A PATH OF PROGRESS:
STATE AND DISTRICT STORIES OF HIGH STANDARDS IMPLEMENTATION

July 2016
The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2010, most states adopted new, more rigorous standards to better prepare our nation’s students for post-secondary success and the demands of the 21st century. In most cases, states adopted the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics, and others adapted those standards or developed their own. Now six years later, the nation’s state education chiefs want to continue to learn how these standards are being successfully implemented in states and classrooms across the country. They want examples of how state and local education agencies are preparing administrators, teachers, and students to meet the new college- and career-ready standards and impact student achievement.

This report by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) provides examples of how the new college- and career-ready standards are being implemented across the country. It is a resource for chiefs and deputies who want to know how their peers at the state and local levels have implemented college- and career-ready standards. This report shines a light on strategies states have utilized when implementing standards and shares with others strategies to adapt or borrow to meet the needs in their own states. Its intent is to foster dialogue and spur collaboration.

This report is also an opportunity to showcase the outstanding work that goes on in our nation’s classrooms. It provides a glimpse into how state policy impacts educators and students in the classroom, and how district leaders are working to prepare students to succeed after they graduate from high school.

In order to see a broad picture of implementation, we interviewed more than 50 individuals from state and local education agencies across the nation. We began the process by requesting interviews with state education agencies to understand how they were working with their education communities to implement the new college- and career-ready standards with fidelity. In order to dive deeper into the various strategies of implementation, we asked state agency staff to suggest local districts that were exemplars of successful implementation. Where possible, we then interviewed those local exemplars to understand, and share with you, exactly how to bring the standards to life in the classroom.

Themes

During the interviews, major themes began to emerge. Changing multiple academic standards on a tight timeline was a challenge for states and districts alike. Many reported that the field at first felt overwhelmed by the work needed to implement the new standards, but that satisfaction among administrators and teachers grew as instruction began to evolve. Curricular resources often weren’t immediately available, which led to states and districts developing their own materials aligned to the standards, and collaboration between districts and states grew to meet the challenges. In many cases, states and districts also had to adapt how professional development was delivered. Some states had to walk fine political lines to deliver content and professional development, or even to adopt and implement the new standards tailored more to their state needs. Overall, those interviewed for this project said the benefit to student learning that will emerge from the new college- and career-ready standards far outweighs the challenges they faced. In fact, most feel the lessons learned have been invaluable and will pay dividends in the future.

As states continue to move forward with college- and career-ready standards, many states and districts believe early engagement of teachers is
essential to the success of major policy changes. Providing teachers an understanding of what the changes are early on, explaining why the changes are being made, and getting their feedback, helps lay the framework for broader implementation. In addition, communications with legislators and stakeholders should begin much sooner and at a foundational level, such as simply explaining what learning standards are and why they are important.

**Supporting Educators**

Professional development is a key to delivering new learning standards with fidelity, and in many cases that model changed through the implementation process. Previous day-long lectures or “sit and get” models were largely abandoned. In many cases, professional learning was shifted to provide teacher leaders, coaches, or district teams with in-depth training regionally and having those individuals bring the information back to the district to share with colleagues on an ongoing basis. Many recognize the need for continuous professional development. Rather than sessions at the beginning and end of the year, administrators and states worked to specifically provide and embed professional development opportunities throughout the year.

The materials for this report were developed from interviews with state and local district officials. Demographic data are displayed throughout the report to provide the reader a picture of the states and districts highlighted. State data are from the National Center for Education Statistics (2013-14) and in some instances may not add to 100 percent due to rounding. Local data were self-reported by districts.

CCSSO would like to thank the dozens of state and local education professionals who contributed their time and wisdom to this report. Without their participation, it would not be possible. Together, they are changing the way children learn and are providing better outcomes for the future.
Alabama College and Career Ready Standards; includes adoption of Common Core ELA and Math in 2010

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Alabama College and Career Ready Standards; includes adoption of Common Core State Standards English Language Arts and Math in 2010

The Alabama College and Career Ready Standards include English language arts (ELA), math, science, and social studies. In 2010, the state adopted new college- and career-ready standards in English language arts and math, with some minor modifications. The state set out a staggered roadmap for implementing the new standards, with schools expected to start implementing the new math standards in the 2012-13 school year and the English language arts standards in the 2013-14 school year.

Initially, the Alabama State Department of Education (the Department) began providing overview seminars for administrators and teachers to build understanding of the new standards throughout the state. Soon, they began to realize they needed to move their professional development out to local regions so they could facilitate a conversation amongst educators to deepen understanding of the standards. In the summer of 2011, the Department hosted what would become their first summer academy, providing face-to-face professional development, unpacking the standards, and showing how they differed from the state’s prior standards.

Regional Professional Learning for District Teams

During the 2011-12 school year, the Department encouraged local districts to create College and Career Ready Standards implementation teams. These teams would meet on a quarterly basis during the 2011-12 school year to delve more deeply into the new math and ELA standards, and focus more on instructional strategies to be used in the classroom. The quarterly meetings were so well received that they continue to this day and now include other subject areas and topics.

They said they liked that they were receiving quality professional development on a local level that was backed up by existing relationships.

The quarterly meetings are done in the Alabama Regional In-Service Centers, 11 regional centers created to provide professional development, which are separate from the Department, housed in a state university, and overseen by a local board. They are full day, face-to-face meetings facilitated by regional center staff. This provides the implementation team from the district a structure so that when they return to their local district, they can educate and train their peers. The materials from the quarterly meetings are all posted to a
website that the trained teachers can then access and use in local presentations. Initially, districts were asked to turn in a plan to the Department, not for accountability purposes, but rather as a way for districts to think about how they would implement the standards and share the training received at the quarterly meetings.

After the first year, the state surveyed attendees, and respondents indicated they wanted the meetings to continue. They said they liked that they were receiving quality professional development on a local level that was backed up by existing relationships. They knew the regional staff that organized the quarterly meetings and felt they were getting solid training that was easily replicated locally. Department staff felt the quarterly meetings provided high-quality, consistent professional development throughout the state.

The regional service centers continue to provide the quarterly meetings to this day and also provide professional development as needed to local districts within their regions. The regional service centers still provide professional development on the standards in math and English language arts, but that work is no longer a part of the quarterly meetings. They instead work one-on-one to meet local district needs in math and English language arts, allowing districts to get the training on demand when they can work it into the local school calendars.

**Stakeholder Engagement and Communications**

Department staff say the standards have been challenged in the state each year, but that two strategies they decided upon early on really helped the standards get traction and take hold. The first was to engage the state’s administrators soon after the new standards were adopted. They included the administrators in trainings, having them involved in the first face-to-face meetings so they understood the shifts that would need to happen in the classrooms and could prepare their teachers for those shifts. Teachers and administrators were also able to see the value of the new standards and what it would mean for students to be college and career ready, so they could help to defend the new standards.

As the state adopted new college- and career-ready standards they also began moving the entire education system in a new direction. In 2012, the Alabama State Board of Education adopted a strategic vision, PLAN 2020. The plan sets in place an instructional design from kindergarten through high school graduation to prepare all students for success in college or careers. It defines what a prepared graduate is and also outlines priorities for the state’s education system. By implementing PLAN 2020 statewide and articulating its specific goals, the standards fell in line with Alabama’s strategic vision. The standards are in place to ensure students are ready for college and careers and the local PLAN 2020 needs those standards as a foundation to ensure student success. Together, the Alabama College and Career Ready Standards and PLAN 2020 support the overarching vision of state education officials to better prepare their students to succeed and be responsible adults in the 21st century.
Superintendent Camille Wright joined the Enterprise City School district in January 2014 and was surprised to see that the implementation of the Alabama College and Career Ready Standards had not really taken hold in the district. The state’s recommended timeline for adopting the new standards called for implementing the math standards in the 2012-13 school year and in English language arts (ELA) in 2013-14. She says that while some teachers in the district had some training, the new standards in ELA and math weren’t being implemented across the district. In some cases, teachers were providing instruction from existing materials and where there was alignment they would teach the new standards — otherwise, the standards simply weren’t being taught.

“To me, it’s a three-pronged approach: instruction, curriculum and assessment. Any time any one of those changes, then the others must change,” said Wright. “Teaching hadn’t changed and our assessment hadn’t changed, even though our standards were now at a different level.”

Wright says the first thing she did when she saw the district was behind in implementing the new standards was to put instructional coaches in each school. Wright says the flexibility she was given by the state in order to meet the local need has been a key to implementing the Alabama College and Career Ready Standards districtwide.

The state of Alabama funded a reading initiative that allowed districts to hire reading coaches. Wright believed she needed more than just reading coaches and reached out to the Alabama State Department of Education to get permission to hire instructional coaches that could help with the implementation of the college- and career-ready standards. In addition to the instructional coaches for each school in the district, she also hired an expert in curriculum for secondary instruction and a professional development coordinator to work with the instructional coaches.

The instructional coaches and professional development director meet weekly, breaking apart the standards, reviewing and revising assessments, and ensuring they are written at the same level as the standards. Together they work on improving instructional practices for teachers districtwide and breaking down assignments. In addition, they meet with principals on a monthly basis and focus solely on instruction. Principals are taught to look at the standards and determine if they are being taught and assessed correctly by the teachers in their buildings. The instructional coaches do rounds with administrators to observe teachers practicing their craft. They discuss instruction, review assignments, and also look at their classroom assessments. During these rounds, they work together as a group to see if the standards are being applied and if not, how can they address it in future professional development.

Wright was also able to hire a director of innovation, whose sole job is to make the
standards relevant and meaningful — to develop real world lessons that students and teachers can apply to the standards and help both transition from rote memory to applying knowledge and skills. The innovation director began creating model classrooms, 5 in each school and 10 at the high school. They work with teachers to build entirely new models for their classrooms using technology, and to help teachers become resident experts in their buildings and work with their peers.

Wright says that she was able to make these new hires through flexibility from the state and by convincing the local board and her teachers that they are sound investments for students.

“We talked to our teachers and said if you could have two more students in your classroom, we can bring in resources that will help districtwide,” said Wright. “I convinced the Board that having these folks can make every teacher in our district better, and it would be more efficient than just having three more teachers without the strategic investment.”

In addition to the new hires, Wright was able to convince her board to allow teachers to have four days throughout the year specifically for professional development. These days allow the math teachers to work together through the various grade levels and it allows for teachers at each grade level to come together with colleagues from schools across the district to share and develop classroom resources together.

The district, which is located near Fort Rucker with 37 percent of the students connected to someone in the military, also received a Department of Defense grant for $1.8 million over three years. The grant, received August 2014, funds two math specialists, among other things. These specialists are resources for the entire district and are able to drill down deep into the standards and help teachers not only better understand the content, but also how to teach it at a much deeper conceptual level. They are in classrooms and work with teachers on a regular basis to help them improve their math instruction.

Teaching has completely changed in Enterprise. Previously, teachers had been lecturers relying on textbooks, but now they are shifting instruction to meet the standards that are written at a much deeper level.

“Our kids never had to think and collaborate. They are having to apply knowledge and in doing so, critically think and problem solve,” said Wright.

**These days allow the math teachers to work together through the various grade levels and it allows for teachers at each grade level to come together with colleagues from schools across the district to share and develop classroom resources together.**
California School Demographics

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<th>Total #Schools</th>
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<td>Total #Black Students</td>
<td>384,291 6%</td>
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<td>3,321,274 53%</td>
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<td>727,106 12%</td>
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<td>1,559,113 25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total ELL</td>
<td>1,413,167 22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total #Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>684,161 11%</td>
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When the State of California adopted new college- and career-ready standards in English language arts and mathematics in 2010, officials with the California Department of Education (the Department) knew there would be many challenges. Any time a major reform is implemented, it can pose challenges, but add in the sheer size and diversity of California’s student population and the issues can become that much more difficult to resolve. Department staff say they generally have to walk a fine line between providing enough leeway for local leaders to make decisions in the best interest of their student population and providing enough support to districts that are in need of resources and external assistance.

Local Control Funding Formula and Standards Implementation

The new standards received broad support within the state. One of the keys to moving forward with implementation has been the establishment of a new school funding formula. The Local Control Funding Formula, which became law in 2013, established implementation of the state standards as one of the priorities districts must address in their Local Control Accountability Plans. Prior to the switch to the Local Control Funding Formula, the state had several categorical programs that defined for districts where they had to spend their money.

The switch to the new local control formula actually took away most of the categorical programs and left it up to districts to make their budget decisions in a single plan aimed toward achieving local academic success. Districts create plans in collaboration with their communities to define priorities and fund them the way that best meets their local objectives. However, part of the accountability plans that districts have to develop requires them to address how they will implement the state academic standards.

In addition to the adoption of the new funding formula in 2013, lawmakers included $1.25 billion in the California state budget for local districts to implement the new standards. Districts could use the funds for a variety of purposes, including professional development, instructional materials, technology, or other uses. In order to access the funds, the districts had to hold public hearings and put together a plan for how they would spend their share of funding.
California adopted a standards implementation plan in 2011. In the implementation plan, the Department made suggestions to local districts about possible implementation activities. One issue they faced right away was professional development, a local control issue in the state, with much of it handled by the state’s County Offices of Education. The Department is funded to develop and administer assistance, however, technical assistance is not their focus. They did develop online professional learning modules that go in depth into the standards and they also facilitated the adoption of materials to bridge the gap from the old standards to the new standards.

**Internally, Department staff realigned themselves to work with the county offices which are closer to the local districts to provide the needed supports.**

Department officials say not being able to provide technical assistance to districts was a challenge they had to overcome collaboratively with County Education Offices. They credit those offices with playing a major role in providing professional development and resources to the local districts. Internally, Department staff realigned themselves to work with the county offices which are closer to the local districts to provide the needed supports. They created an internal Common Core roundtable which was used as a clearinghouse to provide updates on where the various systems were in regard to the progress on the implementation plan of the new standards. The hub was a way to coordinate the many pieces that make up the California K-12 system.

**Curriculum Frameworks**

The Department also developed curriculum frameworks that became the state’s comprehensive guidance to implementing the standards. The process includes appointment of an expert panel (the majority of this panel is classroom teachers) to develop the frameworks and an extensive public review period. The frameworks are highly detailed documents that guide local agencies and educators, as well as publishers of instructional materials, toward standards implementation. The comprehensive documents get into specifics with the standards, providing examples of what instruction could look like, possible professional development, how to work with diverse student populations, assessment, compiled research for instruction, and more. The detailed documents — the English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework is more than 1,000 pages long — provide a thorough look at the standards and how to incorporate them into the classroom.

As California began implementing the new standards in math and English language arts, the Department recognized the need to further support teachers struggling to serve English learners. In 2012, a new set of English Language Development Standards, based on the standards for ELA/literacy, were adopted. Using both sets of standards, the Department developed the curriculum framework for English language arts and English language development, demonstrating the close integration of both sets of standards.

“It has been a great resource for all of our teachers, because English Learners are so prevalent throughout our state. Our Hispanic population is greater than our Caucasian population,” said Carrie Roberts, Director of the Professional Learning Division. “It really ties the two standards together and helps teachers to realize just who their audience is and how to best reach them.”
The Department points to collaboration and support for the new standards as a sign of success. They say whether it was the county offices, the California State Board of Education, the California Department of Education, lawmakers, or teachers, everyone was on board, giving the same message to move forward with standards implementation and work together. They also say by moving slowly and without demanding that districts implement immediately they were able to move intentionally and thoughtfully to the new standards.
The Elk Grove Unified School District in Elk Grove, California, didn’t adopt the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics until its local board formally approved them in 2013. Even so, staff knew the state of California adopted the standards in 2010 and they officially began developing their plan to implement the new standards in Elk Grove schools during the 2010-11 school year.

District officials began a gradual release. During 2010-11, they approached implementation of the standards as an informational campaign throughout the district. Central office staff pored through documents, familiarizing themselves with the new standards, looking at the similarities and differences between the old and new standards. They worked on building a knowledge base for their instructional specialists who are the content area experts that would be tasked with providing the districts upcoming professional development for teachers. They hosted events at several schools throughout the district, providing multiple opportunities for teachers and administrators to hear about the new expectations and shifts that were about to come.

In the 2011-12 school year, Elk Grove central office staff worked with math teachers in kindergarten through 2nd grade to begin teaching the new standards in the classroom. The decision was to start implementation at the primary grades and gradually move up, over several years. Secondary teachers began to attend more formalized training on how to begin implementing the new standards in classrooms during the 2011-12 school year. They began professional development, taking a much deeper dive into the shifts that would come with instruction in the near future, but there was no expectation to fully implement in their classrooms at this time.

During the 2012-13 school year, intermediate grades began implementation. Teachers in 4th-6th grade were expected to start classroom instruction based on the new standards. That same year at the secondary level, teachers began implementing the standards in English language arts and literacy in core courses, and math implementation began.

Elk Grove officials say that first and foremost the professional development they were able to provide their teachers locally was the most exciting part of implementing the new college- and career-ready standards.

After the local board formally adopted the new standards, Elk Grove Unified began full implementation of the standards across both content areas in the 13-14 school year. They credit the state’s gradual rollout, without
forcing districts into implementing all at once, as allowing them the ability to shape the implementation to their local needs.

Elk Grove officials say that first and foremost the professional development they were able to provide their teachers locally was the most exciting part of implementing the new college- and career-ready standards. Unlike other districts, Elk Grove found the lack of Common Core State Standards-aligned resources during the early years of implementation a positive situation. Because the adoption of the standards came at a time when the district could not buy new resources, teachers had to become more intimately familiar with the standards to figure out how to apply them, using older materials that were aligned to the previous California learning standards, not the Common Core State Standards. They say the teachers had to learn the new standards at a level not previously explored by many before. The district was forced to figure out a way to implement a new curriculum with old materials, but new standards. It forced teachers to be creative, explore the new standards, and find ways to shift classroom instruction.

District administrators say the whole experience was very positive because it forced each teacher to become an expert in the standards themselves. They say that now as they are able to adopt new materials that are supposed to be aligned to the new standards, their teachers have become critical consumers. They know where resources have strong alignment, a weak alignment, and in some cases, where there is no alignment whatsoever. It has led the district to be able to purchase smarter and more efficiently use materials they know target what teachers want and will help drive student success.

Elk Grove officials say they are fortunate because they currently have 15 instructional coaches dedicated to supporting teachers. These coaches are part of the central office staff, but housed at school sites throughout the 61 schools. They receive deep professional development on a regular basis so they bring back what they learn to classroom teachers.

Elk Grove had the instructional coaches prior to the adoption of the new standards, but there were fewer of them and the numbers fluctuated depending on private grant and federal funding. After adopting the college- and career-ready standards and the adoption of the new Local Control Funding Formula, the local board made the decision to invest in the instructional coaching as a way to support the implementation of the new standards through their Local Control Formula funds.

Elk Grove officials say the approach that the California Department of Education emphasized allowing districts the ability to choose how to gradually phase in the standards, provided them with much needed time to focus on the standards first, and not rush into implementation. They say it’s very different from the past when California standards were first introduced in the 90s and that their teachers are much better prepared to support student success.
When the State of Connecticut adopted new learning standards for English language arts and mathematics in 2010, the state’s department of education was in transition. The budget was reduced significantly; staffing and resources suffered significantly. The Connecticut State Department of Education (the Department) worked within its limitations to help districts switch to the new college- and career-ready standards, but between 2010-2012 it was a struggle to provide districts with the needed direction and training to implement the standards with fidelity.

Department staff say that one of the driving forces that helped the state turn the corner on implementing the new college and career ready learning standards was a package of legislation in 2013 that provided the Department with much needed resources. Over the next three years, the legislation that passed with bi-partisan support, provided the Department’s Academic Office with $20 million to help schools throughout the state make the change to the new standards.

Department officials say they were really able to lead and maximize efforts to help local districts switch from the old Connecticut learning standards to the new, Connecticut Core Standards in 2013. Connecticut education officials decided to take a two pronged approach: developing a website focused solely on the new standards serving as a one-stop shop for teachers, parents, and the public; and rolling out professional development opportunities for educators.

**Dynamic Online Resources**

Connecticut is a local control state with curriculum development all done at the local level. The Department knew they had to support districts and what they chose to do was to look to models developed by other sources, find the very best ones aligned to the new standards, and make them available to local districts. In order to make those examples available, they created the Connecticut Core Standards website: [ctcorestandards.org](http://ctcorestandards.org).

The CT Core Standards website was the brainstorm of the Department’s Academic Office. They knew teachers and administrators around the state were all searching for resources on a daily basis, scrambling to find reliable content that could help them in their individual pursuits to implement the new standards. They wanted to target the website so that a variety of audiences would find it useful, but also have very practical applications.
and benefits for teachers. They developed an easily accessible, vibrant parent page devoted to providing teachers, parents, and others with the following supports:

- Model units and lessons and standards-aligned classroom materials,
- Program models to assist leaders and educators in the transition to the new standards,
- Resources for professional development and learning, and
- Parent-, student-, and community-friendly materials to learn more about the Common Core State Standards.

The website is not static; it’s refreshed at least three times a week and translated into the top six languages each year. This year it was also named one of the top 14 common core resources by Daily Genius, an online platform dedicated to new ideas and trends.

The Academic Office staff wanted the website to be tailored to meet the needs of Connecticut educators, so they worked with a group of experts and practitioners from across the state.

**Connecticut education officials decided to take a two pronged approach: developing a website focused solely on the new standards serving as a one-stop shop for teachers, parents, and the public; and rolling out professional development opportunities for educators.**

The Academic Office staff wanted the website to be tailored to meet the needs of Connecticut educators, so they worked with a group of experts and practitioners from across the state. The Academic Office provided training to vet possible resources for alignment to the new standards and provide the platform for sharing the Connecticut perspective. They noticed other websites simply gathered information and let teachers sort through to see what was good and what wasn’t. They wanted to take it a step further, put it through a test of industry standards, and provide feedback specific to teachers in their home state. If teachers don’t want to use the examples contained on the site, at least they are able to see what strong alignment looks like.

**Wide-Ranging Professional Learning**

In addition to the work on the website they also ramped up a major professional development effort beginning in 2013. The Systems of Professional Learning helps provide a wide range of professional development, focused on English language arts and math. The idea was to move away from the “one and done” style of professional development and instead move toward multi-purposed workshops that could be filmed and edited and posted on the CT Core Standards website.

The Systems of Professional Learning series was targeted at explaining the instructional shifts and taking a deep dive into standards and content. The Department took a wide ranging approach with multiple vendors, providing a variety of opportunities to engage educators, whether it was in an intimate math session with less than 30 attendees to a large scale summer academy with nearly 1,000 participants in the room.

They also began incorporating the professional development into the [CT Core Standards](#) website.
Because a professional development workshop will be discontinued after it’s completed or be reduced to just the handouts, they began to look at how they could make them more enduring and available to a wider audience. That’s when they decided to video, edit, and closed caption the presentations. Connecticut no longer collects continuing education units, however, local districts must provide three days of professional development. Now, teachers can access professional development any time. They can pull down a snippet from the website, watch it, and do an activity together, engaging in professional development as a group or alone, depending on how and when it is needed.

Department officials credit Governor Daniel P. Malloy and the state’s legislature for providing the necessary funding to allow them to move forward with their implementation efforts. That funding allowed the two-pronged approach, providing wide-ranging professional development through online resources, which was the basis for their implementation strategy.
In the K-12 Cromwell Public School District, administrators began implementation of the new learning standards in 2011. At first, administrators began what they describe as a discovery process, unpacking the standards. They spent a lot of time with the district’s 200 teachers, going through the standards, what they meant, what it looked like at grade level, and what it looked like at the previous grade and the grade after. “We did it the right way, we spent a lot of time building teacher capacity to understand the standards,” said Paula Talty, Superintendent of Cromwell Public Schools. “We provided teachers with the opportunity to be learners, to really be comfortable asking questions.”

District leaders felt they needed to invest in their teachers to build capacity internally. They couldn’t build the necessary capacity to make the instructional shift unless they understood the standards and content deeply. While some teachers may have had the knowledge in one area, they may not have understood everything and needed time to unpack and dig deeper.

The Connecticut State Department of Education (the Department) provided significant support to the local district in the form of online resources and professional development as they worked through the lengthy implementation process. Cromwell administrators took advantage of the support the state provided to leaders, with the expectation that they would then engage faculty. The Department worked with the local education support agency to provide multiple professional development opportunities for principals and building level leaders on the instructional shifts required of the new college- and career-ready standards.

Cromwell educators liked the approach the Department took by offering a menu of study opportunities, not just one and done workshops. Representatives came to the district and had cohorts working with a team to understand the standards and look at specific district needs. In Cromwell, that meant working with building leaders at the four schools in the district to align their curriculum.

The standards implementation has meant rich conversations throughout the local district. Administrators have begun taking a more critical look at the assessments that are being used.

Cromwell officials say that one of the key things the state did to help them was to provide common core teacher leader training. They were able to receive training for teams of English language arts and math teachers that would then come back to their schools and help their colleagues make the shift, and also assisted in the curriculum revision.

