Teaching to the Core:

Integrating Implementation of Common Core and Teacher Effectiveness Policies

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Overview & Recommendations

The purpose of the Common Core State Standards is to prepare students to succeed in college and career pursuits. To that end, the Common Core calls on teachers to focus on deepening students' understanding of what they're learning, enhancing their problem-solving skills, and improving their ability to communicate ideas. At the same time, states are putting in place policies aimed at increasing teachers' effectiveness, the most prominent of which are rigorous evaluations.

Together, teacher effectiveness policies and the Common Core have transformative potential to significantly improve outcomes *and* equity. But putting them into place quickly, simultaneously and with integrity is a hugely demanding and complex endeavor. Right now, timelines are colliding, placing an enormous burden on front-line practitioners. But managers at the state level have not been expected to reduce this burden by forging coherence across these policy priorities; more often, coordination is left to principals and teachers.

As just one example, the timelines for implementing the Common Core and new assessments designed to measure students' progress toward college and career readiness in many cases conflict with the timelines for new teacher evaluation policies that heavily weigh the results of tests based on outdated standards. That means that, in some locales, teachers will be learning to teach to the new standards even as they are being evaluated on their ability to teach to old standards. A similar conflict arises when evaluations are based on teaching frameworks that pre-date the Common Core and do not emphasize the instructional shifts demanded by the Core. This sends a mixed signal to teachers regarding the system's priorities: focus on teaching the old standards, or focus on transitioning to the Common Core?

Successfully integrating these work streams into a coherent, unified improvement agenda requires intensive collaboration across teams and offices, sophisticated change management, and continuous cycles of feedback and response. If states do not

do this aggressively and swiftly this opportunity to change teaching and improve learning could well be squandered.

But this is not what state departments of education were designed to do. They were designed to ensure that school districts spend state and federal money for the purposes intended and to enforce myriad state and federal regulations, dealing with everything from school buses to special education.

To carry out this new mission, state education agencies (SEAs) must reinvent themselves: establish a new culture, develop a different set of competencies, and adopt new approaches to their work with school districts. Different arms of the bureaucracy must engage in joint planning, learn to share information and expertise, expand communications internally and externally, and develop the capability and inclination to use implementation data to support continuous improvement. State departments also must work with school districts to ensure that changes in practice are substantive and comport with the increases in rigor and depth called for in the Common Core.

The next several years are pivotal for re-orienting the culture of public education toward higher expectations for student learning and continuous improvement by educators. But inertia is a powerful force in the nation's classrooms; waves of policy reforms have come and gone, leading many educators to adopt a "this too shall pass" mentality. If they are treated as separate and distinct initiatives, the Common Core and teacher effectiveness policies will be more easily dismissed as two more fleeting reforms to be out-lived.

SEA leaders must demonstrate by their actions and words that the initiatives are inextricably linked and also that they call for fundamental changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. If it is not made clear to educators in the superintendent's office as well as the classroom that expectations for performance have fundamentally changed, then there is a real danger that we will have expended a

tremendous amount of political capital and billions of dollars, only to find instruction has not changed and student achievement has not improved.

The purpose of this policy brief and its 10 recommendations is to help state departments succeed

in carrying out these responsibilities. The first six recommendations deal with organizational design and functions of state departments. The next four recommend changes in practice.

Organizational Recommendations

1. Integrate planning and operations of Common Core and teacher effectiveness teams within the SEA.

2. Quickly acquire and develop the internal expertise needed to ensure that the Common Core is implemented with integrity and fidelity.

3. Ensure that professional development activities reflect Common Core expectations.

4. Create and support professional networks of school district leaders, principals and teachers to accelerate professional learning and deepen understanding of the Common Core and teacher evaluations.

5. Enable and encourage prioritization of Common Core instructional shifts in teacher evaluations.

6. Create a single, coordinated communications plan for college and career readiness that highlights the value of the Common Core and the linkages with teacher effectiveness policies.

Recommendations for Practice

1. Require that definitions of high quality teaching practice used in teacher evaluations be aligned with the Common Core.

2. Insist that assessments used in the evaluation of teachers measure the Common Core.

3. As a complement to teacher evaluations, develop *principal* evaluation criteria that highlight the importance of implementing the Common Core with fidelity.

4. Support innovations in daily schedules that provide time for teachers to collaborate on Common Core-related activities during the school day.

Action Steps

1. **Integrate planning and operations of Common Core and teacher effectiveness teams within the SEA.**

- It should be the responsibility of the state chief to communicate internally and externally the importance of integrating these policy strands. The chief should then assess the SEA's readiness to take on this crucial leadership role. This assessment should reveal whether this work can be carried out by the agency as it is currently organized or whether structural changes must occur first.

- Regardless of whether a structural change is needed, the state chief should convene a planning and management group within the SEA comprising leaders and key support personnel involved in the rollout of the Common Core and teacher effectiveness policies. State chiefs should participate regularly, and involve other senior leaders to signal that this work is a critical SEA function and that turf issues and structural or bureaucratic obstacles will not be allowed to get in the way.

- Principal-supervisors, principals, and teacher-leaders should be included as standing members or ad-hoc contributors. The discipline of reconciling SEA discussions with front-line practitioner perspectives will improve the quality and usefulness of the work and likely surface important issues earlier.

