Perspective Newsletter

Commentary

High-Quality Instructional Materials Needed to Support Common Core Implementation

As students and educators head back to the classroom, the need for high-quality instructional materials aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) persists. Though states are now several years down the road of CCSS implementation, educators, schools, districts and states continue to struggle to find appropriate instructional materials that will help deliver on the promise of the CCSS.

Fortunately, there are many initiatives underway to support educators, schools and districts in ensuring they have high-quality, aligned instructional materials in every classroom.
Through EQuIP and the Open Education Resources (OER) Institute, Achieve aims to support states in their endeavors to identify instructional materials that are aligned to the CCSS and support educators in developing their own materials or in evaluating the quality of materials that are currently on the market. To date, 40 lessons or units have been identified by the EQuIP Peer Review Panel as exemplars and can be accessed here under the "EQuIP

Exemplars" tab.

Furthermore, states have implemented strategies to help select materials to ensure their alignment. Washington has developed [guidance](#) for conducting an instructional materials review, and has [reviewed OER](#) for quality and CCSS alignment over the past two years. Oregon has established [adoption criteria](#) for instructional materials, incorporating a modified version of the EQuIP rubrics. New York incorporated the EQuIP rubrics (referred to as the "Tri-State Rubric") in their [RFP process](#) for instructional materials. Iowa educators were trained on the EQuIP rubrics to review instructional materials submitted to the state through an RFP process; the educator evaluation committee will use a modified version of the rubrics. These are just a few examples. The Southern Regional Education Board highlighted many other states' use of different rubrics to support CCSS implementation in its report, *[State Implementation of Common Core State Standards: Common Core-Aligned Teaching Resources](#)*.

Additionally, the recently announced [EdReports.org](#) aims to serve as a "*Consumer Reports*" for instructional materials and will to post free online reviews of major textbooks and curricula that claim to be aligned to the CCSS. EdReports.org will begin be reviewing K-8 mathematics materials, and will subsequently review high school math materials and English language arts materials in grades K-12. With these reviews available, educators and administrators will be able to make more informed purchasing decisions.

With many states implementing assessments aligned to new, higher standards this school year, the need for high-quality

instructional materials is clear. Students deserve quality and aligned instructional materials to support their learning as they work to meet the standards, and teachers are in need of these materials to help their students meet expectations and close gaps in achievement. Much work is already underway to support schools in providing quality materials for their students and more work remains to be done to support full implementation of the CCSS.

News

Update from EQuIP

New EQuIP Videos for Teachers

Earlier this month, Achieve and Teaching Channel announced the launch of their new partnership by releasing three new videos that introduce and explore Achieve's Evaluating Quality Instructional Products (EQuIP) initiative. The videos, which are publicly available for viewing on Teaching Channel's [website](#), introduce the EQuIP Peer Review process and provide an in-depth look at real teachers using the mathematics and English Language Arts. [More...](#)

EQuIP Peer Review Panel

Achieve is excited to announce another opportunity to apply to the EQuIP Peer Review Panel. In January 2013, EQuIP collaborative state leaders expressed a desire to create and select a stable group of experienced reviewers to evaluate the quality and

alignment of lessons and units to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). To meet this need, Achieve launched the EQuIP Peer Review Panel in June 2013. Since that time, 55 EQuIP Peer Review Panelists, representing nearly half of the states as well as 875 years of classroom experience, have reviewed nearly 200 lessons and units. To ensure that the panel is comprised of members with a range of content expertise, EQuIP Peer Review Panelists are distributed across grade bands (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12) in both mathematics and English language arts/literacy. Educators and instructional leaders across states, districts, schools and partner organizations are encouraged to apply.

