

Implementing Common Core Standards with Hispanic and ELL Students



Introduction

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative is a state-led, voluntary effort to establish a single set of clear educational standards for English language arts and mathematics that states can share and voluntarily adopt. These standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared for college, work, and success in the global economy.

Currently states are allowed to set their own academic standards—to which they are held accountable—for federal reporting purposes. This system has incentivized some states to set low standards to disguise their students' low proficiency rates, and has thus put U.S. students at a disadvantage by allowing for widespread variability in educational quality and rigor. Studies have shown that not only are there major differences among standards,¹ but also that they are nearly all inadequate measures of what students should know and be able to do in today's economy. Given the evolving U.S. student demographics, the standards discussion is particularly important because students of color disproportionately live in areas that are plagued by low academic standards.*

The CCSS represent an opportunity for Latinos,[†] who are a large and growing share of the U.S. student population yet are not being adequately served by our educational system. Currently, only 56% of Latino students graduate from high school on time with a regular diploma, compared to 77% of their White peers.² This low graduation rate undercuts the increasing demand in the United States for highly educated and trained individuals who can compete in the global economy. At the same time, because of low educational standards, many of those students who do graduate are inadequately prepared for college and a career. As a result, a disproportionate number of Latinos are left unprepared for college and unqualified for good jobs; they will not have the same opportunities as their White peers to buy a house, afford health insurance, or send their children to college.

Obtaining a meaningful, high-quality education is more important than ever before, as today's economy requires a workforce of highly trained and educated individuals who can compete in the global market. If the United States is to remain an international leader, our nation's schools must provide high-quality education to all students.

*A recent review of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which compares academic performance across states, found that those states with the greatest degree of difference between the NAEP scores and their own state test scores were largely in the South, Southwest, and Far West and have a disproportionate share of low-income, non-White, and ELL students. See Goodwin Liu, "Interstate Inequality in Educational Opportunity," *NYU Law Review* 81, no. 6 (2006). An abridged version of this article appears at http://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/Interstate_Inequality_Goodwin_Lui.pdf.

[†]The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.

The economic consequences of denying today's students the adequate preparation to become part of tomorrow's workforce can be devastating. For example, if half of the Latino students who dropped out in the Los Angeles metropolitan area would have graduated in 2008, this graduating class would have earned an additional annual combined income of \$324.7 million.³ This additional income stream would have likely produced an increase of \$228.3 million in spending and \$85.1 million in investment during an average year.⁴

Nationally, one report found that if the performance gap between Black and Hispanic students and White students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) had closed between 1983 and 1998, the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2008 would have been between \$310 billion and \$525 billion higher, which represents a 2% to 4% increase in GDP.⁵ Similarly, if the achievement gap between low-income students[‡] and their better-off peers would have narrowed—as measured by results on the NAEP—the GDP in 2008 would have been \$400 billion to \$670 billion higher, an increase of 3% to 5% in GDP. The same report found that if America's lowest-performing states performed on par with the highest-performing states on the NAEP, the United States in 2008 would have had \$425 billion to \$700 billion higher economic output.⁶

The economic benefits of educational achievement are clear. Setting common academic standards benefits everyone by raising standards and helping all students achieve them. Specifically, the CCSS initiative holds the potential to:

- ▶ **Ensure that all students, regardless of ZIP code, income, race, or ethnicity, will be taught to and held to the *same, high* standards that are aligned to college and work expectations**
- ▶ **Ensure that all students have access to high-quality educational content, supports, and opportunities that research has demonstrated are essential to postsecondary success**
- ▶ **Allow parents and caregivers to more effectively assess their child's progress and compare their child's education with the education of children in other communities, states, and nations**
- ▶ **Free up resources to create high-quality and rich assessments that can accurately and reliably measure the progress of every student**

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) believes that the CCSS Initiative is crucial to improving education for Hispanic students. However, as states begin to adopt these new, higher standards, the voice of the Latino community is critical to making sure that policymakers implement CCSS in such a way that truly improves education for Latino students. This implementation guide was designed to improve the CCSS implementation process by helping state education leaders identify and address key elements and questions. With this information, state education leaders will, in turn, build stronger, more effective strategies to ensure educational success for Hispanic and English language learner (ELL) children and families.

Strong academic standards are the foundation of a sound educational system—they set the tone for high expectations and effective instruction. However, raising standards alone is not enough to ensure academic success; educators and school leaders must be able to effectively implement these new standards in every classroom, for every student. In order to do so, standards need to be closely aligned with all elements of the school system, including:

- ▶ **Effective teaching**
- ▶ **Rigorous curriculum and effective instructional strategies aligned to standards**
- ▶ **Accurate tests that show what students know**
- ▶ **Effective family and community engagement strategies**

While it may take time for every state to establish high standards for all students—especially in places where student achievement is low relative to the current standards—raising the bar now can catalyze and accelerate further changes that bring improvement to the classroom. Upgrading each educational system element will help Hispanic students graduate from high school with a greater likelihood of success in college or the career of their choice.

Along with the collective CCSS development work, states should heed the unique needs of ELL students. One important element for ELLs is how their English proficiency levels may affect their academic performance. To adequately measure ELLs' academic knowledge, states should have English language proficiency (ELP) standards aligned to their states' academic standards. Currently the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium[§] has led the development of ELP standards across 25 states** independently and in advance of the CCSS initiative. Given the shift in English language arts (ELA) standards, educational research institutions have worked to develop ELP standards aligned to CCSS and the ELP assessments.^{††} Recently, Stanford University received a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to create materials that will outline what ELLs should know and be able to do in the content areas at different English proficiency levels.⁷ The development of materials and strategies to help teachers support ELL students access the common standards are promising in ensuring that proper supports are in place for ELLs at varying grade and proficiency levels.

Before changes happen in the classroom, states and districts will need to develop implementation plans, making community input a priority in the initial planning stages and thereafter. Only by engaging a variety of communities, will states be able to change policies to respond to the needs of the Latino community, the fastest-growing student population. Local and state education leaders play an essential role in guaranteeing the academic success of Hispanic children and families throughout the country.

[§]For more information about the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium, see <http://www.wida.us/index.aspx>.

**The WIDA Consortium consists of 25 partner states: Alabama, Alaska, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

^{††}The U.S. Department of Education launched a grant competition for English-language-proficiency tests to be developed for the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), but the \$10.7 million provided for that competition did not include funds for the development of English language proficiency standards, which typically come first. See: Mary Ann Zehr, "Stanford to Lead Creation of ELL Standards for 'Common Core,'" *Education Week*, "Learning the Language," July 12, 2011, http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning-the-language/2011/07/stanford_to_lead_creation_of_e.html (Accessed July 26, 2011).

