

# **Getting Ready for the Common Core**

**A Collaborative Project  
Between the  
Kentucky Association of School Superintendents  
and  
The Leadership and Learning Center**

The  
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## Getting Ready for the Common Core State Standards

A Compilation of Helpful Resources to Assist School Systems  
In Planning and Implementing the CCSS

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## Background of the Initiative

The CCSS, developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and education experts, **establish clear and consistent goals for learning** that will prepare our children for college and the workforce. The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) received feedback on the drafts from national organizations representing, but not limited to, teachers, postsecondary educators (including community college instructors), civil rights groups, English language learners, and students with disabilities.

The CCSS Initiative produced two sets of standards: **college and career readiness standards** were released for public comment in September 2009; **K-12 standards** were released for public comment in March 2010. The final standards were released June 2010. An advisory group provided advice and guidance on the initiative. Members of this group included experts from Achieve, Inc., ACT, the College Board, the National Association of State Boards of Education, and the State Higher Education Executive Officers.

**Source: *Rigorous Curriculum Design* (Ainsworth, 2010), Chapter 5:**

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a **state-led effort** coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers to ensure that U.S. students **receive a world-class education and the preparation necessary to succeed in the 21st century global marketplace.**

In 2009, governors and state commissioners of education from **48 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia** committed to developing a common core of state standards in **English language arts and mathematics for grades K–12** to prepare students for **college and careers**. This commitment also included the development of **literacy skills and understandings necessary for students in grades 6–12** to apply to their study of history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.

The resulting Common Core State Standards (CCSS):

- **align with college and work expectations;**
- **include rigorous content *and* application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills;**
- **represent evidence- and/or research-based decisions; and**
- **build upon strengths and lessons learned from current state standards.**

A significant feature of the CCSS is that they have been **internationally benchmarked to high-performing nations** in order to prepare students to be educationally and economically competitive in our global economy and society.

Finalized and released to the public in June 2010, these sets of standards define the knowledge and skills students should have to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses and in workforce training programs.

States are ***not required to adopt*** the Common Core State Standards. However, with Kentucky leading the way, 37 states have now voluntarily chosen to do so. States are being asked to adopt the Common Core State Standards in their entirety but **may add an *additional 15 percent*** from their existing English language arts and math state standards.

## Benefits

The Common Core State Standards do indeed represent a commendable body of work: thoughtfully and logically organized, comprehensive in scope, vertically aligned standards with increasing rigor from grade to grade, and articulately communicated to a wide audience. Of special significance are two sections in both the English language arts and mathematics documents that specifically address the need for English Language Learners and students with disabilities to receive *equal access* to these standards.

Other Key Benefits:

- College and career readiness for **ALL** students
- Excellent for mobile population
- Consistency of standards—preferable to 50 different state versions of standards
- Capacity for sharing resources within and across states
- Textbook publishers creating common sets of instruction and assessment resources for *all* states, not just the largest ones
- Allows states/districts/schools to connect CCSS to their own areas of focus: Response to Intervention, English Language Learners, cultural responsiveness, social justice, district/school themes, etc.
- Explicit horizontal and vertical “learning progressions” (Popham, 2007)
- Emphasis on interdisciplinary literacy

**Excerpted From “On the Road to Implementation,” *Achieve*, August 2010:**

The K–12 Common Core State Standards (CCSS) represent a major advance in standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts. They are **grounded in evidence** about what it takes for high school graduates to be **ready for college and careers** and **build on the finest state and international standards**. They also provide a **clear and focused progression of learning** from kindergarten to high school graduation that will give teachers, administrators, parents and students the information they need for student success.

In order to positively impact student achievement, standards—including the CCSS—**must be not just adopted but implemented**. Adopting the standards in a state represents the beginning, not the end, of the process, as the goal is to have content standards that actually impact what happens in the classroom.

## Challenges

This **rapid adoption** of the CCSS by so many states represents a historic shift away from the nation’s tradition of *state-determined* standards. This **will dramatically impact how**:

- Veteran educators *transition* from state standards to more rigorous standards;
- *Pre-service* and *new* educators at participating states are trained and certified;
- *Professional development* changes to increase educators’ content area expertise;
- Extensive standards-based work accomplished over years can be *merged* with CCSS;
- States will guide and direct districts to implement the CCSS within a *timeline*;
- Funding for the transition to CCSS will occur, especially *without* Race to the Top grant

Another significant challenge is **assessment**. Even though assessment development consortia are working to create national assessments aligned to the CCSS, states that adopt the new standards will have to continue administering their existing *state* assessments **until the 2014/15 school year**. Current state assessments **will not align as closely** with the national standards as do their current state standards. This will likely cause educators anxiety about a possible decline in students’ test results if their instruction and assessment focus shifts away from the state standards to the CCSS. However, the CCSS are **more rigorous** than most states’ current standards. By focusing on these “higher” standards, student performance on current state assessments may, in fact, improve.

**Excerpted from “On the Road to Implementation,” *Achieve*, August 2010:**

The Common Core State Standards offer an **unprecedented opportunity** for states across the nation to **improve upon their education policies and practices**, and **achieve system-wide reform**. This will not be easy. States and districts and key stakeholders will need to think carefully about what it will take for the Common Core State Standards to become fully operationalized in every classroom, every year, from kindergarten to high school graduation, and make serious decisions about their **budget, curriculum, assessments, graduation requirements, accountability systems, instructional resources** and more.

## Prioritization of Standards Still Needed

In 2008, Sir Michael Barber, onetime chief advisor to former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, stated, “The question of national standards is inescapable. The U.S. needs *fewer, clearer, and higher* national standards” (Klein, A. 2008, September 24. “Groups seek to keep a spotlight on issues of testing, standards.” *Education Week*, p. 24).

If *fewer* equates to “less than what we have now,” if *clearer* is synonymous with “specific,” and if *higher* signifies “rigorous,” then the Common Core State Standards should make it easier for U.S. educators to adequately teach, assess, re-teach, and reassess *all* of the standards within an academic school year. Yet a **simple counting** of the numbers of grade-level English language arts CCSS shows that the **totals** at each grade level are **still considerable, particularly in English language arts**. If an individual state decides to also include the **additional 15 percent** of their existing state standards, the number of standards per grade level will **increase further**.

Prioritization of the CCSS is very much needed. Douglas B. Reeves, founder of the Leadership and Learning Center, writes: “The quantity of standards that teachers have to cope with in the Common Core **remains too high**—Mike Schmoker, in his new book *Focus*, estimates that schools using the Common Core Standards will only be able to effectively teach *half of them*. The Center’s time-tested Power Standards process is the best way to help teachers and leaders focus on the standards that are most important for student learning. Therefore, *Power Standards are more relevant now than ever*.”

## Organization of K–12 English Language Arts

The English language arts core standards are organized by **individual grades** in kindergarten through grade 8 and by **grade bands** for grades 9–10 and 11–12. Classified according to the familiar language arts strands of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language development, each strand presents College and Career Readiness (CCR) **anchor standards (broad statements)** along with **grade-specific standards** (additional specificity) that together define the knowledge and skills that students must know and be able to demonstrate by the end of each grade. The reading standards are organized by the sub-strands of literature, informational text, and foundational skills (K–5 only).

Three English Language Arts Appendices provide important supporting information.

- Appendix A: Research Supporting Key Elements of the Standards
- Appendix B: Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Tasks
- Appendix C: Samples of Student Writing

# English Language Arts Coding of CCSS

The College and Career Readiness (**CCR**) **standards**, which **anchor the standards** for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, define **general, cross-disciplinary literacy expectations** that must be met for students to be prepared and ready to succeed upon entering college and workforce training programs. Each broad **CCR anchor standard** has an **accompanying grade-specific standard**, which provides grade-appropriate end-of-year expectations.

## CCR Anchor Standards for Reading

- Key Idea and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
- Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

## CCR Anchor Standards for Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Production and Distribution of Writing
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge
- Range of Writing

## CCR Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening

- Comprehension and Collaboration
- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

## CCR Anchor Standards for Language

- Conventions of Standard English
- Knowledge of Language
- Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

The Standards for **English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects** comprise **three main sections**: a comprehensive **K–5** section and two content area-specific sections for **Grades 6–12**, one for English language arts, and one for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. **Each section is divided into strands.** K–5 and 6–12 have Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language strands. The 6–12 history/social studies, science, and technical subjects section focuses on the Reading and Writing strands.

