

IMPLEMENTING Common Core State Standards and Assessments

A Workbook for State and District Leaders

UPDATED MARCH 2012



Achieve



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1. INTRODUCTION

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

A Workbook for State and District Leaders

To download the full workbook, go to
www.parcconline.org/CommonCoreImplementationWorkbook



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We are at one of those rare, maybe once-in-a-lifetime moments. After 30 years of fits and starts, true transformational reform in education is not only possible but also entirely within our grasp. In the last few years, we have seen a number of significant shifts occur: College and career readiness for all students is the new national norm, the majority of states have adopted internationally benchmarked K–12 Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in mathematics and English, and most states are participating in a Race to the Top assessment consortium. The nation has, by and large, coalesced around a common — and rigorous — set of expectations and goals that will put all students on a trajectory to graduate from high school ready for college, careers and citizenship.

As remarkable as the effort has been to get to this point, the true transformation will occur only if these goals are put into practice and fully implemented for the benefit of every student, in every classroom, in every state. Can it be done? Much of the answer to that question rests squarely with you, the state and district leaders charged with making the CCSS a reality in schools and classrooms. Leading change within a school district or state education agency takes hard, sustained effort. No greater task confronts state and district leaders today than preparing students to meet the new expectations. Trying financial circumstances and stretched capacity only compound the degree of difficulty. Yet the work is critical. The ability of students to reach their full potential — and by extension, our nation’s ability to compete and lead — depends on your ability to take full advantage of this moment in time.

By adopting the CCSS, your state has taken a critical first step forward. You now have a clear road map — anchored in college and career readiness and internationally benchmarked — for what students in your state must know and be able to do to succeed. With this road map comes the chance to fundamentally rethink your system, including long-held notions about educator training, professional development and instructional materials — not to mention the transition from where you are today to where you hope to be by the time the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments are given.

You will face a choice in the days ahead: The transition to new standards and related tests can be done in the way it has always been done, or the CCSS can be at the heart of more aggressive instructional reform efforts.

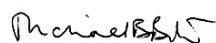
What would this look like? Rethinking instructional reform means deliberately building on good practice in leading districts while injecting urgency and capacity into struggling districts. It means understanding how to get aligned instructional materials in the hands of the right teachers at the right time and how to ensure professional development design reflects best practices and accurately targets student needs. And it means being relentlessly curious about the impact of your implementation efforts, so nothing will surprise you once students sit down to take their first PARCC assessment.

Our two organizations are committed to helping you succeed. We have combined Achieve’s content knowledge with the U.S. Education Delivery Institute’s implementation expertise in performance management. The result is the Common Core Implementation Workbook, which can help you organize for the transition to the CCSS. The workbook contains a framework for how to put all the relevant policies in place and offers sample timelines, relevant best practices, implementation advice and critical exercises to guide this important effort.

We hope that the workbook, in addition to the related state team gatherings and webinars, will help your team take maximum advantage of this moment in history. We look forward to helping you succeed.



Michael Cohen
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Sir Michael Barber
Founder
U.S. Education Delivery Institute



Kathy Cox
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1. Introduction

“The [Common Core State] standards establish clear and consistent goals for learning that will prepare America’s children for success in college and work.”¹ This is the aspiration behind the newly developed and adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Soon, rigorous content will be taught throughout elementary, middle and high school, with a focus on how to apply this knowledge. Doing so will equip students from every walk of life to compete with their peers in top-performing countries.

First, though, state and district leaders must diligently prepare for the implementation of the new standards.

Broadly speaking, complex policies and practices must be organized so that policy intent at the state level actually translates to classroom practice across the state. This means aligning instructional materials and curricular units to the CCSS; conducting highly effective professional development; and redesigning data, assessment and accountability systems to reflect the expectations in the CCSS. It also means mobilizing supports for students with disabilities and other challenging populations. Finally, state and district leaders must work with systems of higher education to guarantee that new mechanisms for teacher evaluation and preparation accurately reflect expectations for student learning. Integrating all of these policy efforts is critical.