- The planning group should invest time in making sure that everyone involved is familiar with the underlying research, content, and intent of the Common Core standards and teacher effectiveness policies. Because this work is evolving rapidly, time should be allocated in this group to keep participants informed of new research, policy developments, and available resources. The goal should be to help staff become effective leaders of implementation activities and advocates for integrating the two areas of policy.

- One of the first items on the planning group's agenda should be to create a timeline that integrates activities related to the rollout of the Common Core and teacher and leader evaluation and effectiveness policies. The group should do a side-by-side comparison of current timelines and identify opportunities to combine activities. Where conflicts or competing priorities surface, the workgroup should be charged with resolving them.

> **The discipline of reconciling SEA discussions with front-line practitioner perspectives will improve the quality and usefulness of the work and likely surface important issues earlier.**

  i. Having created an integrated timeline, state staff should communicate it to the field using webinars, regional meetings and site visits.

  ii. This should be a living document that is updated regularly and is readily accessible electronically.

  iii. The timeline should be seen as a way of communicating what the state department is committing itself to as well as what actions are expected of the field.

- The implementation group should meet at least monthly. Discussions should center on challenges in the field and ways that the teacher effectiveness and Common Core work can be mutually reinforcing.

- The planning group should create explicit benchmarks and milestones to establish internal and external accountability and to maintain momentum.

  i. For example, the group could set a deadline for creating a draft of an integrated

timeline for the two sets of policies, another deadline for receiving feedback from the field, and a third deadline for revising and publicizing the timeline more broadly.

ii. The group also should identify measures and means of monitoring progress to evaluate the degree to which teacher effectiveness policies and Common Core implementation are being integrated. For example, are Common Core instructional shifts the focus of observation and feedback? How will the SEA determine this?

iii. The state should regularly survey teachers and principals regarding the rollout of the Common Core and performance evaluation systems to determine whether they are experiencing the work as an integrated, coherent whole. The data should be gathered and analyzed quickly and released in progress reports. Doing so will signal that the experiences of educators in this regard are taken seriously and are being used to plan statewide activities.

- The state chief and senior leaders should plan an event or a series of events or other means of signaling to the field that the department has embraced this new role.

- States differ in the extent to which the state controls the design of teacher and leader evaluation systems.[i] But, even in states where districts are taking the lead in designing these systems, states can determine whether the local designs satisfy statewide criteria and insist that they reinforce the Common Core. States also can provide technical assistance to districts designing new evaluation systems to help them integrate Common Core expectations.

- Common Core and teacher effectiveness should provide the foundation for the work of all offices within the state agency, including those with oversight for categorical programs and grants. SEAs need to determine what initiatives and data reporting can be eliminated because they are obsolete or conflict with requirements of teacher effectiveness and Common Core implementation; if everything else is "business as usual," the combined demands will overwhelm local administrators and divert attention and energy from these new priorities. This includes areas such as English language development,

special education, and Title II professional development. The personnel in each of these offices make demands on local educators and often provide technical assistance at the school level, so it is essential that the work of these offices is informed by and reinforces the Common Core and teacher effectiveness.

2. **Quickly acquire and develop the internal expertise needed to ensure that the Common Core is implemented with integrity and fidelity.**

- State departments have an essential role in assuring the quality and fidelity of implementation of both the Common Core and teacher effectiveness policies. SEAs can only lead and manage this agenda if they can draw on and deploy experts in these two key areas of policy and practice. Without this expertise, the Common Core is likely to be misunderstood and watered down and teacher evaluation policies are likely to be misaligned.

> **State departments have an essential role in assuring the quality and fidelity of implementation of both the Common Core and teacher effectiveness policies.**

- State agencies should move quickly on three fronts to ensure they have this expertise available.

    i. First, they should identify those with the greatest expertise within the agency and draw on them to build the knowledge and skills of others.

    ii. They also should identify partners in outside organizations both within the state and nationally who can provide technical assistance and quality assurance reviews. Public-private partnerships and/or philanthropic investments may be necessary to establish these relationships quickly; this is an area to prioritize, because once implementation occurs it will be difficult to increase expectations for rigor or quality.

    iii. They should identify experts within high-functioning school districts and provide them with incentives to take on tempo-

rary assignments with the state agency, either part- or full-time, to augment state expertise, facilitate professional learning networks, and/or conduct site visits and content audits on behalf of the SEA. Temporarily sharing expertise could have the added benefit of strengthening understanding and professional relationships among SEA and LEA leaders.

   iv. Finally, they should explore partnering with neighboring SEAs to pool talent and access to expertise.

- Because the work is already in progress and demands for expertise are increasing rapidly, states need short-term and long-term strategies. District experts and external partners should be engaged immediately to shore-up the quality of current efforts and also to develop expertise across the state agency that can sustain supervision/management of this work moving forward.

3. Ensure that professional development activities reflect and model Common Core expectations.

- Professional development for teachers and principals should be seen as an opportunity to integrate Common Core standards and teacher effectiveness efforts. Designing and delivering professional development emanating exclusively from one office or another (i.e., Common Core or teacher effectiveness) perpetuates the perception and reality that these are separate and distinct initiatives.