Here is the specific coding of the strands by grades, K–5 and 6–12:

K–5 and 6–12 Strands:

### Reading

- RL—Reading Standards for Literature
- RI—Reading Standards for Informational Text
- RF—Foundational Skills Standards (Grades K-5)
- W—Writing Standards
- SL—Speaking and Listening Standards
- L—Language Standards

6–12 Strands:

### Reading

- RH—Reading for Literacy in History/Social Studies
- RST—Reading for Literacy in Science and Technical Subjects

### Writing

- WHST—Writing for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Source: [www.corestandards.org/](http://www.corestandards.org/)

## Key Takeaways from the K–12 CCSS in English Language Arts

### Reading

The standards establish a “**staircase**” of **increasing complexity** in what students must be able to read so that all students are ready for the demands of college and career level reading no later than the end of high school. The standards also require the **progressive development of reading comprehension** so that students advancing through the grades are able to gain more from whatever they read.

Through reading a **diverse array of classic and contemporary literature** as well as **challenging informational texts in a range of subjects**, students are expected to build knowledge, gain insights, explore possibilities, and broaden their perspective. Because the standards are **building blocks** for successful classrooms, but recognize that teachers, school districts and states need to decide on appropriate curriculum, they **intentionally do not offer a reading list**. Instead, they offer **numerous sample texts** to help teachers prepare for the school year and allow parents and students to know what to expect at the beginning of the year.

The standards **mandate certain critical types of content** for all students, including classic myths and stories from around the world, foundational U.S. documents, seminal works of



American literature, and the writings of Shakespeare. The standards appropriately **defer the many remaining decisions** about what and how to teach to states, districts, and schools.

## Writing

The ability to write logical arguments based on substantive claims, sound reasoning, and relevant evidence is a **cornerstone** of the writing standards, with opinion writing—a basic form of argument—extending down into the earliest grades.

**Research**—both short, focused projects (such as those commonly required in the workplace) and longer-term, in-depth research—is emphasized throughout the standards but most prominently in the writing strand, since a written analysis and presentation of findings is so often critical.

**Annotated samples of student writing** accompany the standards and help establish adequate performance levels in writing arguments, informational/explanatory texts, and narratives in the various grades.

## Speaking and Listening

The standards require that students gain, evaluate, and present **increasingly complex** information, ideas, and evidence through listening and speaking *as well as through media*.

An important focus of the speaking and listening standards is **academic discussion** in one on one, small group, and whole class settings. **Formal presentations** are one important way such talk occurs, but so is the more **informal discussion** that takes place as students collaborate to answer questions, build understanding, and solve problems.

## Language

The standards expect that students will **grow their vocabularies through a mix** of conversations, direct instruction, and reading. The standards will help students determine word meanings, appreciate the nuances of words, and steadily expand their repertoire of words and phrases.

The standards help prepare students for real life experience at college and in 21st century careers. The standards recognize that students must be able to **use formal English** in their writing and speaking but that they must also be able to **make informed, skillful choices** among the many ways to express themselves through language.

**Vocabulary and conventions** are treated in their own strand not because skills in these areas should be handled in isolation but because their use extends across reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

## Media and Technology

Just as media and technology are integrated in school and life in the 21st century, **skills related to media use** (both critical analysis and production of media) are integrated throughout the standards.

Sources: [www.corestandards.org/](http://www.corestandards.org/) and [www.achieve.org/](http://www.achieve.org/)

## Organization of K–12 Mathematics

For years, studies of mathematics education comparing the United States to other high-performing countries have led to the conclusion that the mathematics curriculum in the United States needs to be much more focused if the country is to ever see a real improvement in student achievement. Yet it is important to acknowledge that **fewer standards written as broad, general statements are not synonymous with *focused* standards**. The CCSS in mathematics aim for **clarity and specificity**.

The **K–5 math standards** provide students with a solid foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, and decimals so that students can do hands-on learning in geometry, algebra, probability, and statistics. The **middle school standards** are “robust” and designed to prepare students for algebra in grade 8 and for high school mathematics. The **high school standards** emphasize conceptual themes and application of mathematical ways of thinking to real-world issues and challenges; they prepare students to think and reason mathematically in both college and career.

The **Standards for Mathematical *Content*** balance and blend conceptual understanding with procedural understanding. Students who lack conceptual understanding of a math topic typically over-rely on procedures. Without a strong knowledge base of mathematical understanding from which to begin, students are less likely to apply math to practical situations, think and reason mathematically, use technology as a tool to expedite their work, explain their thinking, and reflect on their process.

The **Standards for Mathematical *Practice*** describe ways in which students engage with the mathematical content throughout their elementary, middle, and high school years. These eight standards, applicable to every math domain, are: (1) Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them. (2) Reason abstractly and quantitatively. (3) Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others. (4) Model with mathematics. (5) Use appropriate tools strategically. (6) Attend to precision. (7) Look for and make use of structure. (8) Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

The Common Core State Standards in math are **potential “points of intersection”** between the Standards for Mathematical Content and the Standards for Mathematical Practice.

Included with the organization of the mathematics standards is Appendix A: Designing High School Mathematics Courses based on the Common Core State Standards.

Sources: [www.corestandards.org/](http://www.corestandards.org/) and [www.achieve.org/](http://www.achieve.org/)

# Mathematics Coding of CCSS

**Standards for Mathematical Practice** are present throughout the K–12 document and describe **varieties of expertise** that mathematics educators of all levels should seek to develop in their students. Standards for Mathematical Practice describe ways in which developing student practitioners of mathematics increasingly ought to engage with the subject matter as they **grow in mathematical maturity and expertise** throughout the elementary, middle, and high school years.

The Standards for Mathematical Practice are based on the **NCTM Process Standards** and the **strands of mathematical proficiency** specified in the National Research Council’s report, “Adding it Up” (CCSS Mathematics, pages 6–8).

## K–12 Standards for Mathematical Practice

- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
- Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
- Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
- Model with mathematics.
- Use appropriate tools strategically.
- Attend to precision.
- Look for and make use of structure.
- Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

**Standards for Mathematical Content** include: **concepts** (what students need to understand) and **skills** (what students need to know and be able to do). These Standards aim for clarity and specificity. **K–8** grade-by-grade standards are **organized by domain** and **9–12** high school band standards are organized by **conceptual categories**.

## K–5 Domains

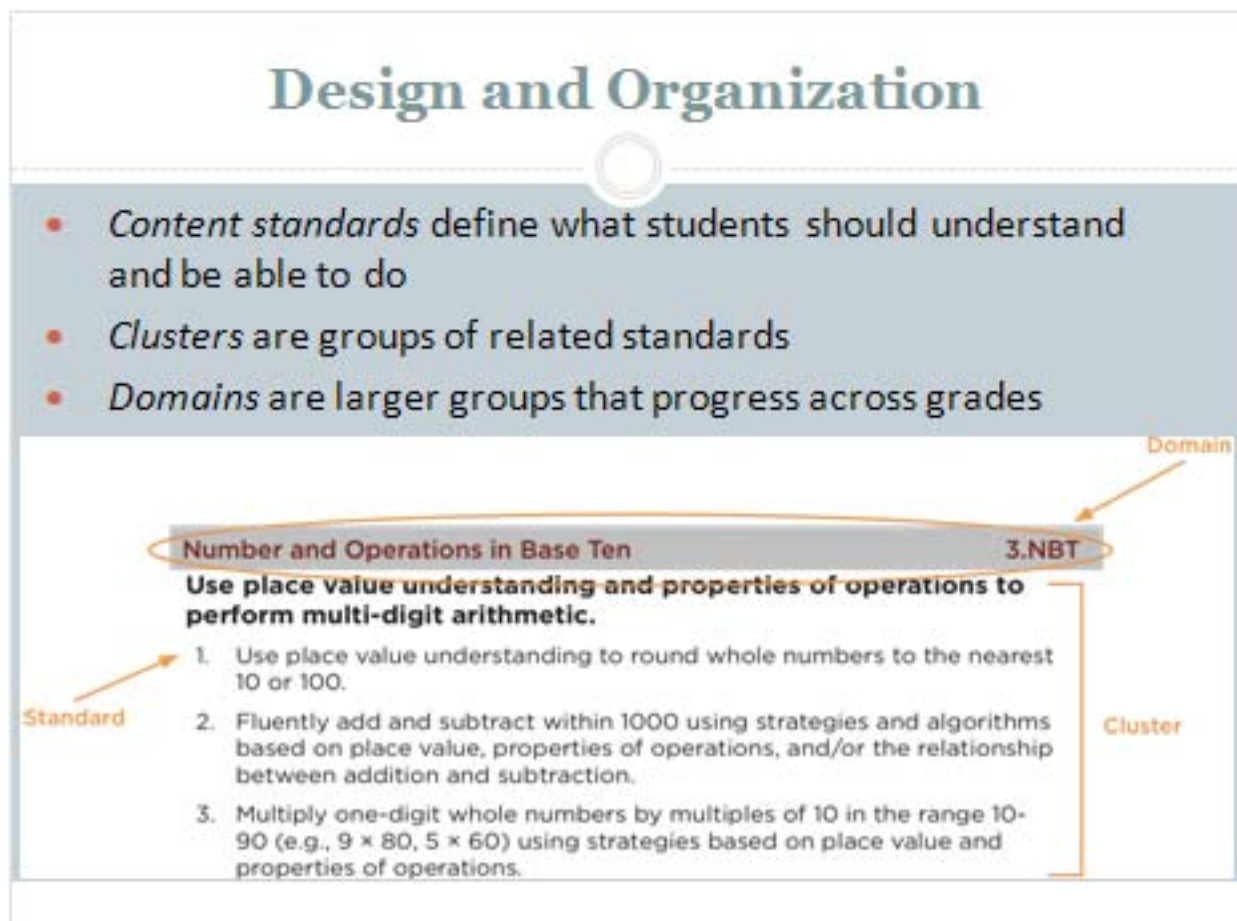
- CC = Counting and Cardinality
- OA = Operations and Algebraic Thinking
- NBT = Number Operations in Base Ten
- NF = Number and Operations – Fractions
- MD = Measurement and Data
- G = Geometry