EQuIP Peer Reviewer Commitment

EQuIP Peer Reviewers will commit up to 12 days of service each year of their term, through a combination of in-person and virtual convenings, as well as time spent independently reviewing collections. Each peer reviewer will be required to complete a quality review for a minimum of 10 collections each year and submit written, criterion-based feedback in a timely manner. The EQuIP Peer Reviewer Panel will convene in person twice each year, starting with a mandatory EQuIP Peer Review Panel Training November 18-19, 2014 in Washington, D.C. The EQuIP Peer Review Panel is designed to ensure that at least three peer reviewers are available to review each lesson/unit in a given grade band and discipline, while minimizing the burden on any individual peer reviewer. Before the EQuIP Peer Review panel is seated, proposed peer review groups for grade band and subject area are reviewed to ensure these groups contain peer reviewers from a range of states and partner organizations. This reduces the likelihood that panelists will review work from their own state,

district, school or organization.

EQuIP Peer Reviewers Application Process

Prospective peer reviewers must complete the application using the online application portal. After completing the application, prospective peer reviewers will receive two lessons in a specific content area along with the EQuIP Rubric Electronic Feedback Form. Prospective peer reviewers will complete an EQuIP Rubric Electronic Feedback Form for each lesson and submit for criterion-based feedback. Both completed EQuIP Rubric Electronic Feedback Forms must be uploaded to the EQuIP Peer Review Panel application portal by September 11, 2014. Application link: http://equip.achieve.org

Important Dates

- Application Opportunity Posted: August 20 - September 11, 2014
- Completed Application Forms and EQuIP Rubric Electronic Feedback Forms due: September 11, 2014
- Applicants notified: October 3, 2014
- Selected EQuIP Peer Reviewers confirm their commitment and interest: October 10, 2014

EQuIP Exemplars

Achieve wants to bring your attention to important resources made freely available for classroom teachers through the EQuIP initiative. The EQuIP quality review process identifies exemplary CCSS-aligned instructional materials that can be broadly

disseminated and used by educators across the country. There are currently 40 *Exemplar* or *Exemplar-if-improved* lessons that have been reviewed by the EQuIP Peer Review Panel and are publicly available for download on the [EQuIP website](#), and more will be added in the coming months.

Vote for participation in SXSWedu 2015

To highlight K-12 innovations and promote social change that benefits student success, [South by Southwest Education Conference and Festival](#) (SXSWedu) hosts a diverse and energetic community of education, business and technology advocates each year. We need your support by Friday, September 5th to secure participation in SXSWedu 2015. Achieve, in partnership with cross-sector leaders from Project Lead the Way, Chevron, and California STEM Learning Network has proposed a new workshop that explores the future of K-12 STEM education and what's needed to ensure the U.S. remains the world leader in technology and innovation. Visit [SXSW PanelPicker](#) to review the full workshop proposal and give the session a thumbs-up.

Panelists will leverage their deep knowledge and experiences across education, advocacy, and employment to highlight some core challenges in equipping students to pursue and succeed in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics related fields. They will also examine policies and programs - including the Next Generation Science Standards - that help connect science in classrooms with real-world, post-secondary and career-opportunities.

Like our idea? Share it with your Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn networks and encourage them to vote by the Friday, September 5th deadline! You can also follow us on Twitter and vote for our proposed session here. Thanks for your support and we hope to see you in Austin for this year's SXSWedu from March 9-12, 2015.

News Clips

Higher ed embracing goals of Common Core

A commentary in *EdSource* provides reasons for optimism in regard to greater cooperation (and improved alignment) between K-12 and higher education. More...

Graduating workers with needed skills, today and tomorrow

Chippewa Valley Business Report highlights a Job Skills Gap report that was commissioned by the Eau Claire Economic Development Corporation. The report calls on schools to prepare students for careers in math, science, engineering, and technology and build their skills in communication and collaboration. More...