Section 1:

To improve student achievement across racial/ethnic groups and socioeconomic levels and in several educational elements, students need access to a rigorous curriculum and highly effective teachers, so that they obtain the college- and career-readiness skills necessary to succeed.

Nationally, Hispanics lag behind their White peers in high school graduation rates by over 20 percentage points.⁸ Although various factors⁹ contribute to high dropout rates and low academic performances for Latino students, current education reform efforts—if implemented properly—can reverse the downward spiral of academic outcomes for many Latino students. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative, the state-led voluntary effort to establish a set of higher, internationally benchmarked academic standards for English language arts and mathematics, presents an opportunity to improve the educational elements necessary to realize successful Hispanic student outcomes.

While it may take time for every state and school to fully implement these high academic standards—especially in places where student achievement is low relative to current standards—raising the bar now will catalyze further changes and result in higher student achievement in the classroom. Additionally, the development of CCSS presents an opportunity for schools and community members to work together at every level of implementation. Advocates and state education leaders must consider the needs of Latino and English language learner (ELL) students at every step of the implementation process. The alignment of educational systems happens at many points but could especially benefit Latinos at several junctures—such as access to quality preschools, readiness for literacy and mathematics, high school graduation, and access to postsecondary education—where Hispanic student performance tends to falter. Effectively implementing CCSS, while improving critical educational system elements, will result in Latino students graduating from high school equipped to succeed in college or a career.

Process and Timeline

As implementation plans are being developed, it is important to assess what has been already been done and what plans are moving forward, before focusing on the specific details of a state or district implementation plan. Also consider whether the state has developed a plan for helping ELLs meet the new standards. As a state education leader, you should be prepared to address broad questions and concerns—even anticipating unspoken issues—as well as to assure parents and community leaders that CCSS implementation will benefit all students—regardless of income level, cultural heritage, or linguistic background. Understanding and speaking to stakeholder needs and concerns will go far to win their support and engagement to bring about a more effective implementation.

Below are questions to consider as your state begins CCSS planning and implementation:

What is the process and timeline for implementing CCSS? Who is in charge of implementing these standards and associated reforms? Is there an ELL expert working with state leaders in CCSS adoption and implementation? What implementation efforts will the state handle and what will be left to the districts, and how will the two efforts be coordinated? All state education leaders should know the basic information of who, what, when, and how, with respect to CCSS implementation efforts. Although CCSS will not be put into place overnight, at the outset decision-makers need to know the implementation plan details and timeline as these may affect other education-related initiatives or issues. Also know at the outset what the role of each state education leader will be and whether ELL education experts will be represented on state leadership teams. Additional important information includes what portion of the implementation efforts will be left to districts to accomplish and how the new standards will be integrated.

What implementation efforts have happened so far in your state, district, and school? Relevant education reform efforts include the college- and career-ready policies that your state has already adopted or implemented, such as rigorous curriculum programs, course requirements, or valid and reliable assessments for measuring college- and career-readiness.

State education leaders also should consider whether current state education reform efforts are already aligned to CCSS and whether any previous reform initiatives will actually delay CCSS implementation. If delay is likely, state education leaders can strategize an action plan to line up CCSS implementation efforts with current state college- and career-readiness policies. Additionally, previous efforts should be assessed to see how effectively they met the needs of Latino and ELL students. Lessons learned from previous efforts can be used to advance Latino academic achievement through the new efforts to adopt CCSS.

What can I do in my current position to ensure that all stakeholders, including communities of color and Native tribes, are meaningfully involved in state and district implementation planning?

To ensure support from all communities, state education leaders must engage members of all affected communities in any CCSS implementation efforts. The development and implementation of outreach strategies should be carried out early in the planning process; these should not be an afterthought. Outreach strategies should not only disseminate information about CCSS, they should include dialogue and input from communities to ensure that these stakeholders are engaged in the planning process. Effective outreach may require having bilingual or multilingual staff on hand and presenting materials in a format and language that community members can understand.

How is your state preparing to develop new English language proficiency (ELP) standards or aligning your state's current ELP standards? Is there an integration plan? Who is involved, and what elements are missing? Although many states already have ELP standards, they may not adequately align with the state's academic standards. ELLs have the dual task of simultaneously learning English while acquiring academic content. Without the proper alignment of ELP and academic standards, students cannot be properly assessed on what they know if the assessment does not account for how ELLs' English proficiency affects their ability to convey their academic knowledge. States must plan to integrate new ELP standards or how to align their current ELP standards to CCSS. ELL experts should be involved in discussions around ELP standards to ensure that research-based best practices are being utilized.

Are there other ELL initiatives in your state? Is there coordination among ELL initiatives and CCSS implementation?

As a state leader, you will need to know what your state is doing to address the needs of ELLs. Your state's existing initiatives to improve ELL academic achievement could possibly be coordinated with CCSS implementation. The coordination of efforts across the state may be beneficial in meeting ELL needs, while not burdening districts and schools by adding more requirements or duplicating efforts that may not be fruitful.

Conducting a Gap Analysis

The state may need to conduct a gap analysis to determine how its current standards compare to CCSS. Comparing what the state already teaches to the CCSS requirements will help determine how much work is needed so that all students will be able to achieve academically. Many states—notably those in the South, Southwest, and Far West with the greatest concentrations of students of color and disproportionately low standards¹⁰—may have to prepare their teachers and students more than those states with already high standards. The goal of this gap analysis is to identify and develop strategies to prepare all students for the rigor of college coursework or career training.

Depending on where your state's current standards lie, your local schools may need to rethink and strategize how students are currently being served. Teachers may need additional professional development to better understand what the changes in standards may mean for classroom instruction; district leaders will need to determine how to inform parents and community leaders about the district-wide and classroom-specific changes; and parents will need to understand how best to support their child's academic needs at home.

Here are some questions to consider as initial implementation plans are being made:

Has a gap analysis already been done? How well do the CCSS align with your current state standards? Do they require a restructuring of curriculum? What are the implications for ELLs?

Before implementation planning can happen, a gap analysis should take place to know how much work is needed to put CCSS into practice. State education leaders will need to know how much their current state standards vary from the CCSS. It is possible that some states' standards will not be far from the mark, but others may have to do more to bring up their state standards to the CCSS level.

State education leaders will need to analyze the gap analysis to understand if there are any fundamental skills or concepts being taught at different grade levels. If there are major differences, state education leaders will need to consider the implications for their schools' current curriculum and for students, especially those performing below grade level or with limited English language proficiency (see Section 2 for more discussion on ELL students' needs). The results of the assessment could mean that school districts will need to adopt a different curriculum or restructure their current curriculum. The assessment may also mean that some students need to repeat a grade or that school districts need to provide additional classes and support services to bring them up to grade level. These additional supports may need to occur outside the traditional school day, in conjunction with any efforts happening during the school day.

