

SREB

*Benchmarking State Implementation
of College- and Career-Readiness
Standards, Aligned Assessments and
Related Reforms*

Cross-State Findings

Southern
Regional
Education
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Six individual reports make up the set – a summary report, plus five reports with detailed state profiles by topic.

Cross-State Findings Report

Timeline and Approach to Standards and Assessments

Aligned Teaching Resources

Professional Development

Evaluation of Teachers and Leaders

Accountability

The *Cross-State Findings Report* summarizes the findings of this research. The five accompanying reports each present a detailed profile of each state's efforts in the topic area. Together, these reports represent the cumulative findings of SREB's Benchmarking College- and Career-Readiness Standards project. These reports replace the preliminary reports SREB released in March 2014. They update the information in the preliminary reports to reflect state efforts and plans between 2010 and summer 2014. Additional benchmarking studies are forthcoming from SREB. All of the reports are available at <http://www.sreb.org/page/1600/>.

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Executive Summary

Implementation of college- and career-readiness standards is some of the most important work currently underway in states to improve student achievement and public education overall. **SREB examined the efforts of 14 states** — including 11 SREB states — to support implementation of new college- and career-readiness standards. Researchers reviewed state policy documents and reports, state department of education websites, and other sources such as U.S. Department of Education reports, and then interviewed leaders from state departments of education, local teachers and leaders, members of state boards of education, union leaders, legislators' and governors' staffs, higher education leaders, and representatives of business and community organizations. The goal of the research was to document the steps states have taken and to highlight exemplary efforts, in order to provide feedback to states, foster cross-state dialogue and inform states' drive for continuous improvement.

This *Cross-State Findings Report* summarizes the findings of this research. This report is accompanied by five separate topic-specific reports, each presenting a detailed profile of the 14 states' efforts in one of these five areas: (1) *Timeline and Approach to Standards and Assessments*, (2) *Aligned Teaching Resources*, (3) *Professional Development*, (4) *Evaluation of Teachers and Leaders*, and (5) *Accountability*. Together, these reports represent the cumulative findings of SREB's Benchmarking College- and Career-Readiness Standards project. These reports replace the preliminary reports SREB released in March 2014. These cumulative reports update the information in the preliminary reports to reflect state efforts and plans between 2010 and summer 2014. Additional benchmarking studies are forthcoming from SREB. All of the reports are available at <http://www.sreb.org/page/1600/>.

Timeline and Approach to Standards and Assessments

Each state's approach to the reform of its standards and related assessments depended on a number of variables. Researchers considered when the state adopted its new standards and how state leaders organized to lead the transition; when the state aligned, or plans to align, its annual assessments to the new standards; whether the state had integrated, or plans to integrate, the new standards into teaching and assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and English learners; and the structures and initiatives state leaders put in place to support local implementation. Key findings are as follows.

◆ *Standards:*

- All of the 14 states in this study adopted the Common Core State Standards (Common Core) or adopted and then modified the Common Core to meet state needs.
- In all 14 states, the state departments of education expected teachers to begin teaching the standards in classrooms as of 2013-14 or earlier.
- Since adopting their new standards, six states convened formal reviews of the standards, and one decided to replace them, while three other states have recently undertaken major new initiatives to build upon and support implementation.

◆ *Assessments:*

- By 2013-14, eight states administered English language arts (ELA) and math assessments that they reported were fully aligned to their new standards.
- In 2014-15, 13 states plan to implement fully aligned assessments. Six of these states plan to use tests developed by either the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Consortium or the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced). Nine of these states plan to acquire tests from a vendor or use tests custom developed for them.
- One state, Tennessee, plans to have fully aligned tests in place by 2015-16. In 2014, legislation delayed the transition to any new assessment for one year, and withdrew the state from PARCC Consortium. Tennessee will continue to administer its Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) Achievement Test and end-of-course (EOC) exams in 2014-15, and will use a competitive bidding process to select a fully aligned assessment for 2015-16.

- ◆ *Supporting Local Implementation:* Since adopting their new standards, all 14 states have supported local implementation, principally by providing educators with professional learning and online, on-demand instructional resources and materials that are aligned to the new standards.

Leading states, those with the most extensive, coordinated and innovative efforts to align standards and assessments and to support local implementation, are Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland and New York.

Aligned Teaching Resources

This study examined the supplementary online, on-demand instructional resources and materials that state departments of education make available to educators to support instruction based on the new standards. Researchers considered the number and types of tools the states provide, the criteria and processes states use to select and develop these tools, and the support states provide educators to select and design their own.

- ◆ *Aligned Resources:* All 14 states provide educators with supplementary online, on-demand instructional resources and materials aligned to the states' new standards; overall, states have provided more resources for ELA and math than for the literacy standards in science, history/social studies and technical subjects. In 2014 alone, most states added significant quantities of new resources to their online archives.
- ◆ *Selecting and Developing These Resources:* Most states work with partners and vendors, and four states involve educators heavily in the process. A majority of the states use the EQUIP/Tri-State Rubrics as criteria for gauging alignment.
- ◆ *Empowering Educators:* All 14 states have offered some training for teachers on how to select and design their own aligned tools; five states have offered extensive training.

Leading states, those with the most comprehensive array of resources and materials and the most extensive efforts at empowering educators in design and selection, are Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland and New York.

Professional Development

This study examined how state departments of education provided initial training for local teachers and leaders to prepare them to implement the new standards; the ongoing professional learning and support they offer to bolster local efforts long-term; and the supplementary online professional learning resources that they make available.

- ◆ *Approaches to Professional Learning:* All 14 states designed their initiatives to build local capacity to lead implementation, and several sought to maximize the impact of a small staff at the state department of education. Most of the states had special funding to boost their early initiatives; 10 of the states had won Race to the Top grants.
- ◆ *Professional Learning Offered:* All 14 states provided some sort of initial training for district leadership teams, and they all offer at least some ongoing support for teachers and leaders. Three states have deep professional development work, with school-level teams at the heart of their efforts, and four states have extensive teacher-level offerings. Overall, states have provided less professional learning for leaders than for teachers.
- ◆ *Sustainability:* Four years into the work of supporting local implementation, states are grappling with how to sustain their professional development efforts. In 2014, four states launched new, major professional development initiatives.

Leading states, those with the most comprehensive training and the deepest collaboration with teachers, leaders, districts and schools, are Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland and Tennessee.

Evaluation of Teachers and Leaders

SREB studied the extent to which state teacher and leader evaluation systems are based on professional standards aligned to the new state college- and career-readiness standards; the extent to which the systems incorporate measures aligned to the new college- and career-readiness standards; and the extent to which states foster the use of evaluation data for continuous improvement.

- ◆ *Timelines of Reform:* By 2012, all 14 states had begun implementing new or revised teacher and leader evaluation systems. Six states have delayed the impact of evaluation results on personnel decisions until 2014-15 or later.
- ◆ *Professional Teaching and Leadership Standards:* Six states developed or updated their professional standards (and one state is in the process of doing so) to articulate more explicitly the key skills, knowledge and practices needed to be effective in a college- and career-readiness environment.
- ◆ *Alignment of Measures Within the Systems:*
 - **Classroom Observation Rubrics:** Four states updated their rubrics to provide more explicit guidance on what effective teaching looks like in college- and career-readiness contexts.
 - **Leadership Measures:** Three states updated their leadership rubrics or professional practice criteria (and one state is in the process of doing so) to more explicitly define effective leadership in college- and career-readiness contexts.

- **Measures of Student Growth and Achievement:** See the above section on *Timeline and Approach to Standards and Assessments* for information on state efforts to align annual ELA and math summative assessments. To incorporate student growth and achievement measures from non-tested grades and subjects, most states provide local educators and evaluators with guidance or training to support their selection of measures aligned to the new standards, where appropriate.

Leading states, those with the most comprehensive efforts to align teacher and leader evaluation measures to the new state college- and career-readiness standards, are Colorado, Louisiana and Tennessee.

Accountability

Looking at statewide accountability systems and accountability reporting for the use of federal Title III funds to serve English learners, researchers reviewed the measures states have in place to gauge student learning of the new college- and career-readiness standards and what is known about the extent of alignment of these measures to the standards.

- ◆ *In their general statewide accountability systems,*
 - All 14 states have annual summative ELA and math grade-level and course assessments that they reported were or soon will be aligned to their new standards.
 - Eight states have measures of college and career readiness.
 - Three states have other kinds of measures that can provide additional information about teaching and learning of the new standards.
- ◆ *For Title III accountability reporting,* 11 of the states use results from English language proficiency (ELP) assessments for English learners that the test developer reported are aligned to the Common Core; three states have plans to align their tests by 2015-16.

Leading states, those with the most extensive set of statewide accountability measures and ELP assessments for Title III reporting that are aligned to their new standards, are Georgia, Kentucky and North Carolina.

Successes, Challenges and Next Steps for States

In this work to implement new standards, assessments and related reforms, states have achieved successes and faced challenges – in varied forms. And they have all begun planning next steps to capitalize on their gains and meet their challenges.

Successes

Across participants in the varied role groups interviewed across all of the states, the following successes were most commonly cited.

- ◆ *Comprehensive Reform Efforts:* All 14 states have undertaken comprehensive, multi-year efforts to lead and support implementation of their new standards, aligned assessments and related reforms.
- ◆ *Good Reviews of the Standards and State Efforts:* Interviewees across all the role groups interviewed gave good reviews of the standards, noting that the more they worked with them the more they found them to be better than their states' previous standards. Interviewees also universally gave strong

marks to the professional learning and implementation support provided by their state departments of education.

- ◆ *More Collaboration:* Several of the departments have expanded their roles, working more closely with local systems, educators, stakeholders — and other states — than they ever have before. Leaders at the K-12 level and in higher education are also working together in unprecedented ways. In some states, higher education leaders participate on states' PARCC or Smarter Balanced leadership teams. In some, higher education faculty have participated in states' professional learning for K-12 teachers. Five of the states participate in the Core to College project, a collaboration that builds a foundation for ongoing work to prepare more high school graduates for success after high school. This collaboration across K-12 and higher education expands efforts to bring policies into alignment and to foster consensus about the knowledge and skills needed for success in K-12, job training, postsecondary education, and careers.

Challenges

Across participants in the varied role groups interviewed across all of the states, the following challenges were most commonly cited.

- ◆ *Scale:* These reforms are massive. States as well as districts, schools and teachers need long-term, comprehensive supports to foster real change in local practice. State departments of education are working hard to respond to increased calls from the field for assistance.
- ◆ *Complexity and Communication:* Educators and the public need to better understand the new state college- and career-readiness standards. They need to know how these standards differ from states' previous standards and how the more rigorous demands of the new standards inform related initiatives, including new approaches to instruction, new assessments, and new teacher and leader evaluation systems.
- ◆ *Variation in Local Implementation:* While many teachers, schools and districts embrace the standards wholeheartedly, far too many are still not prepared to implement them effectively. Moving forward, local educators continue to need information, support and resources to implement the standards with fidelity.
- ◆ *Funding:* Many states had large infusions of funding to support their early implementation initiatives, including Race to the Top grants and other external funding. State policy-makers must determine how to continue or modify their initiatives when this temporary influx ends.

Next Steps

Across all the participants in the varied role groups interviewed across all of the states, the following plans for future work at the state level were most commonly cited.

- ◆ *Standards and Assessments:* States are planning to press ahead with implementing college- and career-readiness standards and aligned assessments — though the direction of these efforts varies. For example, while several states currently plan to stick with their standards and assessments, in four states (Colorado, Georgia, Maryland and North Carolina) state leaders expect recommendations about how to proceed — keep, modify or change current plans — from review committees later in 2014 or in 2015, and one state is currently developing new standards (South Carolina).

- ◆ *Supports for Educators:* State leaders have plans to continue to provide educators with professional development and aligned teaching tools to support long-term implementation of the standards — though the shape of these efforts varies.
- ◆ *Communication:* State department of education officials know they must establish more consistent public messaging about what their new standards are, what changes are needed, and how students — and schools, states and businesses — can benefit.

Moving Forward: Learning From Leading States and Supporting Educators

As state departments of education and other state leaders work to capitalize on their successes, tackle their challenges and continuously improve student achievement and public education overall, SREB encourages each state to continue to support the implementation of its college- and career-readiness standards and aligned assessments. The recommended actions outlined below can help states push forward. They are based on the efforts of leading states and also on what interviewees across the participating states shared about what educators need to realize the promise of these reforms.

- ◆ *Strengthen implementation supports and align targets for educators, particularly in the areas that follow.*
 - **Professional Learning:** State departments of education should continue to provide — and bolster district and school efforts to provide — professional learning and ongoing implementation support for all teachers, school administrators and district leaders.
 - **Teaching Resources:** States should offer sets of sample instructional plans that model rigorous, differentiated instruction for all of the standards in ELA and math K-12, and for all of the literacy standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects in grades six through 12. State departments of education should vet these resources using methods and criteria that are rigorous, explicit and systematic. And departments should help more educators learn about the available resources and train educators on how to select and design their own high-quality aligned tools.
 - **Evaluation Systems:** State departments of education should update professional teaching and leadership standards, classroom observation tools and leadership rubrics to articulate more explicitly the new knowledge, skills and practices needed to successfully teach and lead in college- and career-readiness contexts.
 - **Accountability Measures:** States should include multiple measures in their accountability systems beyond the annual tests in ELA and math — for example, measures of college and career readiness and other types of measures that supplement test data and provide a richer picture of local practices and outcomes.

States can enhance their work on the above recommended actions in the following three ways; interviewees across role groups and states suggested these as essential to moving the work of their state, districts and schools forward.

- ◆ *Foster commitment to policies and funding.* State education leaders should work together and with leaders in other sectors and the public to foster commitment to policies and funding that will support educators in their work over the long haul to prepare all students for success in postsecondary education and careers.

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- ◆ *Strengthen the use of data to guide continuous improvement.* State departments of education, districts and schools need to collect, analyze and use data more effectively to understand their practice and to identify efforts that are working, efforts that are not, and places where improvements can be made. Interviewees shared that they need more time built into regular schedules and more professional learning to deepen staff capacity in this area.
 - ◆ *Augment capacity at state departments of education to address emerging needs.* Interviewees in several of the states shared that their department needs to reorganize, redeploy or increase staff to meet local educators' increased needs for support. Many noted that their department needs more internal expertise in key areas, including content areas, change management, psychometrics, statistics, research and evaluation, teacher evaluation, and talent development. State departments of education can work together to help each other address these needs, and external partners, experts and funders can provide states with resources and know-how.

Introduction

In SREB states, policy-makers have adopted new college- and career-readiness standards as a foundation for strengthening teaching and learning. State departments of education are providing guidance, tools and support for teachers and leaders in schools and districts to help them implement these new standards, aligned assessments and related reforms. This is some of the most important work currently underway in states to improve education systems and to build globally competitive workforces and economies. **SREB examined the recent efforts of 14 states — including 11 SREB states — between 2010 and summer 2014** to support implementation of new college- and career-readiness standards and related reforms.

Reports

This *Cross-State Findings Report* summarizes the findings of SREB’s research. This report is accompanied by five separate topic-specific reports, each presenting a detailed profile of each of the 14 states’ efforts in one of five areas. Together, these reports represent the cumulative findings of SREB’s Benchmarking College- and Career-Readiness Standards project. These reports replace the preliminary reports SREB released in March 2014. They update the information in the preliminary reports to reflect state efforts and plans between 2010 and summer 2014. Additional benchmarking studies are forthcoming from SREB. All of the reports are available at <http://www.sreb.org/page/1600/>.

This Cross-State Findings Report includes the information listed below.

