

# TOOLKIT

## for Evaluating Alignment of Instructional and Assessment Materials to the Common Core State Standards

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March 2014

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STUDENT  
ACHIEVEMENT  
PARTNERS



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# Introduction

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## **TOOLKIT**

## for Evaluating Alignment of Instructional and Assessment Materials to the Common Core State Standards

# I. Introduction

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The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a set of academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy that are grounded in evidence and designed to ensure that all students have the academic knowledge and skills they need in these core subjects to succeed after high school. The CCSS were developed in a state-led process under the leadership of governors and chief state school officers with participation from 48 states. The process included the involvement of state departments of education, districts, teachers, community leaders, experts in a wide array of fields, and professional educator organizations.

A good place to begin to understand the CCSS is through a study of the standards themselves and the key instructional shifts required in each discipline. In English language arts/literacy, students will be exposed to a balance of literary and informational texts to build a growing base of knowledge and will be expected to cite evidence from within the texts in order to answer questions and develop written or verbal responses. Students will also be expected to develop facility with academic language and read texts that increase in complexity as they progress so that all students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading no later than the end of high school. The instructional shifts in English language arts/literacy are as follows:<sup>1</sup>

## **Building knowledge** through **content-rich nonfiction**

Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational

Regular practice with **complex text** and **academic language**

Focus and coherence are the two major evidence-based design principles of the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics.<sup>2</sup> These principles are meant to fuel greater achievement in a deep and rigorous curriculum, one in which students acquire conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and the ability to apply mathematics to solve problems. Thus, the instructional shifts in mathematics are as follows:<sup>3</sup>

**Focus:** focus strongly where the standards focus

**Coherence:** think across grades/courses, and link to major topics in each course

**Rigor:** in major topics, pursue with equal intensity

- conceptual understanding,
- procedural skill and fluency, and
- applications

To ensure that all students are able to meet these high expectations, educators need access to high-quality and well-aligned instructional and assessment materials. In support of the work being done by both educators and developers to meet this need, Achieve, the Council of Chief State School Officers and Student Achievement Partners have developed this *Toolkit for Evaluating Alignment of Instructional and Assessment Materials*. The purpose of the Toolkit is to catalyze the impact that the CCSS can have on student achievement by increasing the prevalence of CCSS-aligned, high-quality instructional and assessment materials.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the shifts in English language arts/literacy, see [achievethecore.org/elalitshifts](http://achievethecore.org/elalitshifts)

<sup>2</sup> For some of the sources of evidence consulted during the standards development process, see pp. 91–93 of CCSSM.

<sup>3</sup> For more information about the shifts in mathematics, see [achievethecore.org/mathshifts](http://achievethecore.org/mathshifts)

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# What's in the Toolkit? An Overview

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## **TOOLKIT**

for Evaluating Alignment of Instructional and Assessment  
Materials to the Common Core State Standards

## II. What's in the Toolkit? An Overview

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The Toolkit is a set of interrelated, freely available instruments for evaluating instructional and assessment materials for alignment to the CCSS. The tools themselves are included in section III; see Table A for a summary. Each tool in the Toolkit supports the expectations in the CCSS and derives from the Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards in English language arts/literacy and mathematics, which were developed by lead authors of the CCSS along with the National Governors Association, Council of Chief State School Officers, Achieve, Council of the Great City Schools and National Association of State Boards of Education. The Publishers' Criteria provide guidance for both developers and purchasers of curricular materials by defining quality materials aligned to the CCSS. The criteria were revised through conversations with educators, researchers, and other stakeholders to be purposeful and strategic in both what to include and what to exclude in instructional materials based on the CCSS.

The criteria were developed from the perspective that publishers and purchasers are equally responsible for ensuring high-quality instructional materials. *They do not define, endorse or prescribe curriculum; those decisions are, and should be, local within each state or district.* The instruments in this Toolkit do not express novel expectations, but rather articulations of the Publishers' Criteria for use in practice. It is therefore highly recommended that the Publishers' Criteria be read prior to using any of the included resources. The Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards can be found in the Appendix to the Toolkit or online at [www.core-standards.org/resources](http://www.core-standards.org/resources) or [www.achievethecore.org/publisherscriteria](http://www.achievethecore.org/publisherscriteria).