Are there any standards that will require specific professional development for teachers and school leaders? Is your state preparing to design professional development specifically targeted to help ELLs meet the new standards?

The gap analysis may also reveal the need for teacher training and professional development. For example, if the analysis shows that fundamental concepts that are currently taught in third grade must now be taught in second grade, some teachers may need additional professional development to obtain the proper tools and skills to teach to the new standards in their grade level. Teachers may also need to acquire specific competencies to support ELLs in meeting these new standards. Some school districts may even decide that a change in teacher assignments is necessary if CCSS requirements are taught at a different grade level than current state standards.

Teachers may not be the only staff to require additional professional development. Other school leaders may need training on the changes and how they can best support teachers.

What fundamental skills and concepts are not part of your current state standards?

In reviewing the analysis, state leaders should be alert to whether there are skills or concepts that are not part of CCSS, but are currently in the state standards. These may be standards specific to the state or covering an area where state education leaders do not think CCSS went deep enough with math or language arts. These standards may be important to the state, so state education leaders will need to consider if they will want to keep them as part of their state standards.

How will your state and local school district share this information with teachers and parents?

State education leaders should plan how and when to share information—in an accessible language and format—with teachers, parents, and community education stakeholders. The information shared with teachers and parents around CCSS timelines and processes should be the same, but the presentation to each of the stakeholders may require a different format or more details. Teachers may be more interested in the specific changes that they will need to follow, whereas parents may be more interested in what the changes mean for their students and what may be required of them in the process and implementation.

Aligning Curriculum and Assessments with High Standards

Schools in high-poverty areas and schools with high concentrations of students of color are less likely to offer college preparatory courses. Research demonstrates a strong correlation between taking higher-level courses in high school and achieving success in college; however, in the 2004 graduating class, studies show that less than 7% of Hispanics completed calculus, as compared to 16% of White students.¹¹ For students to fully benefit from higher standards, the curriculum, instructional materials, and tests used to measure student performance must align with CCSS so that students are not only taught to higher expectations, but are also appropriately assessed for their learning.

Knowing the current content of your state standards is important when engaging and speaking to parents and community members. Stakeholders will ask how CCSS will change the way business is done at the state and local levels and how the standards will be used at the school and classroom levels. You should also be prepared to answer what the implementation of CCSS could mean for long-term benchmarks such as high school graduation, as well as for students and families on a day-to-day basis. Your most immediate consideration is how CCSS implementation will affect students on a daily basis.

Curriculum and instruction can be used to ready students to meet the new and higher standards. State and local education leaders are responsible for providing appropriate learning materials to all students who are subject to the higher performance standards.

States that adopt CCSS must adopt 100% of the CCSS standards outlined in the initiative; however, states are able to integrate an additional 15% of their own academic content and standards into the CCSS—so long as at least 85% of a state’s content standards consists of CCSS.

Additionally, teachers are critical to how the standards will be taught—so they need time, support, and resources to learn the new standards and curriculum, as well as to adjust their teaching styles to make the standards accessible to all students.

Although the day-to-day CCSS implementation efforts of aligning curriculum and instruction to the standards may be more immediate, consideration of the long-term alignment processes should be addressed simultaneously. High schools may have to adjust graduation requirements, institutions of higher education may need to review how the new state

standards align with college entrance requirements, and state leaders may want to engage stakeholders in developing the “additional 15%” of state standards. Each of these longer-term implementation efforts has a day-to-day impact on how students and their families view the CCSS.

Here are some questions to consider:

How will your state standards vary from the CCSS? Before state education leaders can align curricula with standards and assessments, education leaders will need to understand how CCSS vary from their current state standards to better understand how much work will need to be done around alignment. See the section on conducting a gap analysis for more information on this comparative process.

Curricula, as well as instructional materials, and tests used to measure student performance, must be aligned with the CCSS so that students are not only taught to higher expectations, but are also appropriately assessed for their learning progress. Alignment and proper assessment is especially important to ensure that ELLs are learning both academic content and language at the same time.

Will our state opt to develop additional standards? If so, how will the additional 15% of the standards be developed? Although states that adopt the CCSS are required to adopt all of the standards outlined in the initiative, CCSS only needs to make up 85% of a state’s standards—leaving room for an additional 15% to be created by individual states. State education leaders will need to consider what, if any, additional standards they would like to implement.

As state demographics evolve and student populations change accordingly, state education leaders should consider whether there are content standards reflecting unique state history or communities that are appropriate to add. In deciding on additional state standards, state education leaders should involve representatives from every community to ensure that students are learning academic standards that are important to all communities in the state, such as cultural and linguistically relevant content. The process of involving stakeholders in the development of the additional 15% should be transparent and information should be broadly disseminated.

Will student assessments be aligned to CCSS? If so, will students be tested on material that goes beyond CCSS? Although the two assessment consortia, PARCC and SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium, are developing new assessments that will be aligned to CCSS, not all states participate in either consortium. You will need to know what assessments your state is planning to use once the CCSS are fully implemented, especially what accommodations and strategies will be considered for ELLs. States may also consider modifying their current system as a way to transition to the new assessments.

How do these new standards align to college and university requirements? How will state leaders engage higher education institutions to ensure alignment of college-ready expectations? Given that during the 2007–2008 school year, 45%¹² of Latino students required remediation in college, state education officials need to determine whether the state is adequately preparing students for college success and align K–12 academic standards with those of the postsecondary system as necessary. An Alliance for Excellent Education analysis estimates that college student remediation during the 2007–2008 academic year cost the nation an estimated \$5.6 billion.¹³ Without proper alignment, college remediation will remain necessary, which not only costs students more money and time to complete college, but also decreases the total of their lifetime earnings—thus students and states lose.^{††}

State education leaders should engage institutions of higher education to match up what students are being taught in K–12 to the expectations of their colleges and universities to better prepare students for higher education and prevent remediation costs.

Do your high school graduation course requirements currently match or exceed the CCSS? As your state implements the CCSS, consider whether your current graduation course requirements match that same high level of expectation. Research demonstrates a strong correlation between taking higher level courses in high school and achieving success in college.¹⁴ However, high poverty areas and schools with high concentrations of students of color are less likely to offer college preparatory courses, which can put students at a greater disadvantage in being adequately prepared for college.

Expecting that all students reach the same high levels of proficiency (by requiring college preparatory courses for all students), and that they have access to the same high-quality courses and effective teachers is the first step to preparing students for college and careers.

State education leaders will undoubtedly be asked whether school districts should keep their current graduation requirements policy or whether they will need to raise or alter the requirements for high school graduation. States should provide guidance on how high school graduation requirements fit together with college entrance requirements, as well as how schools can prepare for the transition and implementation of higher expectations.