- ◆ *Descriptions of trends* across 14 states in their efforts to support local implementation of their new standards, assessments, and related reforms, with a section on each of the following topics:
 1. Timeline and Approach to Standards and Assessments
 2. Aligned Teaching Resources
 3. Professional Development
 4. Evaluation of Teachers and Leaders
 5. Accountability
- ◆ *Highlights from states* with leading efforts
- ◆ *Successes and challenges* states are encountering, including perspectives from the field on how the work is going; next steps states anticipate; and support states need to move the work forward

The reports in this series describe state efforts and plans between 2010 and summer 2014:

- This Cross-State Findings Report with descriptions of trends in the work across the 14 states and perspectives from the field on how the work is going
- Five accompanying topic area reports with detailed state-by-state profiles

These reports can be accessed at SREB.org/1600.

Five accompanying topic area reports provide state-by-state profiles with detailed looks at each state’s efforts in the five topic areas listed above.

Project Overview

Purpose

SREB prepared these publications as part of its Benchmarking College- and Career-Readiness Standards project. The purpose of these reports is to support states in their efforts to lead reform by tracking and reporting on their progress to implement key policies and initiatives. This project builds on SREB's history of providing state education leaders and policy-makers with actionable feedback on their efforts. This feedback can serve as a forum for discussion and collaboration to inform improvement efforts. These reports also establish a baseline for SREB's ongoing tracking and reporting.

Participating States

Fourteen states, including 11 SREB states¹, joined with SREB in this project. SREB worked with a point person in each state's department of education to facilitate the state's participation.

SREB participating states:

Alabama	Kentucky	Mississippi	Tennessee
Delaware	Louisiana	North Carolina	West Virginia
Georgia	Maryland	South Carolina	

States participating from outside the SREB region:

Colorado	New York	Pennsylvania
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Research Methodology

A team of SREB researchers and consultants gathered information from the following two sources.

- ◆ **Reviews of Publicly Available Information:** Researchers reviewed state policy documents and reports, state department of education websites, and other sources such as U.S. Department of Education reports.
- ◆ **Interviews:** Researchers interviewed leaders from state departments of education, members of state boards of education, union leaders, legislators' and governors' staffs, teachers, principals, district superintendents, higher education leaders, and representatives of business and community organizations. In most states, people representing each of these perspectives provided information, although all these individuals were not available in every state.

Each state department of education reviewed and provided feedback on drafts of the reports on its state, to ensure the accuracy of the information.

New College- and Career-Readiness Standards in the States

States have been working over the past 20 years to set expectations for what students should know and be able to do, in order to strengthen their education systems and prepare their graduates for success in

¹ Florida participated early in the project and was represented in the *preliminary versions* of these reports, published in March 2014. Florida is not represented in these final reports.

increasingly competitive local, national and global economies. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) required states to adopt student learning standards for English language arts (ELA) and math, but left it to each state to develop those standards. NCLB also required states to use assessments to measure student progress on their standards, but each state developed its own assessments and set its own levels of achievement required to demonstrate proficiency. This resulted in wide variation across the states in the knowledge and skills deemed necessary for students, and the levels of mastery they had to demonstrate to be considered proficient. Even when students scored well on their own states' assessments, far too many scored below the Basic achievement level on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), a test that is considered to be the Nation's Report Card and that allows comparison of student achievement results across states (Bandeira de Mello, 2011; U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2014). Also, more than a third of high school graduates entering colleges and universities were under-prepared for the rigors of postsecondary work and were required to take remedial courses. This jeopardized their persistence in college and increased the cost of their education and their time to degree completion (Barnett & Fay, 2013). Further, students in the United States have performed below their peers from other countries on international assessments in recent years (Baldi et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit & Pittenger, 2014; Kena et al., 2014). All of these forces have hampered states' efforts to empower their citizens and their industries to be globally competitive.

New College- And Career-Readiness Standards

States — including all 16 in the SREB region — have adopted new college- and career-readiness standards in response to challenges that emerged as part of states' work over the past 20 years to strengthen their education systems and prepare their graduates for success in increasingly competitive local, national and global economies. The 14 states in this study (11 in the SREB region) took different approaches to developing their new standards.

In recent years, states — including all 16 in the SREB region — have adopted new, more rigorous student learning standards. States adopted these standards to set the expectation that when students graduate from high school they will be prepared for success in college and careers. The 14 states in this study took different approaches to developing their new standards.

Related Reforms

Implementation of new college- and career-readiness standards are just one foundational component of states' work to help educators realize the goals of better practice, higher achievement and college and career readiness for all students. Professional development and aligned teaching resources help teachers provide high-quality instruction based on the new standards. Updating measures within teacher and leader evaluation systems and state accountability systems helps educators, schools and districts focus on the kinds of work deemed most essential for helping students master the new standards. The sections below summarize states' efforts in these interrelated areas of work.



Timeline and Approach to Standards and Assessments

What basic decisions and actions have state education policy-makers — at state departments of education in particular — taken to foster successful implementation of their new college- and career-readiness standards and aligned assessments?

Overview of SREB's Look at State Efforts

SREB researchers reviewed the following information about each state's efforts to foster successful implementation of new college- and career-readiness standards and assessments.

- ◆ *Leadership Context:* When did the state adopt its new standards? How did state leaders organize to lead the transition, and what other major reform initiatives or legislation informed their plans?
- ◆ *Standards:* What is (or was) the state's timeline for implementation?
- ◆ *Assessments:* How did the state ensure (or how does it plan to ensure) that its annual summative grade-level and course assessments in ELA and math are aligned to the new standards?
- ◆ *Supporting Implementation:* What major structures, routines and supports did the department put in place to support local implementation?
- ◆ *Reaching Diverse Learners:* How did the state ensure (or how does it plan to ensure) that its alternate ELA and math standards and assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, and its English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards and assessments for English learners, are aligned to the state's new college- and career-readiness standards?

Leading State Efforts

All 14 states launched significant efforts in these areas.

Leading states, those with the most extensive, coordinated and innovative efforts, are Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland and New York. See the *Highlights From Leading States* section below for descriptions of the work in two of these states.

Leading states stood out according to the following criteria:

- ◆ *State leaders, legislation and/or other major education initiatives provided strong support* for the implementation of the new standards and the state's college- and career-readiness agenda.
- ◆ *The state's progress in implementing the new standards included efforts at reaching diverse learners*, such as implementing ELP standards and assessments for English learners, as well as alternate standards and assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, that align to the new college- and career-readiness standards by 2014-15 or soon thereafter.

Leading State Efforts

All 14 states mounted significant efforts to lead and support successful implementation of their new standards and aligned assessments. *Leading states*, those with the most comprehensive, coordinated and innovative efforts, are Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland and New York.

- ◆ *The state has aligned its ELA and math assessments* to the new college- and career-readiness standards, or it continues to pursue plans to acquire aligned assessments by 2014-15.
- ◆ *The state department of education has provided extensive implementation support to local districts, schools and teachers.* This support consisted of professional learning that directly reached schools and large numbers of teachers, facilitated collaboration across various levels of the system, and included a large array of aligned teaching resources.

Starting Point: States' Newest Work in This Area

The work described below includes the following most recent developments.

- ◆ In 2014, two states (Maryland and Mississippi) refined the Common Core standards and then re-named them to better meet their needs.
- ◆ Between 2013 and 2014, six states convened formal review panels to take a further look at their new standards (Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, New York and North Carolina).
- ◆ In 2014, one state (South Carolina) decided to replace the Common Core and to develop its own new standards.
- ◆ In 2014, six states made changes to their plans for implementing aligned ELA and math annual assessments.
 - Georgia contracted with a vendor to have tests custom developed.
 - Kentucky dropped out of PARCC. Kentucky will use the tests it previously had in place for 2014-15, and is considering options for future years.
 - Louisiana decided not to use the PARCC tests for high school. Instead, Louisiana will continue to use its own high school end-of-course tests.
 - In North Carolina, in 2014 the state Board of Education decided to convene an advisory group to evaluate testing options and provide recommendations for 2017-18. These options could include the Smarter Balanced assessments. However, legislation in 2014 required legislative approval for adoption of any test to assess student achievement on state academic standards.
 - In South Carolina, legislation in 2014 required the state to withdraw from the Smarter Balanced consortium. The state currently is conducting a new assessment procurement process for 2014-15.
 - In Tennessee, legislation in 2014 delayed the transition to any new assessment for one year, and withdrew the state from the PARCC Consortium. Tennessee will continue to administer its own partially aligned exams in 2014-15, and will use a competitive bidding process to select a fully aligned assessment for 2015-16.
- ◆ Since 2013, three states (Delaware, Maryland and West Virginia) have launched new state-level or cross-state initiatives that build upon and support their states' new standards.
- ◆ In 2014 or 2015, Race to the Top grants, which supported key aspects of 10 states' implementation initiatives, will end. States with Race to the Top grants include Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Tennessee.

For a detailed profile of each of the 14 states' efforts in this area between 2010 and summer 2014, see the accompanying topic-specific report in this series on *Timeline and Approach to Standards and Assessments*.

Trends Across the States: Adoption of New Standards

Major reform initiatives and legislation that informed state plans to adopt college- and career-readiness standards

Most of the 14 states had initiatives in place that informed their adoption of new college- and career-readiness standards. For example, in five states (Alabama, Georgia, New York, North Carolina and Tennessee), state education task forces or commissions, or participation in policy reform initiatives such as the American Diploma Project facilitated by Achieve, provided support for adoption of new standards and assessments. Three states enacted legislation that either spurred or supported their adoption (Kentucky in 2009, Colorado in 2008 and South Carolina in 2005). The U.S. Department of Education awarded 10 states Race to the Top grants, which required adoption of college- and career-readiness standards, assessments and related reforms. Race to the Top funds provided funding for initiatives in Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Tennessee.

Since 2012, all of the states in this study have received waivers from the U.S. Department of Education for certain provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (currently known as NCLB). States receiving waivers agreed to adopt college- and career-readiness standards and assessments by 2014-15, along with aligned alternate standards and assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, and aligned ELP standards and assessments for English learners; to redesign their statewide accountability systems; and to implement educator effectiveness systems that incorporate the use of student performance information such as test scores.

How state leaders organized to lead the transition

In most states, leaders in the state department of education worked with leaders in other sectors — higher education, business, the executive branch, the legislature, education leadership commissions, unions — to gather input from educators across the state on developing timelines for rolling out the standards and plans for supporting local implementation efforts.

Adoption of standards

States began adopting their new standards in 2010, and have taken different approaches to development and adoption. Across the nation, to date, 43 states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity, whose schools serve the children of military families stationed on bases in the United States and around the world, have adopted the Common Core State Standards (Common Core). Adoption by such a large number of states provides a consistent set of high expectations for students, regardless of where they live, a benefit for military families and others who have high rates of mobility during their children's school careers.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative was launched in 2009 (see www.corestandards.org/). It was led by the nation's governors and state education superintendents, through the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Committees of educators and subject-matter experts developed the standards, incorporating extensive feedback from state officials, scholars, assessment developers, professional organizations, educators, parents, students and the public. The standards establish

expectations for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level K-12 and upon graduation from high school in math and ELA, and for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects in grades six through 12. Released in 2010, the standards were developed to be aligned with college and work expectations; fewer, clearer and more rigorous than most states' previous standards; built on the best of previous state standards; internationally benchmarked to prepare all students for success in the global economy; and based on evidence and research. The standards were adopted voluntarily by states. The standards are distinct from curricula; they are a basis upon which local educators develop curricula.

- ◆ *Six of the states in this study adopted the Common Core in 2010, and the Common Core serves as the standards for these states* in math and ELA K-12 and for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects in grades six through 12: Delaware, Kentucky (referred to as Kentucky Core Academic Standards), Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina (to be replaced, see information below) and Tennessee.
- ◆ *Eight of the states in this study modified or added to the Common Core after adopting the standards in 2010*, to incorporate content that local stakeholders felt was essential for students in their states and renamed them: Alabama (Alabama College- & Career-Ready Standards), Colorado (Colorado Academic Standards), Georgia (College and Career Georgia Performance Standards), Maryland (Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards), Mississippi (College- and Career-Readiness Standards), New York (Common Core Learning Standards), Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania Core Standards) and West Virginia (Next Generation Content Standards and Objectives).

Trends Across the States: Timelines for Implementing the Standards

Timelines varied across the states for implementing the new standards in classrooms. **All of the 14 states in this study expected teachers to teach the new standards in classrooms by 2013-14.** Kentucky established the earliest start date, beginning in 2010-11. The last states to begin, in 2013-14, were Maryland, Pennsylvania and South Carolina. Some states began implementing all of the standards at one time, while others phased in implementation (for example, by grade level) over two or more years. Four states have rollout timelines that extend into 2014-15: Georgia, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and West Virginia.

After adopting their standards and beginning implementation, **between 2013 and 2014, seven states in the study decided to take another look at their new standards. Six states** — Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, New York and North Carolina — **convened a formal review** of the standards adoption process, the standards themselves, the assessments the state would use to measure student learning on the standards, the state's resources for supporting local implementation, the fiscal impact of these reforms on taxpayers, and/or other aspects of the reform. In most cases the review was mandated by the state's legislature.

- ◆ *In Mississippi*, in January 2014 the review committee submitted its report to the Legislature. The report outlined the reasons for the state's adoption of the Common Core, the state Department of Education's implementation efforts, and approximate costs of the new, aligned assessments. The committee plans to continue to monitor the state's implementation of its College- and Career-Readiness Standards, and outcomes.

Standards Implementation Timelines

All of the 14 states in this study expected teachers to teach the new standards in classrooms by the 2013-14 school year.

- ◆ *In New York*, in February 2014 the State Board of Regents reviewed findings from a work group of the Board of Regents P-12 Committee and adopted a comprehensive slate of recommendations designed to improve implementation of the state's Common Core Learning Standards.
- ◆ *In Colorado, Georgia, Maryland and North Carolina*, state leaders expect findings reports and recommendations from their respective review committees between late 2014 and 2015.

One state, South Carolina, decided to replace the Common Core. Legislation in 2014 required the state Department of Education to develop new standards for ELA and math for implementation in 2015-16. South Carolina will continue to implement the Common Core in 2014-15.

Since 2013, three states have launched new state-level or cross-state initiatives that build upon and support their state's new standards.

- ◆ *Delaware*: In 2014, Governor Jack Markell helped to launch the Partnership for Higher Standards led by the Bipartisan Policy Center, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and the Hunt Institute. This partnership aims to strengthen support for the Common Core (see <http://bipartisanpolicy.org/news/press-releases/2014/03/monday-launching-partnership-support-higher-standards-education>).
- ◆ *West Virginia*: In 2013, West Virginia joined the Improving Student Learning at Scale Policy Collaborative, a partnership of five other states, the NGA, CCSSO and the National Conference of State Legislatures. The project focuses on Common Core implementation and increasing student achievement (see <http://www.nga.org/cms/home/nga-center-for-best-practices/meeting--web-cast-materials/page-edu-meetings-webcasts/col2-content/main-content-list/improving-student-learning-at-sc.html>). Also, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 359, which requires, among other things, that by 2014-15 the state Board of Education, the Higher Education Policy Commission, and the Council for Community and Technical College Education adopt uniform standards of college and career readiness based on the state's Next Generation Content Standards and Objectives. This requirement has been accomplished. The bill also requires that determination of whether a student is ready for credit-bearing courses in college be based on an assessment which is linked to those standards and that the board align the requirements for a high school diploma with the standards.
- ◆ *Maryland*: Maryland's 2013 Senate Bill 740, the College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act, requires, among other things, that beginning in 2014-15 all students must be assessed for college readiness by grade 11; Maryland plans to use the tests from PARCC for this purpose. By 2015-16, the Maryland State Department of Education must collaborate with districts and public community colleges to develop and implement transitional courses for grade 12, or other instructional opportunities aligned to the standards, for students who have not yet achieved college readiness by the end of grade 11.