Educators are encouraged to integrate the Publishers' Criteria and the tools in the Toolkit into CCSS implementation efforts and to use them to deepen shared understanding and support systematic application of the criteria for CCSS-aligned instructional and assessment materials. In doing this work, it is important to note that the included tools do not address all factors that may be important in determining whether instructional materials and assessments are appropriate in a given local or state context but instead aim to clearly articulate the criteria for alignment to the CCSS.

Successful implementation of the CCSS requires many actors across the educational system to work in concert. Hence, the audience for the Toolkit is intentionally broad, ranging from classroom teachers to state administrators.

Potential Toolkit users include:

- educators and administrators responsible for developing or evaluating curriculum, or for making purchasing decisions for comprehensive textbooks and textbook series in print and digital format;
- educators and administrators responsible for developing, evaluating or making purchasing decisions for grade or course-level assessment materials, including individual or sets of assessments, item banks or individual assessment items; and
- teachers and instructional coaches responsible for creating, or selecting and reviewing, lesson plans and units.

**Table A. Types of Tools in the Toolkit**

Tools of each type are content specific, and in some cases, grade band specific.

<b>Type of Tool</b>	<b>Used for Evaluating</b>
Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool (IMET)	Comprehensive mathematics and English language arts or reading curricula in print and digital format.
EQulP Rubric for Lessons and Units	Lesson plans and units of instruction in mathematics and English language arts/literacy.
Assessment Evaluation Tool (AET)	Assessments or sets of assessments and item banks for mathematics and English language arts/literacy, including interim/benchmark assessments, and classroom assessments designed to address a grade or course.
Assessment Passage & Item Quality Criteria Checklist	Assessment passages and assessment items or tasks.
EQulP Student Work Protocol	Student work to establish or articulate the relationship between student work and the quality and alignment of instructional materials.

## Overview of the Tools in the Toolkit

### Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool (IMET)

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For each given subject area and grade band, the Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool (IMET) is used to evaluate a comprehensive textbook or textbook series for alignment to the CCSS in mathematics and English language arts/literacy. In addition, the IMET can be used to deepen a shared understanding of the criteria for CCSS-aligned classroom materials. There are four IMET tools, one each for K-8 Mathematics, High School Mathematics\*, K-2 English Language Arts\* and a combined tool for 3-5 English Language Arts/Literacy & 6-12 English Language Arts.

The IMET should be used for:

- Informing decisions about purchasing a comprehensive textbook or textbook series;
- Evaluating previously purchased materials to identify necessary modifications;
- Building the capacity of educators to better understand what CCSS-aligned textbooks look like; and,
- Informing publishers of the criteria that consumers will use to evaluate RFP responses for a comprehensive textbook or textbook series.

#### a) *Where to find online:*

To view and download the IMET, please visit:  
[www.achievethecore.org/materialsevaluationtoolkit](http://www.achievethecore.org/materialsevaluationtoolkit)

#### b) *Who uses:*

The IMET is designed for use by educators and administrators responsible for developing, purchasing and/or evaluating a comprehensive textbook and/or textbook series. This can include content specialists, adoption committees and administrators at the school, district or state level.

#### c) *Target materials:*

The IMET is designed to evaluate a comprehensive textbook and/or textbook series (e.g., basal reading series, mathematics series, anthologies, student workbooks, teacher editions and supports) in print and digital format.

#### d) *How to use:*

The IMET in both mathematics and English language arts/literacy is organized in two sections:

1. Section I — *Non-Negotiables*: Materials must fully meet all of the non-negotiables at each grade/course to be aligned to the CCSS and to continue to Section II.
2. Section II — *Additional Alignment* Criteria and Indicators of Quality: The criteria in this section are additional alignment requirements that should be met by materials fully aligned with the CCSS. A higher score in this section indicates that instructional materials are more closely aligned to the CCSS than instructional materials that have a lower score.

For each non-negotiable in Section I, reviewers should make a determination about whether the materials under review have fully met the criterion based on the metrics provided. For all determinations, reviewers should record a justification to ensure

that judgments and determinations are evidence based. Once all the non-negotiables have been met, then (and only then) should reviewers evaluate materials based upon Section II: Additional Alignment Criteria and Indicators of Quality.

\*IMET for High School Mathematics and K-2 English Language Arts/Literacy to be completed in August 2013.