- Ongoing professional development is a key strategy for translating evaluation results into improved teacher practice. If the opportunities for professional development provided to teachers as part of the evaluation process are not infused with the Common Core, then the system is more than inefficient – it is working at cross-purposes. Likewise, Common Core activities should make explicit reference to the frameworks and assessments used in determining teacher performance ratings to reinforce coherence.

- Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) in Tampa, Florida provides an example of integrating the Common Core with teacher effectiveness policies through professional develop-

ment. Observation data revealed that most teachers in HCPS struggle with using questioning and discussion techniques (domain 3(b) in Danielson's Framework for Teaching). Without making any distinction between the two priorities, HCPS integrated Common Core content into professional development activities, so that teachers experienced help with meeting evaluation expectations and support for meeting Common Core as a single, coherent set of improvement activities. The Measures of Effective Teaching study revealed that most teachers struggle with questioning and discussion techniques (as well as other skills that are critical to Common Core), so the Hillsborough example addresses a problem many districts will confront.

> **Professional learning should model the Common Core by engaging teachers in intellectually rich and demanding activities, and require teachers to create products and communicate their ideas to deepen their learning. This will make it more likely that they will apply what they learn in their own classrooms.**

- SEAs can use their oversight of federal Title II and state professional development funds to insist that they be used to promote Common Core expectations. SEAs should review professional development content as well as format to ensure Common Core expectations are reflected.

- If professional development sessions exhort teachers to more actively engage students in closely analyzing text, constructing meaning, and communicating their ideas, but the message is delivered in traditional, "sit-and-get" presentations, then implementation is undermined from the start. Professional learning should model the Common Core by engaging teachers in intellectually rich and demanding activities, and require teachers to create products and communicate their ideas to deepen their learning. This will make it more likely that they will apply what they learn in their own classrooms. Teachers need to experience Common Core pedagogy and content, not just hear about them.

- Teacher and principal preparation programs must embed Common Core content and expectations into their training. SEAs can use program approval and other mechanisms to ensure preparation programs are adapted to the demands of Common Core.

4. **Create and support professional networks of school district leaders, principals and teachers to accelerate professional learning and deepen understanding of the Common Core and teacher evaluations.**

- State education departments cannot directly provide job-embedded, context-specific professional development to classroom teachers. But SEAs are well positioned to help districts and charter school organizations share knowledge and expertise.

- SEAs should organize networked learning communities that use in-person and virtual meetings to compare strategies, offer critical feedback, and develop/share materials and insights. For example, these networks could organize a process through which local educators could crowdsource opinions regarding the alignment, quality and rigor of model units, lessons, performance tasks, and jury student work relative to the expectations of the Common Core. SEAs should canvass local districts and partner organizations to identify sources of expertise as well as situations where the needs for technical assistance are most acute and then differentiate their services accordingly.

> **States should not waste their limited time or money on developing new tools. Instead, they should curate, adapt, and strategically deploy tools that already exist and help school districts make good choices among them.**

- States should not waste their limited time or money on developing new tools. Instead, they should curate, adapt, and strategically deploy tools that already exist and help school districts make good choices among them. SEAs are better positioned to help educators make sense of all the products that are proliferating and should not invest heavily in producing more products themselves. SEAs also can work to identify and highlight exemplars of promising practices within the state and nationally. National membership organizations such as the Council of Chief State School Officers, the national teachers' unions, Council of Great City Schools, non-profits such as Achieve, The Aspen Institute, Student Achievement Partners, and many others, including for-profit companies, are creating a wide variety of tools for implementing both the Common Core and teacher effectiveness policies.

- Supporting networks and convening professional meetings requires just as much knowledge about the standards as would providing technical assistance directly. SEAs should be sure to staff such efforts appropriately.

5. **Enable and encourage the prioritization of Common Core instructional shifts in teacher evaluations.**

- The Common Core and new teacher evaluation systems each demand that professionals learn new content, new skills, and new approaches to teaching. Most principals are learning how to observe teaching and provide productive feedback. Teachers, meanwhile, are learning how to accept constructive feedback and design professional improvement goals and plans for reaching them. Together, principals and teachers are working on collaborating across classrooms around student work, performance data, and instructional planning.

- If states want to prioritize moving to the Common Core, then this must be reflected clearly in what teachers are held accountable for instructionally. In these transition years, it would be better to orient teachers and their supervisors toward the new standards and the instructional shifts they require than to cling tightly to old standards.

- Establishing the Common Core instructional shifts as priorities for observing and developing teachers can make the transition more manageable and build confidence in these policies.

- SEAs can help by sending the clear message that school districts should establish and focus on priority areas within comprehensive definitions of successful teaching. For example, school districts could decide that, in the first

year of implementation, principals and teachers will focus on improving questioning techniques, quantity and quality of academic discourse, or other skills that advance the instructional shifts demanded by Common Core. Or, rather than establishing priorities for all schools, districts could ask principals and teachers to identify the Common Core priority areas that make sense for them and their students. The MET study suggests that the majority of teachers struggle with skills that are extremely important to the Common Core (e.g., engaging students in meaningful discussions, using assessment data). The state can encourage districts to focus on these areas in evaluations and in providing for professional development.