The standards implementation has meant rich conversations throughout the local district. Administrators have begun taking a more...
critical look at the assessments that are being used. Recently in Cromwell they went through an assessment review process and eliminated 13 percent of the assessments they had been using previously. They stopped using tests that weren’t applicable to what they wanted to do as a district and weren’t providing the information that they needed. They feel this is creating better opportunities for students, more clearly showing evidence of student need and growth.

“Teachers are looking at meaningful ways to see that those students are making gains on the standards, not just quizzes and tests for test sake,” said Talty. “They look at the lesson and the questions to see if they are getting the quality data they need to help their students.”

The transition to new college- and career-ready standards has changed the way the classrooms in Cromwell look and feel. The standards are creating experiences for students to work together dynamically. Kids may be together with a teacher initially, but then they break apart into small groups. Students are taking more responsibility for their own learning with the teacher serving more as a facilitator than a controller.

Cromwell leaders say one of the best surprises of moving to the new college- and career-ready standards is the common language they now share with colleagues across the state and across state borders. They are able to be a part of a larger learning community and can share the work they’re doing in their districts with other colleagues. They also feel that for the first time as a district, they have a common understanding of what a student looks like when they are on track to be ready to succeed after they graduate. They say there’s a renewed sense of community in the work they are doing together within the district — linking academics with life skills and preparing students to achieve their fullest potential.
Soon after Delaware adopted new college- and career-ready standards in English language arts and mathematics, the Delaware Department of Education (the Department) recognized that districts and charter schools were in various stages of implementation, and some even struggling with where to start. While some schools began the process of aligning curriculum and instruction immediately, others were seeking additional support and resources.

Sensing that something needed to be done, in 2011 the Secretary of Education solicited feedback on implementation of the new standards through an annual District Support Survey. The data revealed that additional college- and career-ready implementation support and technical assistance was necessary and that trainings needed to be strengthened. The Secretary then brought together a group of stakeholders and superintendents to discuss how to move the implementation efforts forward in a cohesive manner. The group of stakeholders met over the course of six months and laid out six priorities that would allow for the new college- and career-ready standards to really take hold.

The Department, in turn, developed a comprehensive 18-month professional development plan that utilized the Guiding Team framework to build capacity in Delaware schools. Other meeting structures such as the monthly Teaching and Learning Cadre and Chiefs (District Superintendents) meetings were leveraged to gather feedback from local districts and respond accordingly to build responsive supports.

**Common Ground for the Common Core**

What ensued was the state’s coordinated effort to provide resources and professional development, which became known as Common Ground for the Common Core. The launch of Common Ground in March 2013 set a new path for college- and career-ready standards implementation in the state with a statewide convening bringing more than 700 educators together from 140 schools to take a deeper dive into understanding the new standards and their impact on classroom instruction. The initiative would provide a vehicle for cross-district collaboration, principal training, teacher leadership, providing quality training with the best providers, and ongoing feedback on implementation efforts.

The program engaged educators at the school level in teams that would include principals and teacher leaders working in collaboration with their central office. Educators from around the state came together around the college- and
career-ready standards – they were provided the time and supports to be comfortable with the standards and instructional shifts and resources to support school specific professional learning of the new standards.

The initiative would provide a vehicle for cross-district collaboration, principal training, teacher leadership, providing quality training with the best providers, and ongoing feedback on implementation efforts.

As a result, the work of implementation intensified in the 2013-14 school year as educators got to know the new standards and the accompanying shifts. The 2014-15 school year focused on understanding the college- and career-ready standards, while also working on developing a balanced assessment system. During the 2015-16 school year teams were asked to focus on one of two strands: Targeted Approaches to Closing Achievement Gaps or Deepening Literacy Practices across Content Areas.

Schools that signed onto Common Ground worked with the Department to develop an implementation plan unique to their school. The plans not only mapped out the strategies for implementation, but also the evidence that would show the impact of the plan on teacher practice and student learning. The Department organized review teams comprised of both state and local educators, as well as from national organizations. The teams carefully studied each school plan providing feedback to strengthen the plans in three core areas identified on the rubric. This process ensured that school plans were in place at the start of the school year.

The professional learning cycle was designed to lead the transfer of professional learning to practice. First, Guiding Teams convened for training provided by national experts and organized by the state agency in collaboration with district and charter leaders. The teams in turn, took the new learning back to their schools to share with others. The following month they participated in a webinar with the same consultant who provided the training to get any questions answered and provide a check-in. During the third month of the sequence the Guiding Teams came back together to share best practices, provide feedback and evidence of how the implementation of the new standards was taking place in their schools.

“The Spring Convening in 2013 sent a message to Delaware schools that we don’t have to go at this alone and can do this together as a state,” said Shelley Rouser, Director of K-12 Initiatives and Educator Engagement. “It provided an opportunity for pulling our resources together to provide the necessary professional development. And if our districts and charters did not sign on with us for Common Ground, we provided an outlet for them to share best practices and evidence of implementation at the Annual Bright Spots event and other statewide meetings.”

Empowering Teacher Leaders: The Delaware Dream Team

Another component to Delaware’s strategy to implement the new college- and career-ready standards was the Dream Team Project. The Department worked with the districts and charters to find the best teachers across the state and provide them with professional development and allow them to work collaboratively to develop tools and resources to share with their colleagues across the state.

The Dream Team Project features three cohorts of approximately 35 teachers each year. The first two
years, teachers applied to join the Dream Team. They dug into the standards to gain a greater understanding, engaging in Teachfest, a two-day professional development event where they learned how to develop college- and career-ready lessons and other tasks that are then posted as a free resource for all teachers to use.

One of the most significant challenges faced in Delaware was rethinking the way professional development was delivered across the state.

The third year of the Dream Team project, the Department asked schools to identify talented teachers and have them apply to join. The first year’s results from the state assessment informed the decision to focus the third Dream Team cohort on K-12 mathematics. The focus shifted from creating lessons to using tasks that centered on building conceptual understanding and sharing those with the learning communities in their schools. Training also emphasized strategies to scale up what they learned and how to manage change.

Lessons Learned

One of the most significant challenges faced in Delaware was rethinking the way professional development was delivered across the state. It was clear that isolated training days would not allow these standards to take root and bear results, and that a sophisticated professional learning design that supports schools beyond the initial training was necessary. Common Ground provided a venue to build a common language to be brought to the field and provided statewide sustained professional learning and valuable resources.

“We knew that this transition would not be an easy one. We maximized limited resources by connecting schools with the best consultants in the country and created a sequence of learning experiences year by year to meet them where they were and take implementation to the next level, year by year,” said Rouser. “Making sure all students have access to these rigorous standards is important and Delaware’s schools have shown their commitment to this goal.”
Administrators at the Colonial School District wanted to move slowly with implementing the new college- and career-ready standards after Delaware adopted them. They began working through the standards in the 2011-12 school year, breaking down the standards two at a time during weekly hourly staff meetings and in professional learning communities. During that first year, district content coaches were analyzing the textbooks that were in use in the district and other materials to unearth where there was alignment and where there were gaps.

During the 2012-13 school year, the district’s approach was more aggressive. Building on the work of the content coaches, they began trying to determine how they would fill in the gaps in alignment. The district was at a point where they were looking to purchase a new anthology; however, as they reviewed the available materials for purchase, they felt none were sufficiently aligned to the standards.

They put together teams of teachers at every grade level and asked them to examine what they could do locally to supplement the current curriculum to close the gaps. The teachers then began to ask if they could create their own scope and sequence, what would it look like? They began to have conversations about what they would like to teach and when in order to meet the new standards. At the end of the 2012-13 school year they developed their own curriculum shell, with a timeline of how and when standards would be taught and teachers utilizing open educational resources to customize their own materials for their classroom.

“One thing we got right was not purchasing an anthology and not looking for a one-size fits all approach. We were looking at the big picture, what did we want for our kids?” said Sherrie Clark, Supervisor of English Language Arts and English Language Learners. “An anthology can’t do that. Instead we used money to purchase things that addressed the curriculum gaps we had and in my opinion we got it right.”

Once they had created the curricular shells they needed to create common assessments. They asked teachers to work with content coaches to create assessments that fit into their system. Teachers would use data from their students’ tests to allow them to backwards plan what they would do in their classroom.

“Teachers’ are interested in seeing where the kids take them as much as where they take the kids. We’re on the right track and things are going well.”

The district implemented a monthly professional development day. Instead of having days set aside at the beginning and end of the year, the administration deliberately spread them out over the course of the year to provide ongoing professional development. Staff used data from the common assessments to plan the monthly...
professional development. If they noticed students were struggling with text structure, for example, they would dedicate time the following month to focus on that topic. They also would use the local data to revise instructional units and the assessments themselves.

The district has three English language arts coaches and three math coaches that facilitate the professional development. They have also been instrumental in developing the curricular shells and the district assessments. In addition, they have worked with teachers to vet thousands of items for classroom use and have created their own materials.

One of the biggest challenges the instructional coaches faced was providing guidance to teachers, while allowing for flexibility in the classroom. Initially, the standards had little impact on classroom instruction during the first two years, but as teachers gained a deeper understanding, their planning changed which was evident in the level of college- and career-ready aligned instruction.

“Now I feel like our instruction is better than it has been. Teachers are excited about the lessons, planning and creating,” said Clark. “Teachers’ are interested in seeing where the kids take them as much as where they take the kids. We’re on the right track and things are going well.”
When Hawaii adopted the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics, they wanted to give teachers time to become familiar with the new college- and career-ready standards. They outlined a plan for schools to begin awareness of the standards in the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years, with the goal of implementing the standards in the 2012-13 school year.

Selecting Aligned Instructional Materials

The State Leadership Team, comprised of educators from each of the state’s 15 complex areas responsible for administration of that area’s schools, had heard from their teachers and principals in the field about how difficult it was to find materials aligned to the Common Core. In 2013, at the suggestion of the State Leadership Team the Hawaii State Department of Education began a review of instructional materials. The materials selected would be consistent in all schools throughout the state so there would be a core set of high-quality instructional materials used across complex areas.

The concept was that by using use core instructional materials, it would help the Hawaii Department of Education (the Department), which serves as a state education agency (SEA) and local education agency (LEA), to better support teachers as they move forward with transitioning to the new standards. They also believed that it would provide a greater level of consistency for students throughout the islands; would be more equitable if everyone was using the same materials; would foster greater collaboration among the complex areas and schools; and would bring about economies of scale as new instructional materials needed to be purchased in order to support the implementation.

“It was a bold move by our leadership, but it has been a very good move for our students,” said Dewey Gottlieb, educational specialist for mathematics at the Hawaii State Department of Education. “Teachers had tangible resources that allowed them freedom for classroom instruction and to personalize learning, while using materials that were truly aligned to the standards.”

When the review began they found that schools throughout the state were using 288 different instructional materials in math and 287 different instructional materials in English language arts. Of the 71 math programs and 40 ELA programs initially reviewed, a handful of materials were identified as fully aligned to the new standards. The Complex Area Superintendents eventually agreed on a single set of materials at each grade level which schools must purchase and fully implement by the 2016-
The Department developed its own instructional materials for high school math. Teachers and students are able to transition between different schools and complex areas without missing a beat.

“Last year, we had an issue on the big island with a volcano and the path that the lava was taking. It was moving towards communities and teachers and students were given the option to transfer to other schools out of the path of the lava flow,” Dewey said. “It was a huge issue for the communities, but since the schools were using the same aligned materials, so kids were able to get caught up to their new peers within a day.”

While the core instructional materials are the same, teachers are given flexibility to meet student needs and be creative with instruction. The materials are the primary source, but not sole source that guides classroom instruction. Teachers are encouraged to modify and supplement instruction in order to best meet students need.

One of the concerns with moving to the core instructional materials for all schools was financial. Even though the Complex Areas Superintendents were the ones who made the recommendation, officials felt that they needed to provide supports to schools. The state agency was able to provide $26 million in additional formula funds and impact aid with the recommendation that these funds be specifically used for the initial purchase of the core instructional materials.

Aligned Materials Augment Professional Development Impact

By moving to the same required materials in all schools, professional development has been streamlined. State professional development teams are able to provide focused trainings in all of the complex areas, where teams from local schools, including math and English language arts coaches, attend the trainings. These coaches become the school level trainers for colleagues, to provide better understanding at the classroom level. Complex area staff can then zero in on the additional training needed at individual schools and provide it with support from the state. The core materials have helped facilitate this process through greater collaboration at the local level.

Local principals like the core instructional materials, especially with growing mobility rates.
In the 2013-14 school year the Kailua/Kalaheo Complex Area began a new program to provide professional development to the English language arts teachers in the complex area’s 14 schools. Administrators realized they needed to provide a form of professional development that would be ongoing and support area teachers as they implement the new college- and career-ready standards and also the new core instructional materials required to be used in Hawaii’s schools.

“Teachers are becoming change agents within the school.”

“These teachers are being enhanced in practice and leadership within their schools. Their classes become learning labs for other teachers and administrators,” said Esmeralda Carini, Literary Content Specialist Kailua/Kalaheo Complex Area. “They get to build their knowledge, get solid feedback from their peers, and then share their knowledge and skills with others.”

The cohorts are a way to build additional capacity within the schools. Teachers are becoming change agents within the school and leading the instructional shifts that are occurring as the schools in the complex area implement the new learning standards and materials. Some are now part of school leadership teams and are able to help direct building instructional strategies.

The cohorts are proving to be popular in the Kailua/Kalaheo Complex Area. There were 28
applications for the 12 spots on the cohort in the first year. Next year, they intend to extend the cohort to math.

“These teachers are so excited about teaching the Common Core, and they’re doing it in a way that is authentic, they are doing it in a way where they see an area of need,” said Carini. “They are risk takers who are building their expertise to help not just their students, but their colleagues.”
As the Pearl City/Waipahu Complex Area began work to transition to the new college- and career-ready standards in mathematics, they noticed a high failure rate in algebra. It was concerning to administrators and as the new standards were being implemented they wanted to specifically work on supporting students at all grade levels to be better prepared for algebra.

"Students are doing well and it validates the work we’re doing together as a team, working our way up to put the standards in place," said Alison Ota, Mathematics Resource Teacher Pearl City/Waipahu Complex Area.

In the 2012-13 school year they created the Math Core Group, a set of teachers from throughout the complex who are working together to ensure students in the complex area are better prepared for algebra. The first year they focused on kindergarten through second grade. The Math Core Group did a standards review, a vertical alignment study and created an algebra readiness assessment for K-2 students. The group met five times in one semester and used their time together to better understand the standards. During the 2013-14 school year, the Math Core Group started looking at data as a complex team. They created a third through sixth grade group and found they were beginning to come to a common understanding throughout the various schools and grade levels.

In the 2014-15 school year, the Math Core Group moved to three teams, K-5, 6-8 and intermediate/high school. The groups are now developing strategies together as a team from kindergarten through high school to better prepare all of their students to be algebra ready.

Since starting the algebra preparedness track developed internally by the Math Core Group they now have a faster paced 7th grade math class. If students are successful, they are then placed into 8th grade math. Since they began implementing the algebra preparedness track they have quadrupled the number of students that are taking algebra in the 8th grade and the high school is also seeing gains in their success rates.

“To hear first grade teachers tell me that they feel appreciated by a high school math teacher, it gives me goose bumps,” said Alison Ota Mathematics Resource Teacher Pearl City/Waipahu Complex Area. “Students are doing well and it validates the work we’re doing together as a team, working our way up to put the standards in place.”

Teachers in Pearl City/Waipahu Complex Area have received a significant amount of professional development and resources from the Department. Initially, it was based on providing an understanding of the shifts and the expectations of students. Now it’s more focused
as the move towards full implementation with the core instructional resources required in schools. One resource that has helped was a math curriculum framework provided by the Department that puts the standards into teacher friendly words and provides possible strategies as to what should be taught first.

Ota says she really sees a benefit from the new math standards for her students.

“It’s allowing students to completely understand the math that they’re doing, so they don’t think it’s magic. Things make sense, they can better picture it and they will use it more than the person who just cranked out the algorithm,” said Ota.
Initially prior to 2013, the Department provided districts with resources to host their own workshops and face-to-face trainings, but unfortunately, the trainings did not focus on developing resources and expertise over time because of a complete lack of complete funding. Scott Cook, Director of Academic Services Support and Professional Development, at the Department said it was a daunting challenge — serve all students throughout the large western state. However, as they received operational funding for implementing the new standards through professional development in July 2013, they decided to change their focus and formed the Idaho Coaching Network, a train-the-trainer model that would impact student learning throughout the rural state.

In Idaho, they have found this teacher-leader model to be particularly effective in rural districts, which make up roughly two-thirds of all Idaho districts.

Teacher Leadership in Implementation

The Department didn’t want teachers to get lost in what a big change the standards transition would mean in the classroom. They opted for face-to-face training, treating the teachers who signed up for the Coaching Network as professionals, giving them the opportunity to work with colleagues in a deep sustained way, and positioning them to be a part of the planning process for professional development in their local district. The coaching staff, working alongside department personnel, constructed a 3-day orientation that the network members and teacher leaders would attend in the summer that explained the expectations of the year-long course of study. Everyone who joins the network signs on to be a leader of professional learning.
within their local district. In Idaho, they have found this teacher-leader model to be particularly effective in rural districts, which make up roughly two-thirds of all Idaho districts.

The 3-day summer trainings allow teachers to collaboratively work through modules focusing on universal design for learning principles, assessment, and unit planning. They go through the course, but they also build units that correspond to the particular modules, going through their peers’ units, providing feedback and improving their own. After teaching the unit, teacher leaders collect and bring student work to summer sessions where they evaluate it together, working to better understand how to provide formative feedback to students at a high, cognitive level.

In addition to the initial 3-day summer trainings, members of the network are asked to leave the classroom once a month to connect with others to develop their own regional learning communities. Idaho officials estimate that coaching network participants spend at least 300 hours per year for their work in the network. The Department pays for substitutes in the district and also provides a $1,000 stipend per year for the network members.

“We’re taking people out of their comfort zone, we need to provide ongoing support,” Cook said. “When people learn new things like this it can be difficult, they need frequent and effective feedback, and they need to work in a place where it is safe to take risks. The training is just the beginning.”

Initially the Department hired eight coaches from different regions of the state to staff the Idaho Coaching Network. The Department offered positions in the network with every district and charter school within the state. If a district or charter chose not to participate, they offered additional capacity to the remaining districts. Each coach worked with 30 to 35 teacher leaders. During the first class of the Idaho teacher network, approximately 90 of 140 districts or charters in the state participated allowing them to provide coverage to 85 percent of the student population.

Building on Early Success

In Idaho, they made the decision to continue the Idaho Coaching Network. There has been widespread support from teachers and principals, so much so, that when there was discussion of eliminating the funding the second year, so much legislative testimony was provided that the program was left untouched. The legislature has continued funding for the program at $1.5 million every year, until 2015-16, when it was reduced to $1.3 million; however, three new coaches were added to the network. With increased funding for the 2016-17 school year, the network has expanded to 13 coaches statewide, including a pilot program focused on K-2 early literacy.

**IDAHO COACHING NETWORK**

556 Teachers Participated One Year  
218 Returned for Additional Training  
28,706 Teachers Received PD from Coaches  
81,176 Hours of PD Received by Teachers

The decision to continue the network has led to teacher-leaders coming back for more training after the completion of their first year. While they receive additional professional development training that they are able to take back to their district, they are also helping to mentor the
teachers that are new to the network. Idaho officials say that positive aspect is that in some ways they are creating a mentor mentality for districts, not just instructional coaches. They’re connecting with administrators and building a sustainable system.

**Superintendents and principals are aware that the program is working as they see their employees come in, learn new things, and put them into practice in the classroom.**

Districts are beginning to notice the change in their teachers and are beginning to take advantage of their new expertise. In small districts, the teacher-leaders haven’t just been asked to participate in the planning of professional development for their district, but are actually creating new professional development for their peers and administrators. Superintendents and principals are aware that the program is working as they see their employees come in, learn new things, and put them into practice in the classroom. Administrators are also recognizing the instructional shifts as they go through and do their evaluations.

Department officials say they know the program is a success based on the continued demand for the program. At an estimated $3.33 per hour teachers receive for participating, they know they’re not doing it for the money. “We’re trying to create a place for teachers to work together, to hone their craft,” said Cook. “You know it’s what they love and are seldom given an opportunity like this.”
Jeff Dillon is the superintendent of the Wilder High School district in Wilder, Idaho, a small rural district on the western edge of the state. Wilder is a district unique to Idaho, with 94 percent of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, 85 percent Hispanic, and a 30 percent mobility rate. It has a high concentration of English language learners and faces resource challenges shared by many rural districts.

Switching how instruction was delivered and taking a harder look at how the standards were taught in the classroom was something that began in Wilder even before the state adopted its new, higher standards. In 2009, the district was struggling and a change was needed to better support students and teachers. The decision was made to provide better structure for classroom management, laying a foundation to better engage students in the classroom. The administration began to work with teachers to differentiate instruction for students, implementing instructional strategies to go deeper into content, which was better aligned to standards.

“We found that if you want change, it has to be constant,” said Dillon. “Our professional development is as deep as you’ll find, the question is, how deep do you want to go with the standards? How deep do we go with teachers?”

Teachers from the Wilder School District participated in the Idaho Coaching Network, a professional development program run by the Idaho State Department of Education. The coaching network provides support to districts that would not otherwise be able to afford a deep dive into professional development and make a successful move to the more rigorous Idaho Core Standards for Learning.

Administrators were in classrooms a minimum of once a week, sometimes as many as three times a week providing feedback to the district’s teachers. They would then follow up the observation and feedback with weekly professional development sessions.

In Wilder, they saw amazing progress with the coaching and believe that they need to continue focusing on deep seated change, deeper than what is currently available. That’s why they have begun investing much of their local and targeted federal funds on professional development. Wilder entered into its own contract with professors from Boise State University to provide professional development, creating a culture of weekly enrichment.

Administrators were in classrooms a minimum of once a week, sometimes as many as three times a week providing feedback to the district’s teachers. They would then follow up the observation and feedback with weekly professional development sessions.
In Wilder, they say they are moving teachers from a system of feeling like a victim to one where they are being given the tools to excel and feel like they have the autonomy to help students meet their maximum potential. Teachers are encouraged to take their time getting through the material, which makes the classroom more enjoyable.

“Our teachers have the ability to be creative and take risks. We don’t have a scripted program that tells you what to do, so they are allowed to be professionals and be great teachers,” said Dillon. “The standards allow them to go as deep as they want to go and as deep as their students are capable.”

Our teachers have the ability to be creative and take risks.

Dillon says what follows the deep dive into standards is meaningful results. Before they made the changes to instruction, professional development, and greater focus on standards, about 50 percent of his students were identified as English language learners (ELLs); since the district has changed classroom instruction, now the district doesn’t have enough ELLs to qualify for Title III funds. Reading assessments based on comprehension are showing Wilder students making one to one and a half years’ worth of growth each year. In the high mobility district, 85 percent of new students transferring into the district are two years behind in reading, yet if they stay in Wilder for at least three years, 90-95 percent are proficient in reading.

Wilder made professional development a priority for their Title I funds, rather than trying to expand staffing levels or other possible uses. They’re focusing their efforts on investing in their teachers because they believe that’s where they’ll get the best results for students to master the standards and skills they’ll need to be college- and career-ready.
The Illinois State Board of Education adopted new college- and career-ready standards in June 2010 to replace the previous standards which were implemented in 1997. The previous standards were criticized as being vague and lacking depth, leaving many to refer to them as being, “a mile wide and an inch thick.” The new standards, or the New Illinois Learning Standards, were welcomed by many in the field, providing more focus and concentration on depth of study.

Three Phase Approach

The Illinois State Board of Education (the Department) suggested local districts take time in their implementation of the new, higher, more rigorous standards. The Department suggested a three phase implementation plan over the course of four years. The first phase, which occurred during the 2010-11 school year, was aimed at familiarizing administrators and teachers with the new standards, focusing on communications and awareness. The second phase, in 2011-2012, was geared more toward developing a process for implementation, local resources, and technical assistance. The third phase was to have schools and districts transition to the new standards, which was to occur in the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years.

Illinois School Demographics

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<td>Total #Students with Disabilities</td>
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Model Math Curriculum

Illinois has more than 850 school districts, with the availability of local resources varying widely between districts. While the standards were adopted by the state, it is up to local districts to develop curriculum. As districts began the process of implementing new standards, many had a difficult time finding curriculum and materials aligned to the new math standards and didn’t have the resources to develop their own. In order to ensure districts were supported in this work, the Illinois General Assembly passed a bill that was signed into law requiring the Department to develop a model math curriculum.

The Department pulled together a team of administrators, teachers, curriculum experts, and stakeholders to develop the model math curriculum. The Model Mathematics Curriculum took the team two years to develop and is free to use. The initial version included 88 units, 72 lessons, and more than 500 assessments all aligned to the Illinois college- and career-ready math standards.