## 6–8 Domains

- RP = Ratios and Proportional Relationships
- NS = The Number system
- EE = Expressions and Equations
- F = Functions
- G = Geometry
- SP = Statistics and Probability

## 9–12 Conceptual Categories

- N = Number and Quantity
- A = Algebra
- F = Functions
- M = Modeling (Modeling standards appear throughout the high school standards rather than in one set.)
- G = Geometry
- SP = Statistics and Probability



## Key Takeaways from the K–12 CCSS in Mathematics

The K–5 standards provide students with a *solid foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions and decimals*—which help young students build the foundation to successfully apply more demanding math concepts and procedures and move into applications.

In **kindergarten**, the standards follow successful international models and recommendations from the National Research Council’s Early Math Panel report, by focusing kindergarten work on the *number core*: learning how numbers correspond to quantities, and learning how to put numbers together and take them apart (the beginnings of addition and subtraction).

The **K–5 standards** build on the best state standards to provide **detailed guidance to teachers** on how to navigate their way through knotty topics such as *fractions, negative numbers, and geometry*, and do so by maintaining a **continuous progression from grade to grade**.

The standards stress not only **procedural skill** but also **conceptual understanding**, to make sure students are learning and absorbing the critical information they need to succeed at higher levels—rather than the current practices by which many students learn enough to get by on the next test, but forget it shortly thereafter, only to review again the following year.

Having built a strong foundation **K–5**, students can do *hands-on learning* in geometry, algebra and probability and statistics. Students who have completed seventh grade and mastered the content and skills through the seventh grade will be *well prepared for algebra in grade 8*.

The **middle school standards** are robust and provide a **coherent and rich preparation for high school mathematics**.

The **high school standards** call on students to *practice applying mathematical ways of thinking to real world issues and challenges*; they prepare students to think and reason mathematically.

The **high school standards** set a *rigorous definition of college and career readiness*, by helping students develop a depth of understanding and ability to **apply mathematics to novel situations**, as college students and employees regularly do.

The **high school standards emphasize mathematical modeling**, the use of mathematics and statistics to analyze empirical situations, understand them better, and improve decisions. For example, the draft standards stated: “Modeling links classroom mathematics and statistics to everyday life, work, and decision making. It is the process of **choosing and using appropriate mathematics and statistics** to analyze empirical situations, to understand them better, and to improve decisions. Quantities and their relationships in physical, economic, public policy, social and everyday situations can be modeled using mathematical and statistical methods. When making mathematical models, **technology** is valuable for varying assumptions, exploring consequences, and comparing predictions with data.”

Source: [www.corestandards.org/](http://www.corestandards.org/)

# Common Core State Standards for English Language Learners

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers strongly believe that **all students should be held to the same high expectations** outlined in the Common Core State Standards. This includes students who are English language learners (ELLs). However, these students may require **additional time, appropriate instructional support, and aligned assessments** as they acquire both English language proficiency and content area knowledge.

ELLs are a heterogeneous group with differences in ethnic background, first language, socioeconomic status, quality of prior schooling, and levels of English language proficiency. Effectively educating these students **requires diagnosing each student instructionally, adjusting instruction accordingly, and closely monitoring student progress**. For example, ELLs who are literate in a first language that shares cognates with English can apply first-language vocabulary knowledge when reading in English; likewise ELLs with high levels of schooling can often bring to bear conceptual knowledge developed in their first language when reading in English. However, ELLs with **limited or interrupted schooling** will need to acquire background knowledge prerequisite to educational tasks at hand. Additionally, the development of native-like proficiency in English **takes many years** and will not be achieved by all ELLs, especially if they start schooling in the U.S. in the later grades. Teachers should recognize that it is possible to achieve the standards for reading and literature, writing and research, language development, and speaking and listening without manifesting native-like control of conventions and vocabulary.

## English Language Arts

The Common Core State Standards for English language arts (ELA) articulate rigorous grade-level expectations in the areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing to prepare all students to be college and career ready, including English language learners. Second-language learners also will benefit from instruction about **how to negotiate situations outside of those settings** so they are able to participate on equal footing with native speakers in all aspects of social, economic, and civic endeavors.

ELLs bring with them many resources that enhance their education and can serve as resources for schools and society. Many ELLs have first language and literacy knowledge and skills that boost their acquisition of language and literacy in a second language; additionally, they bring an array of talents and cultural practices and perspectives that enrich our schools and society. Teachers must build on this enormous reservoir of talent and provide those students who need it with additional time and appropriate instructional support. This includes **language proficiency standards** that teachers can use **in conjunction with the ELA standards** to assist ELLs in becoming proficient and literate in English.

To help ELLs meet high academic standards in language arts it is **essential** that they have access to:

- Teachers and personnel at the school and district levels who are **well prepared and qualified** to support ELLs while taking advantage of the many strengths and skills they bring to the classroom;
- **Literacy-rich school environments** where students are immersed in a variety of language experiences;
- **Instruction** that develops foundational skills in English and enables ELLs to participate fully in **grade-level coursework**;
- **Coursework that prepares** ELLs for postsecondary education or the workplace, yet is made comprehensible for students learning content in a second language (through specific pedagogical techniques and additional resources);
- **Opportunities for classroom discourse and interaction** that are well-designed to enable ELLs to develop communicative strengths in language arts;
- **Ongoing assessment and feedback** to guide learning; and
- Speakers of English who know the language well enough to provide ELLs with **models and support**.

## Mathematics

ELLs are capable of participating in mathematical discussions as they learn English. Mathematics instruction for ELL students should draw on multiple resources and models available in classrooms—such as **objects, drawings, inscriptions, and gestures**—as well as home languages and mathematical experiences outside of school. Mathematics instruction for ELLs should address **mathematical discourse and academic language**. This instruction involves much more than vocabulary lessons. Language is a resource for learning mathematics; it is not only a tool for communicating, but also a tool for thinking and reasoning mathematically. All languages and language varieties (e.g., different dialects, home or everyday ways of talking, vernacular, slang) provide resources for mathematical thinking, reasoning, and communicating.

**Regular and active participation** in the classroom—not only reading and listening but also discussing, explaining, writing, representing, and presenting—is **critical to the success** of ELLs in mathematics. Research has shown that ELLs can produce explanations, presentations, etc., and participate in classroom discussions *as they are learning English*. ELLs, like English-speaking students, require regular access to teaching practices that are most effective for improving student achievement. Mathematical tasks should be kept at **high cognitive demand**; teachers and students should attend explicitly to concepts; and students should **wrestle with important mathematics**.

Overall, **research** suggests that:

- **Language switching** can be swift, highly automatic, and facilitate rather than inhibit solving word problems in the second language, as long as the student's language proficiency is sufficient for understanding the text of the word problem;

- Instruction should ensure that students **understand the text of word problems before** they attempt to solve them;
- Instruction should include a **focus** on “mathematical discourse” and “academic language” because these are important for ELLs. Although it is critical that students who are learning English have opportunities to communicate mathematically, this is not primarily a matter of learning vocabulary. Students learn to participate in mathematical reasoning, not by learning vocabulary, but by **making conjectures, presenting explanations, and/or constructing arguments**; and
- While vocabulary instruction is important, it is **not sufficient** for supporting mathematical communication. Furthermore, vocabulary drill and practice are **not the most effective** instructional practices for learning vocabulary. Research has demonstrated that **vocabulary learning occurs most successfully** through instructional environments that are **language-rich, actively involve** students in using language, require that students both understand spoken or written words and also express that understanding orally and in writing, and require students to **use words in multiple ways** over extended periods of time. To develop written and oral communication skills, students need to participate in negotiating meaning for mathematical situations and in mathematical practices that **require output** from students.