> **Establishing the Common Core instructional shifts as priorities for observing and developing teachers can make the transition more manageable and build confidence in these policies.**

- Allowing for Common Core instructional shifts to be a top priority is not inconsistent with and should not delay implementation of consequential summative performance evaluations. One way to balance the need for comprehensive assessment of practice with the need to focus on this transition is to allocate a certain number of classroom observations of teachers for holistic reviews and use others to target areas within the teaching framework that are critical to Common Core implementation. Another option is to limit all observations in the first year to certain domains or sub-domains in the teaching framework. SEAs can set parameters for allowable focus and prioritization without prescribing the design of observations or evaluation systems.

- States should encourage and welcome consideration of the trade-offs between prioritizing a few critical dimensions of instruction and trying to work on everything at once; they should invite LEAs to propose and justify teacher evaluation implementation plans that strike the right balance.

6. **Create a single, coordinated communications plan for college and career readiness that highlights the value of the Common Core and the linkages with teacher effectiveness policies.**

- The Common Core treats students as active learners who are motivated to engage deeply with concepts and rich academic content. Teacher effectiveness policies should be seen and described as a means to make that vision of learning a reality. Messaging teacher and leader effectiveness work as a central strategy for ensuring that instruction is aligned with the Common Core makes it possible to define these policies as strategies supporting an inspiring vision of teaching and learning rather than primarily as an accountability measure.

- The public will be more likely to support both the Common Core and teacher effectiveness policies if they are explicitly connected to the broader mission of preparing students for success in life rather than merely as "reform" policies.

- If teachers and principals experience the Common Core and teacher evaluations as separate and distinct, then for all intents and purposes they are separate initiatives. Strategic communications can play an important role in helping describe Common Core and teacher effectiveness as parts of a coherent whole. It is also important for SEAs and local school districts to communicate to parents, business leaders, and others that it will not be possible to implement the Common Core in classrooms without high quality teaching, and that the purpose of teacher effectiveness policies is to ensure that all students have access to teachers who help them meet those standards.

- SEAs should review every communication to the field to determine whether explicit linkages between the Common Core and teacher effectiveness can be drawn. It should be rare that state officials talk about one without making reference to the other.

7. **Require that definitions of high quality teaching practice used in teacher evaluations be aligned with the Common Core.**

- The Measures of Effective Teaching study documents that teachers struggle with skills that are extremely important to meeting Common Core expectations. Using highly trained observers watching videos, MET found that most teachers perform well with regard to managing student behavior, managing classroom procedures, and creating a classroom environment

of respect and rapport. But they score quite low on using assessments in instruction, using questioning and discussion techniques, and communicating with students. Meeting Common Core learning goals will require significant changes in teachers' practice.

- In the field, most observation ratings are quite high, which does not build a sense of urgency – or even create a recognition – that teaching needs to improve significantly to achieve Common Core expectations. But changing this will be hard: Patterns of inflated observation scores persisted even after significant investments in training raters in Tennessee and Florida, underscoring the magnitude of cultural change required to achieve accurate, rigorous observation results.

- An inability or unwillingness to acknowledge the huge changes in classroom instruction required of most teachers is a grave threat to the success of the Common Core and teacher effectiveness policies. Most people will not work hard to improve if they receive feedback from their supervisor that their work is satisfactory or better. One district in Colorado has adopted the mantra "We are all beginners at the Common Core," to create an environment in which educators are more likely to embrace constructive criticism in pursuit of Common Core learning experiences. Whatever the strategies, states need to make more accurate observation ratings a high priority to create the possibility for constructive feedback and improvements in teacher practice. The cultural aversion in public education to rigorously evaluating and critiquing teacher practice isn't solved by putting weight on test scores; it needs to be addressed directly.

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- One of the most powerful aspects of teacher effectiveness efforts is the focus on more rigorously applying teaching frameworks, which codify performance expectations and represent foundational documents for the profession.

While various frameworks have been around for years, too often these documents have been peripheral rather than central to teacher evaluations and improvement efforts. Now, with teachers and supervisors focusing intently on aligning instruction to the frameworks, it is critical to review these tools to make sure they reflect and emphasize Common Core expectations.

- It would be foolhardy and unfair to expect teachers to strive for instruction that is different from what they are measured on and held accountable for.

- SEAs play a vital role in ensuring that all frameworks used in the state are aligned with the Common Core, regardless of whether or not a state mandates a default teaching framework for use in all districts. (There are efforts underway to refine common teaching frameworks to make sure this is the case. See appendix.) For example, the widely used Framework for Teaching developed by Charlotte Danielson has been adapted to more explicitly reflect Common Core expectations. The 2013 update includes narrative examples of practice that are illustrative of Common Core instructional shifts. Other districts, notably Newark, New Jersey, developed entirely new frameworks to model the Common Core's goal of fewer, clearer, higher standards.