Will your state be reviewing or purchasing new textbooks and other instruction tools and supplies? How will you ensure that the materials are aligned to the CCSS? Every state has its own timeline for buying new materials for the upcoming school year. Before buying new textbooks or materials that will be used for the next several years, states should consider whether it makes financial sense to purchase new materials for current state standards that will then be adjusted in the next several years. State leaders should also consider how their current textbooks already align with the CCSS and what, if any, supplemental materials need to be purchased, particularly for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Future purchases may also include acceleration materials to help all students, especially those below proficiency, succeed with the new higher state academic standards.

^{††}This figure includes \$3.6 billion in direct remedial education costs and an additional \$2 billion in lost lifetime wages. See Alliance for Excellent Education. *Saving Now*.

How will schools be held accountable if students are not meeting these new, higher standards?

Parents, communities, and education stakeholders will want to know what they can do to ensure that the schools in their communities are properly implementing CCSS. They will want to know about additional student supports to help all students—especially those already at risk of not graduating—achieve the new, higher academic standards. State education leaders should widely disseminate information to alert parents and education stakeholders about what they can do if their local school is not properly implementing CCSS. This information may include a state directory of information, timelines for certain reforms, and contact information for reporting discrepancies. Providing such information will involve stakeholders right away in implementation efforts.

What additional student, teacher, and parent supports will be needed for implementation?

Processes for the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessments should include plans for helping students, teachers, and parents make the transition. Supports will be needed at every level—from students and parents, to teachers, to district- and state-level officials so that everyone has the information to perform their role in the implementation process. Supports include holding public forums to discuss CCSS implementation, holding meetings with education stakeholders to gather input, and disseminating information through regular school channels. This information should be provided in a language and format that parents and stakeholders understand, and if done at a meeting, translators should be made available.

Support for students may need to go beyond the traditional school day, by offering acceleration courses before or after school and during the summer. Officials should solicit feedback from parents and the community on what may work best for their students, and once decisions are made, the information should be widely distributed.

Budget Considerations

Given the current economic climate, funding new initiatives such as the CCSS—that will require schools and states to develop and implement new measures—may seem impossible. State and local leaders will need to strategize to creatively maximize their current federal and state funding streams.

Federal funding under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) may be directed to support CCSS implementation. For example, Title I funds may be used to purchase instructional materials, such as curricula and textbooks; to hire new teachers; and provide professional development on CCSS academic subjects, such as math and reading. Title II, the main funding stream for teacher and principal preparation and training, can be used to provide professional development to teachers. Additionally, Title III may be used to provide professional development for ELL teachers.

If current funding streams are not sufficient, research into additional funding sources may be necessary. Educational philanthropists and foundations may seek to fund a project or a school to effectively implement the CCSS; it may be possible for your state or local school district to receive private funds to support segments of your CCSS efforts.

State education leaders should consider the following questions so that the CCSS initiative fulfills its promise to improve education for all students:

Has the state issued guidance to help school districts prepare their CCSS implementation budget plans? If the state has not, does it plan to release one in the coming months and does it include any targeted funding for ELLs? State guidance on budget considerations can impact how effectively school districts may be able to implement the CCSS. Often funding is the main reason why education reforms become stalled. State direction on what funding streams may be used to implement CCSS can help local officials see that the CCSS implementation will not jeopardize traditional school activities. Information on funding may even assure schools that implementing CCSS may help with their long-term school budgets by consolidating expenses and leveraging additional resources that may have not been available prior to CCSS implementation.

State education officials should provide additional information on which funding streams local school districts can consolidate to provide the necessary tools and workshops to teachers and school leaders. Although the consolidation of funds may be necessary, state education leaders will still need to direct funds to the students who need the most support—complying with all federal laws, such as “supplement and not supplant” requirements.

What current funding sources can school districts use to leverage the CCSS? The state may have information on what other states or school districts are doing or have done to leverage their resources for CCSS implementation, including an explanation of how the strategies used by other states and school districts may apply to your state or local school districts.

Some states and school districts may use funding streams targeted for specific student populations, such as low-income or ELLs, to provide academic supports for the transition to CCSS. Depending on how federal and state funding is allocated to each state and district, some schools may have more flexibility in the use of their funds. The state should encourage collaboration across school districts whenever possible. For example, neighboring school districts could hold joint professional development trainings in order to maximize resources. Or maybe the state can encourage the use of technology, such as webinars, to effectively and efficiently deliver professional development to teachers across school districts and the state.

What resources will the state provide to local school districts to supplement this initiative? State education officials need to decide what resources will be provided to local school districts to implement CCSS. These resources may range from state to state; one state may provide a state-wide training for administrators and teachers, another may provide specific professional development on accommodations for specific subgroups of students. States may decide what resources are needed based on the results of the gap analysis. For more information on the gap analysis, see Section 1.

Will the state be eligible for additional or new funding streams with the implementation of CCSS? Are there any foundations or organizations that would be willing to fund your state’s CCSS implementation efforts? Across the country, there may be additional funds available to states or specific school districts to support CCSS implementation. Although CCSS implementation is not directed by the federal government, Congress or the U.S. Department of Education may provide incentives or supports to states and school districts for implementation efforts. Additionally, education foundations may also provide support to states or schools to implement college- and career-ready reforms, such as CCSS. States may want to designate an individual or group to research opportunities and disseminate the information to school districts or interested parties.

Section 2:

Hispanic children now constitute more than one-fifth (20.5%) of all school-age children in the United States,¹⁵ and nearly one-third (32.1%) of the Latino population is currently enrolled in the U.S. school system.¹⁶ A significant portion (40%) of Latino students are also English language learners (ELLs).¹⁷ This dramatic increase is effectively changing the face of the American student body. Latino and ELL academic success is critical to the strength of the U.S. economy as these students represent a large and growing share of our student population and future workforce.

As momentum builds across the country around the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative, the timing is ripe for policymakers and advocates to address the challenges that faced by Latino students. To truly turn around Hispanic student achievement, policymakers must concentrate on the elements to a good education,^{§§} such as access to a rigorous curriculum and effective teaching, as they relate to the Hispanic community.¹⁸

A challenging curriculum and effective instructional strategies aligned to high standards for Latinos may include the integration of student supports that utilize both in-school and community-based services. Teachers should employ instructional practices such as culturally competent learning techniques that are designed to meet the needs of diverse learners. Schools must ensure that *all* students enroll in rigorous courses (which may include Advanced Placement [AP] or International Baccalaureate [IB] classes). Broadly, education leaders must make informed decisions regarding student eligibility for services in special education, ELL programs, college preparatory curricula, and gifted and talented programs based on legally and educationally valid criteria.

In the following pages we describe additional elements within the educational system that policymakers should address as they implement CCSS.