Source: [www.corestandards.org/](http://www.corestandards.org/)

## Application for Students with Disabilities

The Common Core State Standards articulate rigorous grade-level expectations in the areas of mathematics and English language arts. These standards identify the knowledge and skills students need in order to be successful in college and careers

Students with disabilities—students eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—**must be challenged to excel within the general curriculum** and be prepared for success in their post-school lives, including college and/or careers. These common standards provide an historic opportunity to improve access to rigorous academic content standards for students with disabilities. The continued development of understanding about research-based instructional practices and a focus on their effective implementation will help improve access to mathematics and English language arts (ELA) standards for all students, including those with disabilities.

Students with disabilities are a heterogeneous group with **one common characteristic: the presence of disabling conditions that significantly hinder their abilities to benefit from general education** (IDEA 34 CFR §300.39, 2004). Therefore, *how* these high standards are taught and assessed is of the **utmost importance** in reaching this diverse group of students.

In order for students with disabilities to meet high academic standards and to fully demonstrate their conceptual and procedural knowledge and skills in mathematics, reading, writing, speaking and listening (English language arts), their **instruction must incorporate supports and accommodations**, including:



- Supports and related services **designed to meet the unique needs of these students** and to enable their access to the general education curriculum (IDEA 34 CFR §300.34, 2004).
- An **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**<sup>1</sup> which includes annual goals aligned with and chosen to facilitate their attainment of grade-level academic standards.
- Teachers and specialized instructional support personnel who are prepared and qualified to deliver **high-quality, evidence-based, individualized instruction** and support services.

Promoting a culture of high expectations for all students is a fundamental goal of the Common Core State Standards. In order to participate with success in the general curriculum, students with disabilities, as appropriate, may be provided **additional supports and services**, such as:

- **Instructional supports for learning**—based on the principles of **Universal Design for Learning**;
- **(UDL)**<sup>2</sup>—which foster student engagement by **presenting information in multiple ways** and allowing for **diverse avenues of action and expression**.
- Instructional **accommodations** (Thompson, Morse, Sharpe & Hall, 2005)—changes in materials or procedures—which do **not change the standards** but allow students to learn within the framework of the Common Core.
- **Assistive technology devices and services** to ensure access to the general education curriculum and the Common Core State Standards.

Some students with the **most significant cognitive disabilities** will require **substantial supports and accommodations** to have meaningful access to certain standards in both instruction and assessment, based on their communication and academic needs. These supports and accommodations should ensure that students receive **access to multiple means of learning** and opportunities to demonstrate knowledge, but **retain the rigor and high expectations** of the Common Core State Standards.

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<sup>1</sup> According to IDEA, an IEP includes appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the individual achievement and functional performance of a child

<sup>2</sup> UDL is defined as “a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that (a) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and (b) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient.” by Higher Education Opportunity Act (PL 110-135)

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Source: [www.corestandards.org/](http://www.corestandards.org/)

## Aligning Assessments to CCSS

From “On the Road to Implementation,” *Achieve*, August 2010, pages 8-9:

The goal of the Common Core State Standards Initiative is that states have a **progression of K–12 standards** in place that ensure students have the knowledge and skills in mathematics and English Language Arts they need to graduate from high school ready for college and careers. Just as states will need to **modify or create new curriculum frameworks** and instructional materials to **match** the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), states will also need to **significantly alter their assessments to ensure alignment with the CCSS**.

Assessments play a critical role in state education systems, providing consistent measures of whether or not students are meeting or exceeding the state’s academic standards. A coherent **assessment system anchored in college- and career-ready expectations** will include a combination of measures designed to meet the following goals:

- Effectively measure the depth and breadth of the CCSS;
- Inform and improve the quality and consistency of instruction;
- Indicate whether or not students are reaching mileposts that signify readiness; and
- Hold educators and schools accountable for improving student performance and readying students for postsecondary education and careers.

The release of the CCSS offers a unique opportunity for states to take a hard look at their current assessment systems and make the design- and policy-based decisions necessary to **move to next-generation assessment systems**. As states begin to implement the CCSS, they have the opportunity to strengthen and significantly improve their assessment systems. **Assessments given in grades 3–8 and high school should be designed to indicate whether students are on track to graduate ready for college and careers**. And all assessments should do a better job measuring the **more sophisticated knowledge and skills** called for in the CCSS than is possible with most current assessments.

There are a number of important ways state assessment systems will need to evolve to measure the CCSS. **States will need to:**

- Refocus their assessments to measure the essential knowledge and skills targeted by the CCSS;
- Improve the quality and types of items included in on-demand tests to create more cognitively challenging tasks that measure higher-order thinking and analytic skills, such as reasoning and problem solving;
- Move beyond a single, end-of-year test to open the door for performance measures and extended tasks that do a better job of measuring important college- and career-ready skills and model exemplary forms of classroom instruction; and
- With their higher education communities, establish a college- and career-ready “anchor” assessment given to all students near the end of high school to signal whether students are

ready for college and careers. Anchoring the system in college and career readiness ensures that tests given in lower grade levels are vertically aligned to the high school assessments so they signal whether students are on pace.

## The Promise of Common Assessments

While states that adopt the Common Core State Standards will need to evolve their assessment systems, they **will not need to do it alone**. In keeping with the spirit of **multi-state collaboration** that fueled the creation of the common core, states now have the opportunity to work together to develop a **shared assessment system** to measure student learning against the CCSS. Through the Race to the Top grant competition, the U.S. Department of Education has allotted \$350 million in federal funds to state consortia for the development of **common assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards**.

Three consortia of states have formed to apply for the assessment funds. The *Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers* (PARCC) is a group of 26 states committed to building a next-generation assessment system for grades 3 through high school. The system will be anchored by college- and career-ready tests in high school, and will include a **combination of end-of-year assessments and “through-course” assessments** administered throughout the school year. In addition, the system will include optional formative tests, starting in kindergarten. The system will also be completely computer based. Achieve is coordinating the work of PARCC. The *Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium* (SBAC) is a group of 31 states that proposes developing adaptive, online tests including required summative exams, combined with performance tasks given through the year, and optional formative exams. Finally, the *State Consortium on Board Examinations Systems* is the only consortium to apply for the \$30 million Race to the Top High School Course Assessment Program, and plans to use a competitive process to select at least three board examination systems that include courses in the core subjects aligned to the CCSS, to be administered at the end of 10th grade.

## The Benefits Of Common Assessments

Multistate consortia:

- Provide a **common and consistent measure** of student performance across states, which will allow states to **compare performance on a common metric**;
- Offer an opportunity for states to **pool financial and intellectual resources** to develop better assessments while reducing the cost to each state;
- Allow states to move collectively to next-generation assessment systems by **leveraging innovations in research and technology** that are harder for individual states to achieve on their own; and
- Provide **opportunities for cross-state collaboration in other critical areas**, including the development of curriculum materials, formative assessments, instructional tools and teacher professional development.

## Transitioning to Next-Generation Assessments

Implementation of the CCSS and the transition to next-generation assessments will have **significant implications** for states. Ultimately, states will need to **map out a detailed transition and phase-in strategy and timeline** that identifies the key milestones for “sunsetting” their current state assessments and ramping up administration of the next-generation assessments. This multifaceted plan should address a host of critical issues that states and districts will need to attend to.

It is important to note that even if states plan to move to common assessments, a number of these changes could be **incorporated into their current assessment systems** now before any **common assessments come online in 2014/15**.

## CCSS PowerPoints and Webinars

The following PowerPoints and webinars will assist leaders in communicating essential information about the CCSS to their school districts. The presentations can be shown in their entirety or excerpted for specific informational needs. These PowerPoints are in the public domain, having been created by organizations for the express purpose of informing leaders, teachers, boards of education, policy makers, parents, and others about this initiative.

**“Common Core State Standards Initiative,”** produced by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), June 2010. Go to the website homepage, [www.corestandards.org/](http://www.corestandards.org/) and click on the links, “Download the Presentation” and “Watch the Webinar,” recorded June 30, 2010.

**“Understanding the Common Core State Standards,”** produced by Achieve, June 2010. Go to the Achieve website homepage, [www.achieve.org/](http://www.achieve.org/) and click on the blue link in the right side navigation bar, “Achieving the Common Core.” Scroll down to the PowerPoint.

**“Getting Ready for the Common Core State Standards,”** a webinar presented by Douglas B. Reeves, The Leadership and Learning Center, 9/20/10. Go to the Center’s homepage, [www.leadandlearn.com](http://www.leadandlearn.com) and click on the link, “Webinar Archive.” Scroll down to the September, 2010, listing of this webinar title which addresses:

- What Resources are Available to Support Implementation of the Common Core
- Learning from the Past: Mistakes to Avoid when Implementing Standards
- Addressing Practical Classroom Issues: Second Language and Learning Disabled Students
- Dealing With Time Pressures for Teachers
- Classroom Assessment—Fewer Assessments, More Feedback

# Key Points About the CCSS

## The Standards

- In the past, we have had different academic standards in every state, and too many states' standards have not prepared students for college or careers.
- The Common Core State Standards will provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so that teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them.
- Consistent standards will provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live, and allow states to more effectively help all students succeed.
- With students, parents, and teachers all on the same page and working together for shared goals, we can ensure that students make progress each year and graduate from school prepared to succeed and build a strong future for themselves and the country.
- The Common Core State Standards are designed to be relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in both college and work.
- When American students have the skills and knowledge needed in today's jobs, our communities will be positioned to compete successfully in the global economy.
- The best understanding of what works in education comes from practice and experience. That's why the standards are being developed by the states—not the federal government—and they incorporate the best and highest of the current state standards.
- The best understanding of what works in the classroom comes from the teachers who are in them. 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.