- Leading systems also are considering using evidence guides that identify specific elements of Common Core-aligned instruction. Newark's new framework, for example, distinguishes between practices that are expected to be observed in every classroom every day, and practices that are essential but might only be deployed intermittently (e.g., the mix of fiction vs. information text cannot be observed in a single lesson). Student Achievement Partners is developing guides for assessing effective integration of the instructional shifts in math and in ELA/literacy instruction as defined by Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*.[ii]

- The Common Core's standards for mathematical practice call on students to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them; reason abstractly and quantitatively; construct viable arguments, and critique the reasoning of others. These standards must be applied to learning the major work of the grade – you have to develop these skills in teaching the right con-

tent -- but teachers need shared, operational definitions of teaching that facilitate students' mastery of the mathematical practices. If teachers are able to earn high marks for performance, even if they aren't engaging students in mathematical practices, then this aspect of the Common Core will be only an abstract idea rather than a classroom reality.

8. Insist that assessments used in the evaluation of teachers measure the Common Core.

- Most states' teacher evaluations require additional measures – beyond gains in state test scores – to measure teachers' impact on student learning. Even in "tested grades and subjects," such as reading and math, most state policies specifically require augmenting state tests with other measures. In addition to English Language Arts and Math, Common Core establishes explicit standards for teaching literacy in science social studies, and technical subjects in grades 6-12. These literacy expectations must be assessed to gauge the effectiveness of teachers in these other subjects.

- Every assessment used to determine teacher effectiveness, at least in classes where the Common Core applies, must reflect Common Core content and rigor. If we simultaneously make student learning data matter much more to teachers, and fail to make sure the Common Core is covered by this student learning data, teachers will be forced into an untenable dilemma between what they should do for Common Core and what they should do for their own performance evaluation.

- Requiring students to solve multi-step, complex problems; write to prompts; and demonstrate reasoning and thought processes are all characteristics that distinguish Common Core expectations from the standards/assessments currently in use. Whether through SLOs, performance tasks, portfolios, or other assessments, state departments should enforce the expectation that student learning data for measuring teacher effectiveness include student-generated work products and not solely answers to multiple choice questions. SEAs should constantly monitor the field for new assessment developments because there will be many new developments (e.g., automated scoring of student writing) over the next few years.

- Teachers and principals need to become much more capable of developing student learning goals, selecting appropriate measures, and setting targets. This is not exclusively an issue of test quality, but rather an indication of shallow knowledge in the field regarding assessments, and discomfort with acknowledging the gulf between the current performance of students and the aspirations of Common Core. Assessing learning against the standards is a key strategy for deepening understanding of the standards and how they should be taught. States should invest in developing this capability: If teachers and principals do not develop stronger skills in these areas, it is unlikely they will be able to teach to the rigor and depth expected by the Common Core.

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- To assist districts and schools in creating the additional assessments needed for teacher effectiveness determinations, states should create templates for devising performance tasks and other assessments that reflect the Common Core. To ensure integrity in this work, states should establish jurying and auditing processes for measuring how well these additional measures align with the Common Core.

- Many states plan to use Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) to measure teacher impact on student learning for the additional assessments described above, as well as for non-tested grades and subjects. These SLOs represent another opportunity to stress the Common Core, but SEAs will need to supervise this work proactively to ensure fidelity to Common Core expectations.

- Performance tasks, like those being used in Chicago and piloted in New York City, have the potential to balance traditional tests with

more authentic (and potentially more valid) measures of students' abilities in relation to Common Core expectations, even as there will be ongoing challenges in assuring reliability and comparability. All options involve trade-offs; for example, some options don't require or expect local expertise or discretion, but the most inspiring and aspirational Common Core expectations are not well-assessed by currently available measures. System leaders and policymakers need to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each and make deliberate choices.

> **Giving the results of current tests significant weight in individual teacher evaluations could discourage reasonable teachers from fully embracing the transition to the Common Core.**

- Most states are in the midst of implementing new policies that base a significant portion of teachers' performance ratings on student learning as measured by gains on statewide standardized tests, where such data are available. States must directly address the tension between current tests and new standards, and also plan for the transition to new assessments in 2014-15.

- The empirical base is weak for asserting that results on current tests are well aligned to Common Core expectations. The MET study found only weak correlation between state tests and more cognitively demanding tests that were selected as best available options for reflecting Common Core expectations (these tests were the Balanced Assessment in Math and the SAT9-Open Ended in Language Arts). State tests in English-Language Arts, which are overwhelmingly multiple choice and short answer, were found to be especially weak in terms of reliability and correlation with other relevant measures of student achievement; MET lead author Tom Kane suggests "states should hasten efforts to add writing prompts to their literacy assessments."[iii] In math, some topics need to be moved from one year to another in the assessments, and the Common Core's focus on a few key concepts each year is inconsistent with many state tests that measure many concepts.

- Giving the results of current tests significant weight in individual teacher evaluations could discourage reasonable teachers from fully embracing the transition to the Common Core. Teachers are justifiably fearful that practicing with the teaching approaches sought by the Common Core will not result in maximizing student gains on current tests. It would undermine Common Core implementation if teachers and other educators wait for the new assessments to come on-line before working to change practice; the shifts needed are profound and should be encouraged as much as possible.

- While several states have made significant alterations to the blueprint/design of their tests over the last couple of years to better measure Common Core expectations, most states are waiting for the consortia assessments to come on-line. State departments need to (1) determine the degree to which current state tests are aligned with Common Core and (2) make this information available to the field. They also will have to decide whether and how to use these outdated tests in individual teacher evaluations. States should consider reducing the weighting of current test scores for individual teacher evaluations while the current tests sunset, and explore other ways of accounting for student learning in personnel evaluations, as described above.