Trends Across the States: Aligning State Assessments to the New Standards

States have taken different approaches to aligning their annual summative grade-level and course assessments in ELA and math to their new standards. **Early on, some states modified the tests they already had in place.**

- ◆ By 2013-14, eight states reported that they *fully aligned* some or all of their tests (grades three through eight and/or high school) to their new standards to assess the full range of the new content: Kentucky in 2011-12; Georgia, New York, North Carolina and Pennsylvania in 2012-13; and Alabama, Delaware and Louisiana in 2013-14.
- ◆ Four states made adjustments between 2011-12 and 2013-14 to some or all of their tests to *partially align* them to the new standards, to assess at least some of the new content: Colorado, Delaware, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Thirteen of the states plan to have assessments that are fully aligned to their new standards in place for 2014-15; Tennessee plans to meet this goal by 2015-16. All of the states participated at some point, in some way, with one or both of two consortia that the U.S. Department of Education funded to develop assessments aligned to the Common Core: PARCC (see <http://www.parcconline.org/>) and Smarter Balanced (see <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/>). However, six states — Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Tennessee — decided not to use consortium tests, citing such reasons as cost and the desire to have tests developed specifically for their own state instead of for multiple states. **As of summer 2014, states reported the following plans for 2014-15.**

- ◆ *Six states plan to use the new, fully aligned assessments from one of the two consortia.* Four states plan to use PARCC tests: Colorado, Louisiana (for grades three through eight), Maryland and Mississippi. Two states plan to use Smarter Balanced tests: Delaware and West Virginia. The promise of the PARCC and Smarter Balanced tests is to provide students, parents, teachers, the public and policy-makers with results that clearly reflect how well students meet grade-level standards that lead to college- and career-readiness expectations, and that are comparable across states.
- ◆ *Nine states plan to use their own fully aligned assessments.* These states have, or plan to have, tests that are either developed for them or acquired from a vendor: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana (for high school), New York, North Carolina and Pennsylvania. South Carolina is currently engaged in a test procurement process. Tennessee plans to use its existing, partially aligned tests for 2014-15 and plans to select new, fully aligned tests for 2015-16.

Note: The information provided in this report about the alignment of state assessments to states' new standards is based on information available publicly at the time of publication, which was self-reported by the states and test developers.

Assessment Alignment

Thirteen of the states plan to have assessments fully aligned to the new standards in place for the 2014-15 school year; Tennessee plans to meet this goal by 2015-16.

- Six states plan to use tests from either PARCC or Smarter Balanced.
- Nine states have, or plan to have, tests that are either developed for them or acquired from a vendor.

Assessment technology

PARCC, Smarter Balanced and other assessment developers are designing their assessments to be administered on computers. State departments of education have been working with districts and schools to gauge local readiness and to enhance technology infrastructures to administer computer-based tests. For the spring 2015 administration, Delaware, Georgia and Kentucky reported that local technology infrastructures do not pose a major challenge, because districts and schools in these states have been using or phasing in online testing over the last few years. Other states reported that not all of their districts may have the necessary assessment technology infrastructure and hardware in place by spring 2015. Given steep challenges in some locations, especially rural and high-poverty districts, some states have been exploring the option of using paper-based versions of the tests for the first few years. Tennessee and West Virginia took noteworthy approaches to supporting districts as they prepared for computer-based testing: In 2013 the Tennessee Legislature provided extra state funds to help districts augment their technology infrastructures. In West Virginia, for 2011-12 and 2012-13 the state Department of Education, the state Board of Education and the Legislature collaborated to establish a two-year moratorium on spending state funding for new textbooks and materials. Districts could use those funds instead to upgrade their technology systems and digital resources.

Trends Across the States: Supporting Local Implementation

To help local educators learn about and prepare to implement the new standards in classrooms, states put in place various kinds of resources, structures and supports. Two major types of support are **professional learning** and online, on-demand **supplementary instructional resources and materials** that are aligned to the new standards. Whether designed and delivered themselves or in partnership with entities such as regional centers, all of the 14 state departments of education provided some initial training, and they all continue to provide training and supports of various kinds to help educators implement the standards successfully in the long term. Leading states have worked extensively with district and school teams and directly with large numbers of teachers, and this collaboration helps to integrate the work and unite the focus of practitioners and leaders at the state, regional, district and school levels. Some state departments of education have expanded their work to meet the new demands of this reform environment: Veterans in some departments shared that they are providing more kinds of support and resources to local districts, schools and educators than at any time in the past. All of the state departments of education have also provided educators with online, on-demand access to supplementary instructional resources and materials that are aligned to the new standards. Leading states offer an array of tools to support educators in learning about the standards, comprehensive sets of model instructional plans, extensive assessment resources and other tools, and training for teachers on how to develop and select their own aligned materials. **See the sections below on *Professional Development* and *Aligned Teaching Resources* for more detailed information on these efforts.**

Trends Across the States: Reaching Diverse Learners

In most states, the new standards place greater demands on students than previous ones. These demands are especially challenging for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (those unable to participate in general state assessments, even with accommodations) and for English learners (who must master grade level content while learning the English language). These two groups of students are historically low-achieving, and educators have struggled to help them improve their achievement. One way states can provide support for these students is to implement additional standards and assessments that are aligned to the state's

college- and career-readiness standards: alternate ELA and math standards and assessments for students with significant cognitive disabilities, and ELP standards and assessments for English learners. Indeed, to receive waivers from the U.S. Department of Education for certain provisions of NCLB, states had to commit to adopt these two sets of aligned standards and assessments. These standards and assessments can help educators provide instruction that enables students from these two groups to engage with the rigorous content and language of the college- and career-readiness standards in appropriate ways. States' progress towards this adoption is summarized below.

Alternate standards and assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities

States reported the following plans for aligning these to their new college- and career-readiness standards by 2014-15.

- ◆ *Five states plan to use alternate standards and assessments from one of the multi-state consortia* funded by the U.S. Department of Education to develop alternate standards and assessments that are consistent with the PARCC and Smarter Balanced systems. Maryland and South Carolina plan to use the standards and assessments of the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC, see <http://www.ncscpartners.org/>), although South Carolina has not finalized plans beyond 2014-15. Mississippi, North Carolina and West Virginia plan to use the standards and assessments of the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM, see <http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/>) Alternate Assessment System Consortium.
- ◆ *Nine states report that they may or will use their own alternate standards and aligned assessments:* Alabama, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, New York, Pennsylvania and Tennessee.

English Language Proficiency standards and assessments for English learners

States reported the following plans for aligning these to their new college- and career-readiness standards.

- ◆ *Eleven states are using the ELP standards and assessments of the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment Consortium (WIDA)* in 2014-15: Alabama, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Tennessee. South Carolina, however, has not yet determined what ELP assessment it will use in 2015-16 and beyond. WIDA's ACCESS for ELLs test is designed to measure student mastery of the language skills inherent in the Common Core, and it has been shown in a WIDA alignment study to have moderate to strong alignment (see <http://www.wida.us/index.aspx>).
- ◆ *Two states plan to use the ELP standards and assessments of the English Language Proficiency for the 21st Century (ELPA21) consortium* when they become available in 2015-16: Louisiana and West Virginia. ELPA21 is aligning its standards and assessment to the Common Core (see <http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/ELPA21.html>). Currently, Louisiana uses the ELDA test, developed by states partnering with CCSSO (see http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2010/ELDA_brochure_2010.pdf). West Virginia currently uses its West Virginia Test of English Language Learning (WESTELL). Neither the ELDA nor the WESTELL is aligned to the states' college- and career-readiness standards.
- ◆ *New York uses its own* ELP standards, referred to as New Language Arts Progressions, or NLAP, and its New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). The NYSESLAT was partially aligned to New York's Common Core Learning Standards in 2013-14, and New York reports that it will be fully aligned by 2015-16.

- New York's related work on its Bilingual Common Core Initiative and its Blueprint for English Language Learners (ELLs) Success (which includes eight guiding principles for engaging English learners in Common Core Learning Standards teaching and learning) are also notable efforts to capitalize on the strengths and address the needs of students whose first language is not English. See the *Highlights From Two Leading States* below for more information.

Highlights From Two Leading States

Kentucky

Kentucky's 2009 Senate Bill 1 mandated a new public education assessment and accountability system for 2011-12. This led to Kentucky becoming the first state in the nation to adopt the Common Core, called the Kentucky Core Academic Standards (KCAS), in 2010. A Race to the Top grant supported some of the state's initial efforts to foster successful implementation of the KCAS.

Annual assessments for ELA and math:

- ◆ Kentucky was the first state to develop and administer summative statewide assessments in ELA and math that the state reported were fully aligned to the new standards. Since 2011-12, Kentucky has administered the Kentucky Performance Rating of Education Progress (K-PREP) in ELA (reading and writing) and math for grades three through eight. Kentucky uses ACT's QualityCore end-of-course assessments for high school.
- ◆ In 2014, Kentucky dropped out of the PARCC Consortium. Kentucky will use the tests it previously had in place for 2014-15, and is considering options for future years.

Professional learning and support for implementation:

- ◆ In 2010, Kentucky's Department of Education launched an aggressive three-year professional learning initiative for local leaders, who were then expected to lead reform. Districts established District Leadership Teams (DLTs). The DLTs collaborated with the department, regional educational cooperatives and higher education institutions to receive training, develop district and school implementation plans, and redeliver professional development to local colleagues.
- ◆ The department built a structure of interlocking leadership networks for DLT members to receive role-specific support — the Instructional Support Leadership and Superintendents Network for school and district leaders; the Leadership Network for ELA and math teachers; and the Leadership Network for science and social studies teachers in grades six through 12. A Higher Education Network and an Early Learning Leadership Network facilitate coordination of K-12 reforms with efforts in pre-K through higher education.
- ◆ From 2013-14 onwards, DLT and network members are expected to lead ongoing professional learning efforts in their communities.
- ◆ The department also offers a strong set of online, on-demand resources and materials for educators on its Continuous Instructional Improvement Technology System Web portal (<http://education.ky.gov/curriculum/ciits/Pages/default.aspx>).

Reaching diverse learners:

- ◆ To support students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, Kentucky reports that it aligned its own alternate standards and assessments to the KCAS. In 2014-15, the state may consider adopting the alternate standards and assessments of one of the multi-state alternate assessment consortia, DLM or NCSC; or the state may pursue other plans.
- ◆ To support English learners as they work to master the rigorous linguistic demands inherent in the KCAS, Kentucky uses the aligned ELP standards and assessments from the WIDA consortium.

New York

New York's implementation of the Common Core (called the Common Core Learning Standards, or CCLS) is based within the state's comprehensive Regents Reform Agenda. This agenda aims to further college and career readiness for all students through new standards and assessments, data-driven instruction, and a new teacher and leader effectiveness system. The agenda has been bolstered by a Race to the Top grant and the philanthropically supported Regents Research Fund, a 501(c)(3) organization that provides additional capacity for research and planning at the state level. In February 2014, the Board of Regents adopted a comprehensive suite of workgroup recommendations designed to adjust implementation of the CCLS. Recommendations included providing more support for parents and teachers, improving public trust in CCLS implementation, limiting unnecessary testing, and protecting student data privacy. Additionally, in March 2014, a state Common Core Implementation Panel, made up of New York parents, educators, legislators, business and community leaders, and national experts, reviewed implementation of the standards and submitted to the governor recommendations to ensure their success.

Annual assessments for ELA and math:

- ◆ New York has ELA and math assessments for grades three through eight that the New York State Education Department reported were fully aligned to the new standards in 2012-13, and high school Regents Exams for English and Algebra I Regents Exams that were aligned in 2013-14. New York is in the midst of aligning additional Regents Exams: geometry in 2014-15 and Algebra II in 2015-16.
- ◆ The state participated in the PARCC field testing in 2013-14 and is scheduled to do so again in 2014-15. The decision to adopt new assessments for 2015-16 and beyond is yet to be made.

Professional learning and support for implementation:

- ◆ The department created Network Teams of educators and experts to provide districts and schools with professional learning and to support implementation planning, local curriculum development and integration of the CCLS with other reform initiatives.
- ◆ Regional Boards of Cooperate Educational Services (BOCES) have also collaborated with districts to select teacher and principal Common Core Ambassadors. Ambassadors help to disseminate information about the standards and build the capacity of local colleagues.
- ◆ In 2015, the department plans to coordinate Common Core Institutes, in which educators from districts, BOCES, and charter schools serve as full-time Common Core Institute Fellows. The fellows will support local capacity-building and help to develop additional online instructional materials for 2015-16.

- ◆ Additionally, the department's EngageNY website (<http://www.engageny.org/>) provides an extensive array of instructional tools to help educators implement the new standards. EngageNY has become a popular resource for other state departments of education and teachers across the nation.

Reaching diverse learners:

- ◆ To support students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, New York has alternate standards and assessments in place that the department reported are aligned to the CCLS. New York is a member of NCSC and plans to decide by 2014-15 whether to continue to use its own standards and assessments or adopt those of NCSC.
- ◆ To support English learners in their efforts to master the linguistic demands inherent in the CCLS, New York has developed ELP standards that it reports are aligned to the CCLS, and the state is working to fully align its ELP assessment by 2015-16.
- ◆ To address the needs of English learners in bilingual settings, the department is developing Home Language Arts Progressions (HLAP) through its Bilingual Common Core Initiative. The HLAP is a set of CCLS-aligned standards for ELA in bilingual classrooms pre-K-12. The department is also developing instructional resources to complement the HLAP in the five most common native languages in the state.
- ◆ Additionally, in 2014 the department released a Blueprint for English Language Learners (ELLs) Success. The Blueprint is a statewide framework of eight guiding principles to support administrators, policy-makers and practitioners as they prepare English learners for college and career readiness.

Aligned Teaching Resources

How have state departments of education facilitated local educators' use of teaching materials that are aligned to the states' new college- and career-readiness standards? Many interviewees shared that student textbooks that are aligned to the new standards are unavailable, leaving teachers to find their own resources and materials for everyday teaching. Hence, they said, the supplementary resources and materials that departments have made available for on-demand, voluntary use provide teachers with valuable supports.

What does it mean for instructional resources and materials to be aligned to the new standards? Guidance materials and planning tools for teachers need to provide coherent and accurate information about the standards, clearly articulating the knowledge and skills contained within the standards and how these differ from the states' previous standards. Sample instructional plans need to model how to design teaching and learning experiences that reach the increased levels of rigor required by the new standards.

Overview of SREB's Look at State Efforts

SREB researchers reviewed the following aspects of states' efforts to provide educators with access to online, on-demand, supplementary tools to support the teaching of the new standards.

- ◆ *Location:* Where can educators go to access these tools?
- ◆ *What is Available:* What tools has the department made available?
- ◆ *Development Process:* How has the department developed or acquired these tools?
- ◆ *Ensuring Alignment:* How has the department ensured that these tools are aligned to the state's new standards and of high quality?
- ◆ *Empowering Educators:* How has the department supported educators in developing and selecting their own high quality, aligned materials?

Leading State Efforts

All 14 states in this study have fostered local use of high-quality instructional resources and materials that are aligned to the states' new standards. Leading states are Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland and New York.

Leading states stood out according to the following criteria.

- ◆ *Extensive Resources:* The state department of education has provided educators with access to an extensive set of instructional resources and materials that the department vetted for quality and alignment to the new standards. These resources and materials include the following:
 - Tools for the content areas of ELA and math in K-12, as well as for the literacy standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects in grades six through 12

Aligned Teaching Resources

All 14 states fostered the use of high-quality instructional resources and materials that are aligned to new college- and career-readiness standards. **Leading states**, those with the most comprehensive array of tools and the most extensive efforts to empower educators to select and design their own resources, are Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland and New York.

