



June 2012

# Governance Brief

Governing to the Core:  
The Common Core

Issue 1

This series will focus on the implementation of Common Core State Standards for California.

## What are the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?

In 2009, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) committed to developing a set of standards that would help prepare students for success in career and college. To date, 45 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands have adopted the CCSS, or Common Core. To view a map of states that have formally adopted the Common Core, visit [www.corestandards.org/in-the-states](http://www.corestandards.org/in-the-states).

In the summer of 2010, the adoption of the Common Core was an important component of the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top competitive grant application. To obtain the maximum number of points for the application, the SBE voted unanimously to adopt the Common Core on August 2, 2010, including the 15 percent of additional standards recommended by the California Academic Content Standards Commission. Unfortunately, in September 2010, the state lost its bid to obtain Race to the Top funding. Without the federal funding, implementation-related activities must be supported with existing resources.

The CDE website for CCSS has links for the English and Math Standards, the CDE implementation plan, and information on the development of instructional materials, the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and more at [www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cc](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cc).

## Why is the Common Core a governance matter for school boards?

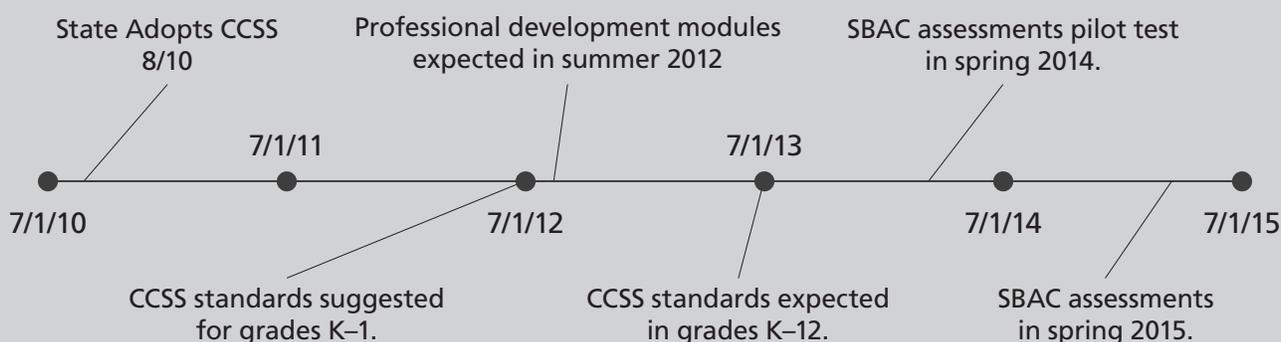
The implementation of the Common Core will require changes at the district level over several years. These changes involve standards and curriculum, teacher and administrator professional development, new instructional materials, and district assessment systems. These changes are directly connected to local boards' responsibilities in setting direction, establishing structure—including policy and budget) demonstrating support, ensuring accountability, and providing community leadership.

## What's the timeline?

Currently, there is a Statewide Pupil Assessment Review Panel charged with developing recommendations for the reauthorization of the current statewide assessment system that includes a plan for transitioning to a system of high-quality assessments, taking into consideration the SBAC developed items. A report on the panel's recommendations is due from Superintendent Torlakson to the SBE and the Legislature on or before November 1, 2012. The new assessments for measuring student achievement will be aligned with the English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics Common Core in the 2014-15 school year. That means this year's high school freshman class, currently engaged in a learning program based on the current content standards for mathematics and ELA, will be tested in their senior year on assessments based on the Common Core. LEAs have three years to prepare teachers and students for this transition.

The CDE's Common Core State Standards Systems Implementation Plan for California (available at [www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cc](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cc)) outlines a three-phase plan: awareness, transition, and implementation. This 62-page plan

## Key dates in the CDE implementation timeline



provides suggested implementation activities for districts and county offices of education (COEs).

While SBAC assessments for Common Core are scheduled for implementation in 2014-15, SBE adoptions of materials and frameworks are not scheduled for several years. Education organizations are urging the SBE to accelerate the process for the development of frameworks and instructional materials.

## Governing conversations for Spring and Summer 2012

### Setting direction

By now, district or COE goals for 2012-13 may be completed or in the process of development. Do they account for implementing the Common Core? Boards are responsible for adopting long-term goals focused on the achievement and needs of all students, and for ensuring those goals are aligned with the LEA's vision, mission and priorities (see CSBA sample policy 0200). Setting direction is not an annual activity – it's a responsibility that the board considers on a regular basis. Whenever the governing board majority believes a course adjustment is appropriate – they can take action.

### Governance team conversations

- Does the district need to establish the implementation of Common Core as a district priority?
- How does this affect other long-term priorities? Will other priorities need to be postponed or dropped to support Common Core implementation?
- Is Common Core implementation a component of the LEA consolidated plan?