“Teachers rely on these materials and they want more; the feedback has been extremely positive,” said Marci Johnson, Project Administrator. “Now we have to build capacity so we can do more of this type of work with the field. They’re using the materials in the classroom and the team is really pleased.”
Clearinghouse for Teachers

The size and diversity of districts in Illinois led the Department to reconsider how it had previously communicated information to the field. As the new standards were being unpacked across the state, the Department decided to utilize its website as a clearinghouse to provide professional development and resources. Initially branded as “Realizing Illinois,” the effort provided information to administrators, teachers, and parents all in one place. The agency created an electronic newsletter in 2012 to provide educators with a regular update containing tips and suggestions on how teachers can better bring to life the standards in their classrooms. Additionally, the agency launched, “Capture the Core,” which is a website tailored to each specific grade level, and includes information for English language arts, math, and literacy.

The Department developed Illinois Teacher Voices, a collection of videos created by Illinois teachers. These videos provide a glimpse inside the classroom, allowing teachers to share stories of their collaboration to solve problems and share strategies they’ve encountered as they have worked together to implement the more rigorous college- and career-ready standards.

Also included is the New Illinois Learning Standards Professional Learning Series, which serves as the agency’s virtual professional development tool. It was designed to provide teachers and administrators in districts that may not be able to afford professional development for staff, access to high-quality professional learning and tools that will help them implement the college- and career-ready standards. The series has three levels: Level 1: Knowledge and Understanding, Level 2: Content Knowledge and Application, and Level 3: Deep Understanding and Integration. The Professional Learning Series allows teachers to receive high quality resources and professional development at a time and place that suits them. Educators can go through the series at their own pace and be provided with strategies and resources aligned to the New Illinois Learning Standards at no cost.

“We had to find a way to provide support to teachers and administrators to implement the new standards with fidelity,” said Johnson. “Some of our districts have more resources and can do this on their own, in others they simply don’t have those supports. We had to use the technology available to get these resources where they were needed.”

The Department also felt it was important to have a classroom perspective for teachers and parents to hear. They developed Illinois Teacher Voices, a collection of videos created by Illinois teachers. These videos provide a glimpse inside the classroom, allowing teachers to share stories of their collaboration to solve problems and share strategies they’ve encountered as they have worked together to implement the more rigorous college- and career-ready standards. Principals can use the videos for professional development with their staff. Topics include student engagement, classroom changes, teaching styles, parental issues, and other suggestions for teachers. The videos have been well-received by teachers, as they confirm they are not facing a challenge alone; they have colleagues throughout the state that have faced similar issues and are willing to share their expertise.
The Gurnee School District in Gurnee, Illinois, began working to implement the New Illinois Learning Standards in English language arts and mathematics in 2011. The district used a phase-in approach over several years, starting in June 2011 with a target completion date to completely switch to the new standards in June 2015.

Colleen Pacatte is the Gurnee Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. Pacatte believes that the Illinois State Board of Education’s adoption of the new college- and career-ELA and math standards was a huge improvement for students and teachers. The previous standards were written in grade spans. This made it more difficult for teachers to determine exactly which standards should be covered in a specific grade. The new standards adopted by the state education agency are very clear about what is to be taught and by which teacher.

“The beauty of the New Illinois Learning Standards is that they are far better than the previous Illinois learning standards. They are more rigorous, but they are much clearer,” said Pacatte. “We knew it would be a big change for our district, but it really has worked out well for us.”

Gurnee teachers were told to have patience and take time with getting to know the new standards. They developed a rollout plan working one grade level at a time. The Gurnee district chose to roll up implementation from kindergarten through high school. Teachers collaborated both within and between grade levels to identify where students were in regard to standards at the end of kindergarten and where they needed to go in first grade.

The district’s Curriculum and Assessment department started with the elementary curriculum and asked teachers how the new Illinois Learning Standards would impact classroom instruction. They repeated the process at each grade level and allowed teachers to work independently on implementation, then brought them together as a group to take a deeper dive. The district asked the teachers to think about why they were implementing the new standards, what big messages to convey through the standards, and what math practices are required for students to achieve the standard(s). They encouraged staff to have conversations around these questions and others to come to a common understanding of the standards. Once that was done, they then would get into the very detailed work back at the school level.

Pacatte says that the switch to the college- and career-ready standards has raised the level of rigor in the classroom and professionalism within the district.

In an effort to make the transition more manageable, the district chose four or five standards to focus on and brought together...
groups of teachers. These groups worked through the standards to establish a common understanding of what they meant and how they were best implemented. Then they began constructing curriculum maps, which is a practice that continues today. Teams of teachers and administrators come together every year to reprioritize and re-write the curriculum maps.

Pacatte says that the switch to the college- and career-ready standards has raised the level of rigor in the classroom and professionalism within the district. This approach ensured everyone in the district is focused on similar goals and outcomes. So too, teachers throughout the district have a common language upon which to build professional learning discussions and to work collaboratively to implement the standards across the content areas.

“As you walk through the district, you’ll now hear teachers having conversations about the standards. Prior to the New Illinois Learning Standards that never happened,” said Pacatte. “The standards are ever present in the work we do every day in a very organic way. It’s not forced. It has become organic because of the foundation of work we’ve built and the instruction we’re doing.”

The biggest challenge in switching to the more rigorous college- and career-ready learning standards is the continuous work that goes on around implementing the standards. This is ongoing in Gurnee District #56. Teachers are regularly working in collaborative environments with their peers, continually coming back to revisit goals and strategies. Pacatte says it is a good challenge that has empowered teachers to ask more questions and is enhancing student learning.
Soon after Iowa adopted new college- and career-ready standards in English language arts and mathematics, they rebranded them the Iowa Core. Prior to the release of the Common Core State Standards, Iowa had begun its process to adopt new standards in 2008, when the state legislature passed a law requiring the state to develop learning standards for all schools and students. This was the first time the state had required standards. Prior to adoption there were vague guidelines that would give direction to schools, but they didn’t actually influence what happened in classrooms.

“Standards for all schools was obviously a big step up. Iowa was the last state in the union to adopt standards,” said Erika Cook, chief of the Bureau of Standards and Curriculum. “That moved us a long way in the right direction, to actually influence what happened in the classroom.”

The Iowa Department of Education (the Department) started working to develop new learning standards in 2008, focusing on literacy, math, science, and social studies. Additionally, the Department identified universal constructs — skills like effective communication, problem solving and collaboration — and were working on resources to help districts develop curriculum based on the constructs and learning expectations. The plan was that local districts would fully implement the new Iowa standards at the high school level in 2012-13 and at the elementary level in 2014-15. When the Common Core State Standards were released, the Department did an alignment study and found them to be similar to the standards they had previously developed and adopted the new college-and career-ready standards to replace the Iowa standards.

District Collaboration

Soon after the new college- and career-ready standards were adopted, the Department asked local districts to develop an implementation plan. That plan was to be monitored and supported by the state’s Area Education Agencies (AEAs), which are regional service centers.

As districts developed their local implementation plans, they were encouraged to collaborate on their plans with other districts. One district would write their plan and ask a neighboring district to provide a critical review. They provided feedback to one another based on the questions the plans were written around and the goals they had set for their district.

This type of collaboration among local districts had never happened before. Many districts liked the interaction with colleagues and began...
working together on common problems and sharing resources. They liked the fact that they were receiving feedback and help from another local district and many said responses were more realistic than what they may have received from an employee of the state education agency who may be years removed from a classroom experience.

Regional Professional Learning

Initially, the legislature had set aside funding for an Iowa Core Network. It allowed a team of educators to meet two days per month to provide common trainings so that schools would have similar implementation plans, materials, and professional development. The Iowa Core Network continued to provide ongoing support and professional development to local schools until 2015.

This type of collaboration among local districts had never happened before. Many districts liked the interaction with colleagues and began working together on common problems and sharing resources.

Additionally, in the AEAs, content leadership teams were created that worked to develop best practices and improve communications channels to provide resources to local districts for implementation. The content leadership teams, made up of representatives from local districts and higher education, collaborate with a Department staff member to determine what content will be developed for that year. The groups have evolved since their initial creation and now extend beyond the literacy and math content areas; they now provide support to districts and schools in supporting the implementation of the Iowa Core.

The AEAs are the primary providers of professional development in Iowa. They are funded independently from the Department and are accredited, but are not governed, by the Department. The AEAs provide services to local districts, but local districts are not mandated to work with them, with larger districts doing much of the work on their own. However, the expectation is that schools will reach out and work with the AEAs. Because they are local experts, districts feel comfortable in reaching out to them for additional assistance.

The Department meets with the Education Service Directors of the AEAs who are responsible for professional development efforts around the Iowa Core. There is a continual discussion about the needs of local schools and how to meet those needs to allow for successful implementation. The AEAs fill in the capacity gap that is needed throughout the state to provide integrated professional learning by having consultants at the grassroots level.

“It’s a tool where we can have consultants out in districts and provide that coordinated professional development,” said Rita Martens, Administrative Consultant for the Iowa Core. “When you have those consultants in every region of the state, you get information to schools and provide the learning opportunities. The Department just doesn’t have that capacity to give the needed support on our own.”
Kansas was in the process of reviewing their learning standards when the development of the new college- and career-ready standards was taking place. When the committee charged with rewriting the standards got together for the first time, the initial draft of the Common Core State Standards came out, so the team decided to begin their work by reviewing the newly proposed college- and career-ready standards. The team liked what they saw and provided a lot of feedback. They decided to hold off on their work to revise the standards until a second draft of the college- and career-ready standards came out to see if their suggestions would be taken into consideration.

When the second draft of the Common Core State Standards were unveiled in early 2010, the committee charged with reviewing the Kansas State Learning Standards were pleasantly surprised to find that more than half of their input was incorporated by those responsible for writing the common college- and career-ready standards. The committee decided they didn’t need to rewrite their state’s standards, because they liked what they saw and felt that the Common Core standards would be beneficial to Kansas. They made some modifications to make the standards specific to Kansas, but felt overall the new common standards were a move in the right direction.

After the new standards were adopted in 2010, the task was to ensure that Kansas educators were aware of the new standards by providing professional learning across the state. To make this happen, many members of the standards committee, as well as other educators from across the state, were identified to become trainers and help train others in the new standards. Kansas education officials say that critical to the successful implementation of the new standards was having staff working with teachers across the state that could stand up and say they were a part of the process to adopt the new, more rigorous learning standards. They say it’s proof to teachers and others that this truly was a state led effort, because these educators can stand before groups and say they were part of the process and they chose these standards for Kansas.

Kansas State Department of Education (the Department) wanted to ensure unified messaging as they began implementing the new standards. They knew that the change to the college- and career-ready standards would be significant for educators and the public and that they needed to have a concerted effort to speak the same language at the department, including the trainers that would be providing professional development.

Kansas School Demographics

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<td>91,469  18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total #ELL</td>
<td>45,530  9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total #Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>67,996  14%</td>
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Teacher Leadership in Implementation

The Department developed a cadre of trainers in 2011 to provide professional development across the state. Department officials felt they needed to maximize the train-the-trainer model of professional development across the geographically large, rural state. They decided to bring in teachers from the specific content areas that they felt had a true understanding and appreciation of the new standards, many of whom were part of that standards committee. They trained them in messaging and professional development in the particular areas of the standards they wanted the field to receive that particular year. The Department brought this group of trainers back each year to make sure they stayed on message and to advance professional development in various parts of the standards.

When the new standards were adopted, the Department gave the field a timeline for implementation. The timeline was guidance that suggested districts implement in phases — implement the new standards in kindergarten through 2nd grade in the 2011-12 school year, adding more grades each year through the 2013-14 school year when they should be fully implemented. At the same time, they also began messaging that this was a rebooting of the system.

Moving Away from Test Prep

School districts wanted to dive in immediately and begin implementing the new standards. Kansas has had standards since the 1990s, so reviewing and revising standards was not new to most in the field. Local districts were requesting the department provide crosswalks, but they refused. The old standards were long lists of lower-level skills and knowledge, which was emphasized in the No Child Left Behind era. The Department previously identified the indicators that would be assessed, with the idea that teachers could use them for instructional purposes. However, districts took those indicators and built their entire curriculum around them.

“If we aligned indicators to the standard with the shifts that occurred, school districts would say, ‘Here’s where we’ll be assessed and that’s where we should teach,’” said Jeannette Nobo, Assistant Director for Academic Standards. “We said, ‘No. Reboot and forget about what you did before. Things are changing, assessment isn’t the end all be all.’”

Nobo says it has been a big shift, but for teachers that truly understand the Common Core, they really enjoy it because it gives them flexibility in the classroom. There were no textbooks aligned to the college- and career-ready standards in the beginning, so teachers were able to put in place quality instruction at the local level. It has been a challenge to move the field away from the fear that students won’t do well on a state test and focus more on true instruction to deeper standards. In Kansas, they feel that instructional changes are taking place, giving students more authority to question and come up with different answers. They say it is about a cognitive process taking place and that teachers are feeling like they have more control of their classrooms.
In Great Bend Unit School District 428 they started working on implementing the new college- and career-ready standards almost immediately after they were adopted in 2010. It was, however, a struggle to switch from the old, familiar standards focused heavily on a state test to the new, deeper and more rigorous standards. Teachers knew what their students would be tested on and what standards they needed to get to in a certain amount of time. If they had extra time they could work on the other standards on which they weren’t going to be tested.

Julie Buzard is an instructional coach in Great Bend and says it was a huge shift for teachers to move toward the very rigorous college- and career-ready standards that weren’t test-specific. She says as the district began working to implement the new standards, teachers still wanted to see what kids needed to know, what the bottom line was for accountability. Not having the gold nugget showing what kids need to be taught was a source of teacher anxiety.

“There was so much focus on the test under the old standards, we want our kids to do well and it comes from a good place,” said Buzard. “We don’t prep our kids for a test now. The reason we do performance tasks is to make sure our kids know how to read, synthesize, and argue with support from those texts. If you teach students how to read closely and practice processing, they’ll be ready.”

Buzard was selected as a state trainer in the new standards and receives firsthand knowledge about the standards and bring sit back to the district. She shares her understanding with others which has helped ease some of the fears among her colleagues. Buzard says being able to deliver the training from the Department direct to teachers locally was extremely effective, especially in a rural state where the capital is six or seven hours away. She says being able to deliver the state training and tell her colleagues it’s not about the test, but rather the thinking that goes with the types of tasks that students are expected to complete has been a key to moving forward with implementation within Great Bend. She has been able to deliver professional development at multiple sites around the district, answering questions and calming fears.

“We don’t prep our kids for a test now. The reason we do performance tasks is to make sure our kids know how to read, synthesize, and argue with support from those texts. If you teach students how to read closely and practice processing, they’ll be ready,” said Buzard.

While the train-the-trainer model was one way to get a large volume of high quality training out to districts, it wasn’t the only professional development available to educators. Staff from Great Bend attended summer conferences that took a deep dive into unpacking the standards and writing workshops focused on teaching...
students to write with evidence. Buzard is now also participating in virtual trainings. She’s part of a virtual community of practice, meeting with 10 other teachers once a month to discuss the standards. This virtual community is allowing them to move beyond growing an understanding of the standard to an actual refinement of teaching.

“The focus is on moving away from broad and wide, we’re not trying to cover everything. We’re going much deeper,” said Buzard. “Much more in-depth conversations in classes, seeing Socratic seminars, our students are willing to take chances and think deeply about things we didn’t see just a few years ago.”

Buzard says as they implement the new college- and career-ready standards, she is seeing an improvement in the quality of her students’ writing and also their ability to reason. She says students are able to substantiate what they say and back it up with evidence. Students can hold their own in an argument, disagree with one another, and be respectful. These are examples she cites as measures of success.

In Great Bend, one of the most positive changes that has come about with the college- and career-ready standards is that students and teachers are willing to take risks because the standards allow them to explore things they couldn’t before. Teachers and students were so focused on a test, they now have freedom to explore and question in the classroom and it is pushing instruction to new places.
When Louisiana adopted new college- and career-ready standards in 2010, the work for the Louisiana Department of Education (the Department) was already going on behind the scenes to implement the new standards. During the first two years after the standards were adopted, the Department was focused on releasing crosswalks between the old and new college- and career-ready standards, trainings to better understand the new state standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, and the release of focused curricular tools.

In 2012, the Department deepened their support for teachers and districts. They took an approach based on two main principles. First, they needed to get extremely high quality curriculum, assessments, and professional development into the hands of teachers. Second, they wanted to help districts bring the necessary changes to scale and make high quality decisions on providing the supports that were needed to transition to the new standards. They needed to identify high quality resources, package them, and help districts use them.

The Department also believed that it was essential for teachers to understand the connection between curriculum, assessments, and professional development. They found that the more professional development is tied to curriculum, the more a teacher’s content knowledge is developed and the more profound an impact they had on day to day changes in the classroom.

### Reviewing Curricular Materials

The Department started conducting curriculum reviews in 2012 and began a robust campaign to review resources, setting a rigorous bar for standards alignment and then posting those reviews publicly on the Department website. The intent was to identify for districts what materials were high quality and aligned to the standards and what was not. In addition, the reviews gave details to districts who had already purchased materials how to supplement what they had. The review graded the materials, placing them into three separate tiers: tier 1 was fully aligned to the standards; tier 2 was aligned, but had some gaps; and tier 3 was not aligned. The Department reviewed hundreds of materials, but found only a few fell into the tier 1 category. According to the Department this process of reviewing curriculum items and placing them into the various tiers was extremely helpful in illustrating for districts where quality curriculum materials were available, showing that not all were created equal, and encouraging vendors to work to improve their offerings.
The Department found that the bulk of what they reviewed fell into tier 3, not aligned to the standards. They found so little materials that were aligned early in the process that they began to create tools to fill in the gaps. The Department created a complete ELA curriculum, ELA Guidebooks 2.0, which is free and available to anyone who wants to use it. They also created supplemental materials in mathematics to fill in the holes in Tier two programs to address the most common gaps.

Making District Purchases of High-Quality Materials Easier

The Department then took the next step to provide district incentives for purchasing high quality materials. To help districts access the high quality materials, the Department signed statewide contracts with all vendors who met the tier one and tier two status. Local district purchasing programs weren’t based on quality, but rather other considerations like cost. Now, because of the statewide purchasing contract, districts do not have to go through their own separate local procurement processes. They can simply choose a high quality, tier 1 or tier 2 vendor from the statewide contract. This is an ongoing process. Vendors can submit their materials for review at any time and districts can request specific materials to be reviewed.

Professional Development Marketplace

The Department also connected professional development to the same tiered system, developing a professional development vendor catalogue available to all schools and districts of tier 1 curriculums. The Department worked with vendors to identify the type of professional development offerings that school systems needed the most and worked with them to offer multiple price points and packages that would also meet the financial needs of all districts. It was easy and accessible to districts, all done through the SEA.

Four years ago, less than 20 percent of local districts were using curriculum aligned to the Louisiana learning standards. Today, 75 percent of local districts are now using standards aligned curriculum.

The Department believes that offering school systems high-quality curriculums that can be purchased easily, and aligned to the same high-quality professional development was a huge move, which reinforced their belief that doing effective training through curriculum was the most effective way to make the shift to the new standards. Four years ago, less than 20 percent of local districts were using curriculum aligned to the Louisiana learning standards. Today, 75 percent of local districts are now using standards aligned curriculum. The implementation of new standards gained huge traction in local districts by removing barriers to finding high quality materials and training, and also simplified purchasing that brings about an economy of scale. Curriculum and professional development remain local decisions, which the Department believes is fundamentally important. Each district should have the ability to choose the materials and support best for their context. However, the Department believes they can do a lot to help districts find and access the highest quality materials out there.
Nason “Tony” Authement, Superintendent of the Rapides Parish School District says the biggest challenge his district faced as they made the switch to new college- and career-ready standards in Louisiana was changing the mindset of teachers and administrators. He says it was a huge shift in how the district does its business and took a lot of people out of their comfort zones.

Authement says Rapides Parish jumped on board with full implementation in the 2013-14 school year. Prior to fully implementing the new college- and career-ready standards, the district organized a committee of teachers to begin looking at the standards and creating grade level frameworks. This process helped ease teachers into implementation and provided them with a baseline of guidance and knowledge of the standards. The frameworks were used across the districts in all grade levels, with professional development provided to all teachers to show them how to familiarize themselves with and use the standards.

Rapides Parish took advantage of the state’s plan to enable districts to easily acquire high quality resources. The district actively used the Instructional Materials Review page on the Louisiana Believes site to acquire curriculum materials. The resources available to local districts that have been classified in various tiers have been a huge help for the district since they haven’t had to cull through materials on their own, instead utilizing the state curriculum marketplace to facilitate curriculum acquisition. Rapides Parish selected their new math curriculum based on the state’s tiering system. They say there is comfort in knowing the Department used local teachers to review the curriculum and rate it based on its alignment to the state’s learning standards.

Teachers that were moving out of their comfort zones are now surprised with what happens when classrooms are less teacher centered and more focused on student driven learning.

As the district moved to put in place the new math curriculum, the administrators knew that because the standards were so much more rigorous than the previous grade-level expectations, some teachers may not have had the content knowledge needed to teach them. Therefore, they offered professional development to teachers prior to teaching each new module. They would set aside time for all teachers to spend a day going through what was to be covered, provided flip charts, electronic resources, and parent communications. Lead teachers at every grade level would digest the module ahead of the training and plan and deliver strategies to cover what needed to be taught, develop and demonstrate sample lessons, and identify the depth of each standard to be
covered. District officials believe this professional development ensured teachers had the math content knowledge and practice they needed in order to be able to teach in the classroom.

Authement says spending the time to build teacher capacity has paid off for the district. Teachers that were moving out of their comfort zones are now surprised with what happens when classrooms are less teacher centered and more focused on student driven learning.

“This has been a paradigm shift for us,” said Authement. “We have been able to improve the practice of our teachers in a very collaborative process, ensuring every level of learner in our classrooms is achieving.”
In St. Charles Parish Public Schools, they took a measured approach toward implementing the college- and career-ready standards adopted by the state in 2010. St. Charles began a gradual implementation, first starting to bring the new standards into the classroom in the 2012-13 school year and fully implementing them in 2013-14.

They say the high level of trust they have with the school community has reduced challenges other local districts may have faced.

Superintendent Felicia Gomez-Walker, and Assistant Superintendent Rachel Alemand have more than 40 years of experience in the district — graduating there, teaching in the parish schools, and serving in the district administration. They say experience and familiarity with the district helped ease the teachers, parents, and students into the new standards. They say the high level of trust they have with the school community has reduced challenges other local districts may have faced.

St. Charles Parish took advantage of the Department’s professional development early on, sending staff to awareness sessions to help better understand the standards. They’ve also sent teacher leaders to the various state academies, and then the teachers bring back that knowledge and share with other teachers in the district. However, the professional development that has helped the most has been the ongoing local professional development tied to the district curriculum, a strategy recommended and facilitated by the Department.

Internally, the district has three groups of ELA teachers and one group of math teachers that meet throughout the school year to help guide district development. These groups take a hard look at the college- and career-ready standards, focusing on the depth and meaning of individual areas and deconstructing them. They also help administrators in the curriculum mapping process, providing feedback on how curriculum implementation occurs throughout the year.

District officials say the switch to new standards and ensuing professional development has had a major impact on how teachers approach their profession. They are having more collaborative conversations about the standards, both horizontally and vertically. They see the way the standards fit together as a bigger picture, rather than just advancing a student from point A to point B.
“You really see the benefits as far as students are concerned,” said Gomez-Walker. “Communications skills, independent thinking and problem solving. Those skills are so transferrable in everything we do in life.”

The collaborative approach means that teachers and administrators work together to identify and plan what strategies need to be implemented in the classroom. They then come back together and discuss what worked and what could have been better. The training makes the standards relevant and immediately applicable. Teachers see the value of the standards and administrators have a better understanding of the learning applications going on in the classroom and what teaching the standards looks like.
Soon after the state of Maryland adopted the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards in June 2010, the state received a $250 million Race to the Top grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The funding was aimed at four specific areas: transforming low-performing schools; redesigning the model for preparation and evaluation of teachers and principals; building a statewide technology infrastructure; and revising the state’s standards, curriculum, assessments, and accountability system based on the Common Core State Standards.

### Professional Development for School Teams

In Maryland, the transition to the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards was phased in over several years. In 2011, the Maryland State Department of Education (the Department) began its Educator Effectiveness Academies, a professional development program that targeted all 1,400 schools in the state. The academies were organized in a train-the-trainer model and facilitated by master teachers from all 24 of Maryland’s local school systems. They were a way for the Department to provide professional development to a team of educators from each school, including the principal, during the summer. The teams would then take back what they learned to be implemented at their schools during the academic year. In 2011, eleven 3-day academies were held in regions across the state. At these academies the teams received intense education on unpacking and understanding the new standards. Attendees gained a better understanding of the standards through the Maryland Common Core State Curriculum Frameworks. The Department created the 600-page framework with the assistance of educators from throughout Maryland. The framework outlines what students need to know and be able to do in order to meet the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards. School teams also developed transition plans to help map out professional development at the local level during the 2011-12 school year. Follow-up webinars were offered for all academy participants and entire faculties.

