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Governance Brief

Governing to the Core *The Year Ahead*

Issue 5

School boards and their districts or counties are receiving something from the state they couldn't have anticipated months ago—money dedicated specifically to the implementation of the Common Core. This is a welcome change in the Common Core State Standards movement that began in August 2010. Since that time, California educators have been working hard to inform teachers, students, and parents about the Common Core initiative, provide teacher professional development, identify the necessary instructional materials and how to fund them, and upgrade technology capacity for new state assessments that will be aligned to the Common Core. They have been contemplating how to achieve all of this in time for the 2014-15 school year—with no funding to support the work.

From Unfunded to Underfunded

Since the adoption of CCSS by the State Board of Education in 2010, schools have suffered significant general revenue losses and there has been no funding to support the aggressive implementation timeline. But the 2013-14 budget signed by Gov. Jerry Brown on June 23 includes \$1.25 billion to fund the implementation of Common Core. Earlier estimates by the California Department of Education (CDE) placed two-year implementation costs for Common Core at about \$3.1 billion. So while this investment in the capacity of our schools to implement Common Core is welcomed by board members and educators across the state, it is not enough. It is, however, a good start. And it may be that the best argument for securing support for additional funding is the wise and judicious use of these initial funds over the next two years.

How much money—with what strings?

According to Janelle Kubinec of WestEd in the June 19 CSBA webcast on Common Core, \$1.25 billion dollars translates to about \$200 per student. The first apportionment was distributed in August and the second apportionment is expected soon. More guidance is forthcoming, but section 85 of AB 86 stipulates that the funds be used for:

- "Professional development for teachers, administrators, and paraprofessional educators or other classified employees involved in the direct instruction of pupils that is aligned to the academic content standards..."
- "Instructional materials aligned to the academic content standards..."
- "Integration of these academic content standards through technology-based instruction for purposes of improving the academic performance of pupils, including, but not necessarily limited to, expenditures necessary to support the administration of computer-based assessments and provide high-speed, high-bandwidth Internet connectivity for the purpose of administration of computer-based assessments."

The bill also outlines the requirements for use of the funds. Local LEAs "may encumber funds apportioned pursuant to this section at any time during the 2013-14 or 2014-15 fiscal year." However, LEAs must first:

- "Develop and adopt a plan delineating how funds allocated pursuant to this section shall be spent. The plan shall be explained in a public meeting of the governing board of the school district, county board of education, or governing body of the charter school, before its adoption in a subsequent public meeting."

- On or before July 1, 2015, report detailed expenditure information to the State Department of Education, including, but not limited to, specific purchases made and the number of teachers, administrators, or paraprofessional educators that received professional development. The State Department of Education shall determine the format for this report.

How to spend the money

The path forward requires a governance conversation to determine priorities, strategy, and allocation of resources. For some years, boards have been forced to make difficult cuts, and it may seem logical to restore what was cut. However, priorities during a period of decreasing revenue likely focused on ensuring fiscal stability and preserving core instructional programs. As districts turn the corner to a period of dedicated funding for Common Core and greater flexibility under the Local Control Funding Formula, boards need to work with superintendents to reconsider priorities in the year ahead.

For example, if a district has reduced both instructional days and professional development days for teachers, and the district can afford either but not both, which comes first? Should the money be dedicated to increasing the number of days of instruction so students can learn more? Or should the money be dedicated to professional development, to increase the capacity of teachers to teach students? The answer will be unique to each district, as they consider what they have been able to accomplish in teacher professional development for Common Core and the learning time students need.

In order for boards to make decisions about how to best spend the money, it's important for them first to agree on the current condition of the district, and collectively agree on what matters most right now. In other words, prioritize: identify what must happen first and ensure that resources are dedicated to accomplishing it. Because AB 86 narrowly defines how the money must be spent, boards should focus their assessment on the capacity of staff, instructional materials, and technology.

From the field—Placer Union High School District established joint board study sessions with its feeder elementary school districts. This resulted in new relationships between board members, administrators, and teachers across districts, creating a culture of open communication and planning that allowed each of the neighboring districts to learn from and with each other. Who can you partner with?

Capacity of staff

Common Core is having a dramatic impact on K-12 teachers. Findings from an EPE Research Center survey, *Teacher Perspectives on the Common Core*, reveals:

- “On the whole, teachers agree that implementing the common core standards will help them to improve their own teaching and classroom practices.”
- “Few teachers feel their textbooks and curricular materials are very well aligned with the common standards.”
- Although most teachers have received some professional development related to CCSS, respondents have typically spent less than four days in such training.”

Jeff Tooker, Assistant Superintendent for Education Services for Placer Union High School District, summarized it well during CSBA's June 19 webcast *Navigating the Implementation of Common Core*: “For the most part, this is being welcomed...but there is anxiety. They are being asked to do things that they have not necessarily been asked to do before...” Boards will want to determine to what extent these characteristics reflect local teacher sentiment, consider how they can minimize the anxiety, and leverage any enthusiasm teachers may have for the kind of teaching and learning that Common Core promises.

Questions board members may ask might include:

- How are teachers feeling about Common Core implementation?
- How much professional development have teachers had?
- How much professional development would be optimal for the next two years?

Materials

After the adoption of the Common Core in August 2010, the Legislature passed Assembly Bill 250 in 2011 to give CDE the authority to revise curriculum frameworks for ELA and mathematics. One of the big shifts in Common Core is a change in teaching, and this has implications for instructional materials. The revised framework for mathematics is anticipated for SBE action in November 2013, and the revised framework for ELA/ELD is scheduled for May 2014. This is a challenging timeline; K-12 schools are expected to begin teaching to the Common Core in the 2014-15 school year. That leaves only a few months for teachers to read and discuss the framework and its implications for instructional materials. However, the frameworks will be helpful in the selection of instructional materials, and because of the passage of AB 1246 (Brownley), districts have much more flexibility in the selection of those materials.