## Establishing structure

**Budget.** Like your goals for the next school year, your 2012-13 budgets are very likely close to completion. Boards and superintendents may wish to discuss the extent to which the budget supports the implementation of the Common Core. One of the initial funding issues will be staff development. Administrators and teachers need to understand the changes that the Common Core require in curriculum, instruction and assessment. Districts may need to pool resources and work through COEs to provide the awareness and transition training necessary.

**Technology.** In June 2011, California joined the SBAC which is developing mathematics and ELA assessments aligned to the Common Core. The assessments will be delivered through technology. The Technology Readiness Tool (TRT) was developed to collect information from LEAs on technology infrastructure and capacity in order to establish minimum system requirements for SBAC. The data collection window is narrow—it was announced on April 16 and was set to close on June 16, but the revised FAQ provided by CDE as of May 21 established a new deadline of June 30 at 9 p.m. LEA staff will find a number of CDE links at <http://1.usa.gov/KLoXIE>, with additional information regarding the TRT as well as the SBAC Guidelines on Purchasing New Hardware released in April 2012.

### Governance team conversations

- To what extent does the 2012-13 budget (and projected 2013-14 and 2014-15 budgets) support Common Core implementation?
  - » What staff development funds, if any, can be re-allocated to support any Common Core staff development work that may be necessary?

- Is it important or desirable for the district to participate in the technology data collection through the TRT?

## Community leadership

### Informing community

It will be important for parents and community members to understand what the Common Core State Standards are, and how they will impact student learning and assessment. The California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCESSA) has collected a series of communication tools on Common Core, including a CCSS Parent Handbook, (available at <http://bit.ly/KLoc2w>), which can be adapted for local use.

### Governance team conversations

- Does our community know about Common Core? Do we have a communications plan to support Common Core implementation?
- How can board members support Common Core by raising awareness among constituents?
- What are the key messages for our constituents about where we are and where we are headed with Common Core implementation and what it will mean for our students?

### Interagency collaboration

District policy may provide for the board and superintendent to establish partnerships to support district work. Two examples include: 1) CSBA sample policy 1400 provides for the board and superintendent to “initiate and maintain good working relationships with representatives of these [government] agencies in order to help district schools and students make use of the resources which governmental agencies can provide.” 2) CSBA sample policy 1700 provides similar policy for private sector businesses and non-profits that will “encourage local business involvement in efforts that support the core mission and goals of the district and promote the academic, social, and physical well-being of students.”

The National Network of Partnership Schools conducted a research survey in 1998. More than 400 of the 433 members participated (a response rate above 90 percent), who collectively had 817 active partnerships. Of these active partnerships, 45 percent were with small and large local businesses. Each of the following groups accounted for less than 10 percent of the active partnerships: universities /colleges; health care organizations; government/military; service organizations; faith organizations; senior citizen organizations; and recreation and cultural centers. By thinking more broadly about partnerships, boards and superintendents may be able to generate additional support and collaboration with other agencies that will strengthen district capacity for implementing the Common Core.

## Governance team conversations

- Can the board strengthen the implementation of policy for district partnerships to support the implementation of the Common Core?

## County connection

COEs have an important role to play in supporting the implementation of the Common Core, including providing training and resources. One example is the Santa Cruz County Office of Education. Their e-staffroom site provides more than two dozen links to web, print, and other media resources for teachers, administrators and parents (view this site here: <http://bit.ly/NF2PiR>). This spring and summer, the CDE implementation plan calls on COEs to support LEAs by providing a wide range of training and assistance including:

- Professional development for LEA staff
- Professional development for superintendents and local school boards
- Assistance with and analysis of Technology Readiness Tool and the identification of technology gaps
- Opportunities for LEA focus groups to provide feedback to the English Language Development standards as they are released
- PI districts and schools through RSDSS and other county technical assistance work in analyzing the Common Core and including it in LEA plans and LEA plan addendums
- Provide overviews and seminars of SBAC, the assessment features and assessment sample questions.

### District governance team conversations

1. Is our district maximizing the resources and assistance of the COE?
2. How do these resources address staff development needs implementing the Common Core?
3. Which staff development needs are not fulfilled and what other resources are available?

### COE governance team conversations

1. Is our COE contacting our districts to determine their initial needs?
2. To what extent is our COE helping districts coordinate the sharing of resources and plans.

# Coming up

<b>Right now</b>	Join the Common Core discussion on CSBA's LinkedIn group and ask us your Common Core questions
<b>Summer</b>	Future editions of Governing to the Core
<b>December</b>	Look for Common Core workshops (Closing the Achievement Gap) at CSBA's Annual Education Conference and Trade Show.