## The Process

- To write the standards, the NGA Center and CCSSO brought together content experts, teachers, researchers and others.
- The standards have been divided into two categories:
  - College- and career-ready graduation standards, which address what students are expected to have learned when they graduate from high school; and
  - K–12 standards, which address expectations for elementary through high school.
- The draft college- and career-ready graduation standards were released for public comment in September 2009.
- The draft K–12 standards were released for public comment in March 2010.

- The NGA Center and CCSSO received nearly 10,000 comments from the public on the standards and experts have worked to incorporate that feedback for the final release.
- Next, the NGA Center and CCSSO worked with experts to ensure that the K–12 standards are aligned with the college- and career-ready standards.
- Finally, a validation committee of experts reviewed the standards and determined that they will prepare students for college and career.
- From there, each state that chooses to adopt will follow the process that their individual state uses to determine their educational standards.

## Mathematics

- The standards stress not only procedural skills, but also conceptual understanding, to make sure students are learning and absorbing the critical information they need to succeed at higher levels—rather than the current practices by which many students learn enough to get by on the next test, but forget it shortly thereafter, only to review again the following year.
- The K–5 standards provide students with a solid foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions and decimals—which help young students build the foundation to successfully apply more demanding math concepts and procedures, and move into applications.
- In kindergarten, the standards follow successful international models and recommendations from the National Research Council’s Early Math Panel report, by focusing kindergarten work on the number core: learning how numbers correspond to quantities, and learning how to put numbers together and take them apart (the beginnings of addition and subtraction).
- The K–5 standards build on the best state standards to provide detailed guidance to teachers on how to navigate their way through knotty topics such as fractions, negative numbers, and geometry, and do so by maintaining a continuous progression from grade to grade.
- Having built a strong foundation K–5, students can do hands-on learning in geometry, algebra, and probability and statistics. Students who have completed seventh grade and mastered the content and skills through the seventh grade will be well-prepared for algebra in grade 8.
- The middle school standards are robust and provide a coherent and rich preparation for high school mathematics.
- The high school standards call on students to practice applying mathematical ways of thinking to real world issues and challenges; they prepare students to think and reason mathematically.
- The high school standards set a rigorous definition of college and career readiness, by helping students develop a depth of understanding and ability to apply mathematics to novel situations, as college students and employees regularly do.

- The high school standards emphasize mathematical modeling, the use of mathematics and statistics to analyze empirical situations, understand them better, and improve decisions.



## English Language Arts

### Reading

- The standards establish a staircase of increasing complexity in what students must be able to read so that all students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading no later than the end of high school. The standards also require the progressive development of reading comprehension so that students advancing through the grades are able to gain more from whatever they read.
- Through reading a diverse array of classic and contemporary literature as well as challenging informational texts in a range of subjects, students are expected to build knowledge, gain insights, explore possibilities, and broaden their perspective. Because the standards are building blocks for successful classrooms, but recognize that teachers, school districts, and states need to decide on appropriate curriculum, they intentionally do not offer a required reading list. Instead, they offer numerous sample texts to help teachers prepare for the school year and allow parents and students to know what to expect at the beginning of the year.
- The standards mandate certain critical types of content for all students, including classic myths and stories from around the world, foundational U.S. documents, and seminal works of literature. The standards appropriately defer the many remaining decisions about what and how to teach to states, districts, and schools.

### Writing

- The ability to write logical arguments based on substantive claims, sound reasoning, and relevant evidence is a cornerstone of the writing standards, with opinion writing—a basic form of argument—extending down into the earliest grades.
- Student research—both short, focused projects (such as those commonly required in the workplace) and longer term in-depth research is emphasized throughout the standards but most prominently in the writing strand since a written analysis and presentation of findings is so often critical.
- Annotated samples of student writing accompany the standards and help establish adequate performance levels in writing arguments, informational/explanatory texts, and narratives in the various grades.

### Speaking and Listening

- The standards require that students gain, evaluate, and present increasingly complex information, ideas, and evidence through listening and speaking as well as through media.
- An important focus of the speaking and listening standards is academic discussion in one-on-one, small-group, and whole-class settings. Formal presentations are one important way such talk occurs, but so is the more informal discussion that takes place as students collaborate to answer questions, build understanding, and solve problems.

## Language

- The standards expect that students will grow their vocabularies through a mix of conversations, direct instruction, and reading. The standards will help students determine word meanings, appreciate the nuances of words, and steadily expand their repertoire of words and phrases.
- The standards help prepare students for real-life experience at college and in 21st century careers. The standards recognize that students must be able to use formal English in their writing and speaking but that they must also be able to make informed, skillful choices among the many ways to express themselves through language.
- Vocabulary and conventions are treated in their own strand not because skills in these areas should be handled in isolation, but because their use extends across reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

## Media and Technology

- Just as media and technology are integrated in school and life in the 21st century, skills related to media use (both critical analysis and production of media) are integrated throughout the standards.

## Post-Adoption Implementation

- The federal government has had no role in the development of the Common Core State Standards; however, they will have an opportunity to support states as they begin adopting the standards. It is vital that this initiative remain state-led; to that end, the NGA Center and CCSSO are taking steps to support the implementation process.
- Specifically, the NGA Center and CCSSO are engaging in the following activities:
  - Developing a State Policymaker Guide to Implementation;
  - Convening organizations working on implementation to facilitate opportunities for collaboration;
  - Planning the future governance structure of the standards; and
  - Convening the publishing community to ensure that high-quality materials aligned with the standards are created.

## Assessment

- Like adoption of standards, the development of common assessments will be up to the states.
- Some states plan to come together voluntarily to develop a common assessment system, based on the Common Core State Standards.
- State-led consortia on assessment would be grounded in the following principles: allow for comparison across students, schools, districts, states, and nations; create economies of scale; provide information and support more effective teaching and learning; and prepare students for college and careers.

- The consortia on assessment are focused on developing richer, more authentic evaluations of student learning, not more assessments.
- The nation's governors and chief state school officers believe these new standards offer an unprecedented opportunity for states to work together to dramatically improve the quality, cost-effectiveness, and comparability of state assessments.
- CCSSO and the NGA Center are playing a key role in facilitating a series of conversations with leaders of the state consortia that already had formed to seek Race to the Top funds. We anticipate these discussions will continue on how best to come to an agreement on common action on this important issue.

## **Professional Development**

- Teachers know that effective professional development is essential to realize the promise of the standards.
- There are many groups actively engaged on this issue, and professional development has been an important part of the implementation.

## **Curricula**

- States that adopt the standards may choose to work together to develop instructional materials and curricula. As states join together to adopt the same common core, publishers of instructional materials and experienced educators will develop new resources around these shared standards.
- Working together will allow states the opportunity to share best thinking and practices as well as pool resources in their efforts to ensure that teachers have the tools they need to successfully implement these standards.
- The NGA Center and CCSSO convened internationally recognized experts to discuss the implications for curriculum and how our two organizations could best support districts and states.
- These are all part of a broader ongoing series of conversations that will enable the NGA Center and CCSSO to best support effective implementation of the Common Core.

## **How the Federal Government can Help with Post-Adoption Issues**

- Offer a range of tiered incentives, such as providing states with greater flexibility in the use of existing federal funds, support a revised state accountability structure, and offer financial support for states to implement the standards.
- Provide long-term financial support for the development and implementation of common assessments, teacher and principal professional development, and research to help continually improve the Common Core State Standards over time.
- Revise and align existing federal education laws with the lessons learned from the best of what works in states, other nations and from research.

**Source:** [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org), click on navigation bar at top of homepage, **About the Standards**

# Myths vs. Facts

## Content and Quality: General

**Myth:** *Adopting common standards will bring all states' standards down to the lowest common denominator, which means states with high standards, such as Massachusetts, will be taking a step backwards if they adopt the standards.*

**Fact:** The standards were designed to build upon the most advanced current thinking about preparing all students for success in college and careers. This will result in moving even the best state standards to the next level. In fact, since this work began, there has been an explicit agreement that no state would lower its standards. The standards are informed by the best in the country, the highest international standards, and evidence and expertise about educational outcomes. We need college- and career-ready standards because even in high-performing states students are graduating and passing all the required tests and still require remediation in their post-secondary work.