^{§§}The introduction of a recent NCLR report outlines the key educational elements as: (1) Access to effective teachers; (2) Access to rigorous curriculum and effective instructional strategies aligned to standards; (3) Accurate tests that show what students know; (4) Effective family and community engagement strategies. See: David Castillo and Josef Lukan, *Access to Common Standards for All: An Advocacy Tool Kit for Supporting Success* (Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza, 2011).

English Language Learners

ELLs are the fastest-growing segment of the school-age population. While ELLs constitute more than 10% of the nation's total public school population, ELL student enrollment has increased at nearly seven times the rate of total student enrollment.¹⁹

Despite the number of these students, the U.S. educational system is not effectively serving their needs: access to rigorous curricula, appropriate assessments, and effective parent engagement are just some of the areas that need improvement. Because academic standards are the backbone of the entire education system, raising standards to ensure college- and career-readiness is critical to providing a good education to all students. Additionally, the alignment of high-quality state assessments to high-quality content standards is critical to measuring the true academic achievement of ELLs.

As policymakers address the needs of this growing segment of the student population, here are some questions to consider:

How will your state ensure that ELLs are being taught to the same high-quality standards as other students? What additional supports will be put in place for ELLs to meet those expectations? Under Title III, ELLs are eligible to receive specialized services to help in their English language development. Historically, each state has set its own criteria to determine eligibility for services, as well as criteria for exiting services. Similarly, the quality of programming for ELLs varies greatly from state to state and district to district. Although ELLs share the need to acquire English language proficiency, this group is actually quite diverse^{***} and thus, the supports and services they need will vary accordingly. Despite the need for variation, the quality and effectiveness of services should ensure that ELLs' academic potential is not curtailed.

Many ELLs require specialized instructional services, especially at the secondary level, so they can acquire the English language skills they need to master complex academic content at the same levels as their higher-performing English-speaking peers. States and school districts will need to evaluate the current services and consider if more than minor adjustments are required for CCSS implementation.

Will your state's English language proficiency (ELP) standards be aligned to the CCSS English language arts standards? Many states already have their own English language proficiency standards, thus aligning their standards to CCSS may require individualized actions to make sure that ELLs fully benefit from the shift to higher standards. ELP standards benchmark student progress to English proficiency, while the English Language Arts (ELA) standards demonstrate what a student should know at a given grade level. States will need to ensure that their ELP standards are properly measuring how well an ELL student is doing academically based on proficiency levels. Without proper alignment, many ELL students may be deemed low-performing, when in fact they may be performing adequately based on their English language proficiency levels.

^{***}ELL students are a diverse group, including differences in their levels of oral English proficiency, literacy ability in both the heritage language and English, and cultural backgrounds. Those born in the United States often develop conversational language abilities in English but lack academic language proficiency. Newcomers, on the other hand, need to develop both conversational and academic English. Education experience prior to entering U.S. schools helps determine students' literacy levels in the native language. Some ELLs may have age-/grade-level skills, while others have limited or no literacy because of the quality of previous schooling, interrupted schooling due to wars or migration, and other circumstances. See Carola Suárez-Orozco and Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco (2001), *Children of Immigration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

If common ELP standards are developed, will your state adopt them? The collective work of CCSS development has raised questions around the development of common ELP standards. Currently the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium²⁰ has promulgated ELP standards across 25 states^{†††} independently and in advance of the CCSS initiative. Given the shift in ELA standards, there have been efforts to develop ELP standards aligned to CCSS and the ELP assessments.^{†††} Recently, Stanford University received a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to create materials that will outline what ELLs should know and be able to do in the content areas at different English-proficiency levels.²¹ These resources could potentially lead to the future development of ELP standards, in which case states should be prepared to adopt and implement in a thoughtful manner. In the absence of these standards, states should seek assistance from organizations like the WIDA consortium and Stanford University in aligning their ELP standards with CCSS.

Because the new common core standards will likely be implemented in the absence of common ELP state standards, are ELLs going to be held to the same standard as everyone else? Although the development of the ELP materials is now underway, consider now how your state will support ELLs, as full implementation and alignment of the CCSS takes place. Historically, ELLs have not received the same quality of instruction and services as their peers and have been placed in lower-track classes that further slowed their academic development.²² The transition into higher standards is an opportunity to bring the lowest-performing students up to par with their higher-performing peers.

Given the lack of support these students may already have experienced, there is no need to wait for the development and implementation of the ELP common core state standards to begin planning what services are necessary in the interim and when final implementation takes place. ELLs should have access to highly effective teachers, rigorous curricula, and support services so they can be held to the same standard as their higher-performing peers.

What impact will CCSS have on ELL reclassification or the exit-out process? It is important to think now about how CCSS implementation will affect the process for ELLs to transfer from English-learning classes to mainstream English classes—often referred to as the reclassification or exit-out process. Generally, ELL reclassification happens when an ELL student is deemed proficient in English and ready to participate in mainstream academic courses—though each state and school district develops their own system for ELL identification and reclassification.

These ELL identification and reclassification systems are important to examine, since research has found that these processes have an impact on student academic outcomes. English language learner status—without reclassification—has been shown to correlate with negative academic outcomes due to ELLs' limited proficiency in English and inferior education in English-learning classes.²³ Given the variability of reasons why ELL academic performance is lower than that of their native English-speaking peers, state educational leaders will need to teach all students to the same high-level standards. Although the teaching methods and delivery of instruction may be different, all students should receive instruction in the same content areas to ensure college- and career-readiness.

So that former ELLs are not lost in mainstream classes, states should require school districts to monitor all recently reclassified ELL students for the first two school years after their exit from ELL classes.

^{†††}The WIDA Consortium consists of 25 partner states: Alabama, Alaska, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

^{†††}The U.S. Department of Education launched a grant competition for English language proficiency tests to be developed for the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), but the \$10.7 million provided for that competition did not include funds for the development of English language proficiency standards, which typically come first. See: Mary Ann Zehr, "Stanford to Lead Creation of ELL Standards for 'Common Core.'" *Education Week*, "Learning the Language," July 12, 2011, http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning-the-language/2011/07/stanford_to_lead_creation_of_ell.html (Accessed July 26, 2011).

Teachers

Several factors influence the achievement of Latino children, none more so than having effective teachers. High-quality teachers are probably the single most important factor influencing student academic outcomes, including graduation.²⁴ Research shows that the students most likely to benefit from a dedicated and effective teacher are not being taught by effective teachers.²⁵ These students—who have traditionally been underserved by the system—are the most dependent on our public schools for their education.

