



Achieve

All students should graduate from high school ready for **college, careers and citizenship**

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## News Clips

### In Defense of Common Core

*The Los Angeles Times* editorial board writes in favor of the Common Core State Standards. "The standards, which California adopted in 2010, outline the skills and knowledge public school students should acquire in each grade from kindergarten through high school. Overall, they call for covering fewer topics, but covering each more deeply. They require students to think their way through math problems, rather than taking so much direct instruction from teachers. More careful reading is another part of the standards, along with the reading of more nonfiction. Students do more analysis and a lot more writing." [More...](#)

## Perspective Newsletter March 2014

### Commentary

#### **Voter Perceptions: Common Core State Standards & Tests**

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a hot topic in state legislatures this year. All the while implementation of the CCSS is becoming more widespread in classrooms and CCSS-aligned assessments are being field tested across the country. In order to keep momentum moving forward for the CCSS and fulfill the promise of college and career readiness for all, it is essential to understand what the public currently knows and believes, and where increased communications will be essential to ensure the success of the CCSS and aligned assessments.



In March, Achieve released our third national poll - [Voter Perceptions: Common Core State Standards & Tests](#) - to gauge where voters are on these important issues to public education.

Key Findings of the report include:

- For the third straight year, there is majority support for states to have the same standards and tests rather than their own standards and tests.
- Most voters are still unaware of the CCSS, and among those who have heard at least something, opinions are nearly equally divided.
- However, upon hearing a brief description, a solid majority of voters support implementing the CCSS standards and tests.
- For the first time, this research looked at testing and accountability after the CCSS have been implemented.

### **Op-ed: Common Core a huge leap forward for Connecticut**

Jennifer Alexander, CEO of ConnCAN, writes in the *Connecticut Mirror* that, "Our children deserve great educations that will prepare them for bright futures. Common Core does just that." [More...](#)

### **Dry runs of Common Core tests going well**

*The Plain Dealer* reports that students across Ohio started trial tests of new Common Core exams. The tests' first day had few problems, according to the state. [More...](#)

The majority of voters agree that if test scores drop as the new CCSS-aligned assessments are implemented, it is only to be expected since students and teachers need time to adjust to the new assessments, and we should give the standards and tests time to work.

- Most voters would favor giving teachers and students time to adjust to the new expectations before there are consequences for test results, with most voters favoring a one- to two-year adjustment.
- Still, voters want teacher evaluations and student testing to continue during the adjustment period.

The need for more effective communication about the CCSS is clear. While majority support exists for common standards and tests rather than each state developing their own standards and tests, most voters are still unaware of the CCSS. Among those who have heard at least something about the CCSS, opinions about the standards are nearly divided. When voters are read a description of the CCSS, however, a strong majority of voters favor implementing the standards in their state. With this data in mind, the challenge becomes continuing to educate the public effectively about the CCSS and associated policies, especially as teachers, students and parents adjust to the new, higher expectations. The public is receiving information about the CCSS, but the source of this information is often hostile to the standards; supporters of the standards must continue to make their case clear.

As preparations are underway for administering CCSS-aligned assessments in 2014-15, the public was also polled on their opinions regarding these assessments and appropriate uses for the assessment results. Two-thirds of voters support implementing new CCSS-aligned assessments. Polling about the potential drop in test scores revealed that the public knows that a drop in test scores does not mean that the CCSS are not working and that an adjustment period is to be expected - the standards need to be given time to work. Additionally, the public supports an adjustment period before there are consequences for CCSS test results for teachers and students. Increased and sustained communications around assessment transition in states, especially regarding the increased rigor of the assessments, will be vital for maintaining public support of these new assessments as students, teachers, parents and schools prepare for the first set of test scores in 2015.

Currently there is strong support for the goals of CCSS and common assessments; however, to maintain this support, state leaders and advocates must intensify efforts to increase knowledge of the education reforms in their state, prepare the public for the upcoming changes, and communicate clearly the benefits of reform to students, families, communities and their states. In addition to supporting the implementation of the CCSS and aligned assessments, supporters of the CCSS also need to be vocal about the standards and the promise of increased rigor and higher expectations for all students. It is incumbent upon supporters to make the case for the CCSS and aligned assessments to voters - and not allow the issue to be defined by a vocal minority.

*This poll is the third in a series of nationally-commissioned polling by Achieve designed to monitor voter awareness and support for the CCSS. On behalf of Achieve, Public Opinion Strategies and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research conducted this national survey of N=800 registered voters between November 14-18, 2013. The poll has a margin of error of  $\pm 3.5\%$  for voters. The poll report and slide deck can be accessed here: <http://www.achieve.org/VoterPerceptionsCCSS>.*

## News

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

In joint partnership, Achieve, the Council of Chief State School Officers and Student Achievement Partners developed a [Toolkit for Evaluating the Alignment of Instructional and Assessment Materials to the Common Core State Standards](#). The Toolkit is a set of interrelated, freely available instruments for evaluating alignment to the CCSS. Download the recently updated Toolkit at <http://www.achieve.org/toolkit>.