- Beginning in 2015, states that are part of the PARCC or Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium will be using new assessments to measure mastery of the Common Core. States have to decide how to phase in the use of these assessments in teacher evaluations. This is a complex transition, so states should map the decisions they need to make, the process they will use, and begin to address these issues if they haven't already done so.

- States should consider whether giving the results of the first administration of the new Common Core tests significant weight in individual teacher evaluations would be fair or reasonable. States need to decide how data from these tests should be used and publicly reported, including what data to produce in the transition year from old to new assessments; and how to measure student growth and progress starting with the second administration of the new Common Core assessments (There is also some suggestion that "growth" can be calculated from the last year of the old tests to the first year of the new tests, which, if given significant weight in teacher evaluation, raises deeper issues of accuracy and fairness).

9. **As a complement to teacher evaluations, develop principal evaluation criteria that highlight the importance of implementing the Common Core with fidelity.**

- School principals are the make-or-break actors in both teacher evaluations and the transition to Common Core. State policy is catching up to this reality and beginning to emphasize principal support, supervision, and evaluation. In addition to becoming expert in the content of Common Core and teacher evaluations, principals and principal-supervisors need to be trained to bring these work streams together in practice. Integration efforts should recognize that principals will be critical in whether teachers experience this work as part of a coherent, aligned set of improvement strategies.

- States can develop tools and training for principal supervisors to guide this work, including school visit protocols that look for the structures and practices the states expect to see occurring as these initiatives advance. Leading districts and schools have pioneered this work and should be brought into the process to advise the state and serve as a resource for others.

- Principals cannot evaluate all of their teachers and oversee efforts to implement the Common Core unless they distribute leadership among other adults in the building. Facilitating teacher leadership and team-building should become part of principals' training and be factored into evaluations of their performance.

- Both Common Core and new teacher evaluations demand change management strategies. States should focus principal development and supervision on the discipline of change management and the knowledge/competencies principals need to manage these transitions.

10. **Support innovations in daily schedules that provide time for teachers to collaborate on Common Core-related activities during the school day.**

- The Common Core demands collaboration among teachers to reinforce content and habits of mind across classes and years; this is especially important for literacy expectations, because the types of text and tasks students encounter must be coordinated. Moreover, the instructional shifts will be accelerated and improved if teachers have opportunities to engage in professional discussions about assignments and student work and how they are aligned with Common Core expectations. Most evaluation systems create performance expectations regarding teacher planning and engagement in professional discussions, but teachers aren't provided adequate time at work to meet these obligations. Teachers in the U.S. spend less time in collaborative, professional interactions than teachers in peer countries. New evaluations could unintentionally exacerbate this problem, and undermine successful transition to the Common Core if they focus inordinately on individual contributions and de-emphasize contributions to collaborative efforts.

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- In managing the implementation of the Common Core and teacher evaluations, states should prioritize professional time for teachers to meet their responsibilities. This can be done by canvassing the latest research and making it accessible to local leaders, highlighting model practices that are worthy of attention, networking local leaders with an interest in expanding and deepening use of collaborative time for teachers, and more proactively managing categorical funding oversight.

- Title II plans and allocations provide a critical opportunity for advancing this purpose. All Title II plans should be scrutinized to see if teachers have adequate professional time for processing new information with colleagues and applying their learning. Many systems are exploring ways to extend the school-day for students, which can, but does not have to, decrease the amount

of time for teachers' planning and collaborations. In Chicago, for example, extended day policies are also being used to create more time for teachers to study and plan with each other.

• Developing the capacity of teachers to teach the Common Core cannot be accomplished solely through bursts of training during the summer. States need to work with districts to develop innovative ways to use time and digital technologies to provide additional opportunities for training and to facilitate collaboration among teachers.

Conclusion

Together, the Common Core and the work on teacher effectiveness and evaluations represent an enduring agenda for improving public education. This is more than merely a new set of initiatives that will be completed in two years when more rigorous tests are used and more meaningful evaluations are in place. Rather, this is the new mission of public education.

State departments shoulder tremendous responsibility for provoking and sustaining these improvements in the coming years. Ultimately, these are challenges of leadership, and success or failure will be determined as much by how the work proceeds as by the quality and justness of the underlying ideas. This paper attempts to offer concrete, tangible suggestions for SEAs to re-shape how they relate to and improve work in the field.

