Common Core State Standards Initiative

Classroom Implications for 2014

Willard R. Daggett, Ed.D, CEO
Susan Gendron, Senior Fellow

August 2010
www.LeaderEd.com

International Center
for Leadership in Education

Common Core State Standards Initiative
Classroom Implications for 2014

Nearly a decade ago, *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) presented states with a daunting mix of challenges that supported the creation of statewide standards and assessments and rigorous accountability requirements. Yet, as a nation, the United States still lags behind other countries in student academic achievement and in preparing its young people to succeed beyond the classroom. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education expects the gap between American students and students from top performing countries to begin to close.

As we complete the first decade of the 21st century, American educators must understand that students need a different and more diverse set of skills than their parents were taught a generation ago. The changing nature of *work, technology,* and *competition* in the global job market has far outpaced what the U.S. education system provides for students, despite the ongoing efforts of educators and communities to improve their schools.

Recognizing this, the federal government has placed new mandates on schools receiving funding through the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (ARRA), which has allocated $100 billion for school improvement efforts. Of that, the $4.3 billion Race to the Top (RTTT) fund is targeted at innovative education reform divided into four areas prioritized in the ARRA, the four assurances. Moreover, the administration has called for new steps to better align the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in support of college- and career-ready standards.

Whether educators are directly involved in the chase for competitive RTTT awards or other grants from the stimulus fund, the impact of these federal initiatives will be felt by everyone in education.

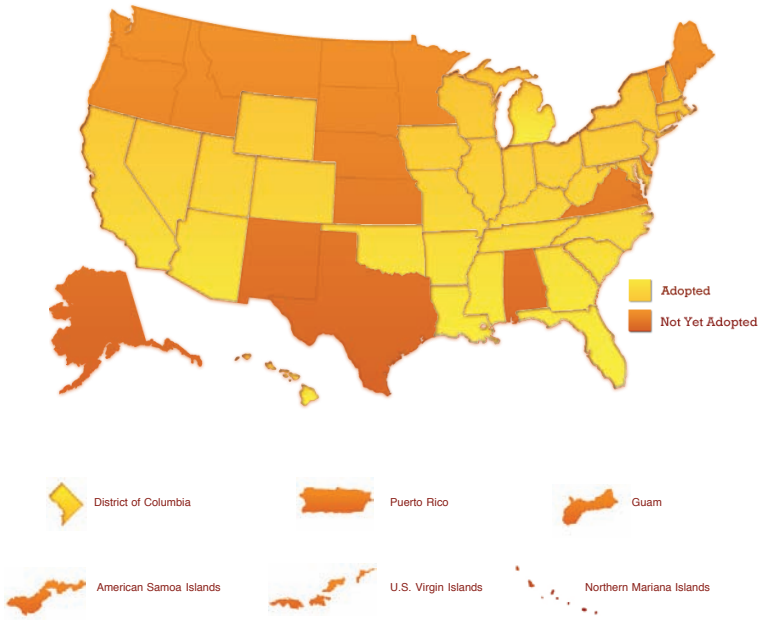
Four Assurances

1. Adopting standards and assessments to better prepare students for careers and college
2. Getting high-quality teachers into classroom
3. Turning around low-performing schools
4. Creating data systems to track performance

The changing nature of *work, technology,* and *competition* in the global job market has far outpaced what the U.S. education system provides for students, despite the ongoing efforts of educators and communities to improve their schools.

Common Core State Standards Initiative

The majority of states have not only recognized the impact of the federal support, but also realized the urgent need to work collaboratively to develop a culture of excellence that challenges every student to acquire the necessary skills to succeed in today's competitive global society. As of August 2010, most states had opted to adopt or adapt the Common Core Standards:



To view this map in more detail, visit
www.corestandards.org/in-the-states

During the past year, governors and state education commissioners from 49 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia came together to help draft a set of common academic standards for students in grades K-12. Called the Common Core State Standards Initiative: Preparing America's Students for College & Career, the collaboration is a nationwide, state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). In June, after more than 10,000 comments elicited from the public, a final version of the Common Core Standards for English and math was released. (CCSSO and NGA Center, on behalf of the participating states, also plan to develop common core standards in science and social studies.)