With the right planning, high-capacity districts can be in the vanguard of this effort. Here, the state education agency’s role is to ensure that the work occurs consistently across the state. **The state agency does not necessarily need to lead the work directly, nor does it have to treat all districts in the same way.** By differentiating among districts based on capacity, the state can create networks that leverage high-capacity districts and better target its limited resources where they are most needed — to helping struggling districts. Realizing this vision demands that the state also create feedback loops, monitor performance and solve problems as they arise.

The implementation challenge looms large. In response, Achieve and the U.S. Education Delivery Institute have developed a **practical Common Core Implementation Workbook for all states in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)**. The workbook uses a proven performance management methodology known as “delivery” to lay out clear action steps for states and districts. It provides relevant information, case stories of good practice, key questions and hands-on exercises for leadership teams to complete together. Regardless of your timeline, the workbook offers state and district leaders the means to plan for the CCSS and then drive successful implementation.

The discipline of delivery was first developed in 2001 under U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair. This approach to public-sector management is widely credited with helping Blair’s government meet most of its policy targets for a range of public services. Delivery has five stages, which move a system from its aspiration to planning to implementation.² Few of these elements are new; however, delivery provides a systematic and comprehensive way to think about implementation. The approach connects ongoing project management to strategic planning, all with student outcomes in mind. Today, state education agencies in Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts and Tennessee have adopted and refined the delivery approach and are moving from managing projects to managing for results. The same approach can help states elsewhere improve student achievement by successfully implementing the CCSS and related assessments.

How To Read This Workbook: The Elements of CCSS Implementation

This is a once-in-a-generation chance to match student performance against the best in the world. To take advantage of this opportunity, state and district leaders must put the CCSS at the heart of broader efforts to create aligned instructional systems. This means tackling a complex and integrated policy set **as a whole** — thinking through policies on formative and summative assessment (and related technologies); coherent professional development; course approvals and revisions; student supports; new instructional materials; changes to teacher preparation, evaluation and licensing; and improvements to the existing data system and accountability framework.

The diagram below is one way to work through this integrated policy set. This workbook will cover all the shaded implementation actions and critical questions in the diagram. Future chapters may address the remaining actions and questions.

Organize To Implement	Aspiration (p. 3.3)	Internal leadership team (p. 3.5)	Timeline (p. 3.9)	Budget (p. 3.17)	Gap analysis (p. 3.24)	Stakeholder communications (p. 4.1)
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		Critical questions					
		Where are we now?	What would success look like in 2014–15?	What are our strategies to achieve success?	How will the strategies be implemented through the field to the classroom?	How will we connect strategies to expected outcomes?	How will we monitor progress and stay on track? (p. 11.1)
Take Action: Implementation Actions	Align instructional materials (p. 5.1)						
	Train educators (p. 6.1)						
	Transition technology and assessment system (p. 7.1)						
	Transition accountability and data reporting system (p. 8.1)						
	Align teacher preparation, evaluation and licensing (p. 9.1)						
	Inform student transitions to higher education (p. 10.1)						

Desired Student Outcomes

Covered in this workbook
 Anticipated

The workbook begins with a **diagnostic assessment** to help you determine where your CCSS implementation effort is going well and areas of challenge that merit additional attention. Findings from the diagnostic should then guide how you use the rest of the workbook. Page numbers for each relevant section are within the diagnostic so you can quickly focus attention on areas of true need.

After the diagnostic, the next sections of the workbook focus on how the state agency and school districts can **organize for implementation**. These actions undergird the entire implementation effort. Chapters 3 and 4 contain concrete information on how to shape the leadership team, create a timeline, set the budget, manage external stakeholders and form a communications plan to accompany your implementation strategy.

The workbook then offers a set of **implementation actions** that consist of the actual work of the CCSS transition. Chapters 5 and 6 help you answer the critical questions for two key actions: how to align curricular and instructional materials and how to train educators on the CCSS. Though many states will take until 2013 or later to implement all the complex changes associated with the transition to the CCSS, most have indicated that these two actions will be their first steps. As the diagram on the previous page shows, additional key actions are required to align your instructional system to the CCSS. Chapter 7 addresses the broad transformation many schools will need to make as they become true digital learning environments where technology is integrated into all parts of the school experience, including instruction and assessment. Chapter 8 identifies ways to advance and align college- and career-ready accountability systems with CCSS implementation. Chapter 10 examines ways to strengthen student transitions to higher education in light of the CCSS. The workbook ends with Chapter 11, which answers the final question — **how to monitor progress and sustain momentum**, a topic that obviously applies across all the implementation actions.

