



Achieve

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

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## News Clips

### NCTM Supports CCSS for Mathematics

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) issued a position statement stating that "The Common Core State Standards are a significant component of systemic improvement in mathematics learning, but on their own they are not sufficient to produce the mathematics achievement that our country needs to be competitive in the global economy of the 21st century." [More...](#)

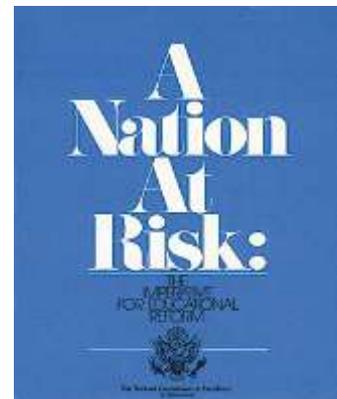
## Perspective Newsletter August 2013

### Commentary

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have been in the spotlight this summer. On July 16, Achieve President Michael Cohen appeared before the Michigan House of Representatives Subcommittee on Common Core State Standards. In his testimony to the legislators, he provided a history of state standards for state legislators and an overview of how the states came together to develop a set of college- and career-ready standards. Below are excerpts:

"The impetus for the development of state standards dates back to the Reagan Administration's *A Nation At Risk* report, which identified low expectations as one of the primary causes of the mediocre performance of U.S. students compared with students in other industrialized countries. That report was quickly followed by a number of other reports and major events that in combination fueled state-led education reforms. In 1986 the National Governors Association, under the leadership of Lamar Alexander, released *Time for Results*, in which governors committed to hold schools accountable for results and give educators greater flexibility in how to achieve them. This was soon followed by the 1989 National Education Summit between President George H.W. Bush and 49 of the Nation's governors.

"The CCSS have been adopted by 45 states and the District of



## A New Policy Framework for Advancing Competency Education

Lillian Pace, Senior Director of National Policy, KnowledgeWorks, writes that Achieve's publication, *Advancing Competency-Based Pathways to College and Career Readiness: A State Policy Framework for Graduation Requirements, Assessment and Accountability*, is meant to drive action, making it a great resource for state policymakers, or anyone, interested in charting a practical course towards competency education." She notes, "Because the framework tackles three critically important, and very difficult, issues - graduation requirements, assessment, and accountability - this report could be a game changer at advancing the shift to competency education nationwide." [More...](#)

Columbia, as well as by the Department of Defense Education Activity whose schools serve the children of military families stationed on bases here in the U.S. and around the world. They are rigorous and aligned with the knowledge and skills necessary for postsecondary success, in careers and in postsecondary education.

"In English Language Arts/Literacy, these include:

- A balance between literature and nonfiction and informational texts, supported by literacy standards for science, history and technical subjects to enable students to read and write in a wider range of contexts.
- An emphasis on explanatory writing, including writing and speaking using evidence drawn from texts to present careful analyses, well-defended claims and clear information.
- Regular practice with increasingly complex text and its academic language, or words that may appear in a variety of contexts.

"In Mathematics, these include:

- A sharper focus on fewer key topics in each grade to allow educators and students to go deeper into the content so students can better understand concepts
- A coherent progression of learning across grades and across concepts, with each progression resulting in students' fluency in a given concept. Each standard is not a new event, but an extension of previous learning.
- Rigor through mathematical practices that foster reasoning, flexible and real-world application and deeper conceptual understanding across the discipline.

"These advances will make significant differences to teachers and their students. They free teachers from the need to race through the curriculum, and instead take the time to go into the depth that the content, and their students, deserve. They can allow students to read, and reread if necessary, classical literature with challenging vocabulary, complex rather than straightforward structure, and rich ambiguity, helping students to develop the necessary reading skills rather than give them watered down texts. Elementary school teachers in grades 3-5 can focus on multiplication and division of whole numbers and fractions, helping students develop procedural fluency, conceptual understanding and the ability to apply these foundational skills. There is enough time to help struggling

## Raise the Bar for Our Schools

An editorial in the *Clarksville Leaf Chronicle* notes that, "Under Common Core, which are more academically rigorous, students will be expected to know the nation's founding documents, be strong in math and science, and be able to evaluate evidence and form independent judgments - the skills needed to succeed in this ever-changing world." [More...](#)

students so they too have the solid foundation necessary to take on algebra by 8th grade.

"As these standards are being implemented and new aligned assessments come online, parents will come to understand whether their students are on track to developing the skills needed for the postsecondary opportunities of their choice. Local educators can already begin to choose among a wide range of curriculum and instructional materials aligned to the Common Core being developed by commercial publishers, nonprofit organizations and other states. And policymakers and taxpayers will be able to judge the progress and performance of public education in their states as compared with those of other states, and draw on the most effective policies and practices anywhere."

Read the full testimony [here](#).

Achieve has developed materials to help states, districts and others understand the organization and content of the standards and the content and evidence base used to support the standards. Visit <http://www.achieve.org/achieving-common-core>.

## News

### New York State Assessment Results

On August 7, Achieve issued a statement on the release of the New York state assessment results. Mr. Cohen noted that, "In today's knowledge-based economy postsecondary success demands higher skills and some postsecondary education or training." He underscored, "Low test scores aren't a reason to back away from standards, assessments and accountability. Instead, it is reason for state education leaders, local school boards and educators - including teachers, principals and local administrators - and higher education institutions, to work together and double down on efforts to systematically improve classroom instruction." Read the full statement [here](#).

