

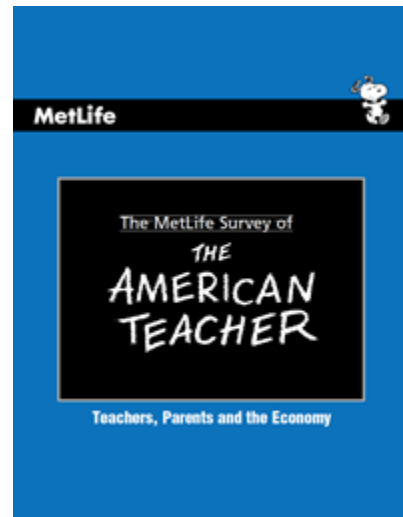
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Successful Common Core State Standards Implementation Is Key

To date, 46 states, 2 territories and the District of Columbia (and [Anchorage, Alaska](#)) have chosen to adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The wide adoption of the CCSS means that, for the first time in history, states will share a common platform on which they can collaborate and compare achievement, and students from coast to coast will be held to the same standards designed to prepare them for life after high school.

But the mere adoption of these new standards is clearly insufficient. Success in each state hinges on implementation: the strategies used to improve instruction in every classroom, the tiered supports provided to all students, the policy changes to promote coherence and alignment, and the commitment to building and maintaining widespread understanding of and support for the new standards.

The results of two teacher surveys were released this month that provide valuable insight as schools work to implement the CCSS. [The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Teachers, Parents and the Economy](#) indicates that teachers are widely acknowledged as the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement. In large numbers, teachers today emphasize the importance and the challenge of preparing all students to meet higher standards for college and career readiness, including diverse learners with the highest needs. Successful implementation of CCSS to prepare all students for college and careers, will require listening to teachers in ways that can make essential opportunities for professional learning both more efficient and effective.



"The survey's findings underscore that education is a shared responsibility, particularly in the face of financial challenges," said Dennis White, vice president of corporate contributions for MetLife. "Economic prosperity will depend on a new generation well-prepared to learn for a lifetime in order to compete and collaborate in a global economy."

Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation recently released [*Primary Sources 2012: America's Teachers on the Teaching Profession*](#), which surveyed more than 10,000 teachers from every state in urban and rural districts. The findings specific to the CCSS are very positive. Teachers clearly understand that their job is to keep students academically motivated and prepare them to meet the rigorous standards that nearly all states have adopted as part of the CCSS.

Teachers identify a clear link between standards and consistent, equitable education for all students. Many teachers said that common standards (64%), clear curriculum (79%), and common assessments (49%) would make a significant impact on improving student academic achievement. However, while the majority (78%) of teachers are aware of the Common Core State Standards, many do not yet feel prepared to teach to these new standards.

To assist states in gauging the strength of their implementation plans and to illustrate how to improve them, [Achieve](#) and [Education First](#) released a new "[*Common Core State Standards Implementation Rubric and Self-Assessment Tool*](#)." Implementing the standards and related policies, resources, and programs is no easy task, and will require states to assume a far stronger leadership role than most have taken in the past. This tool sets a high quality standard for a strong state role, provides concrete details and examples to help state leaders get there, and profiles some promising state approaches. In addition, the tool is intended to complement a workbook that Achieve and the Education Delivery Institute (EDI) released (and recently updated), [*Implementing the Common Core State Standards: A Workbook for State and Local Leaders*](#). The Achieve-EDI workbook is mainly about "the how" — what it takes to organize and manage the complex implementation plan required for success. This new tool focuses more directly on the "what." More materials to help states and others interested in better understanding the CCSS are at <http://www.achieve.org/achieving-common-core>.

New from Achieve

New Poll Shows Strong Support for Improving Science Education

A recent poll released today shows voters are virtually unanimous—97%—in believing that improving the quality of science education is important to the United States' ability to compete globally. Moreover, making sure American students receive a world-class education in math and science ranked second only to fixing the nation's financial health as a strategy for improving America's economic competitiveness with other countries. Speaking at the National Science Teachers Association Annual Conference in Indianapolis, Dr. Stephen Pruitt, Achieve's Vice President of Content, Research and Development, noted, "Science teachers have long understood the value to students of a high-quality science education and it's encouraging to see that voters also understand the value of a robust science education—for students as well as for our nation's ability to compete. This is exactly why 26 states have come together to develop Next Generation Science Standards." [Read the news statement.](#)

First Draft of the Next Generation Science Standards is Coming Soon

The first public draft of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) is expected later this spring. The NGSS are being developed in a process led by 26 states and in partnership with the National Research Council (NRC), the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and Achieve. The standards will be based on the NRC's [A Framework for K-12 Science Education](#), which was published in print form last month and can be found online [here](#). The second public draft of the NGSS is expected in fall 2012, and the final standards will be released in early 2013. For more information, see www.nextgenscience.org

Achieve Contributes to "Friends of CTE Guest Blog" on the Next Generation Science Standards and Career and Technical Education

Stephen Pruitt recently wrote a blog post entitled "Next Generation Science Standards for Today's Students and Tomorrow's Workforce" for the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium (NADCTEc). Pruitt wrote, "We believe the NGSS will offer excellent opportunities for stronger alignment between science and CTE instruction. While the NGSS won't replace existing CTE courses or pathways (e.g., engineering, agriculture/life sciences), the standards can enhance CTE coursework in meaningful ways. Specifically, the NGSS can and should serve as a bridge between what science educators are teaching in their classrooms (the content) and what CTE educators are teaching in their classrooms (the applications)." The full post is available [here](#).