- A wide variety of resources such as guidance materials, curriculum development tools, sample instructional plans, strategies for differentiating instruction for diverse learners, formative assessment tools, videos of high-quality instruction and samples of student work
- The most comprehensive sets of sample instructional plans include lesson and/or unit plans that address all of the standards for a school year (providing “a year at a glance”) in ELA and math for all grades K-12, and some sample plans for the literacy standards in grades six through 12
- ◆ *Formal Vetting Process and Criteria:* The state department of education established rigorous criteria and an explicit and systematic vetting process for determining the quality and extent of alignment of the resources it provides.
- ◆ *Empowered Educators:* The department has also provided extensive training and support for educators to learn how to design and select their own high-quality, aligned teaching tools.

Starting Point: States’ Newest Work in This Area

Although most of the states have built extensive sets of aligned teaching resources for educators, they are not resting. In 2014 alone, most added significant quantities of new resources to their repositories. The work described below includes these 2014 additions:

- ◆ *Seven states* added additional information about the standards and planning guidance materials for educators.
- ◆ *Seven states* added sample instructional plans for ELA and math K-12.
- ◆ *Eight states* added sample instructional plans for the literacy standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects grades six through 12.
- ◆ *Nine states* added formative assessment tools.
- ◆ *Ten states* added videos showing exemplary teaching and learning in practice.
- ◆ *Two states* added samples of student work based on the new standards.

For a detailed profile of each of the 14 states’ efforts in this area between 2010 and summer 2014, see the accompanying topic-specific report in this series on *Aligned Teaching Resources*.

Trends Across the States: Resources and Materials Offered

Location of the state-provided resources and materials

To meet educator needs for access to online, on-demand, aligned instructional resources and materials, each state has either a dedicated website or pages on the state department of education’s website housing their offerings. A few of the states have also used wikis as an additional mode of sharing.

Types of aligned resources and materials

All 14 states in this study have provided the following types of tools, to varying degrees: information about the standards and explanations of the instructional shifts required to meet the standards, guidance for

designing curriculum and planning for instruction, sample instructional plans such as model lessons or units, and information about assessment. **Notable examples are as follows.**

- ◆ *Information about the Standards and Planning Guidance:* Seven states — Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New York and Tennessee — provide extensive resources for educators and parents, such as toolkits, guidebooks, curriculum frameworks and communication tools.
- ◆ *Sample Instructional Plans for ELA and Math K-12:* The five leading states (Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland and New York) offer sample instructional plans that address all of the standards for an entire school year for all grade levels K-12 in ELA and math. These plans and accompanying resources include not just instructional strategies and activities but also techniques for differentiating instruction for diverse learners, formative assessment tasks, and other classroom resources.
- ◆ *Sample Instructional Plans and Other Tools for Teaching the Literacy Standards in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects in Grades Six through 12:* Four states (Colorado, Georgia, Maryland and North Carolina) offer extensive sets of sample instructional plans and resources for these subjects.
- ◆ *Resources to Help Teachers Differentiate Instruction for Diverse Learners:* Maryland and New York have the most robust set of resources for helping teachers address the particular strengths and needs of bilingual students, English learners, students with disabilities, advanced learners and struggling learners.
- ◆ *Formative Assessment:* In addition to furnishing model formative assessment items and other tools, which most of the states do, Georgia and North Carolina each offer a series of online professional learning modules to help teachers learn how to use the state-provided resources and how to employ formative assessment practices in their classrooms.
- ◆ *Models of Teaching and Learning in Action:*
 - Four states offer extensive libraries of videos showing exemplary teaching and learning in classrooms — Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana and New York.
 - Three states offer samples of student work resulting from instruction on the new standards — Kentucky, Louisiana and New York.

Acquiring these aligned instructional resources and materials

Thirteen of the states have developed their own resources and materials, often in conjunction with local educators, partners and vendors. By contrast, in Colorado, the state Department of Education has acted as a convener, providing guidance, professional learning and facilitation for local educators to develop resources and materials; selected materials from this process have been then posted in the state archive. **Notable aspects of this work are as follows.**

- ◆ *Involving Educators:* Four states have involved educators heavily in their resource development and vetting processes — Colorado, Louisiana, Maryland and Tennessee.
- ◆ *Partners and Vendors:* Most of the departments have worked with partners and vendors to develop or obtain some resources. Typical partners with states are regional education service agencies, the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) and Mathematics Design Collaborative (MDC), higher education

representatives, the PARCC or Smarter Balanced consortium, Achieve, SEDL, Student Achievement Partners, and public broadcasting. While states as a whole have worked with many vendors, the two most common are Thinkfinity and Pearson.

Trends Across the States: Ensuring Alignment

All of the states in this study have either established a formal process for vetting instructional resources and materials they make available or, in the case of Mississippi, are in the midst of developing one. **Notable aspects of these processes are as follows.**

- ◆ ***Robust Vetting Processes:*** In the four states with the most robust vetting processes — Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina and Pennsylvania — the department established rigorous review criteria and explicit guidance for reviewers (for example, Pennsylvania’s Quality Review Process handbook). The department also established a multistep process involving reviewers from the school to the state level (for example, Kentucky’s and North Carolina’s multistage reviews and Louisiana’s involvement of thousands of Teacher Leaders). In Kentucky, North Carolina and Pennsylvania the vetting process is conducted entirely through the states’ online instructional improvement systems.
- ◆ ***Explicit Alignment Criteria:*** States took one of two approaches, listed below, to establish the criteria they use to gauge the extent of alignment and quality of possible materials for posting. (While they may have used multiple criteria, the primary criteria states reported are indicated below.)
 - Eight states elected to use the EQUiP/Tri-State Rubrics, developed by Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island and Achieve: Alabama, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, New York, North Carolina and West Virginia.
 - Six states developed their own criteria or adapted criteria from other publicly available tools such as the Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool (IMET, from Student Achievement Partners) and the Publishers’ Criteria for the Common Core State Standards (developed by the lead authors of the Common Core): Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Aligning textbooks

Most state departments of education play modest roles in the review and adoption process for textbooks and other instructional materials that are selected at the local level; in a few states the department has no role. In many states, a state-level panel reviews products submitted by vendors and produces a list of recommended or approved products, although districts may purchase materials whether or not they are on a state list.

- ◆ In nine states (Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia), the department furnished the state-level review panel and/or district decision-makers with tools to help them gauge the extent of alignment of products to the new standards. These tools included the Publishers’ Criteria for the Common Core State Standards, the EQUiP/Tri-State Rubrics and/or the IMET.
- ◆ Louisiana’s state Department of Education has a notable process in place to support the local selection of aligned textbooks. In 2013-14 the department developed an informal rolling review process to broaden the set of resources reviewed and to provide ongoing guidance as new materials

are submitted. Reviews result in three-tiered ratings of the products, from full Common Core alignment to partial alignment to a lack of any quality alignment (see <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/academics/instructional-materials-review/curricular-resources-annotated-reviews>).

Trends Across the States: Empowering Educators

All of the 14 states in this study have offered at least some professional learning for educators on how to select and design their own high-quality, aligned teaching tools. In most states, the department has trained district and/or school leadership teams who then work directly with teachers. In addition, most of the states have also offered some type of training directly to teachers, for example through summer academies. **Notable aspects of this work are as follows.**

- ◆ *Most Extensive Training and Support:* Five states — Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee — have offered the most extensive training, reaching large numbers of practitioners across the state.
- ◆ *Frameworks for Training:* Most states use the EQUiP/Tri-State Rubrics as a basis for this training. Six states — Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania and West Virginia — use the LDC/MDC frameworks.

Highlights From Three Leading States

Colorado

To foster local use of instructional resources and materials that are aligned to the state's new Colorado Academic Standards (CAS), the state Department of Education acts as a catalyst for local development. The department convenes local educators and provides guidance, professional learning, and facilitation. The department has posted resources and materials developed by participating educators in archives available to educators statewide. See the department's website for standards and instructional support (<http://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction>) and the eNetLearning website (<http://www.enetlearning.org/>).

The department has three major initiatives to accomplish this work:

- ◆ The District Sample Curriculum Project was designed to generate a statewide resource bank of CAS-aligned instructional resources and materials. In 2012-13, more than 500 educators participated voluntarily in the department's professional learning on the new standards and training on how to develop aligned instructional unit plans. These educators developed more than 700 sample unit overviews for math, ELA and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects (and other content areas). The overviews provide teachers with "a year at a glance" with all of the standards incorporated. During 2013-14, educators from 116 districts developed more than 100 full instructional units based on the unit overviews, with at least one full unit for each grade and content area K-12. Each unit includes approaches to teaching and learning, strategies for differentiating instruction, and suggested classroom resources and formative assessment tasks. The EQUiP/Tri-State Rubrics, as well as other resources, were used to ensure the alignment of the materials.
- ◆ The Content Collaboratives project focuses on building a statewide resource bank of high-quality assessment tools aligned to the CAS and building teachers' assessment literacy. In 2012, the department convened volunteer K-12 educators along with assessment experts. Participants reviewed

available assessments from vendors, districts, and other sources, and identified those that exemplify high quality and alignment to the standards. So far, more than 300 have been loaded into the department's online assessment bank. Next, the department collaborated with the Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation of the University of Kansas to train the teachers on how to develop their own CAS-aligned performance assessments. Finally, beginning in 2014, the department worked to integrate this assessment work with the continuing work of the District Sample Curriculum Project. Members of the Content Collaboratives initiative lend assessment expertise to the design of performance assessments embedded in the instructional units, and they develop assessment literacy tools.

- ◆ The LDC/MDC project focuses efforts at the district level. The department, the Colorado Education Initiative and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have together sponsored the participation of 13 districts. The goal is to support teachers in developing rigorous, standards-aligned learning experiences that integrate literacy skills throughout the academic disciplines and that increase student achievement in math. The department and its partners currently are developing plans for scaling this project across the state.

Louisiana

To foster local use of instructional resources and materials that are aligned to Common Core, the state Department of Education has provided educators with extensive resources on its online Teacher Support Toolbox (see <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/classroom-support-toolbox/teacher-support-toolbox>; see also the department's Academics Web page at <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/academics/2014-2015-curricular-package>). The department also works to build educator capacity through its Teacher Leaders Cadre initiative.

- ◆ The department collaborates with a committee of 60 Teacher Leader Advisors from across the state to create and vet materials for the department's online Teacher Support Toolbox. These resources include model scope and sequence documents for ELA and math that cover an entire year of instruction for every grade pre-K-12. The department provides instructional guidebooks by grade level, with illustrations of effective Common Core instruction and model instructional unit plans. Guidebooks also include remediation strategies for every standard to support teachers of diverse learners. The department also provides an online formative assessment item bank with items for grades one through 11, aligned samples of student work, and videos of exemplary instruction that were developed in partnership with the Teaching Channel. To select materials from external sources (for example, vendors), the department reviews the materials using rubrics adapted from the IMET.
- ◆ The department launched its Teacher Leader Cadre initiative in 2013. This cadre initially included one or two teachers from every school in the state, approximately 2,000 in total. In 2013-14 the size of the group doubled, and in summer 2014 the department provided more than 6,500 seats for Teacher Leaders. In collaboration with Teacher Leader Advisors, the department provides the Teacher Leader Cadre with intensive professional learning on assessing alignment of materials and developing aligned lessons and units of study. Teacher Leaders then work with peers in their schools to build local capacity to design and select high-quality curricular resources.
- ◆ Louisiana also has a notable process in place to support the selection of aligned textbooks. In 2013-14 the department developed an informal, rolling review process to provide ongoing guidance to local decision makers (see <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/academics/2013-2014-math-and-english-language-arts-instructional-materials-review>).

Maryland

To foster the use of instructional resources and materials that are aligned to Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards, the Maryland State Department of Education provided educators access to extensive resources through the department's online Curriculum Management System within its Blackboard Learn website (<https://msde.blackboard.com>) and School Improvement website (<http://mdk12.org/index.html>). The department also provided extensive training to build educator capacity to select and design their own high-quality, aligned materials.

- ◆ To develop, acquire and vet materials for posting, the department collaborated with educators from across the state and various partners, including content-area experts, higher education institutions, Maryland Public Television, and the Maryland Business Roundtable. The department worked with local district leaders to select teachers to write the Maryland College and Career-Ready Curriculum Frameworks, which identify essential skills and knowledge for K-12 in math, ELA, and literacy in social studies, science, and technical subjects. These writers used the EQuIP/Tri-State Rubrics as a guide during development. Department staff, educators, higher education colleagues — including experts on English learners and students with disabilities — plus colleagues from other states and Achieve, provided feedback on drafts.
- ◆ To complement the frameworks, the department is developing an extensive Online Instructional Toolkit that, when complete, will include model unit and lesson plans and assessment resources for every standard in pre-K-12 in math, ELA, and literacy in social studies, science, and technical subjects. All of the instructional plans included in the toolkits incorporate strategies for differentiating instruction for diverse learners. The department also makes available 250 intervention modules for ELA and math. The department provides videos of exemplary instruction for ELA, math and STEM, with videos for disciplinary literacy under development, and is developing formative and interim assessment tools.
- ◆ To build educator capacity to create and select their own high-quality, aligned resources and materials, the department provided Educator Effectiveness Academies each summer, 2011 to 2013, with follow-up during the school years. Leadership teams from every school in the state received intensive professional learning on using the EQuIP/Tri-State Rubrics to develop aligned instructional plans, and on using the aligned materials provided by the department. Participants were encouraged to use this training to lead curriculum development and alignment work within their schools and districts. The department has also provided teacher trainings on the EQuIP Student Work Protocol, a protocol for collaborative examination of student work.

Professional Development

What professional learning opportunities have state departments of education provided to help educators prepare for and implement their states' new college- and career-readiness standards?

Overview of SREB's Look at State Efforts

SREB researchers reviewed the major initiatives each state put in place to provide teachers and leaders with training and support on the state's new standards. The goal of this review was to gain an overall understanding — not an exhaustive list — of states' approaches to providing professional learning for local educators.

SREB researchers reviewed the following aspects of states' professional learning efforts.

- ◆ **Overall Approach and Rationale:** How did the department structure its major professional development initiatives to help educators prepare for and implement the new standards and assessments?
- ◆ **Major Professional Learning Initiatives:** What major initiatives did the department undertake to provide training and support to educators?
- ◆ **Tailored Professional Development for Leaders:** What major initiatives did the department undertake to provide role-specific support for principals and district staff?
- ◆ **Online and On-Demand Professional Development:** In addition to the general professional development above, what supplemental online, on-demand tools did the department provide educators to address their particular needs?

Leading State Efforts

All 14 states provided some initial training for educators, and they all offer at least some ongoing support. *Leading states*, those with the most comprehensive and coordinated efforts, are Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland and Tennessee.

Leading states stood out according to the following criteria.

- ◆ **Initial and Ongoing Structures:** The department provided or collaborated with entities such as regional education service centers to provide initial training on the new standards; it continues to provide ongoing support to foster successful, long-term implementation. This includes the following.
 - Collaboration with local educators that is systematic and intensive, whether through work with school leadership teams or by integrating support structures for practitioners and leaders in key role groups such as school and district leaders, content-area teachers and higher education faculty
 - Professional learning for teachers on an individual basis, in addition to that provided via trainings for school or district teams, in which a large number of teachers across the state have participated
 - Substantial, targeted professional learning for principals and district staff

Professional Development

All 14 states provided some sort of initial training for district leadership teams and they all offer at least some ongoing support for teachers and leaders. *Leading states*, those with the most comprehensive and coordinated, ongoing efforts, are Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland and Tennessee.

- ◆ *Comprehensive Content:* The professional learning content includes the following.
 - ELA and math for K-12
 - Literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects in grades six through 12
 - Differentiation of instruction for diverse learners
 - Formative assessment
 - Understanding how the new standards relate to other major reforms
- ◆ *Supplementary Online Support:* The department has also provided extensive supplementary online professional learning resources for educators to access on demand, to support their particular needs.