Standards do not tell teachers *how* to teach and cannot by themselves ensure the quality of our nation's education system.

Of course, standards do not tell teachers *how* to teach and cannot by themselves ensure the quality of our nation's education system. However, they constitute *an important starting point* in helping schools determine the knowledge and skills that ALL students must be equipped with upon graduation. In essence, thoughtfully written standards provide an accessible roadmap for teachers, students, and parents.

Reaching a Higher Level of Performance

The United States is one of the few developed countries that lack national education standards. Currently, standards vary widely from state to state. NCLB left it to states to determine what students ought to learn in reading, math, and science; how they ought to be tested; and what levels of achievement determine proficiency. For example, what constitutes proficiency for grades 4, 8, and 10 in one state might be lower or higher than in another state. State benchmarks vary so significantly that it is difficult to compare test scores from different states. Yet, all students in America deserve the same level of rigorous and relevant education.

Adoption of the Common Core State Standards is a voluntary decision made at the individual state level. Some states will adopt the standards through their state boards of education, while others will adopt them through their state legislatures.

Common Core State Standards Initiative
www.corestandards.org/frequently-asked-questions

To compound the problem, many states have lowered their proficiency levels in recent years to make it easier for schools to avoid sanctions under NCLB, but this can affect students negatively for the rest of their lives.

Consider one recent study, *Mapping State Proficiency Standards onto NAEP Scales: 2005-2007*, released by the U.S. Department of Education, which found that 31 states had set proficiency scores for 4th grade reading that were lower than the cutoff for the Basic level of performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP is the common test scale for mapping state performance standards at the Proficient level. For 8th grade, 15 states set standards lower than the Basic level. In grade 4 math, seven states set standards lower than the Basic level. In grade 8 math, eight states set standards that were lower than Basic.

Crossing a state line does not change the level of reading, writing, or math proficiency an individual needs for success in higher education, the workplace, the home, or in life.

Some testing experts have challenged the study's methodology. They said that the standardized tests that states now use and the more rigorous NAEP— the congressionally mandated program known as the "Nation's Report Card"— are too different to put on the same scale. But that's just the point. *There is no uniform alignment of education standards to define what every student across America is expected to know and be able to do.* Crossing a state line does not change the level of reading, writing, or math proficiency an individual needs for success in higher education, the workplace, the home, or in life.

The new standards will be used to revise curricula and state tests to make learning more uniformly rigorous across the country, so that students in Louisiana, for instance, have the same learning opportunities as students in Massachusetts. In short, consistent standards will provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live.

The movement to common standards and more rigorous new generation assessments comes at a critical juncture for students who have been identified as needing special education services. When NCLB first placed the spotlight on the performance of student subgroups, many educators believed that expecting students with disabilities to achieve proficiency was unrealistic and unfair. However, as these students have gained access to the general education curriculum and participated in state assessment programs, more of them have met standards each year. The special education population is comprised primarily of students with learning disabilities, speech and language disabilities, and emotional disabilities. These students have the capability to learn but often need specialized instructional approaches. Providing these students full access to the general education curriculum will require that schools and districts to:

- assist these students to be successful in the core content through a combination of highly qualified content experts and specialized instructional supports
- incorporate the needs of these students up front in policy planning and program design and not take the approach of addressing their needs later
- be deliberate in assuring that these students have exposure to the new assessment designs early and continually as part of their specialized services

The best understanding of what works in the classroom comes from the teachers who are in them. That's why these standards will establish *what* students need to learn, but they will not dictate *how* teachers should teach. Instead, schools and teachers will decide how best to help students reach the standards.