## EQuIP Rubric

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Educators Evaluating Quality Instructional Products (EQuIP) is a collaborative of states working with Achieve to increase the supply of quality instructional materials that are aligned to the CCSS and build the capacity of educators to evaluate and improve the quality of instructional materials for use in their classrooms and schools. The EQuIP Rubrics are a set of quality review tools to evaluate the alignment of lessons, units and modules to the CCSS. There are three EQuIP Rubrics, one each for Mathematics, K–2 English Language Arts/Literacy, and a combined rubric for 3–5 English Language Arts/Literacy and 6–12 English Language Arts. EQuIP builds on a collaborative effort of education leaders from Massachusetts, New York and Rhode Island that Achieve facilitated.

The EQuIP Rubrics should be used for:

- Guiding the development of lessons and units;
- Evaluating existing lessons and units to identify improvements needed to align with the CCSS;
- Building the capacity of teachers to gain a deeper understanding of the instructional demands of the CCSS; and,
- Informing publishers of the criteria that will be applied in the evaluation of proposals and final products.

### **a) Where to find online:**

To view and download the rubrics and related training materials, please visit: [www.achieve.org/equip](http://www.achieve.org/equip)

### **b) Who uses:**

The EQuIP Rubrics are designed for use by educators and administrators responsible for developing, reviewing or making determinations about materials for use in classrooms. This includes classroom teachers, instructional coaches, instructional leaders and administrators at the school, district or state level.

### **c) Target materials:**

The EQuIP Rubrics are designed to evaluate lessons that include instructional activities and assessments aligned to the CCSS that may extend over a few class periods or days as well as units that include integrated and focused lessons aligned to the CCSS that extend over a period of several weeks. The rubrics are not designed to evaluate a single task or activity or portion of a lesson. The rubrics intentionally do not require a specific template for lesson or unit design.

### **d) How to use:**

The EQuIP Rubrics can guide the development of lessons and units as well as examine and evaluate existing lessons and units to identify improvements necessary to align with the CCSS. They can be used by individuals or groups, integrated into formal review panels/processes and professional learning communities, and/or used more informally to guide discussions and decision making.

The criteria in the EQuIP Rubrics are separated into four dimensions: Alignment to the Depth of the CCSS, Key Shifts in the CCSS, Instructional Supports, and Assessment. The EQuIP quality review process emphasizes inquiry rather than advocacy; it is intended to yield observations, judgments, discussions and recommendations that are criterion- and evidence-based and designed to provide

guidance on how to strengthen the lesson or unit. As such, using the EQUiP rubrics and quality review process leads to concrete suggestions for improvement. Dimension 1, Alignment to the Depth of the CCSS, is considered non-negotiable. If materials do not meet many or most of the criteria for Dimension 1 (a rating of 2 or 3) then no further review takes place. In order to be deemed exemplary, a lesson or unit must receive high ratings in all four dimensions.

## Assessment Evaluation Tool (AET)

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The Assessment Evaluation Tool (AET) is a review tool to evaluate the alignment of grade or course-level assessment materials for alignment with the CCSS, including interim or benchmark assessments and classroom assessments. In addition, the AET can also be used to deepen a shared understanding of the criteria for CCSS-aligned assessments. There are separate AET tools for K-High School Mathematics and 3-12 English Language Arts/Literacy.

The AET should be used for:

- Informing decisions about purchasing assessment materials or item banks designed to address a grade or course;
- Evaluating previously purchased or developed assessment materials and item banks;
- Guiding the development or refinement of individual or sets of assessments in a district or school;
- Building the capacity of educators and content and assessment specialists to better understand what CCSS-aligned assessments look like; and,
- Informing publishers of the criteria that will be applied in the evaluation of proposals and final products.

### **a) Where to find online:**

To view and download the AET, please visit:  
[www.achievethecore.org/materialsevaluationtoolkit](http://www.achievethecore.org/materialsevaluationtoolkit)

### **b) Who uses:**

The AET is designed for use by educators and administrators responsible for developing, purchasing and/or evaluating sets of assessments and item banks. This includes content specialists, assessment specialists, administrators and educators at the school, district or state level.

### **c) Target materials:**

The AET is designed to evaluate grade or course-level assessment materials for alignment with the CCSS, including interim or benchmark assessments and classroom assessments.