The transition to the CCSS presents an opportunity for states and districts to prepare their teachers with strategies and tools to effectively teach to the new, higher academic standards. States and districts should implement a variety of supports in conjunction with or in advance of implementing CCSS, such as:

- ▶ Providing professional development, training, and technical assistance for *all* teachers—regardless of the subject matter—to meet the needs of Latinos and ELLs
- ▶ Developing a teacher quality or effectiveness system that includes a comprehensive set of measures of success in the classroom that are based on (1) professional teaching standards (including classroom observation, teaching plans and assignments, peer review, contributions to colleagues and the school as a whole, and evidence of student learning that is appropriate for the subjects and students being taught); (2) strong preparation for teaching diverse learners, including English language learners; and (3) evidence of competent performance
- ▶ Developing and implementing comprehensive teacher evaluation systems that measure teacher performance primarily to help struggling teachers improve; recognize, retain, and distribute effective teachers; and counsel consistently ineffective teachers out of the profession
- ▶ Promoting the development of principals and teachers from the community by creating a pipeline that draws from sources such as teacher aides and current high school students
- ▶ Investing in programs to increase the pool of highly qualified bilingual teachers and personnel with expertise in working with Latinos and ELLs
- ▶ Supporting principal and teacher recruitment that diversifies the nation's principal and teacher pool

CCSS may affect the teaching profession at several different levels, from current teachers in the classroom to those in the pipeline. State education leaders should consider the following recommendations to effect change at all of those levels:

What resources will the state provide to ensure that schools and teachers are adequately prepared to deliver high-quality instruction aligned to the CCSS? The increase in the rigor of standards may necessitate additional training and resources in the classroom to develop the capacity of teachers to deliver this instruction. States will need to consider what additional support teachers and students must receive to reach these higher standards. Also, as states determine how their current state standards vary from the CCSS, education leaders should provide extra training or professional development for teachers and school administrators on how CCSS align with current state standards.

What kind of professional development will states and school districts provide teachers? States should provide specific professional development on how to meet the needs of all students, especially low-performing students who may require additional supports. In addition to the basic transitional training for teachers, states should focus on providing additional training on how to work with

struggling students who are performing below current standards, as well as with specific subgroups, such as ELLs, to tailor support services to meet their specific needs.

Will states or school districts provide specific professional development in instruction and assessment of English language learners? Professional development should help teachers improve instruction, as well as provide them with routine evaluations, support, instruction, and cultural awareness on how to teach students with unique needs and from different backgrounds. All teachers, regardless of subject area, administrators, and staff who work directly with ELL students would benefit from professional development through pre-service and in-service programs to better understand the diverse needs of Latinos and ELLs.

Will the state develop new teacher effectiveness systems? Any new teacher effectiveness system should recognize that differentiated teaching is needed for different student populations. Given that teachers are a critical determinant of a student's academic performance, teachers should be evaluated on how well their students are learning. Teacher effectiveness systems need to encompass the needs of all students, including ELLs and other subgroups.

Is your state's current teacher evaluation system aligned to the new academic standards? If not, will it be? States will need to consider whether their current teacher evaluation systems are adequate or whether they will have to develop a new system to properly measure teachers with the implementation of the new higher standards. A new system may use a variation of measurements (e.g., student achievement, required hours of professional development, portfolios, and evaluations) to determine a teacher's effectiveness. Evaluation systems should also provide teachers with detailed information on what strategies they may use to improve their instruction.

Is your state's current evaluation system aligned to timely, high-quality professional development? For teacher evaluations to be effective, information about classroom practice must be readily available and data should be translated so that teachers can use this information to improve their instruction. Information consisting of periodic classroom assessments, benchmark exams, and quality evaluations can help a teacher identify and understand which practices helped a student learn and which did not.²⁶

Has your state partnered with higher education institutions and teacher preparation programs on the CCSS efforts? Partnerships with institutions of higher education can provide teachers with the necessary information and tools to enter the workforce ready to teach to the CCSS.

Graduation Rate Accountability

Although raising high school course requirements can be one important step to providing all students with a high-quality education, course requirements and course titles alone do not equate with college- and career-readiness. For example, the ACT report *Rigor at Risk* found that three out of four ACT-tested high school graduates from the class of 2006 who took a core curriculum^{§§§} were not prepared to take or succeed in credit-bearing entry-level college courses. The ACT report also found that no more than three out of four of these students who took additional courses beyond the core curriculum were ready for their first-year college coursework.²⁷

One of the reasons for the disparity in college-readiness may be due to the variation in the academic content and rigor of classes. Comparable to the variation in ELL classes and support services, there are some students who are exposed to content-rich and stimulating

^{§§§}The ACT report, *Rigor at Risk: Reaffirming Quality in the High School Core Curriculum*, defines a core curriculum as four years of English and three years each of mathematics, science, and social studies.

classes that build college- and career-ready skills in high school, while many others only have access to a less rigorous curriculum or to courses that are rigorous in name only.²⁸ These less rigorous courses shortchange students who are graduating from high school unprepared for college or a career.

As too many students, particularly low-income students of color, leave the American public school system without the knowledge and skills demanded by higher education and the globalized workforce, it becomes increasingly critical to raise academic standards. Raising standards and holding the school system accountable for meeting those standards is essential to direct and employ the resources to support critical improvements in the school system for these students.

Do your current high school graduation course requirements match the same high level of expectations as the CCSS requirements? The CCSS implementation will require state leaders to provide guidance to school districts on some of their policies, such as high school graduation

State leaders should evaluate their high school graduation and course requirements with the following in mind:

requirements. In doing the gap analysis described in Section 1, state leaders will better understand how much more rigorous the courses will need to be once the CCSS are implemented. If the new state standards far exceed previous standards, graduation requirements may need to be adjusted, otherwise students may graduate unprepared for college or a career.

How do the state's school districts graduation requirements compare to college entrance requirements? State education leaders need to know—for each school district—how well high school graduation requirements are aligned to college entrance requirements. The promise of these new, higher standards is that all students will be prepared for college or the career of their choice. If students are graduating from fully implemented CCSS programs, college remediation course enrollments should decline and students will start college prepared to engage in college-level coursework. To further ready students for college or careers, state leaders may need to engage institutions of higher education to collaborate on aligning K–12 standards to college and university expectations.

How do the CCSS align to your state's college-university requirements? State leaders should engage with their state higher education institutions to align K–12 programs with college-ready expectations. Comparing CCSS and college-university requirements may be part of the initial gap analysis indicating how well aligned CCSS is to college-university requirements. Alignment between K–12 programs and institutions of higher education will assist students to better prepare for college.

What additional student supports will be offered to assist all students—especially those who are already at risk of not graduating—in achieving the new, higher academic standards? States should provide guidance on how school districts can support all of their students—even those currently performing below proficiency—in succeeding with the CCSS implementation. Such guidance may mean involving all stakeholders in providing additional student and parent supports whenever necessary, for example, allowing community partners into the school to provide student supports and parental guidance if a particular community-based organization has a strong tie with the community.