Common Core State Standards Initiative
www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/myths-vs-facts

The Common Core Standards provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare students for college and careers. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that students need for success after high school. Key features include:

Key Features of the Common Core Movement

- aligned with college and work expectations
- clear, understandable, and consistent
- rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher-order skills
- built upon strengths and lessons of current state standards
- informed by other top-performing countries so that all students are prepared to succeed in the global economy and society

There are three main sections of the Common Core: K-5 (cross-disciplinary), 6-12 (English language arts), 6-12 (literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects). There is an obvious shared responsibility among all teachers for students' literacy development including reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language. Media skills are integrated throughout the grade levels. Included in the appendices are research and evidence, a glossary of key terms, reading text exemplars (sample performance tasks), and annotated student writing samples.

The focus on literacy will require students to read more complex texts. Text complexity is measured by three factors:

- qualitative evaluation of the text: levels of meaning, structure, language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands
- quantitative evaluation of the text: readability measures and other scores of text complexity
- matching reader to text and task: reader variables (such as motivation, knowledge, and experiences) and task variables (such as purpose and the complexity generated by the task assigned and the questions posed)

More detailed information on text complexity and how it is measured is included in Appendix A of the Common Core Standards.

To learn more about the Common Core Standards, visit **www.corestandards.org**.

The following chart describes text complexity in terms of Lexile ranges (see **www.lexile.com** for more information). In three years, students will be expected to read and comprehend at higher levels (CCR = college and career ready).

Text Complexity Grade B and in the Standards	Old Lexile Ranges	Lexile Ranges Aligned to CCR Expectations
K-1	N/A	N/A
2-3	450-725	450-790
4-5	645-845	770-980
6-8	860-1010	955-1155
9-10	960-1115	1080-1305
11-CCR	1070-1220	1215-1355

International benchmarking played a significant role in both sets of standards. In fact, the college and career ready standards include an appendix listing the evidence that was consulted in drafting the standards and the international data consulted in the benchmarking process is included in this appendix. More evidence from international sources will be presented together with the final draft.

Common Core State Standards Initiative
www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/myths-vs-facts

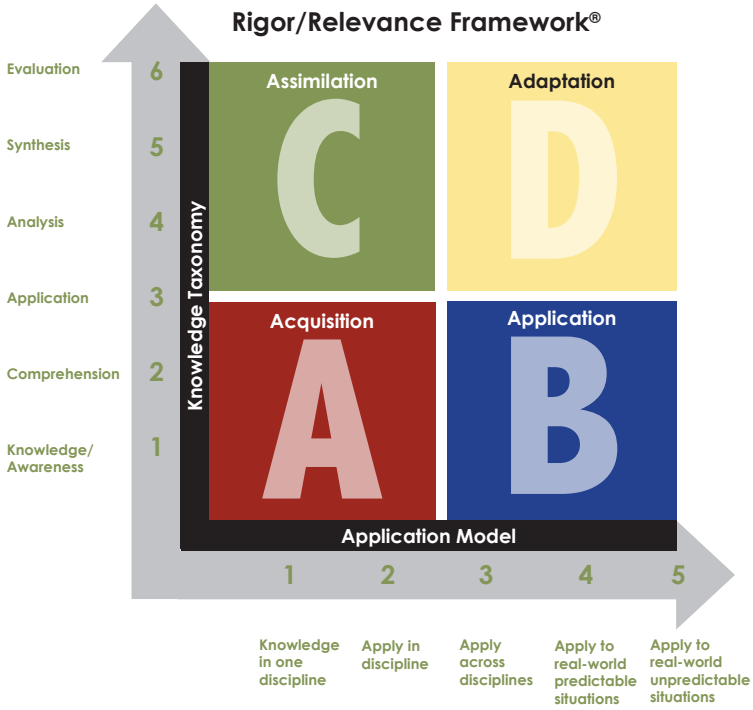
Accountability: Now More Than Ever

In conjunction with the release of the new standards, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), each of which is supported by a group of affiliated states, are in the process of developing assessments built around the new standards on behalf of states. Both consortia have submitted applications for part of the $350 million from the Race to the Top fund, which the Obama administration has set aside to encourage states to design and adopt high-quality common assessments for grades 3-8 and at least once in high school for implementation in 2014. A third consortium, the State Consortium on Board Examination Systems, submitted an application in response to the request to design a new end-of-course high school assessment for 12 states.

