectory		
Chapter 6. Implementation Action II: Train Educators on the CCSS and Related Assessments	Strategies to achieve success		
	Delivery chain		
	Targets and trajectory		

Chapter	Critical question or action	Rating (1–4)	Evidence
Chapter 7. Implementation Action III: Transition Technology and Assessment System	Gap analysis		
	Differentiation of districts according to their individual readiness needs		
	Plan for working with districts to close gaps		
	Connecting strategies to expected outcomes and milestones		
	Establishing feedback loops and routines for monitoring progress		
Chapter 8. Implementation Action IV: Transition Accountability and Data Reporting System	Setting statewide performance goals		
	Transitioning the differentiation and classification system		
	Aligning the statewide system of support and intervention		
	Reporting timely and actionable data		
Chapter 10. Implementation Action V: Student Transitions to Higher Education	Collaborative working team		
	Delivery plan		
	Evaluating past and present course alignment		
Chapter 11. Put It All Together: Establish Routines To Monitor Performance and Solve Problems	Monitoring data		
	Sharing progress with the system leader		
	Regularly solving problems		

## NOTES