Starting Point: States' Newest Work in This Area

The work described below includes these developments, all in 2014:

- ◆ Five states launched major new professional development initiatives or extensions of existing ones.
 - In Delaware, the state Department of Education designed its Common Ground for the Common Core initiative to provide intensive training and implementation support directly to schools and districts. The initiative began in 2013 as an 18-month project. Schools and districts participated voluntarily and each designated a guiding team of teachers and administrators. Teams participated with the department in several full-day and multi-day professional learning institutes throughout the year, as well as monthly follow-up meetings to discuss their progress. In 2014-15, the department launched Common Ground for the Common Core 2.0 to deepen the focus on key practices for successful implementation. The department continues to offer the institutes and monthly follow-up meetings, and liaisons at the department work with the teams to maintain communication and provide feedback on the work at the teams' local sites.
 - In Louisiana, the state Department of Education expanded its Teacher Leaders initiative in an effort to scale the initiative statewide. The department offered over 6,500 teachers representing schools across the entire state opportunities for intensive training, support and collaboration to facilitate their learning about and implementation of the Common Core. Teacher Leaders work with peers at their local sites to build capacity to implement the standards.
 - In Maryland, to extend the professional learning offered through the State Department of Education's Educator Effectiveness Academies (EEAs) that provided training and support to all schools in the state between 2011 and 2013, the department offered professional learning at eight summer conferences hosted on college and university campuses. The conferences were open to all educators across the state. Content was based upon learnings from visits department staff made to all districts in the state during 2013-14. The department trained 200 Master Teachers from across the state to deliver the content. The department also posted all EEA resources online for on-demand access and is developing new courses that schools can use as needed for their local context.
 - In Mississippi, the state Board of Education approved a contract funding additional staff at the state's six regional education service agencies. This additional staff will help to provide enhanced professional learning services and instructional resources to districts, schools and teachers.

- In Tennessee, the state Department of Education launched a STEM Leadership Council, consisting of individuals from industry, higher education and K-12. The council is responsible for developing and facilitating STEM professional development across the state, and will also provide guidance and feedback to the department on its STEM-related initiatives.
- ◆ Most of the states added online professional development resources to their existing archives.
- ◆ Now four years into the work of supporting local implementation of the standards, states grapple with how to shape their future initiatives to foster success over the long term.

For a detailed profile of each of the 14 states' efforts in this area between 2010 and summer 2014, see the accompanying topic-specific report in this series on *Professional Development*.

Trends Across the States: Professional Learning for Educators

State approaches to professional development

All of the states designed their professional development initiatives to **build local capacity to lead implementation**. Several also structured their offerings to **maximize the impact of the small staff at the department**. States' efforts varied greatly, however, in how deeply they reached into the field — how systematically the departments worked with districts, schools and teachers — and how extensively the departments facilitated collaboration across levels of the system to integrate the work of the state, regional entities, districts, schools and teachers. Interviewees from several of the departments shared that since adopting the state's new standards, they have been providing more professional learning and engaging with local educators more intensively than ever before — in response to unprecedented requests for support from the field.

Most of the states had **special funding** to bolster their early initiatives. All of the leading states won Race to the Top grants. A few also received grants from private foundations. Interviewees in these states shared that these grants, while only part of their overall funding stream for professional learning, were a critical factor in enabling them to offer the extent of training and support that they have in recent years.

Major professional development initiatives

Whether they designed and delivered professional learning themselves or in partnership with entities such as regional centers, all 14 state departments of education provided initial training to help local educators learn about the new standards and prepare for implementation. They also provide ongoing training and support of various types to help educators be successful over the long haul. **All 14 states had some sort of training for district leadership teams**, who were then responsible for training their colleagues and leading implementation. Some states, after an initial emphasis on work with district teams, added a focus on direct training for teachers and leaders in order to foster change as close to the classroom as possible. **In addition to work with district teams, notable aspects of states' initiatives are as follows.**

- ◆ *Work at the School Level:* While several of the states offered some type of training for school leadership teams, Delaware, Maryland and Tennessee had deep work with school teams at the heart of their professional development efforts.
- ◆ *Work at the Teacher Level:* While all the states offered some type of training directly to teachers, state departments with the most extensive offerings for teachers were Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee. For example, through its Teacher Leader Cadre initiative, Louisiana has offered training to

approximately 6,500 teachers so far, to serve as leaders and trainers at their home schools. Through its Core Coaches initiative, Tennessee has trained more than 1,300 teachers to lead statewide trainings that have reached approximately 55,000 participants (though this number includes some who attended multiple trainings).

- ◆ *Fostering Collaboration Across Role Groups and Levels of the System:* Georgia, Louisiana, Pennsylvania and Tennessee have made notable efforts to promote collaboration across role groups and levels of the system, for example, department staff working with combinations of regional staff, higher education colleagues, district leaders, school leaders, teachers and external partners. Alabama, Kentucky and Mississippi stand out for taking this collaboration further:
 - In Alabama, in 2012 the State Department of Education created a structure of interlocking district implementation and regional planning teams. Districts create leadership teams that include administrators and teachers of several different subject areas. Districts participate voluntarily, with every district in the state taking part. These teams participate in quarterly professional learning meetings with the department and then lead the professional learning for schools in their districts. To supplement the quarterly meetings and help the district teams deliver local professional learning, regional planning teams made up of leaders from the state's 11 regional in-service centers, the Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) and the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) programs, institutions of higher education, early childhood education, and career and technical education meet quarterly with the department to design tailored, ongoing training and support. Nearly 300 regional AMSTI, ARI and other content specialists across the state then provide this ongoing training and support to districts and schools. This initiative continues in 2014-15 and the department reports plans for future years.
 - In Kentucky, the state Department of Education's District Leadership Teams initiative built a structure of interlocking leadership networks to provide practitioners from a variety of role groups with job-specific support networks. For details, see the Kentucky *Highlight* above in the section on *Timeline and Approach to Standards and Assessments*.
 - In 2014, Mississippi increased the professional learning resources available to local educators, through an initiative resulting from collaboration between the Legislature, the state Board of Education, the state Department of Education, districts and regional centers. In January the state's Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER) submitted a report to the Legislature outlining, among other things, the reasons behind and process for the state's adoption of the Common Core and the department's implementation efforts. Based on the PEER report and with input from districts, in spring 2014 the board approved funding for additional staff at the state's six Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs). In 2014-15 the RESAs provide enhanced training and tools to districts, schools and teachers in the areas of ELA, literacy, math, special education and early childhood education, with a goal of reaching the majority of the state's approximately 34,000 educators.
- ◆ *Literacy Design Collaborative and Mathematics Design Collaborative Initiatives:* Six states have LDC/ MDC initiatives. In Delaware the state Department of Education has trained secondary teachers and Reading and Math Cadre members (district content area specialists) on using LDC tools to create tasks that embed reading, writing and literacy in the content areas. Georgia and Kentucky have trained teachers, leaders and others in the majority of their districts. Colorado provides training to targeted districts, with plans for scaling the work statewide. (See a description of this work in the Col-

orado *Highlight* in the section above on *Aligned Teaching Resources*). Also, in 2013 Colorado and Kentucky partnered on the Common Assignment Study initiative. High-performing teachers from both states meet to collaborate on units of study that align to both the KCAS and the CAS, that embed LDC and MDC modules and that provide models for teachers in both states. The partner states plan to expand the work to include more teachers from additional districts in 2014-15, and have developed criteria and guidance to support scaling this work. In Pennsylvania, Intermediate Units (regional education service agencies) have provided districts with LDC training since 2010-11, and MDC training since 2013-14. The state Department of Education uploads instructional resources developed through this work into its online resource bank for use by teachers statewide. In West Virginia the state Department of Education includes LDC/MDC in its training modules designed for RESAs to use in their work with local districts across the state.

Sustainability

Four years into the work of helping schools, districts and teachers learn about and prepare to implement new college- and career-readiness standards, states grapple with the issue of sustainability. State leaders must determine how to carry their professional learning initiatives forward, and/or whether to develop new approaches to foster continued progress. Complicating matters is the fact that states have tight education budgets and the 10 states that received Race to the Top grants now face the end of that funding. While planning is in various stages across the states, interviewees from state departments of education shared possible approaches that fell into one of two categories: scaling back or expanding.

- ◆ **Scaling Back:** Interviewees in several of the states shared that the state department plans to continue its current initiatives in a modified, scaled-back version. Some possible modifications are to transition from face-to-face trainings to online, on-demand tools and to shift responsibility for providing support from the state to districts and schools.
- ◆ **Expanding or Adding:** Interviewees in some of the states shared that the state department plans to modify and expand its initiatives in 2014-15 and beyond.
 - In Delaware in 2014-15, the state Department of Education extended its Common Ground for the Common Core initiative, which was initially planned as an 18-month initiative to end in 2014. The department will continue its face-to-face professional learning institutes and its monthly follow-up meetings with guiding teams from schools and districts. Department liaisons will also work directly with the teams to monitor local progress and support local Professional Learning Communities.
 - In Maryland, after providing Educator Effectiveness Academies (EEAs) for teams representing every school in the state between 2011 and 2013, in 2014 the State Department of Education worked with 200 Master Teachers to deliver professional learning at summer conferences for educators. The department also posted all EEA resources online for on-demand access and is developing new courses that schools can use as needed for their local context. See a description of this work above in the section, *Starting Point: States' Newest Work in This Area*.
 - In Mississippi, in spring 2014, the state Board of Education approved funding for additional professional development staff at the state's RESAs. See a description of this effort above in the section on *Fostering Collaboration Across Role Groups and Levels of the System*.
 - In Tennessee, in spring 2014 the state Department of Education launched a STEM Leadership Council to develop and facilitate STEM-based professional development across the state. See a description of this work above in the section, *Starting Point: States' Newest Work in This Area*.

Trends Across the States: Professional Learning for Leaders

State departments of education in all 14 states have offered some sort of professional development aimed specifically at increasing the capacity of district staff and principals to lead local implementation. **However, professional learning and support for leaders has not been as intensive as what departments have provided teachers.** Most commonly, state departments of education have offered breakout sessions or a special track for leaders at the statewide summer trainings for district teams, or they have added the topic of the new standards to the departments' regular leadership training. Seven states have had more extensive professional learning for leaders: Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Tennessee. **Highlights from three of these states with more extensive efforts are as follows.**

- ◆ In Delaware, in addition to the role-specific training that school and district leaders receive through the state Department of Education's Common Ground for the Common Core initiative, approximately 100 principals statewide participate in job-embedded coaching programs. The department provides these coaches in collaboration with partners such as the Delaware Business Roundtable Education Committee, the Rodel Foundation, and the University of Delaware. Additionally, the department currently is planning a new statewide professional learning initiative for leaders.
- ◆ In Maryland, from 2011 through 2013 the State Department of Education provided role-specific training to principals from every school in the state during its annual Educator Effectiveness Academies (EEAs). In addition, the department meets monthly with district assistant superintendents, and less frequently with an Executive Officer Network, composed of district leaders who supervise principals. In 2013-14, the department visited every district, meeting with leaders and visiting classrooms to learn about implementation progress and needs. Based on these visits, the department designed sessions for its 2014 summer conferences, and paired leaders in small districts with those in larger districts to facilitate sharing and collaboration. The department also provides job-embedded support for principals in the state's lowest-performing districts and Title I schools through the Maryland Breakthrough Center.
- ◆ Through Tennessee's TNCore Summer Trainings in 2012-2014, school and district leaders received role-specific professional learning. Additionally, the state Department of Education provides a regional Common Core Leadership Course to support school and district leaders in understanding and implementing the standards and observing instruction. Across 2013 and 2014, approximately 5,000 administrators participated. In 2014, the department began offering advanced courses for administrators with experience in Common Core implementation.

Professional Learning for Leaders

All 14 states have provided some sort of professional development specifically for district staff and principals, although these initiatives have not been as intensive as those provided for teachers. Seven states with more extensive support for leaders are Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Trends Across the States: Supplementary Online Professional Learning Resources

All of the 14 states offer educators access to online, on-demand, supplementary professional development resources. These resources can not only help educators prepare to teach their states' new standards but also support their overall, long-term professional growth. Most of the states offer combinations of information and guidance, tools, courses and self-paced modules, and videos of exemplary instruction in action. These include many of the resources and materials described in the section above on *Aligned Teaching Resources*.

Highlights From Two Leading States

Delaware

Delaware's professional learning on the Common Core stands out due to the extensive nature of collaboration between the state Department of Education and leadership teams at both the school and district levels, and training and support for leaders.

Professional learning for school and district teams:

- ◆ Following some initial training for educators around the state, the department worked with a steering committee of stakeholders including the state Board of Education, the teachers union, and higher education to design the Common Ground for the Common Core initiative. The initiative began in 2013.
- ◆ Schools and districts each designate a guiding team of teachers and administrators to participate in several full-day and multi-day professional learning institutes throughout the year. Teams from 143 traditional schools and a few charter schools have so far participated voluntarily, representing 17 of the state's 19 districts. These institutes include learning about the Common Core, developing implementation plans and strategies to evaluate implementation. The department works with partners including Achieve, Student Achievement Partners, the International Reading Association, Solution Tree and Expeditionary Learning to design and deliver the institutes.
- ◆ The department complements the institutes with face-to-face, monthly meetings with the guiding teams. During these meetings, the department offers additional training and feedback. Guiding teams discuss their progress and identify areas of strength and areas for improvement.
- ◆ In 2014-15, the department launched Common Ground for the Common Core 2.0, extending the project and adding a focus on assessment, performance tasks, Professional Learning Communities, and response to intervention practices.

Professional learning for leaders:

- ◆ Principals: The department works with partners such as the Delaware Business Roundtable Education Committee, the Rodel Foundation and the University of Delaware on four job-embedded coaching projects. More than 100 principals work with a coach to develop their knowledge of the Common Core and their skills in instructional leadership, change management, and implementing the state's new teacher evaluation system. The department is also currently planning an additional statewide initiative to support principals.

- ◆ District staff: The department provides professional learning at the district level through Math and Reading Cadres. ELA and math content specialists from all Delaware districts collaborate monthly with the department to receive professional learning and to plan and develop supports for practitioners. Cadre members serve as instructional leaders in their home districts.

Sustainability:

- ◆ Much of the work is supported by the state's Race to the Top grant, which will continue to be in place through 2014-15.
- ◆ To sustain efforts beyond the grant, the department plans to engage with the U.S. Department of Education Reform Support Network's Sustainability Workgroup and to cement reform efforts by institutionalizing Professional Learning Communities in schools statewide.

Tennessee

Tennessee's approach to professional learning stands out due to the extensive involvement of local educators in planning and providing the training, and the large numbers of practitioners who have participated.

Common Core Leadership Council:

- ◆ In 2012 the state Department of Education launched a Common Core Leadership Council. The council is made up of principals, supervisors and superintendents — 22 members represented all regions in the state in 2013-14. The council advises the department on all aspects of the implementation of the new standards and assessments.
- ◆ Approximately every two months, department staff members consult with the council to discuss ongoing professional learning and local implementation efforts and to track progress and address challenges.

Professional learning for school teams and district staff:

- ◆ Following some initial training for educators around the state, the TNCore initiative began in 2012 and continued through summer 2014. TNCore provided local educators and leaders with professional development and support to lead implementation at their home sites. The department recruited 1,370 local educators to serve as Core Coaches. To prepare for delivering the TNCore training to educators around the state, Core Coaches received intensive training and support from the department and experts, with partners such as the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning, Sopris Learning, and others.
- ◆ TNCore training consisted of regional multi-day summer sessions for school teams and district staff. Teachers participated in specific learning tracks by grade level and subject. In addition to the summer sessions, school teams and district staff participated in follow-up sessions throughout the school year. In 2013, the department also invited higher education faculty members to attend sessions specifically designed for them. By the last session in summer 2014, approximately 55,000 participants had attended TNCore trainings (this number includes some who attended multiple trainings). The department currently is exploring options for continuing this initiative, as the state's Race to the Top grant funding for most projects ended in 2014.
- ◆ Additionally, in fall 2013 the department launched a year-long Common Core Reading Course for teachers. Over 5,000 teachers participated in 2013-14 and the course continues in 2014-15. And in

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spring 2014, the department launched a STEM Leadership Council, consisting of individuals from industry, higher education and K-12, responsible for developing and facilitating STEM trainings and professional development across the state.