**Developing Assessments for the Next Generation Science Standards**

New types of assessments will be needed to measure student learning once the Next Generation Science Standards are implemented, says a new report from the National Research Council. The tests that states currently use emphasize factual knowledge and were not designed to assess the type of understanding envisioned by the standards, which emphasize depth of knowledge based on the ability to integrate core content with science and engineering practices. The report describes a new system of assessments that should be developed, and it offers examples of the types of tasks and questions that could assess student knowledge as detailed in the standards. To monitor progress in meeting the standards, states should use information both from state-administered tests and from classroom-based assessments, as well as information about students' opportunity to learn in the ways laid out in the science standards.
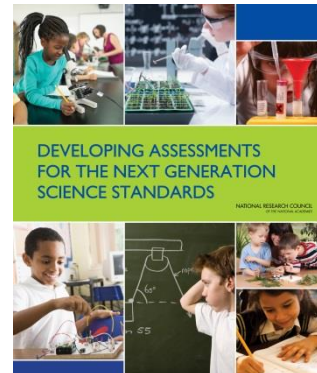
Competency-Based Education in Three Pilot Programs

Competency-Based Education in Three Pilot Programs: Examining Implementation and Outcomes looks at the work of three Project Mastery grantees: Adams County District 50 (Colorado), the Asia Society (specifically four secondary schools), and the School District of Philadelphia. The study by RAND looked at three defining features of competency-based models: instruction that meets students where they are, resulting in flexible pacing; student choices about their learning; and student evaluation based on their demonstrations of proficiency in the academic standards for their education level and subject area.
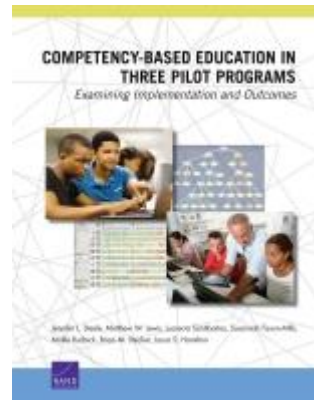
The study analyzes insights from the implementation process, student experiences, and performance across the schools. Tensions that emerged include the challenge of holding all students to a common definition of proficiency, technical challenges facing the learning management systems in use, concerns about financial and logistical sustainability, and equity challenges.

Some key takeaways coming out of the study for policy and practice include: 1) it is important to look at the efficacy of competency-based education on a variety of short-term and long-term outcomes, including test scores, high school attendance, persistence, and completion rates, and college enrollment, persistence, and remediation rates; 2) there may be a need to allow for flexible timing for accountability tests rather than the

traditional model; 3) the student autonomy components of competency-based education make creative and supportive instruction important; and 4) that competency-based education must attend to equity concerns. To learn more about the competency-based education efforts underway in these schools, and to read more of the study and the findings, access the report here.

Focus on 9th Graders Boosted Chicago's Graduation Rates

Efforts to improve the academic performance of ninth-graders drove large improvements in graduation rates three years later in a diverse set of 20 Chicago public high schools, according to a report by the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research. This suggests that the recent dramatic improvement in the percentage of Chicago ninth-graders who are "on track" to graduate should continue to propel system-wide graduation rates in Chicago Public Schools. A second report helps explain why ninth grade is such a key leverage point for reducing dropouts. More...
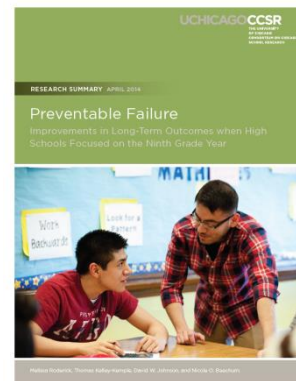
CCSS Forward: State Resources and Success Stories to Implement the Common Core

States across the nation are collaborating to develop tools and resources to implement the CCSS. CCSS Forward is designed to highlight those items, provide updates on new resources, and shine a spotlight on state leadership with Common Core implementation. The website was assembled from contributions by over 40 states convened through CCSSO's Implementing the Common Core Standards group and English language arts and Math State Collaboratives on Assessment and Student Standards. [More...](#)

Career Opportunities

Achieve has career opportunities [here](#).

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