"States are leading the way in creating new standards designed to ensure that students graduate from high school ready for success in college and careers … To fully realize this vision, states need new assessments that measure a broader range of students' knowledge and skills."

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

Assessment over the next 3-7 years will evolve to be more rigorous (i.e., require analysis, synthesis and evaluation as identified by the Knowledge Taxonomy of the Rigor/Relevance Framework® – see Appendix) and more real-world relevant (i.e., interdisciplinary, real-world predictable or unpredictable situations as identified by the Application Model of the Rigor/Relevance Framework). When assessments include highly rigorous and highly relevant content, they fall in Quadrant D of the Rigor/Relevance Framework.



Typically, state tests and local assessments use closed responses such as multiple-choice items, resulting in low rigor/low relevance, characterized as Quadrant A on the Rigor/Relevance Framework. Designing new assessments will be a challenge for the three consortia mentioned above. Preparing students now to be ready for these types of assessments is the reality for classroom teachers in the next few years. Assessments will include performance-based tasks, such as conducting a science experiment or writing more short answers to open-ended questions designed to show deeper levels of learning

and thinking than multiple-choice or other closed-response items can measure. Students need to be prepared to read and analyze more complex texts to be successful on these tests. Here are three samples of those types of items:

Preparing students now to be ready for these types of assessments is the reality for classroom teachers in the next few years.

NAEP, 12th Grade Science

Is a hamburger an example of stored energy? Explain why or why not.

A Rich Task: Science and Ethics Confer (Queenland, Australia)

Students must identify, explore and make judgments on a biotechnological process to which there are ethical dimensions. Students identify scientific techniques used as well as significant recent contributions to the field. They also research frameworks of ethical principles for coming to terms with an identified ethical issue or question. Using this information, they prepare pre-conference materials for an international conference that will feature selected speakers who are leading lights in their respective fields.

In order to do this, students must choose and explore an area of biotechnology where there are ethical issues under consideration and undertake laboratory activities that help them understand some of the laboratory practices. This enables them to:

a. Provide a written explanation of the fundamental technological differences in some of the techniques used, or of potential use, in this area (included in the pre-conference package for delegates who are not necessarily experts in this area).

b. Consider the range of ethical issues raised in regard to this area's purposes and actions and scientific techniques and principles and present deep analysis of an ethical issue about which there is a debate in terms of an ethical framework.

c. Select six real-life people who have made relevant contributions to this area and write a 150-200 word précis about each one indicating his/her contribution, as well as a letter of invitation to one of them.

Applying Knowledge and Reasoning Skills to Real-World Situations (Sweden, year 5)

Carl bikes home from school at four o'clock. It takes about a quarter of an hour. In the evening, he's going back to school because the class is having a party. The party starts at 6 o'clock. Before the class party starts, Carl has to eat dinner. When he comes home from school, his grandmother, who is also his neighbor, calls. She wants him to bring in her post before he bikes over to the class party. She also wants him to take her dog for a walk, then to come in and have a chat. What does Carl have time to do before the party begins? Write and describe below how you have reasoned.

The federal government also is challenging states to transition to a growth model rather than a proficiency model of assessment and to design an assessment proposal that would measure growth in individual students' learning over time, specifically year-over-year. For example, if a 4th grade student is reading at a 2nd grade level, but then he or she makes a year's worth of growth during grade 4, this achievement would receive recognition.