### **d) How to use**

The AET is organized as follows:

1. *Non-Negotiables:* Materials must fully meet all of the relevant non-negotiables at each grade/course to be aligned to the CCSS.
2. *Indicators of Quality:* The indicators of quality are additional dimensions of alignment. Although the assessments may be aligned without meeting the indicators of quality, assessments that do reflect these indicators are better aligned. In the AET for English language arts/literacy, the indicators are incorporated directly into each metric and in the AET for mathematics the indicators are found in Section II.

For each non-negotiable, reviewers should make a determination about whether the materials under review have fully met the criterion based on the metrics provided. For all determinations, reviewers should record a justification to ensure that judgments and determinations are evidence based. Once all the relevant non-negotiables have been met, then (and only then) should reviewers evaluate materials based upon the Indicators of Quality.

## Assessment Passage and Item Quality Criteria Checklists

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The Assessment Passage and Item Quality Criteria Checklists are review tools to evaluate the alignment of individual assessment passages, items and tasks and to deepen shared understanding of the criteria for CCSS-aligned assessment items. There are separate checklist tools for Mathematics Items, English Language Arts/Literacy Passages, and English Language Arts/Literacy Items.

The Assessment Passage and Item Quality Criteria Checklists should be used for:

- Evaluating assessment passages, items and tasks for alignment;
- Guiding the development or refinement of assessment passages, items and tasks;
- Building the capacity of educators and content and assessment specialists to better understand what CCSS-aligned passages, items and tasks look like; and
- Informing publishers and item writers of criteria that will be applied to their passages, items or tasks.

### **a) Where to find online:**

To view and download the Assessment Passage and Item Quality Criteria Checklists, please visit:

[www.achievethecore.org/materialsevaluationtoolkit](http://www.achievethecore.org/materialsevaluationtoolkit)

### **b) Who uses:**

The Assessment Passage and Item Quality Criteria Checklists are designed for use by educators and administrators responsible for developing, purchasing and/or evaluating assessment passages, items or tasks. This includes content specialists and assessment specialists and educators at the school, district or state level.

### **c) Target materials:**

The Assessment Passage and Item Quality Criteria Checklists are designed to evaluate individual assessment passages, items and tasks.

### **d) How to use:**

The criteria for the Assessment Passage and Item Quality Criteria Checklists are grouped into 'gates'. Passages, items and tasks must pass the first gate in order to be considered for an assessment. The subsequent gates include additional criteria that passages, items or tasks items should meet in order to be fully aligned.

## EQuIP Student Work Protocol

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The ultimate goal of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is to prepare all students with the knowledge and skills they need for postsecondary success. The EQuIP Student Work Protocol is designed to establish or articulate the relationship between student work and the quality and alignment of instructional materials that previously have been reviewed using the EQuIP quality review process. Focusing on this relationship enables educators to develop a common understanding of the challenging work required by the CCSS. Furthermore, analyzing this relationship will also assist in closing the gap between what students are learning and the expectations embodied in assignments, as well as verifying what students are being taught and what they have learned, remembered, and incorporated into their knowledge and skills. Common expectations will result in more equitable educational opportunities for students and deepen the existing foundation for collaboration among states and districts.

The specific objectives of this EQuIP Student Work Protocol are three-fold:

- To confirm that a lesson's or unit's assignment is aligned with the letter and spirit of the targeted Common Core State Standards.
- To determine how students performed on an assignment as evidence of how well designed the lesson/unit is.
- To provide criterion-based suggestions for improving the assignment and related instructional materials.

### **a) Where to find online:**

To view and download the EQuIP Student Work Protocol and related training materials, please visit: [www.achieve.org/equip](http://www.achieve.org/equip)

### **b) Who uses:**

The EQuIP Student Work Protocol is designed for use by educators, instructional leaders and administrators.

### **c) Target materials:**

The EQuIP Student Work Protocol is intended for use with instructional materials that have undergone an EQuIP review, received a rating of E or E/I, and then subsequently have been implemented in an instructional setting to produce samples of student work.

### **d) How to use:**

This 5-step protocol begins with a team of reviewers (or a single reviewer) focusing on the assignment itself — the directions or prompt and any accompanying scoring guides. Reviewers identify the content and performances required by the assignment. Reviewers then analyze the standards actually targeted by the author of the lesson/unit and the content and performances they embody. Gaps in alignment are noted. The process then turns to describing how students performed on the assignment and whether and how students demonstrated the expectations of the targeted standards. At the end of the review process, reviewers provide criterion-based feedback regarding improvements that could be made to both the assignment and related instructional materials.