**Myth:** *The standards are not internationally benchmarked.*

**Fact:** International benchmarking played a significant role in both sets of standards. In fact, the college and career readiness standards include an appendix listing the evidence that was consulted in drafting the standards and the international data consulted in the benchmarking process.

**Myth:** *The standards only include skills and do not address the importance of content knowledge.*

**Fact:** The standards recognize that both content and skills are important. In English-language arts, the standards require certain critical content for all students, including: classic myths and stories from around the world, America's Founding Documents, foundational American literature, and Shakespeare. Appropriately, the remaining crucial decisions about what content should be taught are left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

In mathematics, the standards lay a solid foundation in whole numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, and decimals. Taken together, these elements support a student's ability to learn and apply more demanding math concepts and procedures. The middle school and high school standards call on students to practice applying mathematical ways of thinking to real world issues and challenges; they prepare students to think and reason mathematically. The standards set a rigorous definition of college and career readiness, not by piling topic upon topic, but by demanding that students develop a depth of understanding and ability to apply mathematics to novel situations, as college students and employees regularly do.

## Content and Quality: Math

**Myth:** *The standards do not prepare or require students to learn algebra in the eighth grade, as many states' current standards do.*

**Fact:** The standards do accommodate and prepare students for Algebra 1 in eighth grade, by including the prerequisites for this course in grades K–7. Students who master the K–7 material will be able to take Algebra 1 in eighth grade. At the same time, grade 8 standards are also included; these include rigorous algebra and will transition students effectively into a full Algebra 1 course.

**Myth:** *Key math topics are missing or appear in the wrong grade.*

**Fact:** The mathematical progressions presented in the common core are coherent and based on evidence. Part of the problem with having 50 different sets of state standards is that today, different states cover different topics at different grade levels. Coming to consensus guarantees that from the viewpoint of any given state, topics will move up or down in the grade level sequence. This is unavoidable. What is important to keep in mind is that the progression in the Common Core State Standards is mathematically coherent and leads to college and career readiness at an internationally competitive level.

## Content and Quality: English Language Arts

**Myth:** *The standards suggest teaching *Grapes of Wrath* to second graders.*

**Fact:** The ELA Standards suggest *Grapes of Wrath* as a text that would be appropriate for ninth- or tenth-grade readers. Evidence shows that the complexity of texts students are reading today does not match what is demanded in college and the workplace, creating a gap between what high school students can do and what they need to be able to do. The Common Core State Standards create a staircase of increasing text complexity, so that students are expected to both develop their skills and apply them to more and more complex texts.

**Myth:** *The standards are just vague descriptions of skills; they don't include a reading list or any other similar reference to content.*

**Fact:** The standards do include sample texts that demonstrate the level of text complexity appropriate for the grade level and compatible with the learning demands set out in the standards. The exemplars of high quality texts at each grade level provide a rich set of possibilities and have been very well received. This provides teachers with the flexibility to make their own decisions about what texts to use—while providing an excellent reference point when selecting their texts.

**Myth:** *English teachers will be asked to teach science and social studies reading materials.*

**Fact:** With the Common Core ELA Standards, English teachers will still teach their students literature as well as literary nonfiction. However, because college and career readiness overwhelmingly focuses on complex texts outside of literature, these standards also ensure students are being prepared to read, write, and research across the curriculum, including in history and science. These goals can be achieved by ensuring that teachers in other disciplines are also focusing on reading and writing to build knowledge within their subject areas.

**Myth:** *The standards don't have enough emphasis on fiction/literature.*

**Fact:** The standards require certain critical content for all students, including: classic myths and stories from around the world, America's Founding Documents, foundational American literature, and Shakespeare. Appropriately, the remaining crucial decisions about what content should be taught are left to state and local determination. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

## Process

**Myth:** *No teachers were involved in writing the standards.*

**Fact:** The Common Core State Standards drafting process relied on teachers and standards experts from across the country. In addition, there were many state experts who came together to create a thoughtful and transparent process of standard setting. This was only made possible by many states working together.

**Myth:** *The standards are not based on research or evidence.*

**Fact:** The standards have made careful use of a large and growing body of evidence. The evidence base includes scholarly research; surveys on what skills are required of students entering college and workforce training programs; assessment data identifying college- and career-ready performance; and comparisons to standards from high-performing states and nations.

In English language arts, the standards build on the firm foundation of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) frameworks in Reading and Writing, which draw on extensive scholarly research and evidence.

In mathematics, the standards draw on conclusions from Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and other studies of high-performing countries that the traditional U.S. mathematics curriculum must become substantially more coherent and focused in order to improve student achievement, addressing the problem of a curriculum that is a mile wide and an inch deep.

## Implementation

**Myth:** *The standards tell teachers what to teach.*

**Fact:** 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.

**Myth:** *The standards will be implemented through No Child Left Behind (NCLB)—signifying the federal government will be leading them.*

**Fact:** The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort that is not part of NCLB and adoption of the standards is in no way mandatory. States began the work to create clear, consistent standards before the Recovery Act or the Elementary and Secondary Education Act blueprint were released because this work is being driven by the needs of the states, not the federal government.

The NGA Center and CCSSO are offering support by developing a State Policymaker Guide to Implementation, facilitating opportunities for collaboration among organizations working on

implementation, planning the future governance structure of the standards, and convening the publishing community to ensure that high quality materials aligned with the standards are created.

**Myth:** *These standards amount to a national curriculum for our schools.*

**Fact:** The standards are not a curriculum. They are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents, and others will decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms.

**Source:** [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org), click on navigation bar at top of homepage, About the Standards

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) from CCSS Organization

From the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), March 2, 2010

### General

#### ***What are educational standards?***

Educational standards help teachers ensure their students have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful by providing clear goals for student learning.

#### ***Why do we need educational standards?***

We need standards to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. Common standards will help ensure that students are receiving a high quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state. They will also provide a greater opportunity to share experiences and best practices within and across states that will improve our ability to best serve the needs of students.

Standards do not tell teachers how to teach, but they do help teachers figure out the knowledge and skills their students should have in order to build the best lessons and environments for their classrooms. Standards also help students and parents by setting clear and realistic goals for success. Standards are a first step—a key building block—in providing our young people with a high-quality education that will prepare them for success in college and work. Of course, standards are not the only thing that is needed for our children’s success, but they do provide an accessible roadmap for our teachers, parents, and students.

#### ***How are educational standards determined now?***

Each state has its own process for developing, adopting, and implementing standards. As a result, what students are expected to learn can vary widely from state to state.



### ***Is having common standards the first step toward nationalizing education?***

No. The Common Core State Standards are part of a state-led effort to give all students the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. The federal government was not involved in the development of the standards. Individual states choose whether or not to adopt these standards.

### ***What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative?***

The Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) is a state-led effort to establish a single set of clear educational standards for English-language arts and mathematics that states can share and voluntarily adopt. The standards have been informed by the best available evidence and the highest standards across the country and globe. They were designed by a diverse group of teachers, experts, parents, and school administrators, so they reflect both our aspirations for our children and the realities of the classroom. These standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to go to college or enter the workforce and that parents, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. The standards are benchmarked to international standards to guarantee that our students are competitive in the emerging global marketplace.

### ***Why is the Common Core State Standards Initiative important?***

We want to make sure that children across the country are given the tools they need to succeed. High standards that are consistent across states provide teachers, parents, and students with a set of clear expectations so that everyone can work toward together. This will ensure that all of our students are well prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to compete with not only their peers here at home, but also with students around the world, maintaining America's competitive edge. These standards are a commonsense first step toward ensuring our children are getting the best possible education no matter where they live.

Of course, standards cannot single-handedly improve the quality of our nation's education system, but they do give educators shared goals and expectations for their students. For example, the standards will enable participating states to work together to:

- Make expectations for students clear to parents, teachers, and the general public;
- Encourage the development of textbooks, digital media, and other teaching materials aligned to the standards;
- Develop and implement comprehensive assessment systems to measure student performance against the Common Core State Standards that will replace the existing testing systems that too often are inconsistent, burdensome and confusing; and
- Evaluate policy changes needed to help students and educators meet the standards.

### ***Who is leading the Common Core State Standards Initiative?***

Parents, teachers, school administrators, and experts from across the country together with state leaders, through their membership in the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center), have led the effort to develop a common core of state standards. In addition, CCSSO and the NGA Center have provided public comment periods for all stakeholders to submit feedback on the draft standards documents. Those comments were incorporated into the final standards.

### ***How will states adopt the Common Core State Standards?***

The process of state standards adoption depends on the laws of each state. Some states are adopting the standards through their state boards of education, while others are adopting them through their state legislatures.

### ***Will the Common Core State Standards keep local teachers from deciding what or how to teach?***

No. The Common Core State Standards are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents and others will decide how the standards are to be met. Teachers will continue to devise lesson plans and tailor instruction to the individual needs of the students in their classrooms. Local teachers, principals, superintendents, and school boards will continue to make decisions about curriculum and how their school systems are operated.