During the summer of 2012, 10 more 3-day Educator Effectiveness Academies were held throughout the state. The academies were focused on developing participant understanding of the instructional shifts aligned to the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards. Attendees were able to work with lesson plans and model units developed by their peers, as well as to develop new implementation plans for when they returned to their schools in the fall. As a follow-up to the academies, participants again developed school
transition plans aligned to the content of the academies. In addition, the department developed demonstration videos of master teachers across the state implementing lessons aligned to the standards. These demonstration videos were used statewide at school faculty and department meetings and at local school district professional development days.

Eleven additional Educator Effectiveness Academies were held throughout the state during the summer of 2013. The 2013 summer academies focused on teacher ownership of the standards; differentiation of instruction; and administrator observation and support of teacher lessons aligned to the standards. The 2013 academies increased from 3-day to 4-day academies. In addition, school participation increased from four participants per school to six. Follow-up from the 2013 academies again included school-based transition plans, as well as the development of content-focused live and recorded webinars that continued the emphasis of teacher ownership of instruction aligned to the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards.

The survey feedback from the Educator Effectiveness Academies showed the academies were successful in delivering the needed professional development to foster a deep understanding of the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards and of the instructional shifts aligned to the standards. In addition, the transition plans were well received by the attendees and their peers who participated throughout the academic year. An additional outcome of the academies was the creation of a statewide network of master teachers from every state school system who possess a deep knowledge of the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards and the instructional shifts aligned to those standards. They have been utilized on the district and state level to provide guidance and professional learning to teachers. They provide the Department with direct access to school-level data and feedback on implementation needs and strengths. These master teachers have become a regional resource, expanding the reach of the Department to deliver consistent professional development and assist local teachers in better understanding and implementing the new standards. Department staff believe this master teacher network makes it easier for classroom teachers anywhere in the state to pick up a phone and ask a question. These master teachers have established relationships within their communities, and other teachers may be more comfortable seeking support and learning about best practices from a fellow educator.

“It’s exciting to see how people have truly bought into the process and are actively engaged in developing a statewide definition of assessment literacy,” said Heather Lageman, Director of Curriculum at the Maryland State Department of Education.

The Department took the feedback they received from the academies and began a live and recorded webinar series in fall 2014, which allows all educators to take part in professional development. The series has continued through 2016. In addition to targeting professional learning based on teacher instructional needs data, it highlights teachers and schools across the state who share their exemplars with other educators, creating an online collaborative. It provides flexibility to local districts to receive professional development and support virtually, without having to travel upwards of three hours to receive it in person.
Professional Development Open to All Teachers and Administrators

In 2014, the well-received Educator Effectiveness Academies transitioned to College and Career Readiness Conferences. Based on survey feedback and school site visits made in 2013-14 by the Department's Division of Curriculum, Assessment, and Accountability, it became clear that teachers and administrators were ready for differentiation of professional learning based on the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards. Where the academies were specifically focused on one consistent professional learning content delivered to teams from each school, the College and Career Readiness Conferences were voluntary and open to all teachers, administrators, and others to attend and gain professional development to help them implement the new standards. The content was differentiated and participants could choose sessions based on need. The content of the sessions being offered was designed based on survey data and information from school site visits made in 2013-14. The focus of the conferences is to build leadership capacity and gain knowledge and strategies to better differentiate instruction for students. These College and Career Readiness Conferences were repeated during the summer of 2015.

Formative Assessment

One of the Department's more popular initiatives has been the online blog FAME, or Formative Assessment for Maryland Educators. It facilitates educator reflection on what formative assessment means and how to get it in the proper structures. It allows teachers to better understand if they are getting students to their goals. Teachers use the resource to transition into more of an academic coach and less of a lecturer. Some highlights include communities of practice, leadership support, cohort learning, and self-study modules. “FAME has been fantastic, and a major success has been increased reflection and conversation about formative assessment and its role in classroom practice,” said Heather Lageman, Director of Curriculum at the Maryland State Department of Education. “It’s exciting to see how people have truly bought into the process and are actively engaged in developing a statewide definition of assessment literacy.”

“The bottom line is that students are at the center of this process, and teachers know what’s best for their students. They are the experts and need to be respected for their knowledge and their work, because they are the ones that are affecting change in Maryland classrooms every day,” said Lageman.

Changing Relationship Between SEA and LEAs

Lageman says the transition to the new standards has also meant positive growth and change in the relationship between the Department and local education agencies, from a relationship based more on compliance, to a partnership for student learning. The Department is striving to create a repository of current best practice, with more of a collaborative relationship where teachers and principals use their expertise to impact student achievement.

“The bottom line is that students are at the center of this process, and teachers know what’s best for their students. They are the experts and need to be respected for their knowledge and their work, because they are the ones that are affecting change in Maryland classrooms every day,” said Lageman.
When the Baltimore County Public Schools, the 25th largest district in the country, received $17.4 million in Race to the Top funding, district officials knew they had to make a big investment in their staff and resources. The district used half of those funds on curriculum and professional development. Central office staff spent week after week during the school year and summers finding ways to bring teachers in to familiarize them with new standards and deepen their content knowledge.

District officials say their partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education (the Department) was extremely important as the district began its transition to the new standards. The district found invaluable the frameworks provided by the Department and the plans to bring the changes necessary to teach the new standards to scale. Baltimore County sent teams of math, English language arts, and science teachers to the Educator Effectiveness Academies, along with a district administrator. This early professional development allowed these educators train others in the district. They came back to Baltimore County and shared the content they gathered at the academies with building leaders who would in turn share throughout the individual schools.

They also brought back an implementation plan to help the district develop a strategy to begin spreading an understanding of the standards. The first year, most of the district level work occurred after school or at faculty meetings on Mondays. There were one hour sessions for professional development that usually involved an activity, providing teachers a sense of what individual standards meant and how to assess student understanding of the new standards. Building leaders worked to unpack the standards with faculty, having deep discussions around the vocabulary in each standard and what it meant.

They say the time spent unpacking the standards and practices helped as they invested resources in lesson planning. They took information from the Department and started to embed that work into how they wrote their lesson activities that would give students the ability to think creatively and work in the proper context.

District officials credit having that initial cadre of well-trained people at each school with providing a solid foundation for the implementation of new standards to spread throughout the district. They say the time spent unpacking the standards and practices helped as they invested resources in lesson planning. They took information from the Department and started to embed that work into how they wrote their lesson activities that would give students the ability to think creatively and work in the proper context. The goal was to have kids comfortable with the process, thinking in the critical way the standards demand.
Baltimore County Public Schools is proud of the fact that they do not buy curriculum. Their teachers write the district’s curriculum. William Burke, Chief of Organizational Effectiveness in the Baltimore County Public Schools, says the move to implement the new Maryland College and Career Ready Standards forced the district’s teachers to really examine content in a way they have never really looked at it before. The district’s previous curriculum guides were very prescriptive. Teachers could follow the guide and not really have a deep understanding of the content they were teaching.

“Now it’s about student proficiency level against the standards. Teachers really have to know their different levels of proficiency,” said Burke. “The important piece is teachers are much stronger in their content knowledge.”

District officials say they don’t see an end to implementation, but rather it is continuous work. Last year, they spent $1.2 million on writing new curriculum for the district because they believe it is about continuous growth and understanding. They are dedicated to providing teacher training to make it a rich and appropriate experience for students.
When Massachusetts adopted new college- and career-ready standards in 2010, staff at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (the Department) felt the transition to new standards was nothing new for many of the state’s local districts. Massachusetts adopted its first set of K-12 math standards in 1995 and its first set of English language arts standards in 1997, followed by statewide assessments in those subjects in 1998.

The state adopted a phased in approach for the transition. Department assessment staff mapped out in detail what standards would be assessed each year until a new assessment was in place. Local response was positive. Teachers and administrators knew what would be on the assessment each year and they could develop local curriculum accordingly. Being clear about what was to be assessed and when it was to be assessed eased the transition to the new standards and served as a map for all local districts.

Collaboration with the Higher Education Community

Adopting revised state standards and the ensuing transition was nothing new to Massachusetts, however, a comprehensive involvement with the state higher education community was new. This multi-tiered collaboration began with the development and adoption of a Definition of Readiness for College and Careers, a first for the state. This was followed by the beginning of intense curriculum alignment work between high school and college courses in ELA, math, and the sciences. This alignment work continues today. This purposeful collaboration also engaged higher education leaders who prepare Massachusetts educators to ensure integration of the new standards into educator preparation programs.

Department staff say that now there is a firmly embedded commitment to including higher education on different levels and that work is occurring more collaboratively. During the transition, conversations were happening across the commonwealth between K-12 teachers and higher education about college readiness and the need for more learning after high school. K-16 educators worked together on alignment training, taking a deep dive together for transitioning to the new standards and backward mapping from college to kindergarten.

Department officials say it will be some time to see a change in the readiness levels of students.
entering college because most districts began rolling out new curriculum in the lower grade levels. However, given the amount of students that graduate from high school and are placed in remedial coursework, this new relationship with higher education is important.

“We really believe at the core of this work the relationship is essential,” said Susan Lane, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. “I can still call on higher education faculty to be a part of the conversation because they know how important this work is.”

**Model Curriculum**

Massachusetts was awarded a $250 million Race to the Top grant in 2010 which was used to put together several initiatives to support the implementation of new college- and career-ready standards. Areas of concentration included educator evaluation, leadership development, and using data and technology to improve student performance. Department staff say work around developing model curriculum units helped local districts transition to the new standards.

The model curriculum units are resources developed by teachers for teachers to help them through the planning process of implementing new standards in their classrooms and districts.

Massachusetts education officials say one of the challenges they had was to help the field understand the change in expectations with the new standards. Understanding the increased level of rigor took a lot of time for educators in the state to fully grasp. They say what really helped their teachers understand and become more comfortable with the new standards was the development of model curriculum units.

The Department developed more than one hundred model curriculum units across all subjects to aid local districts as they transitioned. In Massachusetts, curriculum decisions are all made locally, however, the model units were meant to provide an example of units that would illustrate what the new college- and career-ready standards called for in the classroom. They weren’t meant to be a full curriculum, but rather they were meant to provide an idea of how practice would need to change based on expectations of the new standards and what they would mean for the student experience and assessments on the local level.

The Department brought local educators from throughout the Commonwealth to develop the model curriculum units. They wanted teachers to own these curriculum units and didn’t want it to be seen as something the state developed. Rather, the model curriculum units are resources developed by teachers for teachers to help them through the planning process of implementing new standards in their classrooms and districts.

**Educators Conducting Outreach**

The Department also developed an informal outreach program to help raise awareness of the new college- and career-ready standards. It included group of 30-40 educators that spanned from elementary through higher education. This team, provided with training and messaging from the Department, was available for local civic groups, education conferences, and school and staff meetings. They didn’t provide extended professional development in the beginning, but they were consistent and substantive in their messaging about the new standards. Officials credit this work with setting the stage for widespread acceptance of the new college- and career-ready standards.
In the Tewksbury Public Schools, Assistant Superintendent Brenda Theriault-Regan was an elementary school assistant principal when the new standards were adopted in Massachusetts. Her teachers immediately began to focus on how to align lessons they had already created with the new standards, a process she likened to building a plane as it was being flown. Yet, they needed to take a step back, review the standards, the guiding principles, and the changes that would be needed for implementing the new standards in their classrooms. All of the teachers received a copy of the standards and they began discussions about practice and content related standards and how to break apart the standards so that everyone was pulling together in the same direction. Prioritizing reading, writing, speaking, and listening in all content areas was key.

That shared responsibility around the new literacy standards was once again a focus when Theriault-Regan became the high school principal in 2012. Departmentally, some progress was being made toward this transition, but not a coordinated effort for the entire school. In 2012, she worked with the school’s department heads to begin dissecting the standards, particularly in the area of shared literacy and writing, by providing professional development to the staff so they could begin to understand the shifts and how to incorporate them into their classrooms school-wide.

It was at this time that a new physical education teacher took the initiative to include writing as part of his day-to-day instruction. Theriault-Regan encouraged her Physical Education (PE) teacher to collaborate with his colleagues and bring in a fresh perspective to develop a way to implement writing into the school’s PE classes. The school is on a block schedule with lengthy 84 minute classes. The teacher gave students an opportunity to reflect on what they learned in each day’s class by writing in a journal. In addition, students were expected to do a short research paper in each eight-week session. They were to choose a topic on how to maintain lifelong health and wellness and were given opportunities throughout the session to work on their research. The students were not initially thrilled at the onset of writing expectations in PE, however, they soon learned to value the class in a more reflective way. And, likewise, students who were not very skilled at the physical aspects of the PE class had an opportunity to show what they learned through writing.

The High School PE writing experiment has morphed over the three years since it was introduced. Other PE teachers in the district have adopted the reflective writing approach and say that students can learn and process material better when they are expected to write about it. They saw that students had a better understanding of the concepts they were teaching and realized just how critical the literacy standards are to all content areas.

Teachers in non-English language visual arts classes also began to implement their own writing-based lessons. The high school’s art department
set a goal to use the citing of evidence approach toward effective artwork critiquing, a required standard for high school art classes. They began having students critique artworks based on the visual evidence they saw in their work. The visual evidence expectations were directly related to the learning objectives from the art lessons. Students first talked about a piece of art and critiqued it together as a group, focusing on the art standards. They then are asked to write down their observations for further reflection. The exercise has come full circle now with students critiquing their own work, and improving on it because of the evidence they do or do not see, rather than to simply critique artwork as good or not.

Theriault-Regan says not every teacher grades the student writing the same way the writing teacher would grade it; that is not the goal. She says writing is simply a common practice in the learning process. Students are practicing writing more and it’s invigorating for the staff to see their strategy paying off as students become better writers and better learners.

“People are pulling in the same direction and we’re speaking the same language around writing and citing textual evidence from third grade reading through high school art,” said Theriault-Regan. “When we speak the same language, students know what we are expecting of them and then they can succeed. A student can go from school to school within our district, or to any school in the country knowing what we expect them to know and do; this is one way we can feel really good about a common set of standards. That has meant a lot to our teachers.”

Theriault-Regan says while not everyone is successful with their first try, the incorporation of more writing in all subject areas has energized teachers and improved student learning. All classes are expected to develop lessons with writing components and writing across all content areas has now become a habit. All classes are expected to develop lessons with writing components in schools across the district.
The State Board of Education in Michigan adopted the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics in 2010, and in 2014 the standards were renamed the Michigan K-12 Standards.

In 2010, the Michigan Department of Education (the Department) began to engage stakeholders, legislators, and the public much like they had with previous initiatives. They sent memos to various groups, providing them with basic information on what was happening with the change in the state’s learning standards, moving from the previous Grade Level Content Expectations to the new, more rigorous college- and career-ready standards. They didn’t anticipate any pushback with the new standards because previous improvements to state standards had moved forward without issue.

Importance of Communications

The biggest challenge they faced in implementing the college- and career-ready standards was political. Department officials planned a four-year timeline for rolling out the new college- and career-ready standards, but spent two years of that time struggling with anti-Common Core groups that wanted to see the standards removed.

While the education community was solidly behind the new standards from the start, there were a number of other constituencies that were concerned about the Common Core and wanted to stop the implementation. In fact, when the Department’s budget was passed in the summer of 2013, the legislation banned the Michigan Department of Education from spending any funds on implementing the Common Core. Three years after the new learning standards were adopted, the Department was forced to stop implementation efforts, or even speaking about the new standards.

“We had to shut down implementation for three months, that was very challenging,” said Andrew Middlestead, Office of Standards and Assessments Director. “We found out that we couldn’t just roll the information out, we needed to do more outreach with legislators and stakeholders.”

The Department learned that they really needed to enhance communication with legislators and launched an education campaign focused on providing them with a better understanding of what exactly learning standards are and how the Common Core was developed. During the first half of 2014, the Department focused its efforts at one-on-one work with legislators. That was the turning point, when they were able to engage legislators and provide them with the facts on the standards.

Michigan School Demographics

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Department staff were able to calm the concerns of lawmakers and to make them more comfortable with the college- and career-ready standards, which ultimately allowed the Department to move forward with implementation of the standards. They also benefitted from Governor Rick Snyder strongly, and publicly, supporting the new standards, as well.

The Department has learned to be more strategic in communicating the changes to lawmakers and stakeholders.

The Department has learned to be more strategic in communicating the changes to lawmakers and stakeholders. There was never an issue before, because Michigan always had its own standards. Now, as the Department looks at more collaborative work with other states, especially in standards and assessments, they are putting more time in with lawmakers, providing that education up front and ensuring that lawmakers get the information they need from the Department to make informed decisions.

Partnering with Professional Associations

Initially, the Department worked with the field to implement with resources and professional development. They developed crosswalks for the new standards and created the Michigan Academic Standards Page to provide educators with tools to help implement the standards. The Department also spent a lot of time engaging their professional associations and other groups to serve as a proxy for the Department. They partnered with these groups, providing them with messaging and talking points to help provide additional information in the schools. One project that stakeholders put together was the Common Core Resources and Guides for K-12 Michigan Schools website.

The website has training tools educators can use to better understand the standards. It is a collaboration of the Regional Education Media Center Association of Michigan and the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators.

The shifts in Michigan classrooms are apparent. Middlestead says educators’ focus has transitioned from just teaching the facts to inquiry and problem-solving, changing how content is being delivered to students. The change is allowing educators to build tests that are more engaging and exciting for students. The giant testing bubble sheets are becoming a thing of the past, and tests that grab a student’s attention and require them to demonstrate knowledge are helping Michigan educators better prepare students to succeed after school.

“It is encouraging to me to see educators and students shift their thinking to deep thought and critical skills,” said Middlestead. “We’re catching up in a lot of ways to better prepare students for college and careers.”
The Ottawa Area Intermediate School District (OAISD) provides services to all of the education agencies in Ottawa County, located along Lake Michigan in the central part of the state. Michigan’s Intermediate School District provides programs and services to schools including special education, career and technical education, general education, and professional development.

Soon after Michigan adopted the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and math, staff at the OAISD began going through the Grade Level Content Expectations and the new college- and career-ready standards. They began identifying gaps at grade levels and eliminating standards that no longer needed to be taught and incorporating the new standards to eliminate alignment gaps.

The staff at the OAISD held three half-day grade-specific professional development sessions three times per year. Districts in the county were allowed to send as many teachers as they wanted, allowing for conversation and collaboration across an entire district. It also allowed the OAISD to tailor instruction based on the specific district needs. Initially they focused their teacher training on the strategies that were new under the Common Core, and now are more narrowly focusing on best teaching practices, along with the importance of formative assessments to drive instruction.

At the time of the initial rollout many districts were looking to adopt new math programs, so the staff began reviewing various programs for alignment. As districts have adopted the new programs, training is more focused on vertical and linear professional development for elementary and special education teachers, especially those that need to know the standards and content at various grade levels.

The majority of schools in Ottawa County uses the same math program, which has allowed for OAISD to tailor the professional learning opportunities to align with the curriculum. They refer to it as readiness training. Before they begin a sequence of units, they meet with teachers to discuss strategies. As teachers get ready to dig into new content, they receive professional development and have time to collaborate and process the new materials with their colleagues from across the district.

“We supported our teachers in that manner and the administration and superintendents supported our recommendations by allowing all their teachers to attend,” said Robyn Decker, Mathematics Consultant. “We are approaching our biggest challenge now. We have proven the importance of professional development and yet funding is being depleted, therefore less of it can happen now.”

Decker says it has been a challenge helping teachers understand what they might not know. She says using classroom videos has helped teachers to see how different their instruction
will look. Math-Talk in the classroom has been a challenge for some, simply because some teachers didn’t know what they were supposed to be listening to. They are used to leading class discussions and not listening to them. The teachers are now asking questions of the students, and the students are providing explanations, which is resulting in a major classroom shift.

“We are trying to help teachers understand that the ones doing the most talking are doing the most learning,” said Decker. “The result is more student engagement.”

The feedback the OAISD has received from professional development evaluations shows that the new standards and how they are being implemented are relevant to teachers. The OAISD has been able to do in-district trainings, videotaping teachers in action and sharing with colleagues to see best practices in action. The video recording allows other teachers to learn from their colleagues and also gives principals an opportunity to see the instructional shifts.

Decker says she would advise other districts to be intentional and have long term goals and that professional development for teachers is the “make it or break it” part of implementation, with a need to be relevant and collaborative.

“This has been amazing and a challenge,” said Decker.
Soon after Mississippi adopted its new college- and career-ready standards in 2010, they worked with partners from higher education, the business community, and elected officials to begin implementing the standards and delivering professional development. As the Department began the task of implementation, they had to take a hard look at how they delivered professional development and the agency structure itself.

In 2010, The Department started blanketing the state with teams from school districts and universities working to implement train-the-trainer models. The train-the-trainer model served well to promote general awareness, but over a period of three years, they found that actual implementation varied from district to district in terms of getting information into the hands of teachers and unpacking the standards. Some districts simply didn’t have the capacity to provide their staff with what was needed in terms of making the standards come alive in the classroom. Through the interaction with teachers and the realization that some districts and teachers needed more in depth training, the state changed the model, moving to an agency delivered face-to-face training model.

Now the Department provides statewide training with a regional approach delivered through the six Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs). This effort allows the Department to branch out and have a more direct touch to classroom teachers and principals. The feedback they have received is that this regional, face-to-face approach is working better and the field wants more of it. The RESAs provide training to over 20,000 educators each year.

Building on the success of the regional approach, The Department has partnered with the University of Mississippi to continue to think outside the box. A $2.6 million contract paid for by a combination of state and federal funds calls for the University of Mississippi to hire individuals as Professional Development Coordinators who are in service.

The Mississippi Department of Education (The Department) began implementing the higher Common Core State Standards soon after the original adoption in 2010. Last year’s 4th graders are the first group of students that have been working with the higher learning standards since 1st grade. State Superintendent Carey Wright says she’s excited to see the dedication to new standards paying off in improved student outcomes, citing improving scores on The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), where Mississippi was the only state in the nation that showed significant improvement in 4th grade reading and math. The state increased in 4th grade proficiency by 5 percentage points to 26 percent proficient, and by 4 percentage points in reading to 30 percent proficient.
to the Department and provide on demand training to the districts in areas such as early literacy, mathematics, English Language Arts, and other content areas. A local superintendent or principal can call and request specific training for staff that is then provided by the Professional Development Coordinators hired through this partnership. This approach allows the Department to have control over the content and ensures that everyone trained through this model gets the same information. This professional development delivery strategy has resulted in 161 sessions in 45 districts just since July 1, 2015.

Mississippi officials say an important lesson learned during implementation of the standards is to listen closely to stakeholders.

Implementing the standards has also caused the Department to look inward, at its very own structure. A capacity review of the Department provided an opportunity to receive feedback and put infrastructure in place to bring about a culture change within the agency. Previously, many people at the Department did not have a strong content area background. Their focus now is to bring in new employees with building level skillsets, hiring individuals who have strong content area expertise.

Like many states, Mississippi began receiving questions from stakeholders regarding new college- and career-readiness standards. To address this need, education leaders across Mississippi joined forces to improve academic content standards. Based on stakeholder feedback, they began a review of the Mississippi College and Career Ready Standards in English Language Arts and mathematics with a desire to better engage the public, and provide a clearer understanding of just what standards are and how they are used in the classroom.

Mississippi put the standards on the agency’s website for the entire state to review. Instead of the normal 30-day process for public comment, the standards went out for a 90-day public comment period. At the end of the 90-days, more than 90 percent of the people that provided feedback on the standards actually approved of them. Not a single person said to remove anything from the standards, but rather called for rewriting specific areas or moving items from one grade level to another.

Once the Department received feedback on the standards, they called in 60 of the best and brightest teachers in Mississippi to advise the Department on specific changes received through the public feedback. After two months of review and modifications by the Department and the team of local curriculum specialists, the revised standards went to the Mississippi State Board of Education for another round of public comments, with the Board eventually approving the Mississippi College and Career Ready Standards in January of 2016.

An innovative partnership with the University of Mississippi allows them to provide specialized trainings to districts that allows for content and training to be consistent across the state.

Mississippi officials say an important lesson learned during implementation of the standards is to listen closely to stakeholders. The feedback they received has helped them improve their professional development, moving to a regional, face-to-face method in partnership with regional offices that has been lauded by the field. They also learned that to improve student outcomes, everyone — teachers, principals and superintendents — needs to be trained in what works. An innovative partnership with the University of Mississippi allows them to provide specialized trainings to districts that allows for content and training to be consistent across the state.
Todd English, superintendent of the Booneville School District says in his district the biggest challenge to implement the standards was society. He says some parents weren’t supportive of the new standards because kids have to work harder than under the previous standards. Moving to college- and career-ready standards from the old Mississippi learning standards was a big jump, for teachers, administrators, and parents.

When the Common Core State Standards were initially implemented he knew there would be pushback, so he went to any church, club, or community meeting that would listen to him speak about the new standards. He talked about the need for Booneville students to be able to compete in a global marketplace. He argued that Booneville had to get behind the new more rigorous standards because if they didn’t they would continue to fall further behind the nation, and the nation would fall further behind the world.