Professional development for leaders:

- ◆ The department also offers a Common Core Leadership Course specifically for principals, assistant principals and district supervisors. Local administrators receive training to serve as Common Core Leadership Coaches, delivering six full days of trainings during the school year. Approximately 70 percent of school-level administrators in the state have taken the course.
- ◆ In 2014 the department began offering advanced courses, to differentiate learning for more experienced leaders.

Online resources:

- ◆ Tennessee also offers educators an extensive array of online professional learning resources for use on a voluntary, on-demand basis through its Electronic Learning Center (<http://www.tnelc.org/>) and its TNCore Web portal (<http://www.tncore.org/>).

Evaluation of Teachers and Leaders

How do states' new teacher and leader evaluation systems integrate the higher expectations for student learning inherent in their new college- and career-readiness standards within the systems' requirements for continuous improvement of teachers and principals? Alignment between the feedback teachers and principals receive about their performance and learning expectations for students is crucial to ensure that educators focus on the kinds of work deemed most essential for improving student learning.

Overview of SREB's Look at State Efforts

SREB researchers reviewed the following information about each state's teacher and leader evaluation systems.

- ◆ *Basic Information about the Systems:* When were the state's new or revised teacher and leader evaluation systems put into place?
- ◆ *Professional Teaching and Leadership Standards:* Has the state updated its professional teaching standards and leadership standards to articulate the new knowledge and competencies needed in the context of the state's new college- and career-readiness standards?
- ◆ *Components of the Systems and Their Alignment to the New College- and Career-Readiness Standards:* How do the measures within the systems produce information about practitioners' competencies and accomplishments in teaching and in leading implementation of the new college- and career-readiness standards?
- ◆ *Use of Evaluation Data for Continuous Improvement:* How are the results of the evaluation process used to assist practitioners, systems, and the state in strengthening teaching and leadership of the new college- and career-readiness standards?

Leading State Efforts

As of 2012, all 14 states had started implementing new or revised teacher and leader evaluation systems, whether wholesale or by rolling out different components over a few years. The updates to these systems were many and varied. Some of the updates were made to meet conditions for a state's Race to the Top grant or a state's ESEA waiver. All states reported that they plan to fully implement their new evaluation systems by 2015-16, although a few have delayed the use of evaluation results to inform personnel decisions.

States leading the charge to update measures in both their teacher and leader evaluation systems to articulate the knowledge and skills that practitioners need in a college- and career-readiness environment are Colorado, Louisiana and Tennessee. Looking at teacher and leader evaluation systems separately, states with leading efforts are as follows.

- ◆ *Leading states* in aligning **teacher** evaluation measures are Colorado, Louisiana, New York, South Carolina and Tennessee.
- ◆ *Leading states* in aligning **leader** evaluation measures are Colorado, Louisiana and Tennessee.

Leading states stood out according to the following criteria.

- ◆ *Updated Professional Standards:* The state department of education has updated the state's professional teaching and leadership standards to define more clearly what effective teaching and leadership entail in light of the new expectations for students.
- ◆ *Updated Classroom Observation Tools and Principal Practice Measures:* The department has updated the state's classroom observation tools, including rubrics, guides or checklists, and principal practice measures including rubrics or leadership criteria, to identify more clearly what effective teaching and leadership look like in college- and career-readiness contexts.
- ◆ *Extensive Use of Evaluation Data:*
 - The department requires or recommends that local practitioners use evaluation results to identify individual strengths and areas for improvement and professional learning.
 - The department provides guidance and support to districts to enhance their use of data for large-scale planning.
 - The department aggregates individual evaluation results to identify statewide trends, which can inform planning for state-level initiatives. The department also points practitioners to professional learning resources based on their unique evaluation results – for example, resources available through a statewide electronic platform or archive.

Teacher and Leader Evaluation

As of 2012, all 14 states had started implementing new or revised teacher and leader evaluation systems. They all plan to fully implement the systems by 2015-16, although a few have delayed the use of evaluation results to inform personnel decisions.

States leading the charge to align measures in *both* their teacher and leader evaluation systems to their new college- and career-readiness standards are Colorado, Louisiana and Tennessee.

Starting Point: States' Newest Work in This Area

The work described in this section includes these most recent developments, most in 2014:

- ◆ One state (Kentucky) updated its professional teaching standards to articulate more explicitly what successful teaching of the state's new standards looks like in the classroom.
- ◆ One state (Tennessee) updated its leadership rubric to articulate more explicitly what successful leadership looks like in schools implementing the state's new standards.
- ◆ Ten states developed more resources to support local educators in developing and selecting student growth measures for non-tested grades and subjects that align to the states' new standards, where appropriate.
- ◆ Ten states provided more tools to support district and school leaders in using evaluation results to drive continuous improvement.

- ◆ Six states (Colorado, Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland and South Carolina) have adjusted timelines for when evaluation results, or certain components of evaluation results, become high-stakes. While all of the 14 states had started implementing new or revised teacher and leader evaluation systems in 2012, those six states have delayed the impact of summative evaluation results and/or of student growth and achievement data for teachers and/or leaders on personnel decisions until 2014-15 or later.

For a detailed profile of each of the 14 states' efforts in this area between 2010 and summer 2014, see the accompanying topic-specific report in this series on *Evaluation of Teachers and Leaders*.

Trends Across the States: Aligning Professional Teaching and Leadership Standards

Most states adopted or developed professional teaching and leadership standards that were informed by models widely recognized as defining basic skills and knowledge needed for effective teaching and leading in a college- and career-readiness environment.

- ◆ **Teaching Standards:** Seven states used the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards to develop their professional teaching standards. InTASC is a consortium of state education agencies and national organizations in collaboration with CCSSO. Eight states used the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Developed by Charlotte Danielson, the framework consists of a set of components of instruction aligned to the InTASC standards. A few states used both the InTASC standards and the Danielson Framework as resources. Three states developed their own teaching standards, with a focus on general standards-based instruction.
- ◆ **Leadership Standards:** Fourteen states used the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders to develop their professional leadership standards. The ISLLC standards were developed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration and its constituents in collaboration with CCSSO. A few states also used resources from other organizations such as SREB, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and McREL.

Aligned Professional Standards

Seven states have developed or updated their professional teaching and/or leadership standards to articulate more explicitly the skills, knowledge and practices needed to be effective in a college- and career-readiness environment.

- **Teaching standards:** Colorado, Kentucky, Louisiana, New York, South Carolina and Tennessee
- **Leadership standards:** Colorado, Louisiana and Tennessee, Maryland currently is in the process of updating these standards

Seven states (listed below) have gone further, developing or updating their standards to articulate more explicitly key skills, knowledge and practices needed to be effective in a college- and career-readiness environment. The standards in these states provide practitioners with stronger support as they strive to be effective in the context of their state's new student learning standards.

- ◆ **Teaching standards:** Colorado, Kentucky, Louisiana, New York, South Carolina and Tennessee
- ◆ **Leadership standards:** Colorado, Louisiana and Tennessee, Maryland currently is in the process of updating these standards

Trends Across the States: Aligning Measures within the Systems

This section addresses key components of evaluation models that are established at the state level and the extent to which the measures within them are aligned to new college- and career-readiness standards. In some states, districts design many aspects of their own evaluation systems.

Teacher evaluation: Classroom observations

By 2014, all 14 states had a component in their teacher evaluation system focused on teacher professional practice. A key measure for this is the observation of teachers in their classrooms. States vary as to whether they stipulate the use of a certain rubric, tool or set of criteria to guide evaluators in their observations.

- ◆ Most states' rubrics are informed by tools widely regarded as defining skills and knowledge that form a **basic foundation** for effective teaching in a college- and career-readiness environment, such as the Danielson Framework.
- ◆ Four states have **gone further, tailoring their rubrics to articulate more thoroughly the skills and practices needed for effective teaching of college- and career-readiness standards**. This provides teachers and evaluators with stronger support in the evaluation process. The four states are Colorado, Louisiana, South Carolina and Tennessee.
- ◆ Six states provide supplemental guidance to teachers and evaluators to facilitate the use of the rubrics in college- and career-readiness settings: Delaware, Louisiana, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Tennessee.

Leader evaluation: Professional practice

By 2014, all 14 states had a component in their leader evaluation system focused on principal professional practice. Measures for this component vary across states, including whether or not the department stipulates the use of a certain rubric or set of criteria. Most often the measures include ratings on a rubric based on on-site visits and conferences with the evaluator, and on progress toward professional growth goals.

- ◆ Most states' rubrics were informed by criteria that are widely regarded as **defining basic skills and knowledge** that principals need to lead effectively in schools implementing college- and career-readiness standards, such as the ISLLC standards.
- ◆ Three states **went further, tailoring their rubrics to define explicitly the skills and knowledge needed to be an instructional leader in a college- and career-readiness environment**. This provides principals and evaluators with stronger support in the evaluation process. The three states are Colorado, Louisiana and Tennessee. Maryland is in the process of doing so.

Aligned Classroom Observation and Principal Practice Tools

Five states have tailored their classroom observation rubrics and/or their principal practice rubrics, to articulate more thoroughly the skills and practices needed for effective teaching and leadership in the context of college- and career-readiness standards.

- **Classroom observation rubrics:** Colorado, Louisiana, South Carolina and Tennessee
- **Principal practice rubrics:** Colorado, Louisiana and Tennessee; Maryland is in the process of updating its rubric

- ◆ Delaware and Pennsylvania, while not tailoring their rubrics, do provide supplemental guidance and resources to principals and evaluators to facilitate the use of the rubrics in college- and career-readiness settings.

Teacher and leader evaluation: Measures of student growth and achievement

This section describes measures of student learning in teacher and leader evaluation systems based on annual state assessments and other student outcome data related to the content areas of ELA and math. (*Note:* The information provided in this report about the alignment of state assessments to new college- and career-readiness standards was based on information available publicly at the time of publication, which was self-reported by the states and test developers.)

- ◆ *For Teachers of Tested Grades and Subjects:* By 2014 all of the states included measures of student growth and achievement on annual state assessments as part of their teacher evaluation systems; four use only annual state assessments. Nine states use annual state assessments and incorporate other locally-selected measures such as district assessments, third-party assessments and national assessments. One state, Alabama, has not yet determined how it will incorporate student growth and achievement into its system. **State approaches to aligning their annual summative assessments have varied.** For details, see the section above on *Trends Across the States: Aligning State Assessments to the New Standards*.
- ◆ *For Teachers of Non-Tested Grades and Subjects* (the subjects and grades not included in the regular state testing program, such as K-2 in reading, writing and math), states allow a wide variety of measures. For example, these measures include locally developed student learning targets or objectives based on district or national assessments.
 - **Most states leave the selection of these measures to the local level**, and 12 states provide models and guidance, lists of approved national and third-party assessments, or common assessments for local use. For example, Colorado, Delaware and North Carolina provide a large number of common assessments which the state departments of education reported are aligned to the new standards where appropriate.

Measures of Student Growth and Achievement, and Other Measures

- *Annual ELA and math tests:* Thirteen of the states plan to have assessments fully aligned to the new standards in place for 2014-15; Tennessee plans to meet this goal by 2015-16. For details, see the section above on *Trends Across the States: Aligning State Assessments to the New Standards*.
- *Measures for teachers of non-tested grades and subjects:* States allow a wide variety of measures, and most leave the selection of these measures to the local level while providing guidance for selecting measures aligned to the new standards, where appropriate.
- *Other measures:* 10 states also incorporated additional kinds of measures that can be determined at the local level, for example, stakeholder surveys, professional growth goals and student portfolios. These measures may or may not be aligned to the states' new standards.

Georgia, New York and Pennsylvania provide a large number of model student learning objectives which the departments reported are aligned to the new standards where appropriate (for example, K-2 in ELA and math).

- Alabama has not yet determined how student growth and achievement measures from non-tested grades and subjects will be incorporated.
- ◆ *For Leaders:* All of the states include measures of student growth and achievement as part of their leader evaluation systems. Thirteen states include data from tested grades and subjects, usually school-wide growth on the annual state assessments. Eleven states also include data from non-tested grades and subjects, and states allow measures and local flexibility similar to those mentioned above for teachers of non-tested grades and subjects. One state (Alabama) has not yet determined how it will incorporate student growth and achievement into its system.

Teacher and leader evaluation: Other measures of effectiveness

By 2014, 10 states also incorporated the use of various other kinds of measures into their teacher and leader evaluation systems to get a comprehensive look at performance. Typical measures include stakeholder surveys, professional growth goals and student portfolios. These measures may or may not be aligned to the states' new college- and career-readiness standards. For example, Kentucky uses Vanderbilt University's Val-Ed Survey in its leader evaluation system. The survey addresses topics related to the ISLLC standards, and the ISLLC standards are widely regarded as articulating general skills and knowledge needed to effectively lead in a college- and career-readiness environment. Most of these states allow the determination of these measures at the district or school level.

Trends Across the States: Use of Evaluation Data for Continuous Improvement

By 2014, most of the states required or encouraged local evaluators to use evaluation results to identify individual practitioner strengths, areas for improvement, and appropriate professional learning.

Most of the states also required or encouraged districts to use aggregated results to inform their large-scale improvement planning. **Most states aggregated teacher and leader evaluation data** to identify statewide trends in strengths and areas for improvement, which can inform large-scale professional learning and other supports. **Notable state efforts include those listed below.**

- ◆ Five states — Georgia, Louisiana, New York, North Carolina and South Carolina — offer the most extensive supports to local leaders to strengthen their use of evaluation data to identify areas for school- and district-wide professional learning. These supports include the provision of an online reporting and data analysis platform, professional learning on the use of data, technical assistance, guidance and other resources.
- ◆ Kentucky and North Carolina provide personalized, online professional learning resources directly to individual teachers and leaders based on their evaluation results. Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Pennsylvania offer online professional learning resources aligned to specific teaching and leadership standards for educators to access based on their evaluation results.

Highlights From Two Leading States

Colorado

Colorado's model teacher support and evaluation system is called the Colorado State Model Evaluation System, and its model leader effectiveness system is called the Colorado Model Educator Evaluation System for Principals and Assistant Principals. In 2013-14, all districts were required to implement teacher and leader evaluation systems, whether their own or the state's models, that meet or exceed state law.

Updated professional standards:

- ◆ The Colorado Department of Education developed its professional teaching standards, called the Teacher Quality Standards (TQS), and its professional leadership standards, called the Principal Quality Standards (PQS), using nationally-recognized teaching and leadership standards as resources. These included the InTASC standards for teachers and the ISLLC standards for principals, both of which are widely regarded as defining skills and knowledge that form a basic foundation for effective teaching and leading in a college- and career-readiness environment.
- ◆ Further, the department tailored the state's teaching and leadership standards to incorporate the instructional shifts required by the state's new college- and career-readiness standards (the Colorado Academic Standards, or CAS).

Aligned classroom observation tool and leadership rubric:

- ◆ When the department developed its state teacher evaluation rubric, which includes observable elements, and its professional practice rubric for principals, it specifically considered the instructional shifts required by the CAS. The rubrics were developed to provide explicit guidance and concrete examples of skills and knowledge necessary for teaching and leading in a CAS environment.
- ◆ Districts in Colorado can use the state rubrics or their own, as long as they meet or exceed the TQS and PQS.