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i   The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders operated by the American Institutes of Research reports that, in 14 states, districts are taking the lead in devising new teacher and principal evaluation systems; 14 states offer a default or model evaluation systems that districts can choose to use; and in 10, the teacher and leader evaluation system has been designed by the states. Data is accessible at http://resource.tqsource.org/stateevaldb/StateRoles.aspx

ii   Student Achievement Partners' pilot project to develop an evidence guide for literacy instruction raises an important set of issues regarding content-specific instructional guidance. Researchers with the Measures of Effective Teaching project found that an English Language Arts-specific teaching rubric was significantly more correlated with increased student achievement than general rubrics on Common Core-aligned tests. Common Core clearly defines expectations for teaching that will advance content-area literacy in science, social studies and technical subjects, so teaching frameworks or other ways of observing practice need to be developed to look for this instruction and to support its improvement.

iii Tom Kane, *Capturing the Dimensions of Effective Teaching*, Education Next, Fall 2012, http://educationnext.org/capturing-the-dimensions-of-effective-teaching/

Appendix A: Next Steps and Resources for Teaching Frameworks Incorporating Common Core Expectations

Update, adapt, and/or create new teaching frameworks and rubrics

- **Danielson's Framework for Teaching (FFT)** was re-issued in late 2012 to reflect Common Core expectations. Language within the rubric was changed to address Common Core directly, but even more detail is fleshed-out in a new section of examples of the various performance levels -- a section that was added in the 2011 edition and becomes even more critical because of Common Core. If the state requires or recommends a form of Danielson's FFT, it is essential to adopt the latest version or at least consider amendments to better reflect the Common Core. While additional changes may become necessary as more is learned regarding the instructional implications of the Common Core, there is no reason to use outdated versions.

- Newark, New Jersey worked with TNTP in consultation with Student Achievement Partners to design an entirely **new framework** to explicitly focus on Common Core priorities.

- Insight Education Group designed the **Insight Core Framework** and used this to revise existing teaching frameworks in Memphis, Washington, D.C., Syracuse, Baltimore and Chicago. By comparing existing frameworks to this tool that was designed from scratch with Common Core in mind, these districts identified aspects of their current frameworks that could more clearly signal Common Core expectations to teachers.

- Common ways in which frameworks are changing include more specificity with regard to:

    i. Precise and appropriate use of academic language by teacher and students;

    ii. Discussion facilitation and questioning techniques that engage students, including sometimes working collaboratively with others, in constructing arguments and critiquing reasoning of others.

Make explicit reference to Common Core expectations in professional development related to teaching frameworks

- Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) in Tampa, Florida realized that domain 3(b) in **Danielson's Framework for Teaching** – using questioning and discussion techniques – was the area in which most teachers struggled. HCPS integrated Common Core content into professional development activities so that teachers experienced help with meeting evaluation expectations and support for meeting the Common Core as a single, coherent set of improvement activities. **The Measures of Effective Teaching** study likewise revealed that most teachers struggle with questioning and discussion skills, so the Hillsborough example should be viewed as a resource for others.

- Professional development should model the Common Core. States reviewing and/or certifying Common Core professional development should examine not only content alignment, but also the format and structure toreinforce and make real Common Core expectations. Educators should be actively engaged in learning and making meaning of text; analyzing and communicating their reasoning; and critiquing the reasoning of others through speaking and writing. Teachers should have a chance to practice teaching the Common Core and getting feedback, also modeling the work of effectiveness and evaluation systems.

Create evidence guides or other strategies for prioritizing teaching approaches and student behaviors that are especially important to Common Core implementation.

- Though essential aspects of teaching pursuant to Common Core might not be present in every lesson, it is important to (1) know how often these strategies are being employed, if at all; and (2) establish clear definitions and exemplars of practice for meeting these expectations.

- **Student Achievement Partners** created an evidence guide for determining whether literacy instruction reflected Common Core priorities – i.e., is a text under discussion; is it of sufficient quality and complexity for grade level; were students expected to cite textual evidence to support arguments regarding meaning of the text? NYC is training principals and other observers on how to transfer information and data captured using the evidence gathering protocol into the Danielson rubric for assessing instruction for evaluation purposes.

- **Newark's observation** rubric includes a section for gathering evidence on whether certain behaviors are observed always, frequently, sometimes, rarely, or never. In transitioning to Common Core, it is essential to systematically collect information on implementation of the instructional shifts to know whether teachers are working with those skillsmore frequent over time and whether proficiency with these approaches is improving steadily or not.

- Literacy instruction and skill-building is an especially important area to check for in observations of instruction social studies, science, and technical courses. The Common Core clearly defines teaching techniques for advancing content-area literacy. The frameworks for describing and observing teaching should be designed to identify this level of instruction and to support its improvement. Literacy-specific instruction in the disciplines might not be observed in every lesson; but it's important to determine whether it is happening at all.

Consider content-specific frameworks or evidence guides

- **MET research** found that the English Language Arts-specific teaching framework and rubric was significantly more correlated with value-added outcomes on Common Core-aligned tests than with state ELA tests. **PLATO** (Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observation) was studied by MET researchers and found to be significantly more predictive of teachers' value-added on the SAT-9 Open Ended than any of the other frameworks. Given that the Gates Foundation researchers selected the SAT-9 Open Ended test to reflect Common Core expectations to the extent possible, this data suggests that PLATO emphasizes skills/approaches that advance Common Core expectations more than generic frameworks.