The Booneville School administration sold the community on a vision — more rigorous standards are needed for their sons or daughters to be successful. The world and the technology that drives it are rapidly changing; the top jobs in 10 years have probably not even been created. Students must get that foundation now, to have success early on.

One of the keys to getting the standards right has been the professional development teachers in his district received from the Mississippi Department of Education (the Department). The face-to-face training the Department provides was effective because the individuals who provided it worked previously with district personnel and had instant credibility. They communicated with the district directly and knew its strengths and weaknesses. The Department math and ELA specialists worked directly with the Booneville curriculum specialist to tailor training and develop an implementation plan for the district.

The face-to-face training the Department provides was effective because the individuals who provided it worked previously with district personnel and had instant credibility.

While the data was a starting point, Booneville teachers say the training was phenomenal. There were 30 teachers in each session. They got to work with each other and were comfortable asking questions. Before the Department teams got to the district, relationships were already in place and the district’s teachers were ready to learn. Professional training from the state has been a key to successful local implementation, “At the end of the day, when the door closes, the quality of the teacher in that room determines the implementation quality of the standards,” said English.
English says the best part of implementing the revised Mississippi College and Career Ready Standards is seeing his kids achieve at a whole new level. In Booneville, they are seeing the growth of the middle ranges of students, those learners who may not have been challenged by the previous standards. English says it’s exciting to see students go from being bored in school under the previous set of standards, to being challenged now and that their only limitation may be their age. But it can cut both ways. There are students who were earning straight As under the old standards, that are now receiving Bs. That can be a tough conversation to have with parents, but it’s important because in Booneville they’re convinced those students are learning so much more now and will have a much brighter future because of the change.
Mississippi- District

Monroe County Schools

Monroe County Schools
Rural
K-12 District
3 Schools
2,400 Students
63% Free and Reduced Lunch

Scott Cantrell is the Superintendent in Monroe County, a 2,400 student district with three K-12 campuses. The biggest challenge the district had in switching to the new Mississippi College and Career Ready Standards has been logistical. Just trying to find time for teachers to familiarize themselves with the standards, scheduling professional development days, and covering classes so educators can work together and develop plans for making the standards come alive in the classroom.

In Monroe County just making sure everyone was on the same page was a challenge, but one that they met head on. In the beginning, the administration approached staff, showing them the difference between the previous standards and Mississippi College and Career Ready Standards and assuring them it was the right direction to be moving in for the students of the district. They encouraged staff to embrace the new standards. Getting staff buy-in was not an easy task, but the administration continued to reinforce and reassure this was the direction the district was heading and staff would be supported.

Assistant Superintendent Brian Jernigan says the shift in how the state delivers professional development in Mississippi has been a welcome change. The old train-the-trainer method worked to an extent, but it took too much time away from the classroom and the training didn’t always trickle down to other educators as it was intended.

Over the past two years Monroe County Schools have been utilizing the state’s menu of services to provide professional development on-site and specific to Monroe County. Having the Department staff come to the district gives extra weight to the professional development. Not only is the state measuring the performance of the district, they’re also working with them to provide guidance to implement the standards.

The relationship between Monroe County Schools and the Department has changed as they have worked together to implement the new standards, “They have been very supportive and they want districts to succeed, understand and be comfortable with the standards,” said Jernigan. “They have really made a deliberate attempt to offer more and we are a lot further now with the support services we receive from them than we have ever been.”

“They have been very supportive and they want districts to succeed, understand and be comfortable with the standards,” said Jernigan.

Jernigan and Cantrell say communicating with classroom teachers is the key to success. They say it’s important to provide resources and information, but that so much has been developed to help classroom teachers make the switch to college- and career-ready standards, it
can be overwhelming. One of the tools they say has helped their teachers make the transition is an essential document binder with no more than five documents that a teacher can focus on to help them narrow their efforts to build lesson plans. If they need more detail, it can always be found, but getting to the baseline with those essential documents has proven valuable to their teachers.
In July 2014, Missouri Governor Jay Nixon signed into law House Bill 1490, legislation requiring the review and update to the state’s learning standards in English language arts (ELA), math, science and social studies. Missouri adopted Common Core State Standards in 2010 in ELA and math, but the passage of HB 1490 required the standards to be updated by Missouri parents and teachers.

The legislation specified a process by which groups, appointed by the legislature, governor and others, would propose recommendations for new standards. There were multiple groups at the elementary and secondary levels for each subject area. These groups worked independently to craft their recommended standards and were required to present their proposed standards in their individual subjects to the Missouri State Board of Education in October 2015.

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Beginning in the fall of 2015 the Department’s curriculum directors were able to review the proposed standards. They took standards developed by the work groups and began to compare and contrast them with best practices throughout the country. The curriculum directors were able to enhance and improve the standards, developing more scope and sequence and creating more comprehensive guidelines.

In addition to the best practices review, Department staff held a series of public hearings and solicited feedback on the standards from educators and other stakeholders. They developed an online survey and sent out requests to professional groups seeking their feedback.

“We wanted to be transparent and inclusive in the process. We had a lot of work to do on the standards as a result of the comments,” said Blaine Henningsen Assistant Commissioner, Office of College and Career Readiness. “One of the most frequent comments we received was the need to implement the new standards in a phased-in process.”

Department staff presented their recommendations for new Missouri Learning Standards, and the State Board of Education approved them in April 2016. In response to feedback during the public input process the Department proposed a phased-in implementation process. School districts should begin work to develop and implement new curricula in the
2016-17 school year. Students will be assessed on new standards in ELA and math in 2017-18; new science assessments begin in the 2018-19 school year and new social studies assessments in the 2019-20 school year.

One of the biggest challenges has been the tight timeline in reviewing, revising and implementing the new Missouri Learning Standards. Originally, the plan was to approve the new standards in February 2016, but because the public comment was so overwhelming and the Department wanted to be responsive to the comments, the schedule was pushed back several months. The delay created pressure to get materials ready in time for the 2016-17 school year. The Department has developed a webpage that contains resources, including the standards and crosswalks, to help districts begin their transition.

The Department has begun providing professional development opportunities to local educators in order to assist with the implementation of the new college- and career-ready standards. In June 2016, they hosted 200 elementary educators in Jefferson City for a week. Teachers were able to choose sessions on the specific content areas, immersing themselves in implementation strategies and exploring in depth the new standards. In July 2016, 250 secondary educators were offered similar opportunities.

"It has forced us to reflect on what we’re doing here and how we’re trying to be partners with districts and not be the accountability police," said Henningsen.

The response for professional development has been so great the Department has had to rethink how they deliver professional learning opportunities because they have had to turn away some teachers who wanted to participate in the weeklong immersions. They are currently developing a series of workshops they will hold in various locations throughout the state in late summer and fall. The Department’s curriculum directors have developed a version that is more compact than the weeklong workshop that can be taken on the road, providing additional professional development opportunities throughout the state.

“This has really emphasized that we are here to support districts and listen to their feedback. We didn’t just hand them something and say ‘here you go,’” said Henningsen. “They have been very involved. It has forced us to reflect on what we’re doing here and how we’re trying to be partners with districts and not be the accountability police.”

Department staff say the main challenge has been balancing the changes to the various subject areas. In the future they plan to work with lawmakers to develop a review schedule that does not require all four subjects to be reviewed and revised simultaneously.
In Liberty 53 Public School District just outside of Kansas City, district leaders say Missouri’s switch from the Common Core State Standards adopted to 2010, to a new set of state learning standards in 2015 did not derail their progress in implementing new learning standards. Superintendent Jeremy Tucker says historically the district has been known to embrace change and jump out front when it comes to experimentation and innovation of learning activities. The district administration, from the local board to building and teacher leaders, have abandoned a view that education is static, instead adopting a mindset that change is good, and that stopping, pausing and reflecting on what works, allows them to do what’s right for the students they serve.

As the state debated a change in learning standards in 2014, leadership in the Liberty School District knew they would have to put some work on hold for implementing new learning standards. However, instead of simply stopping the implementation, they reviewed the state’s existing college- and career-ready standards and decided that many of the same standards would be incorporated into the new Missouri State Learning Standards. They then prioritized the standards they wanted to focus on in their community, keying in on anchor standards as the work to review and revise state standards was being done.

In Liberty, they have framed their work around three key areas; necessary life skills students need to succeed after they leave the local school system, how standards and curriculum build on one another for the next grade level, and what local assessments need to be in place in order to measure how students are progressing and what changes need to be made in order to improve instruction.

“It all starts with a collaborative culture and environment. We really rely on teacher teams and teacher leaders to train and facilitate what it looks like in the classroom,” said Tucker. “Allow grade level teams to be the leaders, identify the essential standards and then support them with professional development and leaning opportunities. Then work with them to generate the local assessments and what it looks like to master those standards.”

In Liberty they say they have an advantage that many districts may not have in their regional partnerships. Liberty has worked with a number of other districts to partner together on professional development and professional learning.
opportunities. They look at it from a regional approach, not simply what’s best for Liberty students, but what is best for all students. Even as standards changed, they worked with other districts and regional professional development centers to continue providing professional development to staff based on anchor standards they felt would be included in the new Missouri Learning Standards.

Liberty staff provided feedback to the state as they went through the process of revising the state learning standards. It was important that local districts were able to make their voices heard and be involved in developing the new standards.

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Now that the new standards have been adopted, Liberty district staff are working with their state counterparts to implement the new learning standards with fidelity. Liberty staff have attended professional development meetings in Jefferson City as well as via webinar. This fall, they will also work with other districts on a regional professional development meeting in the northern Kansas City area.

“I can’t overemphasize the value that SEA connections give to our districts. They are a tremendous support for us and are what we want in an SEA,” said Tucker. “Having that public input and willingness to listen at the state level has been great. We continue to have help from them as we move forward and really dig into the new standards.”

In Liberty, they feel their culture of being willing to have conversations around doing things differently and embracing innovation has led to their success in working with new college- and career-ready standards. It’s not a top down change, but rather a collaborative effort where teacher leadership drives classroom instruction and each teacher is valued as an expert in improving instruction.

A tool that has been particularly helpful for Liberty staff has been the crosswalks of the standards. It has allowed local educators to see commonalities between previous standards, the Common Core and the new, revised Missouri Learning Standards.

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Montana began its official switch to the Montana Common Core Standards in English language arts and mathematics in July 2013, almost two years after the state officially adopted the new college- and career-ready standards. The first step Montana’s Office of Public Instruction (the Office) took to implement the new standards was to create a Content Standards and Instruction Division within the agency. Office leadership recognized that in order to provide resources to support implementation of the new standards, a division was needed to take ownership of organizing the transition. Internal leaders were needed to build statewide capacity, organize collaborative work between partners, focus on pedagogy, and provide equitable professional development opportunities for all educators.

Initially, the work to be done was daunting. The Office knew that it needed to communicate equitably about the new standards with all of their stakeholders, but there were two major challenges. Montana is a large, mostly rural state. The population can be sparse in many areas, with only about seven people per square mile. Some high school students travel 120 miles per day to attend school. In addition, the Office did not receive legislative funding to support implementation. To mitigate these challenges, the Office applied for and received a CCSSO Rural States grant that provided resources to move forward with building capacity for implementing the new standards.

With the support from CCSSO and the Helmsley Charitable Trust, the Office worked with the Education Delivery Institute (EDI) to build internal capacity, facilitate collaborative work, and write a strategic plan. It was through this work with EDI that the agency developed a network of communication to reach all of Montana.

“I’m pleased to say Montana now has communities of learners spread across our state working to improve communication and collaboration,” Jael Prezeau, Director of Content Standards and Instruction said. “This work has been challenging and rewarding, but we’re proud of how far we’ve come.”

**Regional Approach**

The first move to improve communication with teachers and administrators in the regions across Montana was to create 3 Big Ideas, a weekly email that shares the top professional learning information with the statewide community. Recognizing the limited time teachers have in their work day, 3 Big Ideas brings the three most important strategies directly to educators every
Friday. Subscription to the email is voluntary and has increased by 46 percent since it was created three years ago.

Recognizing that it can take some educators eight hours to reach the state capital for professional development, the new communication network needed to provide support out in the regions. To accomplish this, the Office developed a regional plan that provides each of the state’s nine regions with a Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) liaison. The liaisons are curricular leaders who live and work in their respective regions of the state and have built a network of regional support for their regions schools. Meeting monthly with local district leaders, the liaisons provide a way for the Office to share information out to the regions and learn what schools need around standards implementation to provide training and resources as effectively and as efficiently as possible.

“the Hub has direct access to teachers and gives us great feedback to see what they need and what they use,” said Prezeau

Online Professional Learning

The Office also collaborated and supported the Montana Education Association-Montana Federation of Teacher’s application for a two-year innovation grant from the American Federation of Teachers. Specifically aimed at providing innovative ways to deliver online professional development to teachers, the grant supported an online learning platform that provided professional development courses in English language arts and math. Originally called the Montana Digital Professional Learning network and housed at the University of Montana, the online learning system was moved to the Office, rebranded as the Teacher Learning Hub (Hub), and now includes more than 100 courses across numerous content areas and instructional strategies. Making courses available to teachers online has helped address OPI’s challenges of geography and equity.

With a focus on providing free, high quality, engaging online learning, the Hub now has more than 3,000 registered users since August of 2015 and has issued more than 6500 renewal units to teachers. Educators’ feedback has been positive, with an average course satisfaction rating of 4.38 on a scale of one to five.

“It speaks to our desire to measure impact on teachers in the classroom as we continue our conversation within the agency and with providers of professional development,” explained Prezeau.

“The Hub has direct access to teachers and gives us great feedback to see what they need and what they use.”

Streamlining the Search for Professional Development Opportunities

Connecting teachers to professional learning is key to improving communication around the standards as well. In 2015, the Office OPI launched a site to help increase teachers’ awareness of all the learning events in Montana, whether online or in person. Called the Learning Opportunities Portal, the site lists professional development from all providers across the state with a calendar of scheduled events, and a catalog of other available support. The site provides a comprehensive look at statewide learning, allowing teachers to take control of their own professional development.
Robert Watson, Superintendent of the Bozeman Public Schools, says the district saw the writing on the wall with regard to Montana adopting new college- and career-ready standards in English language arts and mathematics and began putting into place how the district would implement the new standards even before they were officially adopted. The district slowly began implementation of the standards in the 2011-12 school year, rather than taking on everything all at once.

In the 2011-12 school year, Bozeman staff began focusing on the eight mathematical practices. Staff were encouraged to start discussions around the eight practices and demonstrate how they relate to everyday activities in the classroom. Students began to draw attention to that work and realize those associations between the practices and activities. In English language arts the staff began working together to pull the standards apart and align their current curriculum to the standards to see what fit and what did not.

In 2012-13 — when the district was expected to move toward full implementation — they had their breakthrough. Teachers were still busy taking a deep look at the standards and deconstructing them. They told the administration that they needed time to discuss the standards with their colleagues and as a group and work through their understanding of the new standards and how they would implement them in their classrooms.

The district was in negotiations with their teachers that year and the teachers made it known that time with the standards and the ability to collaborate with colleagues were as important to them as money and benefits. Together, the administration and teachers worked out an agreement that would set aside funding to allow for time for professional collaboration. That collaboration occurred either outside the school day with extra pay for teachers or the administration was able to hire substitutes so teachers could leave the classroom and work with colleagues on their implementation strategies for the new standards.

“I continually hear from teachers that the one thing we did that really allowed us to move the new standards along was to allow them to have time to talk and ask questions, ‘How do we align from grade to grade?’ ‘What does good curriculum look like?’ ‘How do we develop curriculum when aligned content just isn’t there yet?’” said Watson.

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The following year they didn’t have the funding to continue the out-of-class collaboration as the teachers desired. However, teachers and administrators felt so strongly about continued collaboration around the Montana Common Core Standards that they redesigned the district calendar to allow for it to continue at a lesser degree.

One of the challenges they faced in Bozeman was the whole notion of what college- and career-ready meant. It was confusing for some, but Watson says as questions came up, he focused on the overarching guidelines that define college- and career-ready and the eight mathematical practices. He said, by keeping it simple and pointing to those fundamentals it was difficult to argue that any one of them is not important. Once he and his teachers have these conversations, even the most vocal opponents want their kids to have all of these fundamental skills.

“We don’t want any of our kids leaving school without these skills. There are things in there that resonate with anybody, regardless of their opinion on standards. It’s just good stuff we want our kids to know and be able to do.”

Bozeman teachers say their students are going deeper into subject matter and have a better understanding of subject matter because the new standards are more rigorous. Teachers are having discussions that are much richer than under the previous standards and are seeing the benefits of those discussions through better problem solving and more creative thinking from their students.
NEVADA

Adopted Common Core State Standards in 2010

Nevada School Demographics

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Nevada’s K-12 school system has been standards-based since 1998, so when the state adopted new math and English language arts standards many educators thought they would follow the traditional course for implementation. That traditional approach called for districts to revise their district adopted curriculum the year after new standards were adopted. The second year, instruction would begin in the classroom and the state would begin assessing to the new standards in the third or fourth year.

Standards Necessitate a Different Approach

As work of understanding the standards began, many realized the new standards required adjustments to the prior adoption and implementation timeline the state historically used. The Nevada Department of Education (the Department) began to work with stakeholders and partners to communicate the changes. The Department wanted to make it clear to the community that these changes would require an instructional shift. This work led to the Department developing a new timeline that called for gradually phasing in the standards over a period of a several years. The switch to the new standards began in the 2011-12 school year, when local districts were expected to adjust their curriculum. Instruction was to begin in some grades in the 2012-13 school year and gradually move to full implementation in the 2014-15 school year.

Coordination Across Regions

Professional development in Nevada is run through Regional Professional Development Programs (RPDPs), which are separate from the Department and legislatively funded. The Department organized a statewide meeting during the 2011-12 school year with staff from the Regional Programs and district personnel to create a plan for providing professional development around the standards. The focus of the meeting was to look at the shifts and develop a system to share resources, while dealing with the geographical challenges posed by the large state.

The plan called for delivering professional development in several ways to meet local needs, including summer institutes, university classes, and workshops. The plan also called for the Department to make modules available online. The plan was focused in three tiers and intended to be customizable by region:
Tier 1: Awareness of the adoption and implications of the new standards

Tier 2: Opportunities for teachers to examine the standards and determine and enhance their knowledge of instructional changes needed to ensure students are proficient

Tier 3: Enhance knowledge needed to instruct and understand the Nevada Academic Content Standards

Department staff say their biggest success actually was a result of the greatest challenge the state faced — lack of aligned resources and geography. As the professional development progressed through the RPDPs, a common request was continuing to be heard. Local districts and teachers needed resources aligned to the new standards. Many textbooks weren’t aligned and many districts simply couldn’t afford to purchase an entirely new curriculum.

The Department decided to create a one stop shop called the Instructional Materials Resource Center. Launched in 2014, the Resource Center was created to meet the local district needs. It’s not meant to be a curriculum, but rather a starting point for local content teams to find resources and begin work on their own local curriculum. There is no statewide curriculum in Nevada. The state adopts the standards and local districts are responsible for developing or adopting their own curriculum that best supports their students and teaches the standards.

The Resource Center is a collaboration between the Department and local educators. While it is maintained by Department staff, it is vetted by professionals from throughout Nevada. Local teachers, regional program staff, department staff, and other stakeholders find open-source passages that meet the grade level standards, then align activities and develop lesson frames that help teachers align their classroom work to meet the standards.

While the focus of the Resource Center was initially on the Nevada Academic Content Standards in math and English language arts, it has expanded to include other content areas, such as science and social studies. Educators love the free resources since they are vetted and reliable. They trust the materials they access at the Resource Center and the Department has had other states show an interest in using the materials and also asking how Nevada went about setting it up. The demand is increasing; in February 2016, the Resource Center had 631 page views from unique visitors accessing content specific sites, including 200 ELA page views and 131 math page views.

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Nevada education officials say while they are fully implementing the new standards, they are seeing a slower change in instructional shifts in the classroom. They believe that as the field becomes more familiar with the new assessments, a greater understanding of the complexity of the new standards will take hold and will begin to show up more clearly in the way teachers and students interact.
As Nevada adopted new, more rigorous college- and career-ready standards, state education officials began communicating with the field expressing that the move to the new standards wasn’t going to be the same as it had previously been when new standards were adopted. Previous changes to standards were minor tweaks, while the switch to the Common Core State Standards would require much more intense changes to the state’s educational system.

In Carson City, they listened to the Nevada Department of Education’s advice and committed to a full system change in the district. In order to get the necessary resources to support the wide scale changes in the district, they applied for and received a $10 million Race to the Top district grant. The Race to the Top grant was awarded to the district in December 2012 and runs through September 2017.

The funds have been the district’s main resource to move toward full implementation of the new Nevada Academic Content Standards in math and English language arts. Soon after receiving the grant, Carson City hired 12 implementation and content specialists. The first year the specialists received three months of intensive training, followed by training once a week.

Taking advantage of the resources from the federal grant, the district increased their pool of substitute teachers and provided professional development opportunities to all teachers in the district, either pulling them out of class or using extra hour funds to allow additional time to fully understand the shifts and rigor of the standards. At one point, the district took all of their eighth grade math teachers out of the classroom to work with the content specialists to establish learning targets.

Working with the team of specialists, teachers in the district have gained an understanding of what was expected under the new standards. Together they have laid out course units by working backward, breaking everything down by unit and ensuring alignment with the new standards. They developed learning guides so that every unit of study has a learning expectation and essentially lays out a mini-syllabus for every unit.

It allows common data to be shared among teachers and ensures that any student who moves from one school to another will not be too far ahead or behind.

Over the span of two years, the district has been able to develop a common assessment system. Teachers created the system, while a team of specialists vetted it for continuity and rigor. District officials say that previously you could go to an Algebra I course in four different schools and it looked completely different. Now every three weeks’ benchmark assessments are given based
on the learning targets. It allows common data to be shared among teachers and ensures that any student who moves from one school to another will not be too far ahead or behind.

As the Carson City School District has worked to implement the new standards, they have also used a combination of state, private, and Race to the Top funds to provide each student with a laptop. They have also put in place a system that can track learning standards on an individual basis. Now, every time a student takes an assessment, students and teachers know in real time whether or not they have met their learning targets. Having this ability allows the district to better provide direct interventions based on data and student needs.

District officials say they believe the changes are making a difference even at a time when rigor is increased in all classes as they have implemented the new college- and career-ready standards. At the middle school level last year, 25 students attended summer school for credit recovery, down from an average of 80 students per summer in previous years. Last year, 95 percent of all middle school students met all academic obligations and earned credits in all courses. At the high school, 83 percent of students met all obligations and passed all courses. The previous year, 25 percent were failing at least one class.

Steve Pardere is the Transformation Office Director for Carson City. He says while changing the system has been a challenge and is still a work in progress, teachers want to come and work in the district. Teachers are being asked to switch from an activity model to a learner centered model. He says that it has been stressful at times, but for teachers that were naturally learner centered, the transition is going well. For others more focused on a delivery centered approach, they are making the transition with supports.

“Teachers are telling us for the first time, I really know what I am supposed to teach and how to measure that,” said Pardere. “It’s really a full system implementation change. It’s an ongoing challenge to help teachers make the shift. Now we’re using the system to improve instruction.”
When New Hampshire adopted new college- and career-ready standards in English language arts and mathematics in 2010, the state’s Department of Education (the Department) was concerned about how to implement the new, more rigorous standards.

Soon after the standards were adopted, staff at the Department spent a lot of time working with local districts to help them become familiar with the new college- and career-ready standards. They had discussions with local districts about what they meant and how they were different, but the state couldn’t really break the standards down to a level that allowed districts to really dig into them. The Department did not have the capacity to provide professional development at the scale that was needed to support New Hampshire districts. From then on, they focused on building on existing partnerships and looking within the existing budget to find a way to support teachers as they transitioned to new standards.

Expanding Partnerships to Support Schools

In 2013, the Department was able to set aside $200,000 in federal Title I funds to enter into a two-year contract with the Southeast Regional Education Service Center (SERESC). The contract allowed for Title I and Focus and Priority Schools to access no and low-cost professional development, technical assistance, strategic planning, and resources. In addition, all schools in the state would have access to professional development to assist them in implementation.

The first year of the contract with SERESC focused around the technical work of breaking down the standards. SERESC worked with schools to help them understand the difference between the New Hampshire College-and Career-Ready Standards and the previous ones, and to help educators see what it would mean to teach to the more rigorous standards. The second year was focused on going into districts and actually working to find where the gaps in learning were and developing strategies to close them.

The Department didn’t have a significant funding source to use to deliver what they felt was needed for professional development around the standards, so they turned to stakeholder groups for assistance. New Hampshire is a small state, so one of the benefits is the ability to forge incredible relationships with various education stakeholders. Department staff met with the state’s superintendents once a month and have regular meetings with teachers’ unions and the principals’ association. The Department leveraged those
relationships to get their messaging out about their priorities and needs. The state associations for math and English language arts conducted a tremendous amount of professional development around the New Hampshire College- and Career-Ready Standards for their members.