Part of the assessment process also includes documenting that students are on track to becoming college- and career-ready by the time they graduate from high school. This aspect of the assessments means that higher education institutions will be partners in the development of the new high school tests to ensure the assessment system is anchored to what it takes to be successful in college and careers. The assessments must reflect and support good instruction and include all students from the outset, including English learners, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities. Therefore, students will not only learn from a more rigorous and relevant set of standards, but also be introduced to a new type of assessment that is significantly different from most current state tests.

Evolutionary vs. Revolutionary

Leaders must begin building instructional capacity within their system in order to ensure successful roll-out of the new standards and assessments. Schools and districts will need a focused transition plan and a process to implement the plan.

Planning Begins Now

States, districts, schools, and teachers need to begin planning now for how the new standards will impact instruction and assessment. Making the appropriate changes to reflect these standards along with overall school reform should be evolutionary rather than revolutionary in preparation for full implementation by 2014. Leaders must begin building instructional capacity within their system in order to ensure successful roll-out of the new standards and assessments. Schools and districts will need a focused transition plan and a process to implement the plan.

A solid program of work involves a comprehensive approach and strategic tools. Leadership teams should begin discussions today around their plan of action. That plan should include specific goals over the next three years to achieve successful implementation. With almost 20 years of experience in working with schools to reach their goals, the International Center has a clear understanding of how to support transitions like this and believes that the following objectives are essential to achieving this work:

1. Determine a scope of work, timeline, and quality assurances.
2. Build awareness, understanding, and ownership of the Common Core Standards, new assessments, and the need for change.
3. Position district leaders, teachers, parents, and communities for successful implementation of the Common Core Standards and new assessments.
4. Develop a gap analysis to compare existing standards, assessments, instructional programs, technology use, accountability measures, and student achievement levels to those required for the implementation of Common Core Standards and assessments.

Standards, Instruction, and Assessment

Aligning state and local standards with the Common Core Standards is the first step in identifying what needs to be taught. The process of crosswalking state and local standards to Common Core Standards will identify gaps in curricula. This crosswalk then informs the instruction that should take place. The Common Core Standards will require teachers to go deeper into the content, in contrast to the breadth of the overcrowded curriculum. Cross-disciplinary lessons and project-based learning will help prepare students for the new assessments, which will, in part at least, be different from current assessments and include performance tasks and extended constructed responses. The development of these types of assessments can be guided through the use of the Rigor/Relevance Framework and are found in high rigor/high relevance lessons (known as Gold Seal Lessons, www.leadered.com/gslresources.html).

Creating Awareness

Parents, community members, and students need to understand the shift that is occurring and the expectations this places on all students. The impact of the Common Core Standards will extend beyond the classroom walls. Discussion should begin now and continue over the next three years. Explaining the need for change can be done through examples of how rapidly technology is changing how we learn, work, and live. The skill set needed by a high school graduate today is much different from that of the 20th century.

Take Control Rather Than Feeling Controlled

The implications for educators of the Common Core Standards are both exciting and daunting. Educators will need to shift how they teach and how they assess students within the next three years. Students will need to adapt to those instructional changes and cannot be expected to do so overnight. The transition to new standards and assessments will require vision, gaining commitment and consensus, planning, time, and increased instructional capacity to support teachers in developing an expanded repertoire of skills in anticipation of these new measurements of achievement.

School and district leaders must build capacity within their system and begin preparing now for the new standards and assessments. The International Center for Leadership in Education is already assisting a number of state, district, and school leaders in transitioning to the Common Core Standards and related assessments. The collaborative experience and the expertise being shared are providing insights that can be leveraged to support your own jurisdiction's preparations for the transition. The International Center can support this work by providing a focused program of transition planning and implementation of the plan through the use of strategic tools and tailored to the unique needs and resources of each school or district.

The challenge is great, but so is the opportunity. We can help.