How will you ensure that the materials are aligned to the CCSS? The instructional materials used are critical to teaching students to the new, higher state standards. State leaders, should anticipate and plan for purchasing materials, such as textbooks and other instructional tools and supplies, to coincide with the transition to CCSS.

Section 3:

The alignment of curriculum and tests with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)—as discussed in Section 1—is critical not only to teaching students to higher expectations, but also to ensuring that students are appropriately assessed on their learning. For tests to accurately measure what students learn, the assessment used must be valid and reliable for all students. Most tests that assess students’ content knowledge assume that the test taker is a native English speaker, and many test administrators do not provide statistically sound and legally allowable accommodations for English language learners (ELLs). Policymakers should ensure that academic assessments appropriately measure all students’ acquisition of rigorous academic content. The use of proper assessment accommodations, such as simplified language for ELLs, must be in place, and teachers administering tests must have adequate training in how to use such accommodations.

Characteristics of tests that accurately show what students know:

- ▶ **They must be valid and reliable.**
- ▶ **They must be aligned to high standards and curriculum.**
- ▶ **They must provide students, especially ELLs, access to the testing accommodations they need and teachers trained on the use of accommodations.**
- ▶ **They must be developed through research and investment that has been supported by policymakers and school leaders.**
- ▶ **They must be appropriate assessment instruments for ELLs, including native- and dual-language assessments for students in bilingual programs.**
- ▶ **They must be developed to be appropriate for ELL students.**
- ▶ **They must be developed through research and investment that has been supported by policymakers and school leaders.**
- ▶ **They must be appropriate assessment instruments for ELLs, including native- and dual-language assessments for students in bilingual programs.**
- ▶ **They must be developed to be appropriate for ELL students.**

Assessment Consortia

In conjunction with CCSS development and implementation are two state assessment consortia: the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). PARCC and SBAC were granted federal funds to develop common assessments aligned to the CCSS. The development of these multistate consortia continues the work of the state-led CCSS initiative; both PARCC and SBAC are state-led consortia working to develop the next generation of assessments, with even some states participating in both consortia.

Beyond the two multistate assessment consortia, the U.S. Department of Education sponsored a grant competition to create English language proficiency tests for the states' common core academic standards.²⁹ The need to understand how ELLs are meeting both language and content objectives is critical to seeing that states and schools are serving all students. ELL-specific assessments will allow for proper evaluation and identification of ELLs through targeted approaches that will help student learning.

The state assessment consortia will develop computer-based assessments. In determining how these assessments will take place locally, state and local leaders will need to assess several factors from the number of computers available to the logistics of testing to maintaining computers and software. Although there are several advantages to moving to computer-based assessments, there are also some concerns.³⁰ Officials may be able to alleviate concerns over the costs of implementation, if planning and budgeting for those costs occur in advance. State and local leaders will need to stay informed on how the changes in assessments will affect their schools.

States working together on common assessments will see similar benefits to those that accrue from setting high common standards for all states, such as comparing students across states on the same academic standards, as well as potentially leveraging state resources and lowering implementation costs. Revisions to state assessments to align them to the new standards were already scheduled, thus the collaborative assessment development work among states will be beneficial. States may continue to work collaboratively on the development and implementation of other issues such as sharing best practices for ELLs and students who are academically behind.

Both PARCC and SBAC are establishing technical advisory committees to address ELL needs that will include experts on the assessment of ELLs to ensure access and accommodations for this group of students.³¹ Similar advisory committees may also be necessary at the state and district level to effectively implement tests and proper accommodations.

States will need to develop student performance tests aligned to the curriculum that truly measure what students—especially ELLs—know, as many states have been using inappropriate assessments and accommodations for testing them.³² Below are some questions to consider:

Is your state participating in one of the two assessment consortia? The two state assessment consortia include the majority of states across the country. To find out who is participating in the PARCC consortia, visit www.parcconline.org/about-parcc.

And to find out who is participating in SBAC, visit www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/States.aspx.

If your state is not part of the state assessment consortia, you will need to know what assessment your state will use to measure whether students are learning and are ready for college and careers. Without valid and reliable assessments of what students are learning, it will be difficult to know if students are adequately prepared for their futures..

How will student assessments be aligned to the CCSS? CCSS implementation requires valid and reliable assessments of what students are learning in the classroom. Most tests that assess students' content knowledge assume that the test taker is a native English speaker, and many test administrators do not provide statistically sound and legally allowable accommodations for ELL students. Policymakers should see that academic assessments appropriately measure all students' acquisition of rigorous academic content, for example, offering proper accommodations for ELLs, such as simplified language, must be in place, and seeing that teachers administering tests have adequate training in how to use accommodations.

Will students be tested on material that goes beyond the common core? As mentioned in Section 1, states will be allowed to add their own state standards beyond what is currently outlined in CCSS. As states consider what additional standards they may require as part of K–12 education, they will also need to consider whether and how to test students on these additional standards. Whether developed through either of the two assessment consortia or not, the assessment a state chooses should properly test what a student is learning in the classroom, including state-specific standards.

How will states ensure that ELLs are being taught to the same high-quality standards and that the tests used to measure their performance are appropriate? The state should provide guidance to districts and schools regarding appropriate assessment accommodation practices. Many teachers and administrators across the country do not currently receive adequate guidance and preparation in the administration of accommodations to ELLs and students with disabilities. The implementation of CCSS provides an opportunity to fill that void by providing professional development on the needs of ELLs. Some research has indicated that accommodations are most effective when they have been integrated into daily classroom instruction, suggesting that training teachers in how best to incorporate accommodations into their pedagogy is critical.

Will there be adjustments to the testing accommodations that are provided to ELLs? Each state should include the use of accommodations in its state plan for professional development that prepares teachers to adjust their instruction for CCSS instruction to ELLs.

More specifically, states should identify any assessment accommodations in state plans that are offered to ELLs, including evidence of their effectiveness in yielding valid results. The most frequently used accommodations by states are not necessarily the most effective in reducing the testing gap between ELLs and non-ELLs. In many states, the same accommodations are used in assessing both ELLs and students with disabilities, notwithstanding the differences in these populations. States should require and demonstrate that the accommodations used for ELLs and students with disabilities are appropriate for each population.

How are ELLs currently being assessed in your state? States should move toward an assessment and accountability system that weighs the English-language proficiency and academic assessments for ELLs. For accountability purposes, both the language proficiency assessment and the academic assessments should be considered and weighed according to each student's level of language proficiency. For ELLs at the beginning levels of language proficiency, more weight should be given to language proficiency assessment results. As a learner becomes more proficient in English, gradually more weight can be given to the academic content assessment results. Although many states and districts currently do not have the data capacity to feasibly carry out this recommendation, it is possible that resource and technical assistance support from the U.S. Department of Education could help develop their data systems.