“Our partners came to us and asked, ‘How can we help?’” said Heather Gage, Director of the Division of Educational Improvement. “Very rarely do we have to ask them for help, they come to us first. They did a lot of the work around professional development, and we didn’t have to pay them.”

The Department was challenged through its lack of resources and funding to support schools, but through their strong relationships and the ability to strategically target some funding, the vast majority of the local districts agree college- and career-ready standards are what is right for their students.

In New Hampshire, local school districts can adopt different learning standards than the state, although they would still be assessed on the state standards. The Department says that they believe implementation of the New Hampshire College- and Career-Ready Standards is a success because even though districts aren’t required to adopt the state standards, the vast majority do. The Department was challenged through its lack of resources and funding to support schools, but through their strong relationships and the ability to strategically target some funding, the vast majority of the local districts agree college- and career-ready standards are what is right for their students.

For example, Gage speaks of a kindergarten teacher who is excited about her work. The teacher thought there was no way her kids could perform under the requirements of college- and career-ready standards. She’d heard they were too hard for children and kids would no longer have any playtime. She just decided as a quality teacher to dig into the standards herself and see what they meant for her kids. As she dug in, she found ways to bring the college- and career-ready standards into her classroom in a playtime atmosphere. She found that the kids didn’t know they were being challenged more than the previous year’s students and they didn’t miss out on playtime.

“Teachers all over the country are using standards as frameworks or a roadmap to differentiate and personalize learning,” said Gage. “It’s a collective desire to help kids learn. The thing that we have going for us is we have really good, close partners.”
Governor Wentworth Regional School District

Staff at Governor Wentworth Regional School District began working on the transition to new college- and career-ready standards in 2010, even before the state had adopted the New Hampshire College- and Career-Ready Standards. The administration felt confident they would eventually be adopted and wanted to give their teachers as much time as possible to explore and ease into implementation.

The District began creating curriculum aligned to the New Hampshire College- and Career-Ready Standards in kindergarten through 8th grades. Over a period of three years they created content maps and revisited them at the end of each year. They met in grade level teams across the district and saw how many teachers were able to get through the curriculum, what couldn’t be done in time, and what needed to be moved to a different grade level. This helped the teachers adjust to the new curriculum and take ownership of it.

In the 2013-14 school year the district solidified the curriculum. Teachers were familiar with the curriculum and the district wanted all students from the six elementary feeder schools to enter the middle school on the same page. They then began to focus more on professional development.

The administration was able to put together four to six specific training opportunities for teachers each year. They structured and supported their own training, in-house. The trainings were scheduled at the end of the year and during release days, when entire grade levels would come out of the classroom for full or half-day professional learning. Principals agreed to give up time during their scheduled faculty meetings to allow for additional teacher learning opportunities.

Teachers in Governor Wentworth said they felt isolated and that requirements from the federal No Child Left Behind law changed how they did their jobs and expressed themselves. District administrators say one of the best things they did was to allow teachers to come together and have a voice in how the college- and career-ready standards would be implemented in their schools. It was important to the administration that teachers be philosophically aligned to the district’s commitment of alignment to the New Hampshire College- and Career-Ready Standards.

District administrators say one of the best things they did was to allow teachers to come together and have a voice in how the college- and career-ready standards would be implemented in their schools.

“That collaborative nature is awesome. No one wants to be told what to do,” said Heather Cummings, Assistant Superintendent. “Teachers love the opportunity to share with one another; the best professional development happens when they come together. We weren’t wavering...
on aligning the curriculum to standards, but what was negotiable was how you implement in your classroom."

**The culture in the district has focused on collaboration since implementing the New Hampshire College- and Career-Ready standards.**

As the district moved toward implementation they created K-12 task forces for all content areas. The groups have representation from all schools in the district and all grade levels. They work together to articulate needs, bring out concerns, and ask and answer questions. District administrators are part of the task forces and work together with teachers to identify priorities for the current and future years. It helps to facilitate communication throughout the district as building level liaisons go back and share what they learn with colleagues.

“They hear what happens at every grade level, in every building,” said Katey Hills, Director of Curriculum. “The teachers are able to resolve issues because they work on it every day and collaboratively they can solve anything that has come up."

The culture in the district has focused on collaboration since implementing the New Hampshire College- and Career-Ready standards. The challenge they see now ahead of them is to work together to support staff over time to continuously improve instruction. They believe that implementing college- and career-ready standards isn’t a process that you start and finish, but rather one that is ongoing. They believe a continuous loop of teacher feedback will help them to meet the needs for professional development and resources as they continue to work to prepare all students to succeed after graduation.

“Teachers will do anything for you if they feel that you have their back and that if they feel you will be there to help them along the way,” said Hills.
When the state of New Jersey adopted new college-and-career-ready standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in 2010, the state chose to rollout implementation over a period of three years. In the 2010-2011 school year, districts were given time to allow staff to become familiar with the new college- and career-ready standards and also plan for implementation. The New Jersey Department of Education (the Department) recommended a staggered approach. In math, it was recommended that kindergarten through second grades move to the new standards by September 2011, third through fifth grades and high school by September 2012, and sixth through eighth grades by September 2013. In ELA, it was recommended all grades, kindergarten through 12th grade, move to the new standards by September 2012.

Principal Professional Development

As local districts began working through the standards and putting plans into place to implement them in the classroom, the Department was assessing how to best provide information and training to the state’s classroom teachers. Trying to reach all teachers directly was challenging, but they could reach out directly to school leaders who could then pass down information at the building level. The Department developed a series of workshops for principals as a means to provide support to school leadership and have an impact on classrooms.

The Department began to notice some administrators were more adept at working with their school staff to understand the new college-and-career-ready standards. The Department wanted to help administrators receive professional development and resources, as well as to see best practices for what instruction should look like under the new standards. They wanted to help the principals better communicate with their teachers and parents about the coming implementation, and also to work with teachers as instructional leaders.

The New Jersey Principals Association, through an agreement with the Department, developed content, programs, and workshops for any administrator in the state, while the Department concentrated on the state’s Priority and Focus Schools. The workshops were designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the college-and-career-ready standards and the instructional shifts that were needed for them to be implemented in the classroom. The series of workshops for
principals also showed how the standards connected to assessments and data collection, and how principals could help teachers improve their classroom instruction.

**Parent Engagement**

When the new college-and-career-ready standards were first introduced in New Jersey there was some opposition to them. The vast majority of the education community supported them, but some parents and others were questioning the new standards. Districts asked the Department for help in communicating with their constituencies. The Department responded with a toolkit - Parent Academy for Student Success (PASS) – complete with PowerPoints, FAQs and handouts that districts could customize to meet their needs.

The Department emphasizes that it is an ongoing process as teachers shift from a lecture model to looking at the kinds of questions students are asking and letting them guide more of their learning. The Department actively seeks feedback from the field and tailors changes based on that feedback.

The PASS called for the event to start off in a single room, auditorium, gym or cafeteria, where everyone would gather for five minutes. The superintendent would give a short welcome, briefly discussing what the new college-and-career-ready standards meant for teachers and students. No questions were allowed at that time. They then broke the group up so attendees would be sent to various classrooms where teams of teachers worked together to model a lesson so that parents could actually see what learning looked like for their children as opposed to what they had heard or read in the news or on social media.

After the lessons, they brought everyone back together in a casual, coffee-hour type of setting, where conversations were had in small groups. As they moved the conversation to the student level, it helped to weave a narrative for teachers to discuss real learning in the classrooms.

“People who showed up to protest either left because they didn’t want to wait or the thoughtful, engaging process provided them with background knowledge upon which a respectful conversation could be built. They understood a bit more, and saw that the standards weren’t everything that they had heard,” said Kimberley Harrington, Chief Academic Officer. “What we did behind the scenes was to develop messaging and materials that allowed districts and teachers to tell their own story and be comfortable with it.

Instruction continues to change in New Jersey classrooms as implementation moves further along. The Department emphasizes that it is an ongoing process as teachers shift from a lecture model to a model that looks at the kinds of questions students are asking and letting them guide more of their learning. The Department actively seeks feedback from the field and makes changes based on that feedback.

“We’re seeing a lot of really creative teachers out there pushing their students, and other teachers that are just starting to evolve,” said Harrington. “It’s not only great for children, but for teachers because they are really able to improve their craft.”
In 2008 officials with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (the Department) were busy revamping the state’s content standards, including arts, social studies, school counseling, and others. When the Common Core State Standards was released the Department decided to adopt the college- and career-ready learning standards in English language arts and mathematics, and continue their work on the other standards.

District Leadership Teams at the Center of Professional Development

North Carolina’s efforts to implement the new standards got an enormous boost in 2010 when they received a nearly $400 million Race to the Top grant. Of those federal funds, $60 million was earmarked for helping local educators receive the professional development needed to implement the new, more rigorous college- and career-ready standards.

The Department asked all districts and charter schools to create leadership teams to map out their plans for implementing the new standards. Each of the leadership teams included principals, central office staff, and teachers who would come together and look at the standards. Each team was asked to develop a three to five year action plan with a rollout that would include opportunities and barriers. The leadership teams met twice a year during implementation to discuss where they were and what challenges they faced. Regionally, the Department developed cross division teams that worked locally with the leadership teams.

North Carolina developed presentations for teachers to provide an overview of the new standards and created a central content standards toolkit that they could take back to the district. The Department also provided ongoing regional professional development to get to the teacher level and each district was required to develop their own plans for professional development locally.

Additionally, as North Carolina began implementation they provided a digital instructional improvement system called Schoolnet. Schoolnet is a statewide resource for creating aligned lessons with digital content and shared resources. Educators can develop and deliver aligned assessments for classroom and benchmark purposes and the data can be analyzed to inform practice.

Principal Professional Development

Staff from the Department met with superintendents on a regular basis. As the state was moving to implement the new college- and career-ready standards they began hearing
concerns that principals were feeling left out of the loop and not prepared to implement the new standards. They kept hearing principals needed a better background in and understanding of the standards, what was expected of them, and how to lead instruction and perform evaluations.

The training has evolved to meet the ongoing principal needs so they know how to rate and evaluate teachers based on implementation of the new standards.

In response to these requests the Department was able to identify grant funding that would allow for specific college- and career-ready learning standards training for principals in 2013. All North Carolina principals are invited to attend the Principal Ready training, which is regionally based training where principals meet twice a year. The Department kicked off the training by looking at statewide data, ratings on evaluations, and student growth. Principals come together in groups and have open conversations and look at the data. They discuss what they’re seeing in their schools and come up with strategies and coaching questions to help their teachers as they implement the new standards. They work collaboratively to figure out how to get their teachers to the next level and what resources they need. They watch videos to see what quality teaching under the new standards should look like as they go to evaluate their teachers.

The twice a year trainings are based on feedback from the previous session. Principals are asked what worked, what didn’t, and what they need further help with to frame the next session. The principals wanted to know what the shifts looked like in the classroom and what they — as instructional leaders — should be looking for and exemplifying. They told Department staff they wanted to look at the shifts for one content area, math. Principals felt that if they could better understand the shifts in math they would be able to apply it to other content areas. They spent an entire semester working to look through the lenses of the mathematics standards and understand the shifts.

Principals are seen as a key to the ongoing successful implementation of college- and career-ready standards. North Carolina is a growing state and state education leaders believe professional development for principals has to be ongoing because every year they will be getting new instructors.

The Principal Ready training started out originally on the shift they would see in the new college- and career-ready standards, but now they are getting more in depth into evaluations. The training has evolved to meet the ongoing principal needs so they know how to rate and evaluate teachers based on implementation of the new standards. The training has become so popular that while it was started with grant funds, the Department is now using Title II funds to ensure it continues and is expanding to include assistant principals.
In the Nash-Rocky Mount Public School District, administrators began preparing staff for the switch to new college- and career-ready standards in 2011 soon after they were adopted by the state. They began slowly at first, hosting district awareness sessions for teachers and principals to build a better understanding for the educational shifts that would soon be making their way into the classroom.

During the 2011-12 school year the Nash-Rocky Mount formed teacher leader teams that would take the lead on implementing the new standards in the district with teacher leaders from each of the district’s 28 schools.

The district’s professional development team includes instructional coaches in each of the K-8 schools and a team of nine professional development facilitators in the central office. The professional development team created learning modules and training sessions. They would then bring in the teacher leads from all of the district’s schools, one from each grade level in math and English language arts, and work with them to understand and unpack the standards. The teacher leaders would then return to their buildings and present what they had learned and provide additional training for their colleagues in the schools.

Nash-Rocky Mount officials say the biggest benefit they received in implementing the new standards came from the state education agency. In North Carolina they added five days to the school calendar specifically for teacher professional development. Those extra days allowed teachers to be out of the classroom and focus solely on going deeper into the standards.

The district developed teacher institutes to allow for time for every teacher to go through the new curriculum and become more familiar with best practices. Administrators say that extra time for teachers was a key for the district’s ability to implement the new standards.

On top of the additional time for professional development, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (the Department) created modules that supplemented what was created locally and could be rolled out in districts through their teacher leader structure. The district’s professional development team members also received additional state training at summer institutes. They received information on the standards and the change in instructional practices that they then redelivered at the district level.

The biggest challenge for teachers in Nash-Rocky Mount was the magnitude of the change and the lack of aligned materials. At the time the state adopted college- and career-ready standards, they also adopted new standards in science and social studies. For elementary school teachers in the district that teach all subjects, that amounted to understanding and implementing new standards in four separate content areas.

Additionally, because updated and aligned resources weren’t immediately available, many
teachers took it upon themselves to find resources. While there were a number of free resources online, it was a complex and time consuming process. The teacher leaders took on that work as they compared old and new standards and reviewed materials developed by the Department. The teacher leader teams would have conversations about what resources were aligned and which ones weren’t. They began expanding their meetings to include other content specialists and began vetting their own sources.

They say the skills embedded in the standards make them confident they are better preparing their students for life after high school, providing them with a better chance at success.

District officials say that in the four years they have been implementing the standards, the increased rigor of the standards is pushing staff and students toward more collaboration. They say the skills embedded in the standards make them confident they are better preparing their students for life after high school, providing them with a better chance at success.

They also say the district itself has shifted to be more intentional in interventions with students not on grade level. As they have implemented the new standards they are better utilizing data and have put in place specific resources locally that help them to see where students are missing the target and to help them get back on track sooner.
## North Dakota

Adopted the North Dakota Content Standards Based on the Common Core State Standards in 2011

### North Dakota School Demographics

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<th>Total #Schools</th>
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<td>2,895 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total #Students with Disabilities</td>
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North Dakota adopted new college-and career-ready standards in English language arts and mathematics in 2011, with the expectation that schools would begin fully implementing the standards in 2013. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (the Department) began working immediately with stakeholders to provide professional development to the state’s educators.

Since 2000 the North Dakota Curriculum Initiative (NDCI) provided professional development for North Dakota administrators and teachers. The NDCI, which ended in December 2013, was instrumental in the rollout and support of North Dakota’s new college- and career-ready standards. The purpose of the NDCI was to help assure that all North Dakota students received equitable educational classroom opportunities; assist students in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and shared values essential to our civic culture; and support students in attaining critical work and management skills essential to be productive and responsible citizens.

Traditionally the Department had three main venues for providing professional development: a summer math institute, a summer reading institute, and an annual fall conference. These professional development opportunities shared statewide initiatives with educators. When first organized, the events focused primarily on Title I, but have been broadened since the new standards were put in place. About 200 teachers attend each of the math and reading institutes and 1,000 educators attend the fall conference annually, which have been focused on instructional strategies in both content areas aligned to the standards.

### Partnering with Regional Education Agencies

The Department also broadened professional development opportunities by working closely with the state’s Regional Education Associations (REAs), which are separate from the Department and have their own advisory boards. REAs operate independently from the Department; however, the Department does provide some funding to the REAs and has a close working relationship with them.

The REAs’ primary function is to provide support and professional development to North Dakota school districts. Many of the REAs chose to heavily invest in providing professional development on the new college-and career-ready standards in English language arts and math. They were the ground level support for local districts to receive professional learning opportunities.

### Stronger State Department Support

As North Dakota schools worked to implement the new college-and career-ready standards...
many expressed a desire to have the Department take a more active role in implementation. That prompted the superintendent to create a new office within the Department called the Office of Academic Support. The main job of the office is to provide resources and assistance to local districts to implement the new standards.

The Office of Academic Support was formally created in July 2015 and has a staff of five, including content specialists and an early childhood coordinator. It oversees several programs, one of which is the Cross State Collaborative Math Modules for North Dakota. North Dakota joined with South Dakota, Montana, and Iowa in a project sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) where teacher leaders from each state came together to collaborate and develop resources for teachers to use when implementing the college- and career-ready standards in math. The North Dakota math leadership team took the work they did with their counterparts from the other states and customized the modules for North Dakota educators.

Teachers can now download the modules for their own use and the REAs use them for professional learning sessions locally. The modules consist of sections including collaborative grouping, using assessments, modifying tasks, mindset, and using real world tasks.

Also, the department is growing additional supports to the field in a variety of areas including Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) as well as English language arts/literacy. The Department has strengthened partnerships among groups interested in promoting STEAM instruction to increase the number and quality of STEAM activities and initiatives for students and teachers. Also, with the passage of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Department will seek additional funding to support initiatives to support English language arts/literacy.

North Dakota educators also have access to the Smarter Balanced Digital Library, an online collection of instructional and professional learning resources. It includes a series of interactive assessment literacy and instructional modules in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. The resources are aligned to the state’s standards and assist educators with implementing the formative assessment process to improve teaching and learning.

Feedback from Educators

In March 2016 the Department launched “North Dakota Education…Watch Us Grow.” It is a statewide survey that will help the Department get a better understanding of just how well the new standards are being implemented across the state. The survey will provide feedback for local teachers and administrators on their efforts to implement the North Dakota Standards in English language arts and mathematics.

The Department wants to get at data that will help them understand the challenges local districts have faced and how they can better respond to meet their needs with regard to standards implementation. The idea is that a statewide report would be generated, as well as local district and Regional Education Association level reports, so that they can develop future professional development based on the data.

The reports will be available in late summer 2016 and the Department will then use that information as it begins a review of the English language arts and math standards.
West Fargo Public Schools (the District) is a rapidly growing school district in North Dakota that expects to add 500 more students to their enrollment in the 2016-17 school year. Over the past several years the District has had to open new schools to keep pace with new students, which has meant hiring new teachers and shifting other teachers into new schools. Growth is a good problem to have, but it can become more difficult as you implement new college- and career-ready standards, especially when there’s already a shortage of teachers and substitutes.

The District began implementing the new North Dakota Standards for English language arts and math soon after they were adopted in 2011. At the elementary level they began work on the new math standards first. They created grade level curriculum teams that pulled educators together during the school day to work collaboratively writing curriculum, adopting resources and creating grade level pacing guides. In English language arts, the teams developed their own curriculum, choosing not to buy one. While the work to implement the standards began in 2011, the new standards weren’t fully taught in the classroom for two years in math and three years in English language arts.

It was difficult work. On any given day there may be 120 substitute teachers working in the district, while still another 20 teaching positions don’t get filled. The district had to be creative when it came to providing professional development for their teachers. One approach was a unique partnership with Valley City State University, a four-year college near West Fargo.

West Fargo and Valley City worked together to find a solution that would allow for their teachers to get professional development time, while providing third-year teaching students with valuable experience. The teaching students are able to come in on Fridays, a day the district uses for professional development, and teach lessons to students. They are supervised by university professors and get valuable experience learning their craft. It has provided the district with the ability to get teachers ongoing professional development, knowing the specific classes would be covered without having to wonder if a substitute would be available.

The move to the new standards has caused the district to rethink how it provides professional development. The district has changed its calendar, shifting from all-day professional development to ongoing professional learning communities every Wednesday and common scheduled planning time daily.

“Most of our professional development focused around strong use of formative assessment and student engagement,” said Allen Burgad, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education. “That evolved into professional learning communities (PLCs) along with teachers
supporting teachers through learning walks or other types of classroom observations.”

The district worked on consistency. They wanted all schools to be on the same page, so that as a student moves from one school to another they don’t fall behind. They solicited feedback on curriculum during professional development sessions and would bring the curriculum teams back together to rewrite specific areas based on the feedback of their peers.

“Teachers believe the research of what the best practice is for math and they are seeing the benefits in their students’ work,” said Beth Slette, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education. “If teachers believe in standards, they will jump on board.”

Administrators say they are seeing a difference as they walk through the buildings. High school teachers have embraced new engagement strategies, allowing students to help guide their own learning and also introducing more student self-assessment.

“They are really focused on assessment and engagement and increasing the substance of classroom discussions. We’ve had to work with some of our newer teachers to help them bring it alive in the classroom, but we see more pockets of excellence every day.”

As the district has moved forward with implementing the new standards, teacher confidence in the standards has grown. Initially, they were met with some skepticism from teachers. Some thought the college- and career-ready standards wouldn’t last long, or they were concerned whether a third grader could do keyboarding or a second grader could add three digit numbers in their heads. But as they worked to unwrap the standards and saw the research behind the standards they began to get more comfortable. In fact, as North Dakota started to see pushback on the standards, the district’s math teachers were on the front lines defending them. They saw what was happening in their classrooms and were excited to see the impact of the standards on their students learning.

“Teachers believe the research of what the best practice is for math and they are seeing the benefits in their students’ work,” said Beth
Oregon adopted new college- and career-ready standards in October of 2010. The Oregon Department of Education (the Department) pushed for the new standards to ensure all students receive a quality K-12 education, regardless of where they live or which school they attend. The Department says over the last six years, educators across the state have implemented these standards with fidelity and success, receiving a major boost in 2013 when legislation was passed setting aside $11 million in funding for statewide efforts to implement the standards.

Professional Learning Funding for Districts

The 2013 legislation created the Network for Quality Teaching and Learning, a support system overseen by the Department for local districts to receive professional development opportunities and resources to implement the standards and educator evaluation systems. The Network for Quality Teaching and Learning supported the state’s District Professional Learning Teams, local educators who agreed to lead implementation efforts within their districts, in addition to providing grant funds to local districts with their standards implementation efforts.

The Educator Effectiveness/Common Core State Standards Implementation Grants are one of the resources provided through the $11 million investment in the Oregon Network for Quality Teaching and Learning. Local districts, Education Service Districts, or a group of small districts banding together, could apply for and receive non-competitive funding to assist them in putting the new standards in place. Funding could be used for developing aligned materials and resources, professional development, and professional learning communities. Nearly 200 districts serving 98 percent of the state’s students applied for and received funding through the implementation grants.

Districts who received funding were required to develop implementation plans. The majority of those districts, almost 90 percent, chose to use funds to provide teachers with time to collaborate with one another, create curriculum, and receive professional development. Sixty percent of the districts that received implementation grant funds used professional learning communities to support professional learning within the local district, hiring substitute teachers to allow staff to attend. Nearly two-thirds of the districts included funds for professional development
opportunities, including paying for staff to travel to attend conferences and to bring consultants into districts to present.

State Support to District Teams

In addition to the implementation grants, the Network for Quality Teaching and Learning provided a focused set of opportunities and resources to support implementation of the standards and local educator evaluation systems by hosting a set of regional conferences over two years, from 2013 to 2015. The teams were made up of a group of teachers and administrators at the local level who have agreed to lead the effort to implement the new standards in their districts. The purpose of the Professional Learning Team Conferences was to build school and district capacity by providing professional development and opportunities for cross-district collaboration in order to scale up best practices.

Local districts shared their challenges and successes, and worked together to solve common problems related to implementation of the standards. Participants noted they felt more connected to the Department by having direct interaction with staff and being given the opportunity to provide input. Between 2013 and 2015 more than 2,000 educators took part in the Oregon Professional Learning Team Conferences and a video was created to highlight the work.

“We sought out a way to tell their stories. It is a powerful testament to the work of Oregon educators,” said Meg Koch.

“We were excited and in awe of the educators’ enthusiasm about the standards, not just what they were on paper, but how they talked about their professional practice shifting and their students’ ability to think critically, problem solve and acquire skills meant for the real world,” said Meg Koch, Strategic Communications Specialist at the Oregon Department of Education. “We sought out a way to tell their stories. It is a powerful testament to the work of Oregon educators!”

The Department also developed a communications toolkit to help districts educate their local communities. The toolkit includes letters to parents and teachers, fact sheets about the Oregon standards, and presentations that can be used for a variety of audiences. It provides guidance on how to use the toolkit and what materials should be used for specific audiences.
Pennsylvania adopted the Common Core State Standards in July 2010 and soon after, state leaders made the decision to move to new learning standards more specific to the state. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (the Department) convened educators and stakeholders from throughout the state to take a critical look at the recently adopted college- and career-ready standards. They were asked to translate the standards and transform them into new Pennsylvania Core Standards, which were formally adopted in May 2012.

Voluntary Curriculum

After the new standards were adopted, education officials began hearing from districts that many simply didn’t have the resources to create their own curriculum and major publishers did not have materials aligned to the new standards. The Department decided to develop a complete Pre-K – 12 curriculum framework for English language arts and mathematics which would be voluntary for districts to use and offer districts a guide to see what a quality curriculum framework looks like. The curriculum framework would be organized by big ideas, essential questions, and required competencies.