- “a local educational agency may use instructional materials that are aligned with the academic content standards adopted pursuant to Section 60605 or 60605.8, including instructional materials that have not been adopted by the state board pursuant to Section 60200.”
- “If a local educational agency chooses to use instructional materials that have not been adopted by the state board, the local educational agency shall ensure that a majority of the participants of any review process conducted by the local educational agency are classroom teachers who are assigned to the subject area or grade level of the materials.”

Questions board members might ask include:

- To what extent are instructional materials already aligned to the Common Core?
- Which instructional area has the greatest need for new materials?

- What are some options beyond traditional textbooks for providing instructional materials?
- To what extent can instructional materials be provided digitally?
- What other districts and states have made decisions regarding instructional materials and what can we learn from them?

Technology

Common Core is driving changes in how schools will use technology. These issues are summarized below, and additional information is available in CSBA's Governing to the Core – Tech Fact Sheet. By spring 2015, schools are expected to use the online assessments designed by Standards Based Assessments Consortium (SBAC). For many districts, having all students complete the online SBAC assessments within the testing window may be challenging. To assist districts in assessing their capacity, SBAC has created a readiness calculator that estimates the number of days necessary to complete ELA and Math at <http://www3.cde.ca.gov/sbactechcalc/>

Beyond the requirements of online assessment, boards will want to work with the superintendent to ensure that teachers and students have the necessary resources for the district's vision for digital learning. Two key local infrastructure components that will dramatically impact digital learning are the number of computers available for learning and the available bandwidth.

- Student access to computers is not just a matter of student-to-computer ratio. It also includes how many hours of computer access students have. This will be impacted by where computers are located and how the school schedule creates time for students to use them. How many computer hours per student do you currently have?
- How much bandwidth should you plan for? It has been estimated that schools need 100 megabits per second of bandwidth per 1,000 students today, growing to 1 gigabit per second by 2017. Assuming your internet connection is sufficient, schools and districts might have some internal speed bumps—local network constraints that prevent the system from reaping the full benefit of high speed internet connection.

Strategic choices

Boards will want to be strategic so that technology investments support the ability of students to take state technology-adaptive assessments and also support the local plan for learning and assessment. These will need to be considered alongside the need for instructional materials and professional development for staff. Boards must also balance the ongoing cost of technology purchases with the long-term financial stability of the district.

Questions board members might ask include:

- What is the gap between the bandwidth we currently have and what we must acquire?
- What is the gap between the number of computers we currently have and what we must acquire?
- What will be the increased cost of sustaining new computers and bandwidth?
- What is the projected replacement schedule for new technology and how will that be built into future budgets?
- What increases in staffing will be necessary?
- What training will be required for staff to support expanded technology?

Principles for the year ahead

Jeffrey Tooker's remarks during the June 19 Common Core webcast referenced above revealed three core ideas that seem to be at the heart of what is currently perceived as a successful early implementation of Common Core in his district.

- **Clarity.** It is critical for the board to talk in depth about the importance of implementation and the key strategies the district will pursue. Clarity will make it easier for the board to support the effort in the community, to set budget priorities, and to determine accountability measures.
- **Inclusiveness.** The board must play a key role in ensuring that all appropriate individuals and constituencies have a voice in a conversation about how to best implement Common Core. Inclusiveness will increase clarity, and help alleviate some of the natural resistance to change that occurs when people feel confused or excluded.

- **Trust.** Common Core will be implemented by professional educators and boards need to exercise an appropriate level of due diligence, and then demonstrate confidence in the superintendent and staff to do the work of making the shift to Common Core.

Caveats

Finally, it's important for board member to remember that no matter what boards, superintendents, principals, and teachers do, implementation will be imperfect. Everyone in the system is on a learning curve, and not every effort will be successful. Like students, adults need time to learn and try out new ideas knowing that not all of them will bear fruit. In addition, a dip in student performance on the forthcoming assessments is considered by some to be likely. Boards need to prepare their communities for this reality and help explain that with new standards, new instructional practices, and new assessments, we will be establishing a new baseline of performance—that will take time.

CSBA Resources

June 19 Webcast Navigating the Implementation of Common Core

www.csba.org/TrainingAndEvents/OnlineLearningOpportunities/20130619ImplementCommonCore.aspx

Governing to the Core Governance Briefs

www.csba.org/GovernanceAndPolicyResources/GovernanceBriefs.aspx

Technology Resources

[www.educationsuperhighway.org/Education Superhighway](http://www.educationsuperhighway.org/EducationSuperhighway)

[www3.cde.ca.gov/sbactechcalc/Smarter Balanced Technology Readiness Calculator](http://www3.cde.ca.gov/sbactechcalc/SmarterBalancedTechnologyReadinessCalculator)

LCFF Resources

www.csba.org/GovernanceAndPolicyResources/FairFunding/LCFF.aspx

CDE Resource Highlights

Handouts for parents and guardians regarding the CCSS have now been translated into Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, Hmong, Korean, Tagalog, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

<http://inet2.cde.ca.gov/cmd/translatedparentaldoc.aspx?docid=7941-7946,8211-8216>

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Informational Flyer—According to the CDE website, “This informational flyer was developed by the American Chamber of Commerce Executives in collaboration with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium to inform the business community about what the Smarter Balanced assessment system will mean for them.”

www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/documents/sbacacceflyer.pdf

Coming Up

December 5-7, 2013: Look for an entire Common Core strand at CSBA’s Annual Education Conference and Trade Show in San Diego.