## 2013 PDK/Gallup Poll Results

On August 21 Achieve's Sandy Boyd, Achieve COO and Senior Vice President appeared on a panel to discuss the results of the [2013 PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools](#) at The Gallup Building in Washington, DC. She compared the results with the extensive CCSS polling and surveys Achieve has conducted over the past two years.

The results of Achieve's first two polls ([here](#) and [here](#)) found that the public is still not aware of the standards, but receptive to the states adoption of common, college- and career-ready standards. Achieve will again be conducting more polling and releasing results this fall which will include trend data based on our previous work. [Watch the C-SPAN video](#).

Despite the wide adoption of the CCSS, nearly two-thirds of those polled in the 2013 PDK/Gallup Poll, or 62 percent, said they had never heard of the new standards. Of the 38 percent who said they had heard of them, many thought - incorrectly - that the federal government was forcing states to adopt them and that the CCSS covered every academic subject. Ninety-five percent of respondents want schools to teach critical thinking skills, a key goal of the initiative.

### PARCC on PBS NewsHour

Laura Slover, Senior Vice President, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), appeared on a PBS NewsHour segment on CCSS learning standards. She noted that the assessments "are going to look different, feel different, they're going to be more engaging to students, and not as dry as a straight pencil-and-paper test. You're not going to be asked questions like, what did you think about the thing you read? You're going to be asked to say, what did the author think? Find evidence in the text for that to make that broader point." [Watch the video](#).



## PARCC Releases New Sample Items

PARCC released additional sample items for both English language arts/literacy and mathematics. The sample items show how PARCC is developing tasks to measure the critical content and skills found in the CCSS. The sample items have undergone PARCC's rigorous review process to ensure quality and demonstrate the content that will be on the assessments in 2014-2015. [More...](#)

## New Resources

### Early Warning Data Systems

DQC published [\*Using Early Warning Data to Keep Students on Track toward College and Careers: A Primer for State Policymakers\*](#).

Early warning systems (EWS) provide educators, administrators and policymakers with actionable information that they can use to prepare all students to succeed in college and careers. EWS combine multiple data points and translate them into predictive indicators that are based on research and proactively communicate them to stakeholders, so they can examine which students are or are not on track for postsecondary success and intervene accordingly. Over half the states are producing early warning reports and taking various approaches in disseminating this information.



### Education at a Glance

[\*Education at a Glance\*](#), a report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, analyzes various indicators of performance for pre-kindergarten through higher education across 34 member countries. The 2013 edition emphasizes the relationship between the level of educational attainment and rates of employment,



concluding that gaps in employment rates between those with and without postsecondary education widened during the recession. The report shows that the U.S. unemployment rate for those without a postsecondary degree is up to 16.2 percent (six percentage points higher than 2008). The U.S. now ranks 5th in postsecondary education attainment among 25-64 year olds, 12th when considering just 25-34 year olds, and spends 2.8 percent of its GDP on higher education (compared to a worldwide average of 1.6 percent.) Featuring more than 100 charts, 200 tables, and over 100,000 figures, the report provides key information on the output of educational institutions; the impact of learning across countries.

### **Year 3 of Implementing the Common Core: An Overview of States' Progress and Challenges**

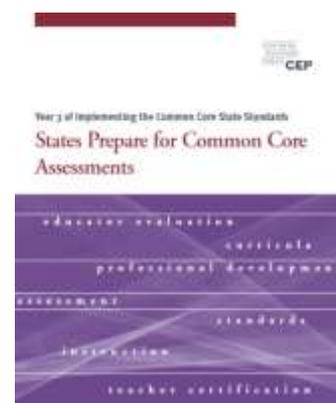
Most states that have adopted the CCSS in math and English language arts (ELA) are already teaching to the standards, according to CEP's [\*Year 3 of Implementing the Common Core State Standards: An Overview of States' Progress and Challenges\*](#). Based on a spring 2013 survey of state education agency officials in Common Core-adopting states, this report broadly examines

states' efforts to implement the Common Core. Topics covered include states' views on the rigor of the standards, timelines for teaching a Common Core-aligned curricula, a discussion of state actions to help schools and districts prepare for the standards, and an assessment of state education agency capacity to implement the Common Core.



### **States Prepare for Common Core Assessments**

CEP also published [\*Year 3 of Implementing the Common Core State Standards: States Prepare for Common Core Assessments\*](#). It finds that education officials in 27 states, a majority of those that have adopted the CCSS, say they have already taken steps to start assessing



students' mastery of the Common Core by modifying their state's tests or will do so before consortia-developed assessments are ready in school year 2014-15. But about a quarter of the states surveyed are not currently changing their tests to better align them with the new standards. This report, based on a spring 2013 survey of state education agency officials in CCSS-adopting states, highlights states' efforts to prepare for the administration of CCSS-aligned assessments, including plans to assess students' mastery of the standards prior to the administration of the state consortia-developed assessments, efforts to prepare teachers to interpret and use the results of the CCSS-aligned tests to improve student learning, and actions to inform parents and other stakeholders about potential lower student pass-rates on the exams.

### Career Opportunities

Achieve has career opportunities available including Intern, State Policy and Implementation Support; Director, State Policy and Implementation Support; Program Associate, PARCC; and Senior Advisor, ELA/Literacy (PARCC). Go to [www.achieve.org/careers](http://www.achieve.org/careers).

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*Perspective* is sent to you by Achieve, an independent, bipartisan, non-profit education reform organization based in Washington, D.C. that helps states raise academic standards and graduation requirements, improve assessments and strengthen accountability. Please feel free to circulate this e-newsletter to your colleagues.