### ***Were teachers involved in the creation of the standards?***

Yes. Teachers have been a critical voice in the development of the standards. The National Education Association (NEA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), among other organizations have been instrumental in bringing together teachers to provide specific, constructive feedback on the standards.

### ***Does having common standards lead to “dumbing down” the standards across the board?***

Not at all. The Common Core State Standards have been built from the best and highest state standards in the country. They are evidence-based, aligned with college and work expectations, include rigorous content and skills, and are informed by other top performing countries. They were developed in consultation with teachers and parents from across the country so they are also realistic and practical for the classroom. Far from looking for the lowest common denominator, these standards are designed to ensure that all students, regardless of where they live, are learning what they need to know to graduate from high school ready for college or a career.

### ***Will more standards mean more tests?***

No. Having one set of standards will make it easier for states to pool information and resources to develop a shared set of high-quality tests to better evaluate student progress. The goal is not to have more tests, but to have smarter and better tests that help students, parents, and teachers.

## **Process**

### ***What makes this process different from other efforts to create common standards?***

This process is different because it is state-led, and has the support of educators across the country as well as prominent education, business, and state leaders' organizations, including CCSSO, the NGA Center, Achieve, Inc, ACT, the College Board, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the Alliance for Excellent Education, the Hunt Institute, the National Parent Teacher Association, the State Higher Education Executive Officers, the American Association of School Administrators, and the Business Roundtable.

### ***Are these national standards?***

The federal government was NOT involved in the development of the standards. This has been a state-led and driven initiative from the beginning. States will voluntarily adopt the standards based on the timelines and context in their state.

### ***Who or what entity determined the Common Core State Standards?***

CCSSO and the NGA Center led the standards' development process in consultation with teachers, parents, experts, and administrators. To ensure that this process was open, inclusive, and rigorous, several working groups and committees were formed. They included the:

- Standards Development Work Group—responsible for determining and writing the standards.
- Feedback Group—provided information backed by research to inform the standards development process by offering expert input on draft documents.
- Validation Committee—nominated by states and national organizations and selected by a group of 12 governors and chiefs who hold leadership positions at NGA Center and CCSSO. These independent, national education experts reviewed the standards to ensure they meet the development criteria.

Members of the work and feedback groups are listed at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org). The approval process for the standards also included public comment periods during which anyone who was interested in the standards could submit their comments for review.

### ***By what criteria were the standards developed?***

The standards were developed by the following criteria:

- Aligned with expectations for college and career success;
- Clear, so that educators and parents know what they need to do to help students learn;
- Consistent across all states, so that students are not taught to a lower standard just because of where they live;
- Inclusive of both content and the application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Built upon strengths and lessons of current state standards and standards of top-performing nations;
- Realistic, for effective use in the classroom;
- Informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- Evidence and research-based.

These criteria were set by states, through the national organizations CCSSO, and the NGA Center.

### ***What grade levels are included in the Common Core State Standards?***

The English-language arts and math standards are for grades K–12. Research from the early childhood and higher education communities have also informed the development of the standards.

***What does this work mean for students with disabilities and English language learners?***

Common standards will provide a greater opportunity for states to share experiences and best practices within and across states that can lead to an improved ability to best serve young people with disabilities and English language learners. Additionally, the K–12 English language arts and mathematics standards include information on application of the standards for English language learners and students with disabilities.

***Why are the Common Core State Standards for just English language arts and math?***

English-language arts and math were the first subjects chosen for the Common Core State Standards because they teach skills upon which students build skill sets in other subject areas. They are also the subjects most frequently assessed for accountability purposes. Of course, other subject areas are critical to young people’s education and their success in college and careers. Once the English-language arts and math standards are developed, CCSSO and the NGA Center, on behalf of the states, may develop common core in additional subject areas.

***Do these standards incorporate both content and skills?***

Yes. Both content and skills are important and have been incorporated in the Common Core State Standards. One of the criteria by which the standards have been evaluated is whether or not they include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order thinking skills.

## **Implementation and Future Work**

***What will the Common Core State Standards mean for students?***

The standards will provide more clarity about and consistency in what is expected of student learning across the country. Until now, every state has had its own set of academic standards, meaning public education students at the same grade level in different states have been expected to achieve at different levels. This initiative will allow states to share information effectively and help provide all students with an equal opportunity for an education that will prepare them to go to college or enter the workforce, regardless of where they live. Common standards will not prevent different levels of achievement among students. Rather, they will ensure more consistent exposure to materials and learning experiences through curriculum, instruction, and teacher preparation among other supports for student learning. In a global economy, students must be prepared to compete with not only their peers in the next state, but also with students from around the world.

***How will the standards impact teachers?***

The standards will provide important goals for teachers to ensure they are preparing students for success in college and the workforce. They will help teachers develop and implement effective strategies for their students by providing benchmarks for skills and knowledge that their students should have by the end of the year. The standards will help colleges and professional development programs better prepare teachers; provide the opportunity for teachers to be involved in the development of assessments linked to these top quality standards; allow states to develop and provide better assessments that more accurately measure whether or not students have learned what was taught; and guide educators toward curricula and teaching strategies that will give students a deep understanding of the subject and the skills they need to apply their knowledge.

### ***Will the Common Core State Standards be updated?***

Yes. There will be an ongoing state-led development process to continuously improve the standards.

### ***Will common assessments be developed?***

Like adoption of the standards, it will be up to the states: some states plan to come together voluntarily to develop a common assessment system, based on the Common Core State Standards. A state-led consortium on assessment would be grounded in the following principles: allow for comparison across students, schools, districts, states and nations; create economies of scale; provide information and support more effective teaching and learning; and prepare students for college and careers. Instructional materials and curricula are key components to making standards usable and real in the classroom.

### ***Will CCSSO and NGA Center be playing a role in the implementation process, such as creating common instructional materials and curricula?***

The release of the final Common Core State Standards marks a historic moment in time. However, the NGA Center and CCSSO recognize that states' adoption of the Common Core does not signify the conclusion of standards work. States that have adopted the Common Core must now turn their attention to the critical work of ensuring that implementation of the standards is carried out thoughtfully.

To that end, the NGA Center and CCSSO are committed to assisting state policymakers in the following ways:

- Developing a State Policymaker Guide to Implementation of the Common Core State Standards, which will provide state policymakers with the key areas that require attention and work as states transition to the standards;
- Convening organizations to facilitate conversations about the standards' implementation and providing opportunities for groups with similar activities to collaborate so that states, districts, and teachers have the tools they need;
- Planning and implementing the future governance structure of the Common Core State Standards Initiative; and
- Convening the publishing community to ensure that high-quality materials aligned with the standards are created.

### ***What is the role of the federal government in standards implementation?***

The federal government has had no role in the development of the Common Core State Standards; however, they will have an opportunity to support states as they begin adopting the standards. For example, the federal government can:

- Support this effort through a range of tiered incentives, such as providing states with greater flexibility in the use of existing federal funds, supporting a revised state accountability structure, and offering financial support for states to implement the standards.
- Provide long-term financial support for the development and implementation of common assessments, teacher and principal professional development, and research to help continually improve the standards over time.

# Getting Started with CCSS Implementation

The following excerpted text provides three important suggestions that **states** can use to begin implementing the Common Core State Standards. However, the recommendations have application also to **school districts** as they begin planning for their own implementation and “roll out” of the CCSS. *District-related words and phrases have been added to the text parenthetically to show these connections.*

## 1. Create a Strategic Implementation Team

The first order of business for states (and school districts) is to **put together a team** that will be tasked with implementation planning, including **setting a timeline** for full implementation and the transition from getting where your state (district) is today to where it needs to go. This will require a team that **knows your current state standards well, has the capacity to consider and make recommendations** about each of the elements that should be in a state’s (district’s) plan, and **can execute such a plan**.

Your strategic implementation team should have responsibility for **creating an overall vision, timeline, phase-in strategy and work plan for implementation**. As the work proceeds, your strategic team will likely need to create other working teams to dive into specific issues and make recommendations to the strategic team about how to proceed on those issues. Due to the importance of CCSS implementation, your team should consider what mechanism can be used to provide project oversight from the leadership team. It will also be critical to consider **what mechanism is in place to ensure fluid communication** between all stakeholders.

## 2. Create a Supportive Environment

Whether they are part of your strategic team or not, be sure to consider the important role of other **key stakeholders** in your process. Consider up front who needs to be **engaged in the work**, who **needs to be kept informed**, and **how you are going to interact** with the various stakeholders. Having a plan from the beginning on when and how to engage stakeholders is **critical to building support** for full implementation of the Common Core State Standards—as well as the rest of your college- and career-ready agenda.