To develop the curriculum framework, the Department put out a call to teachers, administrators, and all of the state’s institutions of higher education. They outlined the goals for the project and asked for help in creating new materials aligned to the Pennsylvania Core Standards. Hundreds of educators applied to be a part of the curriculum framework writing team. The Department brought together teams of content experts and spent hundreds of hours developing the new curriculum framework, which is freely available. The curriculum framework was well-received by local districts and was used in a variety of ways — as a core to build a new curriculum, audit a locally developed curriculum, or as a supplement to an existing system.

Easily Accessible Resources

Pennsylvania also worked with Apple to add their curricular resources to iTunesU. The Department brought in hundreds of teachers to create pathways and resources that could be shared digitally. They developed examples of what good instruction looks like that teachers can access at any time. The assets and resources can be accessed from any device, and local districts can pick and choose from among the apps, videos, and strategies that will work best to meet the local needs.
As part of their digital work and following the success of the earlier curriculum framework, the Department developed the Standards Aligned System (SAS), a website that became a clearinghouse for Pennsylvania school districts to access a robust set of resources focused on the standards. The SAS identifies six key elements that impact student success: Standards, Assessments, Curriculum Framework, Instruction, Materials and Resources, and Safe and Supportive Schools. It is free and all of the resources are open access to anyone who wants to use them.

The curriculum framework was well-received by local districts and was used in a variety of ways – as a core to build a new curriculum, audit a locally developed curriculum, or as a supplement to an existing system.

SAS is the Department’s main tool to get information out to districts around the Pennsylvania Core Standards. In addition to being the main source for materials and resources, SAS includes a rich professional development center that allows educators to earn hours they need to maintain their certification.

Statewide and Regional Professional Development

Pennsylvania has one large scale professional development conference each year in December. It’s a three-day conference attended by as many as 1,200 educators. Standards implementation is always woven into the conference and in 2015 the theme was college and career readiness.

The vast majority of professional development in Pennsylvania is handled through the regional service agencies called Intermediate Units. The Intermediate Units are separate from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, but funded by the Department in order to support its work throughout the state. As the new standards were being rolled out in Pennsylvania, the Intermediate Units received grants to deliver the needed professional development to help districts implement the new learning standards.

The training and services local districts receive are very individualized to meet local needs. They can ask for specific professional development in an area that staff may need or attend general workshops. The services are needs-based, not prescriptive. There is no charge to local districts for the workshops and professional development they receive, however, some of the services like developing new curriculum would be a fee-for-service resource available through the Intermediate Units.

The Intermediate Units have also taken on additional duties as they have worked with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to help districts implement the new learning standards. While the Department created SAS Intermediate Units assists in its maintenance. They are also contracted to ensure the curriculum framework and iTunes materials remain fresh and up to date.
The Garnet Valley School District began working to implement the new Pennsylvania Core Standards in math in the 2012-13 school year, while work on the new standards for English language arts went untouched. They started initially by reaching out to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (the Department), who they credit with providing key resources and trainings to help the district move forward with its implementation efforts.

The district chose a five stage approach to implementing the new college- and career-ready standards. The first year was meant to allow teachers to explore and take time to look at the standards, read supporting literature, and to try and get a firm grasp on the real and perceived shifts that would come with the standards.

The second year was the installation phase. Administrators worked with teachers to unpack the language of the standards and to find out how the instructional shifts would impact everyday classroom work. They modeled assessments and took a deeper look to fully understanding what the standards meant and to determine if staff were ready to begin teaching to the new standards.

Currently, Garnet Valley School District is in year three, which is initial implementation. They are busy assessing their writing curriculum, stripping down all the grade levels from kindergarten through 12, and rebuilding it. They are building their curriculum solely focused on the standards and skills students will need. Next year is full implementation and in the fifth year the district will reflect on their work and revise accordingly.

As the district began moving through its implementation plan they completely overhauled their professional learning models. They created a League of Educational Advancement Professional Learning Committee (LEAP) which is comprised of a cross-section of 25 district staff members, administrators and parents. LEAP committee members work together to identify what is good professional learning for district staff. They test models to see if they are easily articulated and transferable. They require that it meets the test of Garnet Valley’s organizational themes and structures. LEAP now requires that any facilitator that comes into the district must begin their presentation showing their training will meet the district needs.

The administration now uses feedback from teachers and grade level leaders to target professional development in areas they feel they need assistance. The LEAP committee works with building leaders to create as many as 120 sessions on in-service days for 300 teachers and 200 paraprofessionals. Teachers then choose from a menu of sessions to attend. It allows them an opportunity to frame out their learning on the in-service days and has resulted in an increase of 50 percent approval for professional learning to more than 70 percent.

“In terms of satisfaction with the professional learning, principals are doing a much better job
individualizing learning opportunities for their buildings,” said Mark Bertrando, Superintendent of Garnet Valley School District. “Teachers feel empowered and they are already mapping out their year in the types of activities and professional learning they want to see.”

The switch to the new standards has increased collaboration within the district. During the next in-service training the social studies, library, and English departments are scheduled to share rubrics for writing. It is forcing professional discussions on literacy across all content areas, discussions administrators say were not occurring under previous learning standards.

“There’s a renewed focus on making the right things important. You can see and feel that anywhere in our district now,” said Bertrando. “Whether it’s middle school teams coalescing around the writing assessments and how to differentiate instruction to make sure all students are successful, or high school math and science teams aligning our curriculum to what we think is good instruction, it’s empowering our teachers to lead instruction.”

Bertrando says that as they continue to refine and build their curriculum frames they want to leave room for flexibility and teacher creativity. He says they will not buy a curriculum program, because the district’s teachers don’t believe the standards are geared toward a particular book. Instead, they believe providing support and training to teachers, along with their teacher’s ability to differentiate instruction gives students a better opportunity to become college- and career-ready.
PUERTO RICO

Adopted Puerto Rico Core Standards in 2013

Puerto Rico School Demographics

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<tr>
<td>Total #Students with Disabilities</td>
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Puerto Rico developed its own college- and career-ready standards — the Puerto Rico Core Standards — during the 2012-13 school year. The standards were developed to be similar in rigor and content to the Common Core State Standards. The island began implementing the new standards in its schools during the 2013-14 school year.

Stakeholder Engagement

As the new standards were being developed, the Puerto Rico Department of Education (the Department) began an active campaign to engage stakeholders. The Department leadership purposefully sought out the input of local administrators, teachers, and higher education and other post-secondary stakeholders. They wanted a broad cross section of stakeholders to be active participants in the revision of the island’s learning standards in order to build support and ownership as they moved toward the implementation phase.

Revamping Professional Learning

In Puerto Rico the state education agency is also the local education agency. The Department made a strategic effort to align all of the personnel functions of the district in order to support the implementation of the Puerto Rico Core Standards. This has been done on a local level through coaching and mentoring, which gets to the Department’s goal of job-embedded professional development impacting classrooms. In order to ensure alignment locally with professional development, the Department realigned its entire professional learning inventory of offerings. Currently, all offerings, nearly 1,300, are fully aligned with the Puerto Rico Core Standards.

The move to the new standards required a major change in professional development. During the summer of 2013 the Department began a series of boot camps to begin the process of understanding the new standards. The district has roughly 32,000 teachers and the geography can pose a challenge for large-scale meetings. The Department hosted three-day workshops in various locations to provide initial professional development. They then offered that same three-day boot camp to schools throughout the island during the school year.
instruction, high-quality interventions, how to use professional learning communities, and how to align new instruction practices.

“The new policies and procedures the Department implemented created the necessary infrastructure and fostered the creation of a culture that would support and sustain implementation of the new standards,” said Harry Valentin Gonzalez, Undersecretary for Academic Affairs. “This effort was system-wide.”

The biggest challenge for implementing the new standards has been implementing consistent messaging throughout the various districts. The Department has been working to create a change in how instruction is delivered within the island’s classrooms. The new standards and methodology required to implement them are a dramatic shift in how many of the teachers provided instruction previously. The Department has been working to emphasize to the field that the new standards create competence in teachers and strengthen the academic leadership at the school level.

Valentin says the transition has been mostly smooth and credits that to bringing teachers into the process early and including them in the development of the standards.

“The teacher has to be part of the process; they have to be a part of building the standards. There was a big change in terms of expectations; they have to change everything. If they are a part of the building of those standards, they will embrace the new methodology.”
The Santa Isabel School District on Puerto Rico’s southern coast began implementing the new Puerto Rico Core Standards in the 2014-15 school year. The local district worked with the Puerto Rico Department of Education (the Department) to provide training to its teachers in order to implement the new college- and career-ready standards. They sent teachers to the Department’s initial boot camp, and those teachers in turn came back to the local district and worked with colleagues to get a better understanding of how instruction would be impacted.

Teachers continue to receive technical assistance from content area coaches, providing support in planning and assessment. The job-embedded professional learning helps to sustain the move to the new standards as teachers work together with mentors and coaches to develop new teaching techniques and strategies. They are focusing on how to better implement individualized learning within the classrooms.

“Our goal is to continue providing the tools our educators need and continue updating their training with the most accurate and modern pedagogical preparations so that our students can continue benefiting in a positive way,” said Victor Negron Colon, Ayudante Especial in the Santa Isabel School District.

To assist local districts in implementing the new standards and to ensure continuity throughout schools on the island, the Department created curricular maps. In Santa Isabel they use the maps to set the curriculum of each class and every grade level in the district’s 10 schools. It created a common language that the teachers can use as they collaborate to improve their own instructional approaches. The curriculum maps helped to structure student learning to assure that similar skills are being taught at each grade level. Students can move from school to school or district to district on the island, creating continuity throughout the system. The maps help district leaders align their curriculum vertically and horizontally.

The job-embedded professional learning helps to sustain the move to the new standards as teachers work together with mentors and coaches to develop new teaching techniques and strategies.

One of the biggest challenges the district faced was changing students’ attitudes. Negron says that prior to implementing the college- and career-ready standards many students didn’t think about their future after graduating from high school. Now, teachers have been able to expand student interests in post-secondary work and the variety of options available to them, whether college, a trade school, or joining the workforce.

“One of the biggest challenges the district faced was changing students’ attitudes. Negron says that prior to implementing the college- and career-ready standards many students didn’t think about their future after graduating from high school. Now, teachers have been able to expand student interests in post-secondary work and the variety of options available to them, whether college, a trade school, or joining the workforce.

“Their views toward the future have changed and we are actually seeing an increase in the amount of students taking the College Board tests,” said

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**PUERTO RICO- DISTRICT**

**Santa Isabel School District**

Santa Isabel District
Urban/Rural
K-12
63 Schools
18,788 Students
55% Free and Reduced Lunch

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Council of Chief State School Officers
For more information, visit: www.CCSSO.org/CCReady
Negron. “We have modernized our educational system based on students’ genuine interests, strengthening and broadening their individual skills and capacities.”

As the district looked to implement the new Puerto Rico Core Standards they looked outside of their normal school communities for help. They engaged outside stakeholders, seeking their input to enrich the curriculum and meet local student and community needs. The connections created during that time continue even today as they work with other government agencies, industries, and professionals in a variety of fields. The exposure to new fields has created additional career opportunities for the students of Santa Isabel. They can see what professional opportunities are available to them and work with teachers to tailor their instruction to meet their skills and interests.

“Classrooms have become learning centers of opportunities and development of skills,” said Negron.

The adoption of the new college- and career-ready standards and subsequent professional development from the Department has impacted classroom instruction in a positive way. The instructional strategies that are now being employed are increasing student knowledge. Traditional teaching methods that have been the norm on the island for years have shifted to a more modern and technology-driven focus, making the teacher more of a facilitator and less of a lecturer.

“Classrooms have become learning centers of opportunities and development of skills,” said Negron. “Students are the center and core of educational instruction.”

In Santa Isabel, the standards are having a positive impact on the district. Administrators credit them with helping to better integrate students into the workforce and believe they are improving the district’s effectiveness in forming future leaders for Puerto Rico’s tomorrow.
South Carolina adopted the Common Core Standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Soon after schools in the state began unpacking the standards and preparing to implement them, the South Carolina legislature passed a bill in 2014 requiring the South Carolina Department of Education (the Department) to create new learning standards in ELA and math. In March 2015, the new South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards were approved with a goal of full implementation in the 2015-16 school year.

Needs Assessment

As soon as the new standards were approved, the Department conducted a needs assessment to help them better understand the districts’ gaps in implementation. The needs assessment was administered to local superintendents throughout the state in April 2015. It was designed to provide the Department with baseline data to determine the professional development needs as districts prepared to implement the new learning standards.

Results showed that the field wanted a crosswalk from the old standards to the new. They also wanted a vertical articulation for both English language arts and mathematics, which the Department spent the summer and fall of 2015 working with teachers throughout the state in developing, along with other initial resources.

Regional Professional Development

The needs assessment also showed that the field wanted face-to-face professional learning opportunities. The Department quickly put together train-the-trainer regional professional development meetings in the summer of 2015. In English language arts, they hosted four-day meetings held at various locations across the state to provide opportunities for teams of teachers to attend, along with the districts’ instructional leaders in the content area. A total of 331 educators from 59 districts attended these initial meetings. In math, the professional development was targeted toward kindergarten through 8th grade, and for separate content areas in high school. A total of 610 teachers attended the math sessions from 72 districts.

The professional learning opportunities continued throughout the fall with the Department paying for substitutes in districts that could not attend the summer trainings; this freed up teachers to attend the four-day regional trainings. The ELA sessions focused on special education and concerns the field had with implementing the new standards. Schools were encouraged to send a special education team, and if they didn’t attend...
the summer meetings they were encouraged to send their English language arts teams as well. In math, the focus was on ensuring a pedagogical content approach to the standards. During the fall, more than 500 educators received the professional development. Also, during the fall of 2015 the Department began an 8-part series on numeracy for grades K-5 that supports struggling students and is based on vertical articulation of the standards.

“Our commitment to crafting regional professional learning opportunities was based on our feedback loops,” indicated Anne Presley, Director of Standards and Learning.

In the spring of 2016, the Department focused their math and English language arts professional development on the middle and high school levels. In math, they continued their focus on numeracy and a pedagogical approach to the standards, while in English language arts educators designed units of study that followed the inquiry process. Nearly 500 educators at these regional offerings received training to take back to their home schools.

“Our commitment to crafting regional professional learning opportunities was based on our feedback loops,” indicated Anne Presley, Director of Standards and Learning. “We looked at the data before we started and provided the professional development the field said they wanted. It’s not something canned; it’s developed from their feedback.”

In addition to the regional professional development offerings and resources the Department has developed, they are engaging the field electronically through several Edmodo pages. They have developed specific files for ELA and math that are organized by grade bands that teachers can access for resources. They chose to work through Edmodo because it offers a discussion board feature that allows questions to be posed by the field and the Department’s content specialists or other educators can respond. The Edmodo groups are open to anyone and currently they have nearly 1,400 members.

The Department felt it was important to engage the field early to determine their needs. This feedback provides a combination of professional development that will allow for fidelity in implementation throughout the state and continued feedback to make adjustments going forward.
The first year of implementation the new South Carolina College-and Career-Ready standards has been smooth, thanks in part to the district’s commitment to begin implementing the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics earlier. The district chose to aggressively implement Common Core rather than wait, providing training and professional development to staff throughout the district. District officials say that the willingness to dive into the more rigorous standards is paying off for the district now.

“We already had that shift of students being more engaged. If we waited and never did anything with Common Core and the ensuing instructional shifts of teachers as facilitators, it would have been a lot more difficult for us,” said Deputy Superintendent Terry Pruitt. “There wasn’t a huge impact in our district. There’s a lot of carryover to the new standards.”

The first thing district administrators did was to compare the new South Carolina standards to the Common Core State Standards. They looked for the commonalities and found that the standards were very close.

The district sent teams of teachers to the summer and fall regional trainings put on by the South Carolina Department of Education (the Department). One of the district’s math teachers and one of their English language arts teachers were involved in writing the new standards, which was a benefit they were able to utilize as they began their own local professional learning.

Over the summer they brought in a group of teachers to work with the English language arts coordinator to develop instructional units. In math, the group created pacing guides for the district’s teachers.

In order to facilitate professional development on the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready standards during the 2015-16 school year, for the first time in Spartanburg County, they began early release days once per quarter. The quarterly early dismissal allowed for a school-based collaboration meeting to help better understand the standards and guide teachers in the implementation.

The quarterly early release days are cost neutral to the district. Students still have to be transported and teachers still have to be at school. The professional learning is guided internally by the content coaches or the various grade level teams. The biggest change was to have parents’ acceptance of the shortened school day because it changed the family schedule. They built support for the idea through surveys and by working with their Parent Teacher Organization. They asked if teachers should be given more time to collaborate to improve student learning and a majority responded they would support the change.

The district has a reading coach in every elementary school and a curriculum coordinator in each school. Pruitt says one of the biggest
advantages the district has when it comes to implementing the college- and career-ready standards is that all students have received an iPad Mini. The district’s technology integration specialist works with the curriculum coaches and reading coordinators to help teachers better understand what is expected of them under the college- and career-ready standards. The district is utilizing technology to ensure all teachers have easy access to the standards and receive training on how to use technology to encourage student interaction under the new standards.

“It's powerful having an algebra teacher and a kindergarten teacher sit down and talk about how to develop mathematical concepts and number sense early on to build toward success in the later school years,” said Pruitt.

In Spartanburg County, they also do vertical teaming, where all grade levels in the various content areas are represented in teams to implement a new district program. The teachers make decisions as a team around how to implement the specific changes, which creates ownership of the plan.

“It’s powerful having an algebra teacher and a kindergarten teacher sit down and talk about how to develop mathematical concepts and number sense early on to build toward success in the later school years,” said Pruitt. “You really want folks to embrace these changes for the right reasons. They see what we’re doing, and they get a say in how we do it, and they really do embrace it as our initiative.”

Initially, there was a lot of anxiety within the district as they moved to new college- and career-ready standards, just a few short years after adopting new ones. They were concerned that training and money spent on curriculum alignment would be wasted, however, as they have worked through the standards and understand how similar they are, energies are focused on preparing students to succeed after graduation.
South Dakota School Demographics

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<td>18,508 14%</td>
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South Dakota adopted new college- and career-ready learning standards in English language arts and mathematics in late 2010. The South Dakota Department of Education (the Department) began work to help districts better understand the updated South Dakota Content Standards with a pilot group of teachers in the summer of 2011. They built on that experience to begin outlining a professional development plan for teachers and administrators, the Common Core Professional Development Series, with the goal to have full implementation of the standards in South Dakota schools in the 2014-15 school year.

Investing in Teachers

The Department’s efforts were modest at first and state officials knew more intense efforts of professional development would be needed for the state’s education community. In 2012, the South Dakota legislature set aside $8 million in funding to add to the Department’s budget, specifically for professional development and implementing the new college- and career-ready learning standards with a goal of providing professional learning opportunities for 8,000 teachers.

The $8 million of Investing In Teachers funds has been the catalyst for the Department to put together a robust professional development program that is flexible enough to meet local district needs. The Department knew that districts had various capabilities for providing professional development, or when they would be able to allow teachers to receive it. They developed a menu of offerings for professional development that would allow each district to meet their own needs, whether it was a small district with little internal capacity to deliver training or one of the state’s larger districts that could write their own plan and submit it to the state for approval. The options included summer workshops, workshops that occurred throughout the school year, online learning, and district-created plans.

At the state level the initial training was regionally based, allowing districts to send teams and bring back the expertise to be shared with colleagues. It was focused on both content areas to help educators better understand the shifts in English language arts and mathematics. They went from a higher level of awareness to more narrowly tailored modules so districts could choose to send their teachers where they felt they needed more support.

“It was well received for the flexibility and the ability for a district to customize for their own needs. Each district is in a different place and...
we needed to work with them to meet them where they were,” said Becky Nelson, Director of the Division of Learning and Instruction. “Our plan was really a reaction to what districts wanted and the Investing in Teacher funds really allowed us to give them what they wanted.”

**Through the professional development the Department offers as part of Investing in Teachers, they can help districts understand alignment and help them to choose and develop curriculum that meets the more rigorous standards. It allows the Department to give guidance to local districts without interfering with local control.**

The Investing in Teachers funds have also helped the Department with concerns about curriculum. South Dakota is a local control state where the state may make suggestions but doesn’t publish recommendations. It is up to local districts to determine if the curriculum they use is aligned to the South Dakota Content Standards. Through the professional development the Department offers as part of Investing in Teachers, they can help districts understand alignment and help them to choose and develop curriculum that meets the more rigorous standards. It allows the Department to give guidance to local districts without interfering with local control.

**Shifts in Instruction**

The Department credits the extensive professional development they have been able to provide with helping to make statewide shifts in instruction. The Department is able to give tailored support to districts. Using feedback from professional learning sessions

the Department can see themes emerging and develop trainings to meet specific needs in the various regions.

South Dakota classrooms are seeing shifts in instruction and in the alignment of concepts that are being taught as teachers adjust to the college- and career-ready standards. In math, teachers are more likely now to share their thinking and understanding of concepts with students and also to recognize that there are multiple ways to solve a problem.

“In the past, we used to have a teacher show one method to solve a problem. Currently, teachers and students are able to solve a math problem in several different methods,” said Nelson. “They then share that knowledge with their classmates, expanding everyone’s base of learning.”
The Tennessee Department of Education (the Department) is leading the state through a staggered transition to college- and career-ready standards. The state adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010, branding them the Tennessee Academic Standards, and has recently concluded a review process that has resulted in the recent adoption of new state standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The staggered transition began in the lower grades in 2011 with full implementation in 2012 and continues through this year with the state’s first assessment fully aligned to college- and career-ready standards.

Large-Scale Professional Development for Teachers

As planning was underway for implementation of new standards in 2010, the Department decided to bring together a team of school and district leaders from across the state to help them develop a vision. That group agreed that they needed quality training for teachers and strong aligned curricular resources and assessments.

Fueled by $44 million in Race to the Top funds set aside for professional learning, the Department started developing a massive professional development program that would train tens of thousands of teachers and impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of students. The optional training was carried out in cooperation with the Centers for Regional Excellence (CORE), the state’s eight regional education offices. The series of two to four day trainings, provided regionally and at various dates throughout the summer, were aimed at providing strategies and resources to teachers to enable them to help all Tennessee students meet the new expectations set out in the standards.

Peer-led teacher trainings formed the backbone of the implementation plan. Through a rigorous application process, the Department identified up to 700 teachers each summer from across the state to lead the training. After
the completion of the summer trainings, both facilitators and participants would go back to their districts to implement the new strategies they learned. The free training was open to all districts and demand was often greater than availability. Department officials say it was a huge undertaking, but an even bigger success, providing training to nearly 70,000 teachers over four years, with more than 28-thousand teachers trained in just two months in 2013.

**Peer-led Professional Development for Principals**

Department officials also felt that if they were going to truly leverage the standards transition, they needed to focus on the leadership at the building level. This focus on developing strong school leadership resulted in the creation of a statewide leadership course for principals. The Department says their focus was on instruction, shifting principals from building managers to instructional leaders. State education officials felt they needed to focus on strengthening school leaders’ understanding of instructional practices and also providing them with a solid foundation in the understanding of the new Tennessee Academic Standards. The Department launched an optional, free training program in the 2013-14 school year for principals through the CORE offices. Just like the teacher training, the principal training was peer-led. The professional development was aimed at providing a deeper knowledge of the learning standards and understanding of what teaching to those standards should look like in the classroom. The Department felt that the building leaders had to have a better understanding of quality instruction in order to lead the transformation from the old Tennessee learning standards to new, college- and career-ready standards.

Both the teacher and principal professional development programs were funded through the Tennessee Race to the Top grant, more than $500 million awarded to the state in 2010. The last year of Race to the Top was 2015, and now state education officials are working to keep the professional development in place but on a much smaller scale using a variety of strategies, including better leveraging of the CORE offices.

Department officials say it was a huge undertaking, but an even bigger success, providing training to nearly 70,000 teachers over four years, with more than 28-thousand teachers trained in just two months in 2013.

**Common Core Council**

Department officials believe their work to involve teachers throughout the state early on helped pave the way for successful implementation. They developed a plan early on to involve local educators and created a Common Core Council that advised the Department as a working group as they collectively figured out their approaches to bringing college- and career-ready standards to the classrooms. The Department started by selecting an effective cohort of practicing local teachers that believed in the power of standards and high expectations for all students. The group was a collection of educators of various levels from local districts throughout the state and the Department engaged this council at every step of the process. They believe this group really helped communicate the benefits of higher standards to their colleagues throughout Tennessee.

Department officials say the Common Core Council, while no longer active, did an excellent job of building acceptance and understanding around the standards. This cohort became a powerful voice to help the Department move
forward with implementing college- and career-ready standards. Members of the cohort spoke with legislators, stakeholders, and other educators to explain what the standards were and to provide clarity and transparency throughout the implementation process. They were able to bring teachers to the table who could say, “I’ve done this in my classroom and our kids can do the work and be successful.”