Do schools in your state have the technology in place to ensure that computer-based assessments will be accessible to all students? Both assessment consortia are developing online assessments for which all states will need to prepare, as not all states currently have the infrastructure for full implementation. If tests will be taken online, every student in the school should have computer access—and the computer skills to be adequately tested. Otherwise the tests may be deemed unreliable, as students' scores may not reflect what they are learning, but on how well they are able to use the computer-based assessment program. The state should offer guidance on how schools and districts will provide all students with equitable access to the new assessment technology.

Who in your state is involved in the state's assessment team? State leaders should create state assessment committees that are representative of the student population. The inclusion of Latino experts, researchers, and providers on assessment committees will help to implement best practices for Latino students and families.

Section 4:

Schools serving low-income students of color often do not have established communication and engagement channels with parents, even though federal law requires school districts to disseminate critical information to parents, including school and student performance data. However, parents' understanding of this data, especially parents of English language learners (ELLs), is often limited by many factors, including language barriers and overly complicated reporting formats. Consequently, parents do not have the requisite information to hold the school accountable for providing high-quality instruction. Because Latino students are concentrated in low-performing schools that will require substantial changes to meet the new, higher standards, states and districts should provide information to parents and communities concerning the implications of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in a language and format they can understand and in ways that encourage their involvement and support.

Communication and Outreach

Although most education reform advocates agree that parents and communities should be more involved in students' education, school districts and schools have not done enough to increase parental engagement in the Hispanic community. Community-based organizations (CBOs) often play a critical role in giving parents timely and appropriate information regarding their child's school, as well as encouraging all youth—particularly disadvantaged youth—to stay in school and graduate. Yet CBOs are not always included in the school district's academic and enrichment program plans. We recommend that CBOs and Native tribal councils be utilized as core partners with schools in helping all students reach proficiency under CCSS.

Along with raising standards and providing the information in a language and format that parents and community members understand, state and district policymakers should develop effective outreach strategies that strengthen the ability of families to engage in their children's education. Such systems should ensure equitable access to services and include programs that enhance parents' capacity to advocate for their children's education and development.

As state policymakers ponder how to actively involve parents and communities, they should consider the following:

What type of information is the state providing parents and communities as the implementation process is taking place? The state, along with local school districts, should be transparent with parents and community stakeholders about the transition to CCSS. States should use local schools as a venue to disseminate information, but consider setting up an independent state system for providing that same information. Having a central clearinghouse for information can make the process more transparent and provide timely and accessible information for everyone in the state—otherwise some districts may seem to have more information than others. Additionally, this information should be written in a language and format that is accessible to all parents and communities.

What can the state do to assist principals and teachers in fostering active parent and community participation as the standards are put in place? States should monitor how well schools and districts are fostering parent and community participation in CCSS implementation. If a school or district is not actively engaging parents, the state should provide guidance on how to increase communication and participation within communities. Schools and districts may also need additional resources in accomplishing this goal.

How can the state engage parents and community leaders to help them in CCSS implementation? The state should actively engage parents and community leaders by creating venues where dialogue can take place. Receiving parent and community input ensures that all stakeholders understand the changes that CCSS implementation may bring and that implementation meets their needs. Only by engaging and hearing from communities will the state be able to address the unique learning needs of all communities within a state.

What local organizations could possibly provide extra support to schools beyond the school day? What services do they currently offer that the school can use to help transition students to the higher academic standards? CBOs can play a critical role in supplementing school efforts to raise student academic achievement and in disseminating information to parents and other community members. The state should encourage partnerships between schools and CBOs to meet parent and student needs.

Parental Engagement

State and district education officials and schools should consider procedures to involve communities and parents, as implementation plans are being developed. Research has found that “when schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.”³³ The difference between an effective and ineffective CCSS implementation is how well parents have been able to participate in the process. Creating partnerships between schools and parents leads to families who support their students’ learning at home. Additionally, parental and community engagement in the implementation process can hold poorly performing schools accountable, thus leading to positive changes in policy, practice, and resources.³⁴

School implementation plans should involve parents from the beginning of the process, engage parents at every academic level from prekindergarten to high school, and value the input of all parents—regardless of income, education, or cultural background—so that all students receive the same academic benefits. Effective programs will engage families with community partners either at the school, community centers, or other locations where they are most comfortable.

In developing parent and community engagement plans, state officials should consider the following:

How will parents be informed about the timing and place details of the transition to CCSS?

Although a local school district may directly provide the information to parents and community members about the transition to CCSS, states should provide guidance on how information should be disseminated. States may also consider creating a clearinghouse or website where parents can easily access for information on the transition progress of their school or school district. This website could also provide information on whom to contact at their local school or district to receive information on the CCSS implementation process.

What can parents and community members do to check whether their local school is following the proper planning and implementation process?

States should oversee how each school and school district is progressing with the CCSS implementation, as well as provide parents and community members with information on how to report whether their local school is not following the proper implementation process. The state’s tracking system for implementation efforts should be publicly transparent and accessible to all stakeholders, including parents and community members.

How will parents receive information about expectations and whether their student is meeting the new standards? What will be done to ensure that parents and students understand these expectations?

Transparency in the implementation of CCSS is important. Parents and community members should be able to access information about their local school district’s implementation progress and what to expect as changes occur. The state and the district should not only provide the information to the public but also analyze whether parents understand the new expectations. Merely providing the information on paper will not ensure that all stakeholders understand the changes; some may require oral communication and guidance to better understand the changes. For example, if the new standards will change high school graduation requirements, both parents and students will need to know as soon as the changes are implemented, not when students reach senior year.

How will schools be held accountable if students are not meeting these standards? Parents and community stakeholders will want to know how to hold their school accountable if it is not properly implementing CCSS. If students within a school or district are not meeting the new state standards, state leaders will need to consider remedies and interventions, such as monitoring the progress of current efforts or providing professional development at the district or school level. The state should also provide the proper supports at the school and district level that students need to meet the new standards.

What type of information should parents expect from their school, administrators, and teachers during the implementation process? What will principals and teachers do differently when the standards are in place? The state should provide guidance to local school districts on the information given to parents and community members. This guidance includes information on what the school, including teachers and principals, is doing around CCSS implementation, including a timetable for changes and what parents should expect from their schools so that they can be involved in the process.

If the new standards are higher than current state standards, and a student is already in high school when the new standards are implemented, will that student be subject to a higher standard to graduate from high school? Parents want to know if students currently in high school will receive a “grace period” if graduation requirements change while their student is enrolled. States should help districts plan for what these changes will mean to current high school students and if additional supports will be necessary to help students reach proficiency in CCSS upon graduating. Some students will need a variety of supports, and districts should ensure that they are culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate for students.



“This document was developed from the public domain document: Raising the Bar: Implementing Common Core State Standards for Latino Student Success: An Implementation Guide – National Council of La Raza (NCLR).”