Extensive use of evaluation data to inform improvement efforts:

- ◆ Following teacher evaluations, evaluators are required to direct teachers to appropriate professional development opportunities based on their results, and the department recommends that schools and districts use aggregated evaluation data to inform their large-scale professional development.
- ◆ Following leader evaluations, districts and regional Boards of Cooperative Educational Services are required to collect and analyze performance data to provide actionable feedback and professional learning support to principals.
- ◆ To support further use of evaluation data, in spring 2014 the department piloted a State Model Online Performance Management System, with full implementation in 2014-15. This online system is available for districts as a tool to collect and analyze evaluation results and to develop reports with feedback for practitioners.
- ◆ The department plans to aggregate individual teacher and principal evaluation results in spring 2015. These data will be used to identify statewide trends in strengths and areas for improvement, which can inform the department's ongoing design of large-scale improvement initiatives.

Tennessee

The state implemented its Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) for teachers and administrators statewide in 2011-12.

Updated professional standards:

- ◆ The Tennessee Department of Education developed its own professional teaching standards, called the TEAM Standards, and its professional leadership standards, called the Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards (TILS), using many nationally recognized standards as resources. These included the ISLLC standards for principals.
- ◆ Further, the department revised the TEAM standards and the TILS to better align them to the Common Core.

Aligned classroom observation tool and leadership rubric:

- ◆ The department revised its classroom observation rubric, which is based on the TEAM standards, to more explicitly articulate the expectations for teaching and learning in a Common Core environment.
- ◆ In 2014-15 the state is implementing a revised professional practice rubric for principals, based on the TILS, that provides explicit examples and guidance on skills and knowledge that principals need to effectively lead schools in a Common Core environment.

Extensive use of evaluation data to inform improvement efforts:

- ◆ Districts and evaluators are required to use evaluation data to identify individual teacher and principal strengths, areas for improvement, and appropriate professional learning, and the department encourages districts to use aggregated evaluation results to inform large-scale professional learning.
- ◆ To support the use of evaluation data, the department provides the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) Best Practices Portal (www.nietbestpractices.org), which offers a wealth of resources on classroom observations, coaching, and implementing the evaluation system. It also provides resources for giving feedback and coaching. Tennessee reports that over 5,000 school and district leaders and 70,000 teachers are registered on the portal.
- ◆ The department also provides the CODE online platform, enabling districts to collect and analyze evaluation results.
- ◆ The department aggregates individual teacher and leader evaluation results to identify statewide trends in strengths and areas for improvement to inform school support, leader development activities, and initiative planning.

Accountability

What accountability measures have states put in place to hold schools accountable for teaching and learning of the new college- and career-readiness standards? Accountability systems are an important link in the chain of effective implementation of student learning standards. Accountability systems help states articulate their goals for public education and establish targets for schools and districts to work toward. They provide a way for states to report to the public on how schools are performing. They influence how state departments of education structure their work with local systems and schools.

Overview of SREB's Look at State Efforts

SREB researchers reviewed states' general statewide accountability systems and aspects of another system through which states can track outcomes and hold educators accountable for improving outcomes for students: annual accountability reporting for the use of federal Title III funds. States and their district subgrantees receive Title III funds to serve English learners (called Limited English Proficient students in federal law), and immigrant children and youth. In turn, they must report on three annual targets, or Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs). **SREB researchers reviewed the following aspects of state accountability systems and reporting.**

◆ *Statewide Accountability System*

- *Context:* Why did the state revise its accountability system? For example, did the state revise the system as part of a larger set of reforms or in response to recommendations of a statewide task force?
- *English Language Arts and Math Assessments:* What are the annual summative grade-level and course assessments in ELA and math for which schools must meet annual targets? To what extent are these tests aligned to the state's new college- and career-readiness standards?
- *Other Measures:* Does the statewide accountability system include additional types of measures that provide stakeholders with information about teaching and learning of the state's new standards?
- *Measures of College and Career Readiness:* Does the statewide accountability system include measures of college and career readiness (for example, ACT or SAT exams), and if so, to what extent are they aligned to the state's new standards?

◆ *Accountability Reporting for Title III*

- What are the assessments the state uses to measure results for each AMAO and to what extent are they aligned to the state's new college- and career-readiness standards?

This report does not seek to explain states' entire accountability systems, which can include many goals, only some of which relate to student learning of states' new college- and career-readiness standards in ELA and math. This report describes the measures states had in place as of summer 2014.

Leading State Efforts

While all 14 states have made strides in accountability system reform, *leading states*, those with the most comprehensive sets of measures that provide stakeholders with information about teaching and learning of the state's new college- and career-readiness standards, are Georgia, Kentucky and North Carolina.

Leading states stood out according to the following criteria.

- ◆ *General Statewide Accountability System Annual Targets for Schools Include:*
 - Measures of student learning in ELA and math based on annual summative grade-level and course assessments that are aligned to the state's new standards
 - Other measures that provide information about teaching and learning of the state's new standards
 - Multiple college- and career-readiness measures that provide information about student preparedness for the rigors of postsecondary work
- ◆ *Title III Accountability Reporting Targets Include:*
 - AMAOs based on data from assessments, particularly the state's English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessment, that are aligned to the state's new standards

Starting Point: States' Newest Work in This Area

The work described below includes these most recent developments, all in 2014:

- ◆ Colorado enacted legislation to delay the impact of its new, fully aligned assessments on school accountability ratings until 2015-16.
- ◆ Kentucky received approval from the U.S. Department of Education to incorporate results from its teacher and leader evaluation systems into its statewide accountability system.
- ◆ The U.S. Department of Education approved three states' requests to modify aspects of their accountability system or their implementation timeline. Kentucky requested a one-year extension for implementation of its system. Mississippi requested that its new assessments in 2014-15 not impact school accountability ratings until 2015-16. Delaware requested revisions to the design of certain components of its accountability system.

Accountability Measures

In their general statewide accountability systems, by 2014 all 14 states had targets for annual summative assessments in ELA and math that they reported either were or would soon be aligned to the state's new college- and career-readiness standards.

For Title III accountability reporting, all of the states use or plan to use by 2015-16 results from English Language Proficiency assessments for English learners that were designed to measure mastery of the linguistic knowledge and skills inherent in the states' new college- and career-readiness standards.

Leading states have an extensive array of ELA and math assessments and additional types of measures that provide information on teaching and learning of the states' new standards, plus multiple college- and career-readiness measures. They also have aligned English Language Proficiency assessments.

For a detailed profile of each of the 14 states' efforts in this area between 2010 and summer 2014, see the accompanying topic-specific report in this series on *Accountability*.

Trends Across the States: Context for Accountability System Reform

All 14 states in this study have recently revised their statewide accountability system. Since 2011, the states have received waivers to certain provisions of NCLB from the U.S. Department of Education. To be granted this flexibility all states had to adopt certain policies the U.S. Department of Education considered fundamental to reform. Along with developing new accountability systems, states had to commit to adopting college- and career-readiness standards and aligned assessments, including aligned alternate assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and aligned ELP standards and assessments for English learners, and educator effectiveness systems that incorporate the use of student performance data. States are working hard to integrate the work of such complex reforms.

Additionally, four states had legislation in place that supported their accountability system reforms: Alabama, Colorado, Kentucky and Maryland. Four states had other kinds of statewide accountability reform initiatives, such as statewide accountability task forces or committees that pushed for the redesign of their systems: Alabama, Kentucky, North Carolina and West Virginia.

Trends Across the States: ELA and Math Accountability Measures

All 14 states designed their new accountability systems to include annual summative grade-level and course assessments in ELA and math. However, the extent to which these assessments have been aligned to each state's new college- and career-readiness standards varies. See the section above on *Trends Across the States: Aligning State Assessments to the New Standards* for details.

Notably, Colorado and Georgia also include in their states' general school accountability measures, targets on the annual ELP assessment for English learners. This helps to ensure that as stakeholders track school progress in helping *all* students achieve in the content areas, they track progress in supporting English learners as they learn English, a crucial aspect of supporting their overall academic growth.

Trends Across the States: Other Measures

Three states have additional kinds of measures that provide stakeholders with information on teaching and learning of the states' new college- and career-readiness standards. These measures complement test data and provide a richer picture of local practice and outcomes. The measures states had in place in 2014 and information about their alignment to states' new college- and career-readiness standards is summarized below.

- ◆ *Georgia has Lexile targets.* A Lexile score is an indicator of a student's ability to read and comprehend increasingly difficult texts as he or she proceeds through the grade levels. Lexile targets contribute to the accountability ratings of elementary, middle and high schools. Lexile scores are correlated to the state's reading and ELA assessments, which the state Department of Education reported are aligned to Georgia's College and Career Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS).

- ◆ *Kentucky has Program Reviews and a Next-Generation Professionals Component.*
 - *Program Reviews:* This is a process by which local school teams, including stakeholder groups such as staff, parents and students, examine instruction, curriculum, assessments, administrative support, professional development, and other aspects of the school's programs. Every school in Kentucky must conduct an annual Program Review in at least one of the following areas: writing, arts and humanities, and practical living and career studies. Because Program Reviews include the examination of student work and assessments, the reviews can provide information about student learning of the Kentucky Core Academic Standards (KCAS) and about the school-level practices that support that learning.
 - *Next-Generation Professionals Component:* Beginning in 2015-16, Kentucky will incorporate teacher and leader evaluation results into its statewide accountability system. This component will constitute 10 percent of a school's total accountability score. No individual evaluation ratings will be made public; schools will receive an overall performance rating based on an aggregate rating for all educators. These data provide information about teaching, learning and leading of the KCAS. (See the accompanying state profile on *Evaluation of Teachers and Leaders* for more information.)
- ◆ *North Carolina has the Graduation Project.* The Graduation Project is an optional high school performance-based assessment. Students complete projects that consist of components such as a research paper, a portfolio and an oral presentation. The process draws on the Common Core areas of ELA and literacy, and on skills that support the Common Core's focus on postsecondary readiness, such as teamwork, problem-solving and use of technology.

Trends Across the States: Measures of College and Career Readiness

College- and career-readiness measures can provide information about student mastery of a state's college- and career-readiness standards and about student preparedness for the rigors of postsecondary work. **Eight states incorporate measures of college and career readiness:** Alabama, Colorado, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina and Pennsylvania. The measures states had in place in 2014 and what is known about their alignment to states' new college- and career-readiness standards are summarized below.

- ◆ *The most widely used measures of college and career readiness are exams.* The most common exams are the ACT, SAT, International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement (AP) and WorkKeys. ACT and the College Board report that the ACT and SAT exams are aligned to the Common Core, and the College Board and the IB organization report that the programs and courses leading to the AP and IB exams support student learning at and beyond the level of rigor of the Common Core. However, the extent of alignment of the WorkKeys exam could not be determined at the time of publication.
- ◆ *Four states also have additional measures:* Alabama, Georgia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. These states have targets for at least one of the following: students earning postsecondary credit or industry certifications while in high school, student enrollment in college within 16 months of graduation, and schools offering students access to college courses. These measures support and build upon the college- and career-readiness focus of the states' new standards.

Trends Across the States: Accountability Reporting for Title III Funds to Serve English Learners

States and their subgrantees (usually districts) receive federal Title III funds to serve English learners (called Limited English Proficient students in federal law), and immigrant children and youth. In turn, states must report (at the state level and by subgrantee) on three annual targets, or Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs), listed below.

1. **Progress Toward English Proficiency:** The number or percentage of students who improve their English fluency
2. **Attaining English Proficiency:** The number or percentage of students who “reach the finish line” of becoming fluent in English
3. **Academic Achievement in the Content Areas:** Academic achievement of English learners in ELA and math

For AMAOs 1 and 2, states use ELP assessments. The assessments states had in place in 2014 and what is known about their alignment to states’ new college- and career-readiness standards are summarized below.

- ◆ ***Eleven states use the WIDA Consortium’s ACCESS for ELLs test:*** Alabama, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Tennessee. South Carolina, however, has not yet determined what ELP assessment it will use in 2015-16 and beyond. The ACCESS for ELLs test is designed to measure student mastery of the language skills inherent in the Common Core, and it has been shown in a WIDA alignment study to have moderate to strong alignment.
- ◆ ***Three states use other ELP assessments.*** Louisiana uses the ELDA test, developed by states partnering with CCSSO. West Virginia uses its West Virginia Test of English Language Learning (WESTELL). The ELDA and WESTELL are not aligned to the states’ new standards, but both states plan to use the new test from the ELPA21 consortium when it becomes available in 2015-16. ELPA21 is aligning its assessment to the Common Core. New York uses its own New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). The NYSESLAT was partially aligned to New York’s CCLS in 2013-14, and New York reported that it will be fully aligned by 2015-16.

For AMAO 3, states generally report the subgroup scores for English learners on the state ELA and math content area assessments. See the section above on *Trends Across the States: Aligning State Assessments to the New Standards* for details about these assessments and their alignment to the states’ new standards.

Highlights From a Leading State

Georgia

Georgia’s new general statewide accountability system, the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI), became operational in 2012-13. Accountability measures and their alignment to the College and Career Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) include those listed below.

- ◆ ***English language arts and math annual summative content-area assessments,*** including alternate assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The state Department of Education reported that these are fully aligned to the CCGPS.

- ◆ *An additional type of measure* of student learning in ELA: Lexile reading-level targets. (See the description of Lexile targets in the section above on *Trends Across the States: Other Measures*.) The department reported that the Lexile measure is aligned to the CCGPS.
- ◆ *An extensive set of college- and career-readiness measures:*
 - ACT, SAT, AP and IB exams. ACT and the College Board report that the ACT and SAT exams are aligned to the Common Core. The College Board and the IB organization report that the programs and courses leading to the AP and IB exams support student learning at and beyond the level of rigor of the Common Core.
 - The Compass college entrance exam. The extent of alignment of this exam could not be determined at the time of publication.
 - The following measures, which provide information on the extent to which students are ready for the rigors of postsecondary work. These measures support the principles of the CCGPS.
 - Students earning national industry recognized credentials, IB career-related certificates, or Georgia-developed career pathway assessments
 - Students completing a three-course career pathway
 - Students earning dual enrollment credit while in high school
 - Graduates entering in-state postsecondary institutions without requiring remediation
 - For middle grades schools: Students completing two or more career-related assessments and an Individual Graduation Plan
 - For elementary schools: Students completing career-awareness lessons

Additionally, in Georgia's Title III accountability reporting, for AMAOs 1 and 2, the state uses the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs test. WIDA reports that this test is aligned to the Common Core.

Successes, Challenges and Next Steps: Perspectives From the Field

SREB set out on this benchmarking project to understand states' efforts to implement new college- and career-readiness standards and related reforms. Researchers sought not only to document actions and decisions the states have taken but also to understand how people in the states feel this work is going, what they plan on doing next and what supports they need to carry the work forward. To accomplish this, researchers interviewed leaders in state departments of education, members of state boards of education, higher education leaders, and legislators, as well as teachers, principals, district superintendents, union leaders and members of business and community organizations. In most states, people representing each of these perspectives provided information, although all these individuals were not available in every state. The perspectives from the field described below reflect trends across all of the interviews in all of the states.

Trends Across the States: Successes

Across participants in the varied role groups interviewed across all of the states, the following successes were most commonly cited.

- ◆ *All 14 state departments of education have undertaken comprehensive efforts* to lead and support implementation of their state's new college- and career-readiness standards, aligned assessments and related reforms. Interviewees appreciated how much their state department of education has done to chart a course and provide local systems, schools, teachers and leaders the supports and resources they need.
 - *Some state departments of education have expanded their roles* to meet the new demands of this reform environment. Veterans in some departments shared that they have responded to unprecedented requests for support from the field, providing more kinds of support and resources than at any time in the past.
- ◆ *People from all of the groups interviewed gave good reviews of the standards and of states' efforts.*
 - Teachers and principals, in particular, shared that the new standards are an improvement over their states' previous standards. Many noted that since so many states have adopted new college- and career-readiness standards, students have access to an education that is more consistently high-quality. This is valuable for military families and others with high rates of mobility during their children's school careers.
 - Teachers reported that their states' professional learning and aligned teaching resources have been extremely valuable in their daily practice and for their overall professional growth.
- ◆ *State departments of education are collaborating with other leaders, educators and stakeholders in their states, and with other states.*
 - Department staff in many states reported that they have been collaborating extensively with regional entities, districts, schools and teachers — more so than most could remember. State board of education members and governors' staffs in some states reported that a key success has been the involvement of the business sector and others in the community in building support for the reform.