## 3. Create a Plan, a Timeline, and a Budget

What is the **date** when you want the new common standards to be **fully operational** in your state (district)? Is that the same date that **new assessments** will be in place? Working backwards, what are the **elements that must be addressed** in your plan (using the list suggested above and other items that your team determines are critical) and **when**? What **expertise do you have** in your team? What **expertise do you need** to find? Who is **responsible for what elements** of your plan and how will team members – and the team – be held **accountable**? How will you know whether or not your state (district) is **on track**? If full implementation takes years, how will you **sustain your efforts** over time? How will you **fund implementation**? What **funding streams are currently available** to fund these efforts? How might funding streams and other reform

priorities be **leveraged** so that the budget implications of implementation are minimized? If received, how might “Race to the Top” funds impact your plans and timeline?

Source: “On the Road to Implementation,” Achieve, 2010, p. 15.

## Valuable Resources to Inform and Support Implementation

**1. On the Road to Implementation: Achieving the Promise of the Common Core State Standards**, created by Achieve, Inc. in June 2010, “seeks to identify the key areas that state policymakers will need to consider to implement the new standards with fidelity. The guide is organized by topic with short chapters. It is *not* meant to be an exhaustive review or a checklist of all the issues that states and districts will need to consider as they move from adoption of the CCSS to implementation. Rather, it is meant to be the starting point from which state and district leaders and their allies can organize and begin the necessary discussions around key topics to successfully implement the standards. Inevitably, states and districts will discover new issues as they dive deeper into each topic. Moreover, they will need to consider what other topics should be added given their unique circumstances.”

To access this report online, go to the Achieve website homepage, [www.achieve.org/](http://www.achieve.org/) and click on the left column under “What’s New” the link to “Common Core State Standards Implementation Guide.”

**2. Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S. Students Receive a World-Class Education** is a report by the National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and Achieve, Inc. prepared in 2008. Released by the *International Benchmarking Advisory Group*, it provides states a roadmap for benchmarking their K–12 education systems against those of top-performing nations. The report explains the urgent need for action and outlines what states and the federal government must do to ensure U.S. students receive a world-class education that provides expanded opportunities for college and career success.

To access this report online, go to <http://www.achieve.org/BenchmarkingforSuccess>.

**3. Fordham Foundation Executive Summary of State Standards Compared to CCSS: A July 21, 2010 report** entitled, “The State of State Standards—and the Common Core—in 2010,” concluded that the “Common Core math standards earn a grade of A-minus while the Common Core ELA standards earn a B-plus, both solidly in the honors range. Neither is perfect. Both are very, very strong. Indeed, the Common Core standards are clearer and more rigorous than the ELA and math standards presently used by the vast majority of states. Out of 102 comparisons—fifty-one jurisdictions times two subjects—we found the Common Core clearly superior seventy-six times.” Among the major findings: Based on Fordham criteria, the Common Core standards are clearly superior to those currently in use in 39 states in math and 37 states in English. For 33 states, the Common Core is superior in *both* math and reading.

To find out more about this study and the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, visit <http://www.edexcellence.net/template/index.cfm> and scroll down to the report.

**4. Comprehensive Analysis of CCSS Products and Services—Executive Summary.** This report, created by **Maryann D. Wiggs** for the **Leadership and Learning Center**, provides a “comparative analysis of events, products and services related to implementation and dissemination of information regarding the Common Core State Standards. Preparation for this report included a detailed review of web-based information provided by nearly 40 professional development organizations, publishing companies, testing companies, advocacy groups, educational journals and national organizations. In addition, a review was conducted of all 123 endorsing partner organizations listed on the Common Core State Standards Initiative web site. In preparation for this report a small sample of State Department of Education web sites were scrutinized.

“Organizations listed in this report appear to have the most active presence in terms of being poised to provide events and services to support states and districts in understanding and transitioning to the Common Core State Standards. The hyperlinks embedded in the electronic version of this report have been added to assist The Center professional development associates and the school systems we serve in both accessing relevant documents and to provide ease in staying current with updated information regarding the Common Core State Standards reform effort.”

To access this report online, go to the Leadership and Learning Center’s homepage at [www.leadandlearn.com](http://www.leadandlearn.com) (link to be announced).



# Implementation and Monitoring the KY Core Academic Standards

District/School	Implementation Plan	Activities/Timeline	Assignments/Resources
<b>Communication</b>	<p><b>Develop strategic communication plan for staff, students, parents, the community:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure clear, consistent messaging regarding KCAS</li> <li>▪ Engage all stakeholders</li> <li>▪ Help develop a solid understanding of KCAS by providing access to available resources (local, state, national)</li> <li>▪ Publish district “road map” for implementation</li> </ul>		
<b>Initiative Inventory</b>	<p><b>Align current initiatives with KCAS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify District/School-wide initiatives &amp; programs</li> <li>▪ Assess rigor of initiatives/programs with KCAS</li> <li>▪ Assess fidelity to intended implementation model</li> <li>▪ Weed your garden as needed</li> </ul>		
<b>Learning Context</b>	<p><b>Assess and consider rethinking these:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Staffing patterns</li> <li>▪ School schedules</li> <li>▪ Course design and pathways for college/career readiness</li> <li>▪ Instructional materials &amp; resources</li> <li>▪ Technology</li> <li>▪ Structures for collaboration</li> </ul>		
<b>Professional Development</b>	<p><b>Consider needs for PD in these areas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Effective Data Teams</li> <li>▪ Sufficient depth in content expertise</li> <li>▪ Literacy across content areas</li> <li>▪ Creating exemplars for grade-level expectations and progressions</li> <li>▪ Increasing nonfiction writing across the curriculum</li> <li>▪ Understanding of Mathematical Practices and their connection to content</li> <li>▪ Increasing levels of rigor and thinking strategies</li> <li>▪ Differentiating instruction</li> <li>▪ Assessment literacy</li> <li>▪ Creating performance assessments</li> <li>▪ Incorporating engaging qualities in instruction and in student tasks</li> <li>▪ Other as determined by your district</li> </ul>		

District/School	Implementation Plan	Activities/Timeline	Assignments/ Resources
<p><b>Curriculum Design</b></p>	<p><b>Build the foundation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish learning progressions for standards, clustering or bundling standards when appropriate</li> <li>▪ Develop curriculum maps</li> <li>▪ Revise pacing guides</li> <li>▪ Select/Construct unit planning organizer</li> </ul> <p><b>Design units of study:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review deconstructed standards and create student friendly learning targets</li> <li>▪ Review model lessons and units</li> <li>▪ Create unit assessments (pre/post and progress monitoring checks)</li> <li>▪ Ensure weekly and daily plans for instruction that follow the written curriculum implementation plan</li> <li>▪ Design formative assessment, including performance-based assessments and tasks</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Quality Instruction</b></p>	<p><b>Implement standards-based instructional practices:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Focus on clearly defined standards</li> <li>▪ Implement engaging learning experiences provided in student-centered classrooms</li> <li>▪ Engage student thinking through effective questioning</li> <li>▪ Provide student tasks to promote higher levels of thinking</li> <li>▪ Conduct frequent formative assessments to monitor learning, refine instruction, &amp; plan intervention</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Access and Acceleration</b></p>	<p><b>Ensure differentiation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Design structures and strategies for access and acceleration for all subgroups, including ELL, IEP and gifted students</li> <li>▪ Organize RTI model to maximize all school resources including human resources</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Assessment Inventory</b></p>	<p><b>Create a balanced assessment program:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure alignment of current assessments with the KCAS noting inconsistencies and gaps</li> <li>▪ Consider implications for online assessments</li> <li>▪ Understand status and growth metrics</li> </ul>		

District/School	Monitoring Plan	Activities/Timeline	Assignments/Resources
<b>Effective Feedback</b>	<p><b>Utilize feedback strategies that advance learning for students and teachers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Utilize PLC's as Data Teams to monitor progress and respond to the effectiveness of instruction</li> <li>▪ Ensure teachers understand effective feedback strategies as a critical part of formative assessment</li> <li>▪ Utilize rubrics to identify levels of success including student-developed rubrics</li> <li>▪ Examine and consider revising grading practices</li> <li>▪ Promote students self-assessing their own progress toward the learning targets; utilize student-led conferences</li> </ul>		
<b>Accountability</b>	<p><b>Incorporate new measures into a holistic accountability system:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monitor what is valued</li> <li>▪ Examine cause date (adult actions) and effect data (student results)</li> <li>▪ Promote lateral accountability through a collaborative process to design, teach, reflect, and revise</li> <li>▪ Act upon the evidence</li> <li>▪ Celebrate successes</li> </ul>		
<b>Systemic Alignment</b>	<p><b>Ensure KCAS alignment with:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ School/District Improvement Plan</li> <li>▪ Supervision and evaluation policies and practices</li> <li>▪ Assessment policies and practices</li> <li>▪ Funding sources</li> <li>▪ Systemic focus of time, effort, resources</li> </ul>		