- Math-specific observation protocols were NOT found to be significantly more correlated with value-added gains on the Common Core-aligned math test chosen by MET researchers. That said, Common Core's standards of mathematical practice need operational, shared definitions to support feedback and guidance to improve instruction. It is also possible that these standards of mathematical practice (e.g., make sense of problems and persevere in solving them, reason abstractly and quantitatively, construct viable arguments and critique reasoning of others) have implications for general instruction. Whether generalizable to teaching other subjects or not, tools need to be designed to look for and develop these skills in teaching math content and assessing students' mastery. If evidence guides aren't created specifically to highlight desired mathematical practices, it's likely that evaluation systems won't reinforce this emphasis; teachers might be able to earn high marks for performance even if they haven't embraced teaching the habits of mind the math practices represent, making them optional or at least extraneous to performance evaluation ratings.

Appendix B: Developments in the Field and Alternative Approaches to Assessments that Measure Common Core Expectations

ELA/Literacy

In a recent Education Next article, lead **MET** researcher Tom Kane put it this way:

Current state ELA assessments overwhelmingly consist of short reading passages, followed by multiple-choice questions that probe reading comprehension. Teachers' average student-achievement gains based on such tests are more volatile from year to year (which translates to lower reliability) and are only weakly related to other measures, such as classroom observations and student surveys.

We supplemented the state tests with an assessment requiring students to read a passage and then write short-answer responses to questions about the passage. The achievement gains based on that measure were more reliable measures of a teacher's practice (less variable across different classes taught by the same teacher) and were more closely related to other measures, such as classroom observations and student surveys. In order to provide clearer feedback on teacher effectiveness, states should hasten efforts to add writing prompts to their literacy assessments.

> **Tom Kane**, "Capturing the Dimension of Effective Teaching," Education Next, Fall 2012.

Math

In math, some topics need to move from one year to another and the Common Core's focus on a few key concepts in each grade sets them apart from most state tests that measure many more concepts each year. In addition to topics, Common Core-aligned tests aspire to more accurately measure students' mastery, automaticity, and deep comprehension. That said, **MET research** suggests relative teacher rankings and effect sizes distinguishing strong and weak teachers are consistent across current state math tests and the Balanced Assessment of Mathematics, which was chosen by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to be the best available proxy for Common Core-aligned test.

Given these issues, state departments should:

- Determine how aligned or not current state tests are and make this information available to the field.

- Make decisions about how to use results from these tests in order to balance accountability for meeting prior standards with accountability for making the transition to Common Core.

On creating additional assessments that reflect Common Core expectations:

- In almost every state, value-added results from state tests need to be complemented with another measure of student achievement and progress. Whether developed by the state or developed by districts and approved by the state, state departments must require that these additional measures assess Common Core content and skills.

- **Chicago Public Schools** created beginning and end-of-year performance tasks for all grades in ELA and math, as well as select secondary subjects. The tasks were designed specifically to measure Common Core content and expectations, and teachers' effectiveness is partially

determined by student progress over the course of the year in meeting the tasks' objectives and performance expectations. There also are tasks available from the district to use for formative and diagnostic purposes throughout the school year. For most teachers, student progress on these tasks counts for 10-15% of their evaluation.

- DCPS also is augmenting state test-score gains with other measures of student learning. Under original **IMPACT** design, value-added counted for 50% of a teacher's performance rating, where that data was available; under new IMPACT rules, test score gains count for 35% where available. Part of the purpose for decreasing reliance on current state tests is to allow for the use of assessments that more closely reflect the higher-level expectations of the Common Core.

- States should design templates for creating performance tasks and other assessments that reflect the Common Core, and should establish jurying and auditing processes for measuring such alignment for all measures that will factor into teacher effectiveness determinations. This includes "additional" measures for reading and math teachers "in tested grades and subjects," and for secondary teachers of science, social studies, and technical subjects, who have explicit responsibility for teaching Common Core literacy standards.

- Many states are turning to SLOs (Student Learning Objectives) for these additional measures. Especially in light of weak alignment between current state tests and Common Core expectations, these "additional measures" are an especially important opportunity to emphasize Common Core's areas of emphasis. If we simultaneously make student learning data matter much more to teachers, and fail to make sure Common Core is covered by this student learning data, teachers will be forced into an untenable dilemma between what they should do for Common Core and what they should do for their own performance evaluation.

- Ensuring that students are writing to demonstrate reasoning and thought processes is an important distinction between most current state tests and tests aligned to Common Core expectations. **The International Baccalaureate (IB)** assessment program includes performance tasks that are graded by teachers and audited for quality and rigor; **research in Chicago** by RAND demonstrated that IB prepared students for college success soits methods should be studied for adaptation and application in Common Core efforts. Whether through SLOs or otherwise, state departments should create the expectation that the universe of data used to measure student learning and teacher effectiveness include student-generated work products and not merely multiple choice questions.

- It is important to acknowledge the tension between reliability (measuring the same thing over different contexts and over time) and validity (measuring what's intended and what's practically important). Emphasizing current state tests prioritizes reliability, although the MET study casts doubt on how reliable these tests are, especially in English-Language Arts. Performance tasks like those being used in **Chicago** and piloted in **New York City**, have the potential to balance traditional tests with highly valid and authentic measures of students' abilities in relation to Common Core expectations; but there will be ongoing challenges in assuring reliability and comparability. All options involve trade-offs; for example, some options don't require or expect local expertise or discretion, but certain Common Core expectations will not be well-assessed by currently available measures. System leaders and policymakers need to understand the strengths and weaknesses in each and make deliberate choices.

About the Author

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