## NGSS Network Convenes First Leadership Meeting

On Feb. 18-19, the NGSS Network held the first NGSS Annual Leadership Meeting for State Teams and National Partners in Atlanta, Georgia. More than 140 education, policy, and business leaders gathered to discuss promising practices and develop plans for implementation of the NGSS in their states. Presentations and other resources from the meeting are available [here](#).

The NGSS Network represents a growing number of states that have adopted the standards. Network states work collaboratively on common issues to improve science education, including the development of [resources](#) designed to support NGSS implementation in the states. Check the [implementation section](#) of the NGSS website in the coming months for access to these resources as they are published. For more information about NGSS, visit [www.nextgenscience.org](http://www.nextgenscience.org).

## EQuIP Update

Achieve continued to train and support educators this month on using the [EQuIP](#) rubrics for evaluating the quality of lessons and units aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In partnership with the [Council of Great City Schools](#), a group of more than 75 educators met to learn about the EQuIP rubrics and EQuIP Student Work Protocol in Baltimore, Maryland on March 7. The following day, Achieve hosted a group of 40 [TeachPlus](#) educators in Washington, DC for a training.

This month, Achieve hosted two separate series of webinars with two groups, the [American Federation of Teachers](#) and [LearnZillion](#), for educators to learn more about the rubrics and the many ways they can be used in the evaluation and development of instructional materials as well as integrated into professional learning communities among educators. A recording of the LearnZillion webinar that provides an introduction to EQuIP is available [here](#).

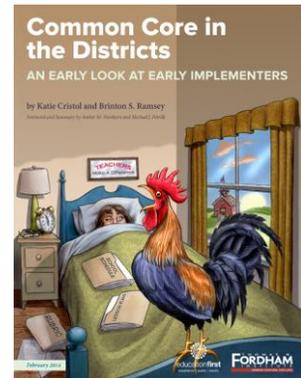
Additionally, a subset of the EQuIP Peer Review Panel met in Washington, DC on March 24-25 to conduct in-person reviews of CCSS-aligned lessons and units. Achieve is currently accepting submissions of CCSS-aligned lessons and units for

Peer Reviewers to evaluate and is in the process of updating its [webpage](#) with materials that have been rated *Exemplar* or *Exemplar* if Improved by the Peer Review Panel. On March 25, Achieve facilitated a cross-state group to use the EQuIP rubrics in a quality review process to evaluate Open Educational Resources (OER). Participants from seven states were trained on using the EQuIP rubrics, with the help of the EQuIP Peer Review Panel, and provided feedback on using the EQuIP rubrics along with some of the Achieve [OER rubrics](#) to evaluate characteristics specific to OER.

## New Resources

### Common Core in the Districts: An Early Look at Early Implementers

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute published a new report, [Common Core in the Districts: An Early Look at Early Implementers](#), which provides an in-depth examination of real educators as they earnestly attempt to put higher standards into practice. This up-close look at district-level, school-level and classroom-level implementation yields several key findings. In short, districts are in the near-impossible situation of operationalizing new standards before high-quality curriculum and tests aligned to them are finished. Yet the clock is ticking, and the new tests and truly aligned textbooks are forthcoming. Today's implementation is a bit like spring training, a time when focusing on the fundamentals, teamwork and steady improvement is more important than the score. Learn how implementation of these ambitious new academic standards is working in a high-performing suburb, a trailblazer, an urban bellwether, and a creative implementer-and to glean lessons for districts and schools across the nation.



## Common Core Implementation Well Underway in States

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) published [\*State Implementation of Common Core State Standards\*](#) - a summary plus five reports with detailed state profiles by topic. Comprehensive and wide-ranging work to implement the Common Core State Standards is well underway, according to reports that document progress in 15 states. The *State Implementation of Common Core State Standards* reports identify exemplary states and practices so others can learn from them as they continue their efforts. SREB's in-depth review documents trends across states as well as challenges such as aligning other reforms with the standards.



## New Assessments: A Guide for State Policymakers

States face a critical decision in the next year: how to assess student learning against new college- and career-ready standards. This decision has important ramifications because testing and assessment have long had a powerful influence on instructional practice. Thus the assessment that states choose will affect teaching and learning in virtually every classroom. The Alliance for Excellent Education has published a [\*guide\*](#) that outlines questions policymakers should ask about proposed new assessments and the ways in which the consortia assessments appear poised to answer them.