Within each chapter of the Common Core Implementation Workbook, you will find one or more of the following:

- **Diagnostic questions** to help your team gauge the extent to which you have already addressed the action(s) in question;
- **A brief narrative** that provides potential options for putting the relevant action(s) in place;
- **Case stories** that illustrate the principles in the narrative; and
- **Exercises** that will help flesh out your implementation strategy and put the relevant action(s) in place.

This workbook is organized in a linear fashion, but only because this medium of communication requires it. In reality, many implementation actions require nonlinear iteration. Moreover, no state or district is starting the planning effort from scratch; each has been leading work on many (or perhaps all) of these actions. Therefore, you should read this workbook as a reference guide for the overall implementation strategy — one that gives you the option to dig deeper in the areas that are critical for your state or district. Where answers already exist, insert them and move on. Elsewhere, honest and critical reflection on the exercises — preferably done together as a leadership team — will help you fill in the blanks.

By completing this workbook, your state or district will have set a clear path for making the most of the transition to the new CCSS and improving instructional practice in classrooms throughout your system. And by participating in the associated webinars and convenings, you will have access to emerging practices across all the states in the PARCC consortium.

Acknowledgments

This workbook was the result of many months of hard work. Achieve and the U.S. Education Delivery Institute (EDI) would like to thank those individuals whose efforts made it possible.

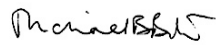
We would like to thank the members of the Achieve and EDI staffs for their tireless efforts on this workbook. Alissa Peltzman provided the overall leadership and guidance for this effort. Alex Harris and Nick Rodriguez played the lead roles in the writing of the report. Special thanks to Marie O'Hara and Lauren Kurczewski for their research contributions, writing and editorial support. Additional thanks to Kate Blosveren, Sandy Boyd, Matt Gandal, Margaret Horn, Stephen Pruitt and Doug Sovde, who shared insights and provided helpful feedback throughout the process.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 National Governors Association and Council for Chief State School Officers (2010). Press release, June 2.
- 2 Barber, Moffit, & Kihn (2011). *Deliverology 101: A Field Guide for Educational Leaders*.
- 3 Center for Education Policy (2011). *States' Progress and Challenges in Implementing the Common Core State Standards*.

About Achieve

Achieve is a bipartisan, nonprofit education reform organization that has worked with states, individually and through the 35-state American Diploma Project, for over a decade to ensure that state K–12 standards, graduation requirements, assessments and accountability systems are calibrated to graduate students from high school ready for college, careers and life.

Achieve is leading the effort to make college and career readiness a national priority so that the transition from high school graduation to postsecondary education and careers is seamless. In 2005, Achieve launched the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network. Starting with 13 states, the Network has now grown to include 35 states educating nearly 85 percent of all U.S. public school students. Through the ADP Network, governors, state education officials, postsecondary leaders and business executives work together to improve postsecondary preparation by aligning high school standards, assessments, graduation requirements and accountability systems with the demands of college and careers.

Achieve partnered with the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative, and a number of its staff served on writing and review teams. More recently, Achieve was selected to manage the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). The 25-state PARCC consortium was awarded Race to the Top assessment funds to create next-generation assessments in math and English aligned to the CCSS.

About U.S. Education Delivery Institute

The U.S. Education Delivery Institute (EDI) is an innovative nonprofit organization that focuses on implementing large-scale system change in public education. Its mission is to partner with K–12 and higher education systems with ambitious reform agendas and invest in their leaders' capacity to deliver results. By employing a proven approach known as delivery, EDI helps state leaders maintain the necessary focus to plan and drive reform.

EDI provides intensive on-the-ground support, data analytics, ongoing professional development and a network through which state systems can collectively build their capacity. As a result of this work, EDI expects to increase the number of well-prepared students who graduate from high school then enter and succeed in college. EDI emphasizes actions to close the gaps that too often separate low-income students and students of color from others. Its success is based entirely on whether the partner systems achieve these aspirations.