International Center for Leadership in Education
1587 Route 146 ● Rexford, NY 12148
(518) 399-2776 ● fax (518) 399-7607
www.LeaderEd.com ● info@LeaderEd.com

Appendix

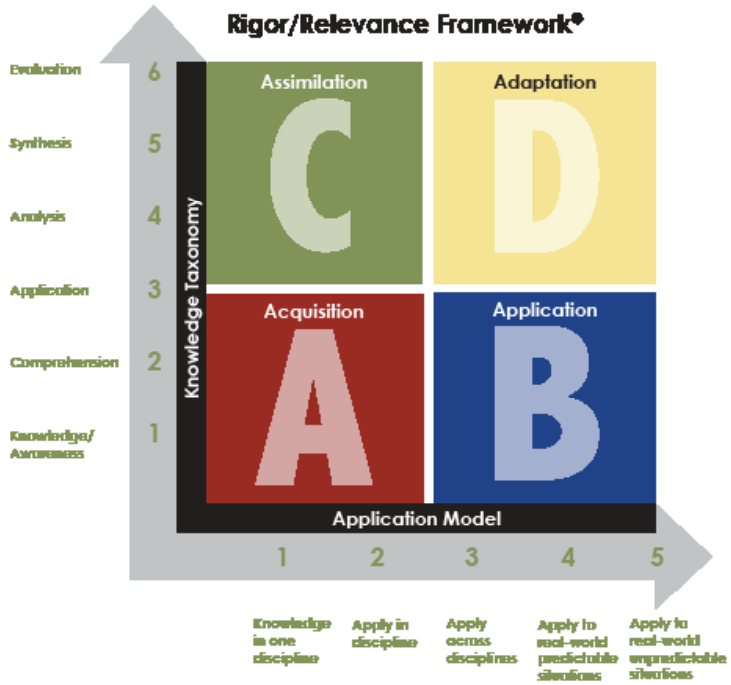
Rigor/Relevance Framework®

The Common Core Standards movement aligns with the higher order thinking and doing skills reflected in Quadrant D learning and instruction, as described in the International Center's approach to rigor and relevance. The Rigor/Relevance Framework is a planning tool to help educators develop grade-level learning expectations and standards by aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The Framework's has two dimensions for higher standards and student achievement:

1. The *Knowledge Taxonomy*, is represented as a vertical continuum based on the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy and describes the increasingly complex ways in which we think. The lower end involves acquiring knowledge and being able to recall or locate that knowledge. The high end labels the more complex ways in which individuals use knowledge, such as taking several pieces of knowledge and combining them in both logical and creative ways.

2. The second continuum, known as the *Application Model* and represented on a horizontal axis, stresses use of knowledge. Its five levels describe ways to apply knowledge to solve problems. While the low end is knowledge acquired for its own sake, the high end signifies use of that knowledge to solve complex real-world problems and to create unique projects, designs, and other works for use in real-world situations.



The two dimensions are divided into four quadrants, labeled A-D, to characterize the learning or student performance in that mode.

A	B	C	D
Students gather and store bits of knowledge and information. Students are primarily expected to remember or understand this knowledge.	Students use acquired knowledge to solve problems, design solutions, and complete work. The highest level of application is to apply knowledge to new and unpredictable situations.	Students have the competence to think in complex ways and to apply their knowledge and skills. Even when confronted with perplexing unknowns, students are able to use extensive knowledge and skill to create solutions and take action that further develops their skills and knowledge.	Students have the competence to think in complex ways and to apply their knowledge and skills. Even when confronted with perplexing unknowns, students are able to use extensive knowledge and skill to create solutions and take action that further develops their skills and knowledge.

- In Quadrant A (Acquisition) students learn and store bits of knowledge and information.
- Quadrant B (Application) requires students to use their acquired knowledge to solve practical problems.
- In Quadrant C (Assimilation), students extend their acquired knowledge to use it automatically and routinely to analyze problems and create unique solutions.
- When working in Quadrant D (Adaptation), students have the competence to think in complex ways and apply their knowledge and skills when confronting perplexing unknowns and creating solutions.