- Departments have also engaged in partnerships across states that help them to accomplish and enrich significant aspects of their work. Highest profile of these partnerships are the multi-state assessment consortia (particularly PARCC and Smarter Balanced) and both formal and informal sharing of instructional resources and materials. The tools that interviewees reported sharing most among their local colleagues and across states are the materials on New York’s EngageNY website and resources from Achieve, Student Achievement Partners, CCSSO, and LDC/MDC. Teachers in particular expressed great appreciation for these resources.
- ◆ *K-12 has engaged in unprecedented collaboration with higher education.* Interviewees praised partnerships between leaders in K-12 and higher education. For example, interviewees cited the participation of higher education leaders on states’ PARCC and Smarter Balanced leadership teams, the participation of higher education faculty in some states’ professional learning for teachers, and state participation in the Core to College project (states in this study that participate in Core to College are Colorado, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina and Tennessee). Such collaboration builds a foundation for ongoing work to bring K-12 and higher education policies into alignment and to foster shared understandings of the knowledge and skills needed for success across K-12 classrooms, college courses, job training and careers.
- ◆ *States have had additional funding to bolster their efforts.* In states that received Race to the Top grants and grants from private foundations, state department of education staff reported that these funds have been essential in supporting their initiatives.

Trends Across the States: Challenges

Across participants in the varied role groups interviewed across all of the states, the following challenges were most commonly cited.

- ◆ *Sheer Size of the Effort:* Interviewees were realistic about the fact that the sea change in public education required by the new college- and career-readiness standards, aligned assessments and related reforms necessitates massive and long-term efforts. The work has just begun, and state departments of education have undertaken it with small staffs and tight budgets, making their efforts all the more impressive — and fragile.

Successes

- *Comprehensive reform efforts:* All 14 states have undertaken comprehensive, multi-year efforts to lead and support implementation of their new standards, aligned assessments and related reforms.
- *Good reviews of the standards and state efforts:* Interviewees across all the role groups interviewed gave good reviews of the new standards and strong marks to their state department of education’s professional learning, aligned teaching resources and implementation support.
- *More collaboration:* Several of the departments have been working closely with districts, educators, stakeholders — and other states — more than they ever have before. Leaders at the K-12 level and in higher education have also worked together to bring K-12 and higher education policies into alignment and to foster shared understandings of the knowledge and skills needed for success across K-12 classrooms, college courses, job training and careers.

- ◆ *Integration of Reforms:* Teachers especially highlighted the need for better integration of the new standards and assessments with other, concurrent state reforms such as the new accountability systems and new teacher and leader evaluation systems. Many educators reported that in their professional learning and in their daily practice they do not clearly see the connections between these reforms, leading to confusion and frustration and impeding improvement.
- ◆ *Variation in Local Implementation of the Standards:* Teachers, principals and district superintendents reported that the readiness of teachers and local leaders to implement the new standards varies considerably across districts and even within schools.
 - One factor contributing to this uneven readiness that many interviewees noted is the variation in amount and quality of professional learning and implementation resources that practitioners have experienced. While the interviewed practitioners gave high marks to the professional learning and implementation supports their state department of education has provided, they pointed out that many educators in their school and district have not participated directly in the state-provided trainings. Even teachers who did participate indicated that they need still more support, time and resources to implement the standards successfully. Further, according to interviewees, when school and district leadership teams have returned home to redeliver the state's trainings to local peers, they often have not presented the material in as much depth as the state-based personnel had, or with fidelity to the model.
- ◆ *Sustainability of Efforts:* Many states had large infusions of funding, such as Race to the Top grants and other external support, to bolster their early initiatives. As state departments of education prepare for the future, they must determine how to continue or modify their initiatives when the temporary funding ends.
- ◆ *Assessment Technology:* While many districts and schools have the technology infrastructure and capacity to administer new computer-based assessments, many still do not. This issue is especially acute in small and rural districts. As well, several teachers

Challenges

- *Scale:* These reforms are massive and require long-term efforts to foster real change in local practices.
- *Complexity and communication:* Educators and the public need to better understand the standards and how they relate to other reforms such as new state accountability systems and new teacher and leader evaluation systems.
- *Sustainability of efforts:* Many states had large infusions of funding to support their early implementation initiatives. They must now determine how to continue or modify their initiatives when this temporary influx ends.
- *Variation in local implementation:* Educator readiness to implement the new standards varies considerably across districts and even within schools.
- *Assessment technology:* While many districts and schools have the technology infrastructure and capacity to administer new assessments online, many still do not. This issue is especially acute in small and rural districts.

reported that even though their school has enough computers to administer online assessments on a given day, students do not receive enough regular learning time on a computer during the school year to enable them to perform at their best on a computer-based test.

- ◆ **Communication:** Despite the outreach, training and information disseminated by the state departments of education, educators and the public still need to better understand the states' new college- and career-readiness standards, how they differ from states' previous standards and how the more rigorous demands of the new standards inform related initiatives (for example, new approaches to instruction, new assessments and new teacher and leader evaluation systems). Confusion has frustrated educators in their efforts to implement the standards and has hampered the pace of overall reform.

Trends Across the States: Next Steps

Across all the participants in the varied role groups interviewed across all of the states, the following next steps for states were most commonly cited.

- ◆ *Press ahead on standards reform — although the direction of these efforts varies widely across the states.*
 - *Some states are proceeding with implementation of the standards that they adopted and are launching initiatives to build upon and support the standards.* For example, in 2014 Delaware Governor Jack Markell helped to launch the Partnership for Higher Standards, led by the Bipartisan Policy Center, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and the Hunt Institute, to strengthen support for the Common Core. In 2013, West Virginia joined the Improving Student Learning at Scale Policy Collaborative, a partnership of six states, the NGA, the CCSSO and the National Conference of State Legislatures, focusing on Common Core implementation. In 2014, Tennessee launched a STEM Leadership Council to provide guidance to the department on STEM initiatives. In 2013, legislation in West Virginia and Maryland required further alignment of college- and career-readiness reforms across the K-12 and higher education sectors.
 - *Between 2013 and 2014, seven states took another look at their new standards, and the result of these reviews may bring changes to the standards or to other aspects of the reform.* Six states — Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, New York and North Carolina — convened a formal review of their standards adoption, standards implementation processes, and/or assessments. While in Mississippi and New York the reviews resulted in a strengthening of the states' efforts to implement the standards, recommendations from the reviews in Colorado, Georgia, Maryland and North Carolina are still to come in late 2014 and in 2015. In 2014 a seventh state, South Carolina, decided to replace the Common Core. Legislation in South Carolina requires the state Department

Next Steps

- **Press ahead with implementation of the new standards and aligned assessments, though the direction of these efforts varies widely across states**
- **Continue efforts to provide educators with professional development and aligned teaching tools to support long-term implementation of the standards**
- **Improve communication about the standards**

of Education to develop new standards for ELA and math for implementation in 2015-16, and in the meantime the state will continue to implement the Common Core in 2014-15.

- ◆ *Move forward with assessments.* Thirteen of the states plan to have assessments that are fully aligned to their new standards in place for the 2014-15 school year; Tennessee plans to meet this goal by 2015-16.
 - *Six states plan to use new assessments from one of the two multistate assessment consortia.* Four states plan to use PARCC tests: Colorado, Louisiana (for grades three through eight), Maryland and Mississippi. Two states plan to use Smarter Balanced tests: Delaware and West Virginia.
 - *Nine states plan to use their own aligned assessments.* These states have, or plan to have, aligned tests that are either developed for them or acquired from a vendor: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana (for high school), New York, North Carolina and Pennsylvania. South Carolina is currently engaged in a test procurement process, and Tennessee plans to use its existing, partially aligned tests for 2014-15 and to select new, fully aligned tests for 2015-16.
 - *As states work with local systems to address issues with technology capacity,* some states plan to offer paper-based versions of new assessments for the first few years.
- ◆ *Continue professional development.* Four years into the work of leading implementation of their new standards, state departments of education and their key partners must determine how to carry their professional learning initiatives forward, and/or whether to develop new approaches to foster long-term progress. Complicating matters is the fact that states grapple with tight education budgets, and the 10 states that received Race to the Top grants now face the end of that funding. Interviewees from state departments of education shared possible approaches that fell into two categories: Several states plan to continue aspects of their current initiatives in a scaled-back version. Possible modifications are to transition from providing face-to-face trainings to offering online, on-demand tools, and to shift responsibility for providing support from state leaders to district and school leaders. Some states plan to expand aspects of their current initiatives.
- ◆ *Increase and strengthen aligned teaching resources.* Many of the state departments of education posted large amounts of new resources in their online archives in 2014, and staff shared that they plan to continue to build on these offerings to support local curriculum development and strong classroom instruction.
- ◆ *Improve communication.* Interviewees in several of the state departments of education shared that plans are underway to work with the business community, governors' offices, parent organizations, other stakeholders and other states to establish more consistent public messaging about what their new standards are, what changes are needed, and how students — and schools, states and businesses — can benefit.

Moving Forward: Learning From Leading States and Supporting Educators

As state departments of education and other state leaders work to capitalize on their successes, tackle their challenges and continuously improve student achievement and public education overall, **SREB encourages each state to continue to support the implementation of its college- and career-readiness standards and aligned assessments. The recommended actions outlined below can help states push forward. They are based on the efforts of leading states and also on what interviewees across the participating states shared about what educators need to realize the promise of these reforms.**

- ◆ *Strengthen implementation supports and align targets for educators:* Leading states in this study provided educators with intensive professional learning and ongoing implementation support, strong sets of teaching resources, and measures of evaluation and accountability, all of which align to and sharpen the focus of teachers, schools and districts on helping students master the new standards. All states can further their efforts in the four following components of reform.
 - *Professional Learning and Implementation Support:* States in this study with leading efforts in professional learning collaborated intensively with local educators through direct work with school leadership teams and through integration of supports for practitioners in key role groups such as content-area teachers, school administrators and district leaders. Leading states also provided teachers with professional development opportunities outside of the training provided for school or district leadership teams, and large numbers of teachers participated. In addition, these states provided substantial, targeted professional learning for principals and district staff. Yet even in these leading states, interviewees shared that many practitioners still need more training and support to successfully implement the new standards. State departments of education should continue to provide professional learning and ongoing implementation support to practitioners, and bolster district and school efforts to provide training and support to all teachers, school administrators and district leaders.
 - *Teaching Resources:* Across the states, and even in states with leading efforts in this area, the aligned teaching tools the state departments of education offer can be enhanced in the following ways in order to ensure that teachers have tools and know-how to provide rigorous instruction on the new standards for all of their students.
 - *Types of Resources:* States should offer sets of sample instructional plans that model rigorous instruction for all of the standards in ELA and math for all grades K-12 and for all of the literacy standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects in grades six through 12. These plans should incorporate strategies and tools for teaching diverse learners such as English learners, students with disabilities, struggling learners and advanced learners.
 - *Quality and Alignment of the Resources:* While all of the states in this study have a process in place for reviewing the teaching resources they provide — or, in the case of one state, are in the midst of developing a method — not all are equally robust. State departments of education should employ vetting methods and criteria that are rigorous, explicit and systematic.
 - *Use of the Resources:* Many interviewees shared that the states' archives are underutilized because not enough educators even know about them. State departments of education should

help more educators learn about the available resources and should also train them on how to select and design their own high-quality, aligned tools.

- Evaluation Systems:* Several states in this study have not updated key components of their teacher and leader evaluation systems since adopting their new college- and career-readiness standards. State departments of education should update professional standards, classroom observation tools and leadership rubrics to articulate more explicitly the new knowledge, skills and practices needed to successfully teach and lead in college- and career-readiness contexts. This will support practitioners and evaluators as they seek to identify and achieve goals for stronger performance. In states where districts establish their own evaluation tools and rubrics, the department can provide districts with models and guidance on selecting and developing high-quality, aligned tools.
- Accountability Measures:* States, districts, schools and educators need shared targets that unite their focus on key levers to strengthen teaching and learning and improve the overall readiness of students for college and careers. As states continue to refine their accountability systems, they should consider including — as leading states in this study already do — multiple measures aligned to the new standards beyond just annual tests in ELA and math. Leading states have additional measures that complement test data and provide a richer picture of local practice and outcomes. For example, Georgia has Lexile targets, student reading level expectations aligned to the rigor of the state’s new standards; Kentucky has Program Reviews, where local teams of stakeholders examine their school’s program to provide authentic data about teaching and learning; and Kentucky has a next-generation professionals measure, the percentage of teachers and principals rated highly on the state’s evaluation system, which helps to hold schools and districts accountable for strengthening the performance of educators. Further, leading states have measures of college and career readiness that

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Strengthen implementation supports and align targets for educators; specifically in the following ways.

- Professional learning:* States should continue to provide training and resources to practitioners, and bolster district and school efforts to provide professional learning and support to *all* teachers, school administrators and district leaders.
- Teaching resources:* States should offer sets of sample instructional plans that model rigorous, differentiated instruction for all of the college- and career-readiness standards that states have adopted, for every grade and content area. Departments should help more educators learn about the available resources and how to select and design their own.
- Evaluation systems:* States should update professional teaching and leadership standards, classroom observation tools and leadership rubrics to articulate more explicitly the new knowledge, skills and practices needed in college- and career-readiness contexts.
- Accountability measures:* States should include multiple measures aligned to the new standards beyond the annual tests in ELA and math. Examples include measures of college and career readiness and other types of measures that supplement test data and provide a richer picture of local practices and outcomes.

provide information about student preparedness for the rigors of postsecondary work, such as ACT and SAT exams and rates of student enrollment in college after graduation.

States can strengthen their work on the above recommended actions in the following three ways; interviewees across role groups and states suggested these are essential to moving the work of their state, districts and schools forward.

- ◆ *Foster commitment to policies and funding.* State education leaders should work together and with leaders in other sectors and the public, to foster commitment to policies and funding that will support educators in their work over the long haul to prepare all students for success in postsecondary education and careers.
- ◆ *Strengthen the use of data to guide continuous improvement.* State departments of education, districts and schools need to collect, analyze and use data more effectively to understand their practice and to identify efforts that are working, efforts that are not, and places where refinements and improvements can be made. Interviewees shared that they need more time built into regular schedules and more professional learning to deepen staff capacity in this area.
- ◆ *Augment capacity at state departments of education to address emerging needs.* State departments of education are working with very small staffs and tight budgets. Interviewees in several of the states shared that their department needs to reorganize, redeploy or increase staff to meet local educators' increased needs for support. Many noted that their department needs more internal expertise in key areas, including content areas, change management, psychometrics, statistics, research and evaluation, teacher evaluation, and talent development. State departments of education can work together to help each other address these needs, and external partners, experts and funders can provide states with resources and know-how.

States can strengthen their work on the recommended actions in the following three ways:

- *Foster commitment to policies and funding.* State education leaders should work together and with leaders in other sectors and the public, to foster commitment to policies and funding that will support educators in their work over the long haul to prepare all students for success in post-secondary education and careers.
- *Strengthen the use of data to guide continuous improvement.* State departments of education, districts, and schools need to collect, analyze and use data more effectively to understand their practices and to drive continuous improvement.
- *Augment capacity at state departments of education to address emerging needs.* State departments of education may need to reorganize, redeploy or increase staff to meet local educators' increased needs for support. Needs include more internal expertise in key areas, such as content areas, change management, psychometrics, statistics, research and evaluation, teacher evaluation, and talent development.

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