During the 2014 legislative session, legislation passed to remove Tennessee from the PARCC consortium and create a Tennessee-specific assessment aligned with college- and career-ready standards. While the assessment changed, the focus on high standards for all students remained.

Classroom instruction has changed as standards implementation has moved forward. Tennessee switched to a text-based assessment in 2012. Now students as early as third grade review text and write an answer based on what they’ve read. Reading and writing are being used in more subject areas, creating cross subject collaborations. In math, it’s more pronounced with more discussion and exploratory instruction. Instead of 15 problems on a multiplication table, students are focused on one complex task with multiple parts. The more rigorous college- and career-ready standards are leading to richer dialogue and more exploration in the classroom.
Trousdale County is often called the Rhode Island of Tennessee, the smallest county in the state in terms of land area. It’s a small rural district where 60 percent of the students are economically disadvantaged, 80 percent are white, and 16 percent are students with disabilities.

Clint Satterfield is the superintendent in Trousdale County. He says one of the first questions he asked when his district began implementing new college- and career-ready standards was, “How can we improve teacher quality?” He says over the past five years the answer has become obvious. In his opinion, it has to be done through high quality professional development, which must be initiated at the state level. He says because Trousdale is so small and rural, they just don’t have the local resources needed to do effective professional development or provide teachers technical assistance or resources, unless development opportunities are initiated by the state.

In Trousdale County, they began implementing the new college- and career-ready standards in the 2011-12 school year. Initially, district administrators and staff didn’t really know anything about the standards. The district’s first foray into the new standards was limited to off the shelf training in English language arts and math developed and provided by a textbook supplier. Building on that training was difficult at best, with district staff struggling to gain traction with the new standards.

Then in 2012, the Tennessee Department of Education began rolling out a massive professional development campaign. This professional development campaign was critically important for Trousdale County. The train-the-trainer model has paid off for the district, providing learning leaders in the district that are helping to expand knowledge and understanding of the standards.

“What it did was give us an opportunity,” said Satterfield. “We were able to start building our own capacity.”

Trousdale administrators began sending teachers to the training from the various content areas. The participating teachers would, in turn, come back to the district and redeliver that content to their colleagues. Teachers in the district were energized by this new professional development that was being delivered by their peers. Initially, a small group of teachers willing to experiment volunteered for the training. As staff became more familiar with the trainings and felt more comfortable with how it was being delivered, other teachers requested to be a part of that teacher leader corps and to receive the training in person to share with their colleagues. Districts were allowed a limited number of spots for the professional development, and as other districts didn’t use their slots, Trousdale began to flood
the training with their teachers. As the state’s professional development continued, more Trousdale teachers have sought access to it.

Satterfield said the only obstacle with the state professional development was trying to figure out how to pay teachers for their time and efforts. In Trousdale County most of this was accomplished by using their in-service time so that the district didn’t have to assume any additional costs. However, because Trousdale County is a strategic compensation district, they did have some flexibility to build the in-house capacity for teacher leaders. They had been paying teachers stipends for hard-to-staff positions, one of the strategies they used was to compensate the learning leaders to do professional development in the summer and redeliver to their colleagues. “We had our teachers become experts and they taught others, building capacity within our resources and within ourselves,” said Satterfield.

They’re asking students to read and ask the right questions, and students are asking questions of each other, taking more ownership of their own education with the teachers acting more as facilitators.

One of the challenges Trousdale county faced initially was trying to implement new standards while being tested on the old ones. Officials say it was a slippery slope they had to navigate, likening it to sleeping with one eye open. The district did build curriculum guides and cross referenced the standards, putting the old standards in one column and the college- and career-ready Tennessee Academic Standards in another. They tried to implement the new standards where they could teach the two standards at the same time. They also tried to teach the old standards in a “new way” — having students write to text more, writing across the curriculum, and increasing the level of text complexity and enhancing rigor where possible.

Satterfield says the classrooms have seen a 180-degree turnaround. Trousdale county teachers are no longer teaching as they did 20 years ago. They’re asking students to read and ask the right questions, and students are asking questions of each other, taking more ownership of their own education with the teachers acting more as facilitators.

“We’re teaching them to think like little lawyers. It’s unbelievable the shifts of where our classrooms are now and where they were four years ago. We’ve got a long way to go, but the quality of instruction has flipped with what we’re doing in our community.”

That flip is credited to the Tennessee Department of Education’s emphasis on train-the-trainer model and their investment in teacher professional development — a strategy started at the state level of high quality professional development, delivered to local teacher leaders who can then successfully redeliver to their colleagues back at school.
In Utah, the State Office of Education (the Office) began providing professional development on the new college- and career-ready standards the first year after their adoption, but teachers weren’t expected to implement them right away. They chose a staggered approach, with the English language arts standards expected to be implemented in Utah classrooms in 2011, along with 6th and 9th grade mathematics. In 2012, the rest of the elementary math grades were added along with 10th grade math, with full implementation in 2013.

In the first year of standards implementation, the Office worked to get the word out on the changes. Content area specialists began the dialogue in their meetings with local district staff, while other agency staff worked with superintendents and curriculum directors to communicate the change, as press releases were used to help spread the work to the public at large.

In-person Professional Development for Teachers

In the summer of 2011 the Office began the Core Academy, a series of 4-day in-person meetings in a variety of locations across the state. The intensive professional development series focused on different parts of the standards each year, with specific English language arts and math grade levels. The Office wanted teachers to have an opportunity to dig deep into the standards, focusing on the instructional shifts and content.

Over the four years of the Core Academy approximately 5,000 teachers per year were engaged in the state-offered professional development at no cost to districts. Originally the state’s focus for delivering professional development was through this regional, face-to-face approach, at one time hosting academies at 15 different locations.

While Office officials were very pleased with the number of teachers engaged in the learning, it wasn’t possible to reach all teachers. They knew there were limitations to the model. Utah has some very remote regions making it difficult to reach everyone. Due to these geographical challenges, the Office began moving to a blended model, with online networks and instruction, interspersed with face-to-face meetings.
Utilizing Open Educational Resources Due to Lack of Aligned Materials

At the same time the state was focusing on professional development specific to content and instructional shifts, districts were expected to concentrate on unpacking the standards. Local districts began the process of curriculum mapping based on local resources, materials, and contexts.

One of the biggest needs teachers identified early on was a lack of resources aligned to the Utah Core Standards. The Office received $2 million in 2011 from the state legislature for implementation of the new standards, funding that was to be used for professional and resource development. That figure was reduced to $500,000 in its last year of funding in 2016. Part of that funding allowed creation of resources to help develop local district capacity in implementing the new, higher standards.

“In this idea that building capacity is very important and recognizing that teachers are professionals and treating them as such is very important to standards implementation,” said Diana Suddreth, Director of Teaching and Learning at the Utah State Office of Education.

The Office says that challenge has actually turned into one of its biggest successes. They’ve created a number of open educational resources (OER) available online for free, giving teachers an opportunity to access quality materials aligned to the Utah Core Standards. They developed the Mathematics Vision Project, an actual curriculum for the integrated pathway for high school and middle school that is being used nationwide.

In addition to the Mathematics Vision Project the Office developed core guides in math. They were simple, one page guides for secondary teachers and a bit larger for elementary grades. The guides covered vocabulary, background knowledge on the standards, what a performance-based task look like, and what a skills-based task looks like pertaining to the individual standards. Teachers embraced these guides and said that they helped them learn what the assessments are measuring. The guides brought clarity to the standards and helped teachers understand what to look for when developing their own assessments.

Utah education officials felt creating the resources was a form of professional development. They worked with small groups of teachers to develop them and then brought in larger groups to facilitate the discussions concerning the materials. They wanted to empower teachers to be leaders, take ownership for the materials and in the process develop additional capacity.

““This idea that building capacity is very important and recognizing that teachers are professionals and treating them as such is very important to standards implementation,” said Diana Suddreth, Director of Teaching and Learning at the Utah State Office of Education. “They felt comfortable with the resources we developed because we didn’t leave them high and dry.”

Lessons Learned and Instructional Improvement

In Utah they felt it was important to get stakeholder support for the standards early on. A committee of higher education professionals, K-12 educators, parents, and others was convened to study the standards and validate that they were appropriate for the state’s students. Parents were one audience they felt they needed more support with. They didn’t
anticipate the monumental shift the new standards would pose for parents, who were previously engaged in helping students do homework, but were no longer able to help. While they did work with the PTA and local districts to engage parents, in hindsight they wish they would have been more active in anticipating the change the new standards meant for parents.

**Teachers are really deepening their own knowledge and getting kids to perform at a higher level.**

Local districts and teachers recognized this as a new way of doing business for the kids. “Teachers were willing to go into this bold new adventure and tell the success that results from deeper understanding of content and how that helps students,” said Suddreth.

Suddreth says the impact in the classroom has been huge. Teachers are really deepening their own knowledge and getting kids to perform at a higher level. The greater emphasis on writing as a critical skill has seen the English language arts standards move into other subjects like social studies and science. Math has been more engaging, instead of watching teachers give examples, students are active participants, helping to shape their own learning. The focus has changed from learning a specific skill to building a better understanding of content and learning to apply that knowledge.
The Salt Lake City School District is a diverse urban district where nearly 60 percent of all students are low income, 43 percent are white, and 38 percent are Hispanic. The majority of schools in the district are Title I.

The district has an advantage that most local education agencies throughout the state of Utah don’t have when it comes to implementing the Utah Core Standards — a cadre of academic coaches that can provide teachers with extra support. When Utah first adopted the new college- and career-ready standards in math and English language arts this cadre of coaches became the districts go-to team to help facilitate districtwide implementation. Administrators made sure to get the coaches on board first, focusing their efforts to understand the standards themselves and then to provide support to the classroom teachers they serve as they make the shift to teaching to the new standards.

Salt Lake City District Officials say one of the most beneficial supports they received were the Core Academies that were run by the Utah State Office of Education (the Office). Salt Lake City sent their coaches to the academy for the training with a goal of bringing back what they learned to the district to share with other teachers.

The biggest challenge district teachers faced was the availability of instructional materials that actually reflected the new standards. They chose a math program that was closely aligned to the standards, and as they replace their consumable materials they have been able to adopt materials more closely aligned to the standards. The district just this school year adopted an English language arts program that they feel truly reflects the standards.

Initially, in middle school and high school they didn’t have any materials that were aligned to the new standards. They again credit the Office with providing much needed resources and guidance. While many local districts, Salt Lake included, were working their way through the standards, unpacking them and finding materials on their own, they say the Office realized that high school teachers were struggling in the new integrated math. The state developed the Mathematics Vision Project, which included core guides for middle school and high schools to use that followed the integrated pathway. In addition to using the math core guides, teachers in the Salt Lake District also use the open educational resources (OERs) the state developed and made available for free.

An integral part of the successful implementation of the new standards in Salt Lake City is the use of local assessments. The district’s cadre of academic coaches wrote interim assessments for district teachers to use that reflect the actual expectation of the core standards. The Salt Lake coaches helped write the state assessments and so the local assessments are highly correlated. These coaches have helped the teachers use these interim assessments to guide their instruction, indicating a level of expectation and reasoning.
They have helped teachers understand how to make adjustments based on the results.

Barbara Kuehl is the Director of Professional Development for the Salt Lake City School District. She says the most exciting part of moving to new standards is the instructional shift and how it has caused a deeper attention to learning.

“That is definitely one of the things you see everywhere. We’ve got some teachers very good at supporting students in English language arts

There is more reasoning, higher order thinking, more justification, more classrooms discussion. Teachers are getting very good at hosting the discourse.

and math,” said Kuehl. “There is more reasoning, higher order thinking, more justification, more classrooms discussion. Teachers are getting very good at hosting the discourse. Teachers just talking is being challenged.”

Kuehl says the switch to new standards has helped to even the playing field across the district. Many people felt that students couldn’t do the more rigorous work expected under the new standards, however, what has been shown is that they can and that students need to be involved more in leading their own learning.
VERMONT

Adopted Common Core State Standards in 2010

Vermont School Demographics

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Total #Students with Disabilities</td>
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When Vermont adopted Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics, state education officials knew it was going to be a big shift for teachers and that they would need time to transition. They put together a five-year phase-in model with the goal that, “Each Vermont educator will have an equitable opportunity over time to develop an understanding, appropriate to his or her educational responsibilities, of the Common Core State Standards and their application to curriculum, instruction and assessment.”

Stakeholder Engagement

It was an ambitious goal and one they knew they would need assistance in achieving. Soon after adopting the new standards, they convened stakeholders to begin developing strategies to implement the standards across the state with fidelity. The first item of business this stakeholder group requested originally was a crosswalk between Vermont’s Grade Expectations, the state’s previous standards, and the Common Core. However, staff at the Vermont Agency of Education felt a crosswalk was not appropriate. They thought that while the previous standards were solid and provided a good foundation, the differences were so significant moving to Common Core they needed a new approach.

To improve equitable access to professional development, the Vermont Agency of Education created the Vermont Professional Learning Network (PLN) which was first awarded to a collaborative of three regional educational agencies. Education leaders decided they needed to increase awareness of the standards and the changes that would be required of teachers, administrators, and students. They created an Implementing Standards and Assessment Advisory Council (ISAAC) to help with this work. The diverse group included agency staff and experts from the field, including superintendents, principals, curriculum directors, special education teachers, and career and technical education educators. ISAAC worked with agency staff to develop and distribute information about the new standards through the various channels they had access to through their professional organizations and local districts. They also worked with the agency on the development of a five-year phase-in for implementing the new standards in schools.
Phase-in Plan

The Vermont timeline for implementing the Common Core spanned five years and consisted of 4 phases:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>2010-12 school years.</td>
<td>Aimed at building educator awareness of the new standards, beginning a dialogue with the field about what Common Core State Standards entailed and how it may impact them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>2011-13 school years.</td>
<td>Intended to take a close, hard look at the standards and examine the instructional shifts and change to local systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>2013-14 school year.</td>
<td>Time to develop and align curriculum, and aligning instruction and assessments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Equitable Implementation

Some districts are in a better position to engage in professional development with educators, while others simply don’t have the resources. To improve equitable access to professional development, the Vermont Agency of Education created the Vermont Professional Learning Network (PLN) which was first awarded to a collaborative of three regional educational agencies. By bringing together resources at scale, the PLN was able to provide online and face-to-face training opportunities for educators throughout the state including regional trainings, virtual learning modules, webinars, online courses, and other resources that are available at [http://www.vermontpln.org](http://www.vermontpln.org).

The focus of the work for the PLN is primarily to provide support to educators on instructional leadership and strategies for effectively implementing the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics. Through hosting virtual and multiple in-person professional learning opportunities at different sites in Vermont, the PLN helps to meet the needs of leadership teams throughout Vermont.

Agency staff feel they have been making strides in providing support to leadership teams, but know work must still continue. A survey from 2015 showed that 80 percent of respondents said they “usually” or “always” use Common Core aligned mathematics materials and assessments, while 73 percent said they did so for English language arts.

Vermont adopted the Next Generation Science Standards in June 2013. They say the experience they had with implementing the Common Core in ELA and mathematics has helped them navigate the implementation of the new science standards. They are following a similar implementation plan in many ways and are applying lessons learned to ease the transition.
The Lamoille South Supervisory Union (SSU) provides administrative services to three local districts in rural Vermont for the towns of Elmore, Morristown, and Stowe. Each of the towns constitutes its own separate school district with its own, locally elected board.

In 2011-12 school year, soon after Vermont had adopted the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics, the administrative staff at Lamoille SSU began looking at the implementation plan set out by the state education agency. As they reviewed the standards and began to plan on how they would provide professional development for teachers in the three separate districts, they decided to create Curriculum Camp, which is essentially a boot camp for teachers to immerse themselves in the standards.

Using Title IIA funds, they created a four-day workshop in June 2012 immediately following the last day of school. They put together a curriculum and instruction council, consisting primarily of teachers, one from each building within the Lamoille SSU, and representing all content areas. The council helped to determine how they would implement the standards within the districts and what teachers needed in terms of professional learning.

The first camp was very specific to English language arts and mathematics and was spent unpacking the standards and studying the implications of the instructional shifts at various grade levels. The teachers developed strategies together over those four days on how they would handle the instructional shifts and also what resources teachers would need in the future. They began to identify major themes in the Common Core and focused heavily on reading complex texts. That first year, teachers worked intensely on adjusting the rigor of reading and finding multiple sources for additional text in the content areas. The second year focused on argumentative writing. Writing teachers worked with their colleagues in math, physical education, and the social sciences to discuss how they could teach argumentative writing in their specific content areas.

Teachers are not required to attend the Curriculum Camp, but in 2015, 97 percent of the professional staff chose to receive the additional professional development. They receive a stipend check, separate from their contractual work, for the four extra days of intense training.

“The first couple of years we got just the core teachers,” said Valerie Sullivan, Director of Curriculum and Instruction. “It’s a really positive experience. Personally, if we required it as part of the contract, I’m not sure we’d have such a positive atmosphere. They want to be here and learn.”

During the first few years, the Curriculum Camp was focused on the standards and what they
mean to the various content areas. Now, the
camps are progressing to mapping out the
standards and showing teachers where the
different standards will occur in their courses and
focusing on assessments by helping teachers in
the districts determine what proficiency looks like
in the various schools and grade levels.

Using this feedback has allowed them
to really focus in on what teachers want.

At the end of every day at Curriculum Camp
participants are asked to fill out a survey to
provide feedback on the day’s activities. They are
also asked to complete another survey at the end
of camp, which Curriculum and Instruction staff
use to begin developing the next year’s camp.
The Curriculum Council now works throughout
the entire school year to develop the camp. They
review the feedback beginning in the fall and start
to plan how to best meet the teachers’ needs.

Using this feedback has allowed them to really
focus in on what teachers want. Initially, the course
offerings were very much one size fits all. Now,
they are more sophisticated in meeting demand
in choices and offerings. This year, there will be a
greater focus on assessment.

“They feel like they are being recognized as
the professionals they are and they like having
the time set aside to really do the hard work to
implement this well in their classrooms,” said
Sullivan. “One hour meetings each week just won’t
cut it. They feel honored and respected, like they
are being supported by their team to really do
their jobs well.”
In 2010 Washington adopted college-and career-ready learning standards in English language arts and mathematics, calling them the Washington State Learning Standards. They started a three-year progression toward full implementation. The first step called for districts to implement the new standards in kindergarten through grade 2, where there was no state assessment. The second step was for districts to implement in grades 3-8, and the final step was for implementation at the high school level in 2014.

Collaboration with Regional Agencies

Washington’s Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (the Office) leaned heavily on its network of Educational Service Districts (ESDs) to help them work with local districts to implement the new college- and career-ready standards. The ESDs are regional agencies that provide intermediary services, including professional development to local districts.

Soon after adoption of the new Washington State Learning Standards, funding was allocated to the ESDs to hire content coordinators for English language arts, math, and science. Office staff work closely with the ESD content coordinators, bringing them together each month to discuss progress and plan. The Office collaborates in planning out professional development that can be delivered to districts through these monthly meetings.

“One of the reasons we have been able to move the needle quite significantly is our relationship with the Educational Service Districts,” said Anne Gallagher, K-12 Mathematics Director. “Using our statewide network of coordinators, we provide the professional development. They really have provided significant support.”

The coordinators helped to deliver the message that the standards were good for students. They were able to work with local teachers to understand the differences between the new Washington State Learning Standards and the previous ones. In addition, because the professional development was being delivered by the ESDs locally, teachers could actually see what the shifts looked like in their classrooms.

Elevating Teacher Leaders

Washington is a large geographic state with more than 50,000 teachers. In 2011 the Office started a network of teacher leaders called the Washington State Fellows’ Network. Every content coordinator in the state’s nine Educational Service Districts puts together a cadre of fellows each year. The ESD coordinators then host a series
of four convenings each year, bringing together members to deepen their understanding of the Washington State Learning Standards and best practices. The fellows must put together a plan for sharing their work back at their local district. Districts in turn must agree to allow the fellows to attend the four convenings each year and utilize the fellows in their school or districts to assist with professional learning.

... because the professional development was being delivered by the ESDs locally, teachers could actually see what the shifts looked like in their classrooms.

The Fellows’ Network is a grassroots initiative that allows the Office to have a coordinated message throughout Washington. Fellows develop resources to share with one another, with their home districts, and the state’s other teachers. In its fifth year, the Fellows’ Network now counts 550 members.

The Fellows’ Network is a no cost program that allows for sharing common messages and resources. The Office and Educational Service Districts plan the convenings and support work with existing staff who are already designated for these types of activities. Districts are responsible for the costs of substitute teachers on the days fellows attend the convenings.

Statewide Coalition

The Office has been working with stakeholders to build support for the college- and career-ready standards and assessments that accompany them. A coalition of organizations — Ready Washington — has been a major partner for the Office. Ready Washington is made up of education agencies and stakeholder groups that work together to engage the community in understanding the need for the new Washington State Learning Standards. They have been a strong voice promoting rigorous standards and assessments in Washington and have been instrumental in the Office’s message getting heard by diverse audiences. The coalition numbers more than 20 members that include advocacy groups, higher education administrators, and the state’s principal and superintendent associations.

The Office is comfortable with the plans they have put in place for implementing college- and career-ready standards, yet they know it’s a big lift and that they still have work to do.

“There are definitely moments where we see great progress, but some people are still holding onto what they know,” said Aira Jackson, English Language Arts Director. “There are pockets of excellence in which we are seeing dramatic differences, but this is a long time evolution.”
Wyoming School Demographics

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In 2010, the Wyoming Department of Education’s (the Department’s) state standards review committee began analyzing the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics to see just how closely aligned they were with the existing Wyoming Content and Performance Standards. The committee’s overall impression was that the Common Core was more rigorous and would do a much better job of preparing the state’s students for success after they completed high school, so the committee recommended adoption of the Common Core ELA and math standards.

State law requires that there be a three-year phase in process when new standards are adopted. The new college- and career-ready standards were adopted in July 2012. This would mean that the new standards would be fully implemented in 2014-15, giving districts a window of time to dig into the standards.

Staff at the Wyoming Department of Education began to help their local districts implement the new standards soon after adoption. They immediately categorized the standards for implementation into two recommended phases. The first were those standards that were more closely aligned to the previous standards and would be easier to implement. The second were those that would be more difficult, requiring additional training and resources. The Department also created several materials to assist the field as the transitioned to the new college- and career-ready standards. These materials were posted on the Department’s Standards Review webpage and include crosswalks in English language arts and mathematics, with an additional, more detailed crosswalk in math, a gap analysis, and a comparison between the two sets of standards.

Despite the fact that the standards were not formally adopted by the state until July 2012, many schools and districts actually began working toward implementing the new standards as soon as 2010. A state survey found that 20 percent of surveyed Wyoming math teachers began teaching to the new standards in the 2010-11 school year.

The majority of professional development in Wyoming is handled by local districts, however, with the adoption of new college- and career-ready standards, the Department decided it needed to engage with the field in a different way. In January 2013, the Department hosted a kickoff meeting in the central part of Wyoming in which each district in the state could send a team of eight people. The two-day meeting featured workshops to provide an understanding of the instructional shifts and what would happen with assessment and instruction. The
goal was to provide a baseline of understanding and help districts to develop their own implementation plans. The kickoff had more than 200 participants, and the Department repeated it later in 2013 for those districts that could not make it the first time.

After the initial workshop, the Department partnered with the Wyoming Curriculum Directors Association at regional events to get messages and materials out. They held regional workshops and engaged with local districts that had specific requests for professional development.

“The districts really should receive the credit. They have done a great job of working together and collaborating,” said Julie Magee, Director of Accountability.

Following the January 2013 workshop, standards and assessment staff spent the next two years providing professional development in specific content areas. They worked with the state educational administrative associations to help their members understand how to better support teachers in the classroom as they moved toward full implementation. In particular, the Department engaged with the Wyoming Curriculum Directors Association, which was very active in the state’s implementation efforts. Department staff frequently filled the Curriculum Directors regional meeting agendas with updates and information. The association even contracted for their own professional development, bringing in districts to regional events to ensure that they had the necessary tools for creating and choosing aligned materials.

In 2015, the Department surveyed teachers, curriculum directors, and principals to look at the degree of implementation of the new college- and career-ready standards. While the survey received limited responses, the Department did find some results that will help shape future implementation efforts. They found from those teachers that responded, their views of implementation were very different from curriculum directors and principals. While administrators saw the implementation as phased in over a period of time, teachers felt it was more immediate. Teachers felt they needed to make rapid changes to resources, lesson plans, and assessments and did not see it as phased in at all. In the future, the Department will spend more efforts specifically on helping teachers understand the process and timelines for bringing the standards to life in the classroom.

The Department credits local districts for their determination to implement the new, more rigorous college- and career-ready standards to better prepare their students.

“The main thing in Wyoming is districts have worked really hard to implement the new standards with fidelity,” said Julie Magee, Director of Accountability. “The districts really should receive the credit. They have done a great job of working together and collaborating.”