Using OER Commons and the Achieve OER Evaluation Tool

Achieve recently released a collection of informational and instructional online videos for its [OER Rubrics and Evaluation Tool](#). Open Education Resources (OER) are free and openly-licensed materials for teaching and learning. To help states, districts, teachers, and other users determine the degree of alignment of OER to the Common Core State Standards and to determine aspects of quality of OER, Achieve developed a series of rubrics in collaboration with leaders from the OER community. To apply these rubrics to online resources, Achieve partnered with the OER repository OER Commons to create an online evaluation tool embedded in the [OER Commons website](#).

Containing a total of nine segments, the narrated videos inform users about the rubrics and how to apply them, along with the capabilities of the online evaluation tool. The videos include screen captures from OER Commons as well as informational slides to help convey the instructional content. Soon there will be links to these videos inside the evaluation tool so that users can easily learn more or refresh their knowledge on the rubrics. The full set of videos is available [here](#).

Building a Grad Nation

Grad Nation is a national movement to transform awareness of the dropout crisis into sustained, results-driven action. The 2012 update of [*Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic*](#) released by the Alliance for Excellent Education, America's Promise Alliance, Civic Enterprises and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University reports that the nation's graduation rate increased three and a half percentage points from 2001 to 2009 (from 72% to 75.5%) and increased a half percentage point to 75.5% from 2008 to 2009. The number of "dropout factory" high schools—schools that graduate 60% or fewer students on time—decreased by 457—nearly 23%—between 2002 and 2010.

"We have continued to make good progress, but we also have much work ahead to achieve our goal of a 90% high school graduation rate," former secretary of state Colin L. Powell and his wife, Alma J. Powell, wrote in a letter introducing the report.

Many states with the lowest graduation rates in 2002 made the most gains by 2009. Two states, Tennessee and New York, achieved double-digit gains in seven years. Six of the eight states experiencing the largest gains in graduation rates are located in the Southeast (Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee). Encouragingly, nearly all states with the highest graduation rates in 2002 continued to improve their graduation rates through 2009 (Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, Vermont, and Wisconsin).

The report highlights specific efforts in

News Clips

1. The Best in the World

Craig Barrett, retired CEO and Chairman of Intel Corporation, chairman of the Arizona Ready Education Council, and chair of Achieve's Board of Directors, says "Our major challenge is to get all schools to mirror the successful examples. This is why international comparisons are so important. It is not appropriate to just compare one local school district, or state, with another. You have to compare the accomplishments of your students with the best in the world." [More...](#)

2. Real World in the Classroom

Times have changed when it comes to auto shop and home economics in the Escondido Union High School District. "It's not just about learning a trade," spokeswoman Karyl O'Brien said of the district's College, Career & Technical Education program, which integrates technical and academic skills with the goal of helping students succeed when they enter college, a trade school or the work force. "It opens doors for not just learning a skill and exploring careers, but definitely scholarship opportunities, employment

Alabama, Georgia, Maryland, Ohio, and Texas to improve high school graduation rates and student preparedness for college and careers. In order to continue to support states in their efforts to increase graduation rates, the report acknowledges the need to define the goal of K-12 education as becoming college- and career-ready rather than merely proficient in basic skills. To reach this goal, *Building a Grad Nation* contends that accountability systems should include achievement measures; high school graduation rates; and other college- and career-ready indicators including AP/IB performance, SAT/ACT performance, and/or the percentage of students enrolling in postsecondary education to ensure college and career readiness is valued and incentivized by school systems.

opportunities and networking opportunities." [More...](#)

3. **Common Core Standards Bring More Rigor**

Kevin Maxwell, superintendent of Anne Arundel County Public Schools in Maryland writes, in an op-ed that the Common Core initiative "calls for us to aim even higher and to strive to continue to enhance the educational opportunities we provide our children." [More...](#)

4. **An Educator's View on the Common Core**

According to *The Hechinger Report*, Darren Burris, a middle-school instructional coach and a high-school math teacher, "the Common Core represents an empowering opportunity for teachers to collaborate, exchange best practices and share differing curricula—because a common set of standards is not the same thing as a common curriculum." [More...](#)

New Resources

- The National Association State Directors Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEc) released an issue brief, [Achieve and State CTE Directors: Integrating the Common Core State Standards in math and Career Technical Education](#), that describes a pilot project developed jointly by Achieve and NASDCTEc to help educators integrate the Common Core State Standards and Career Technical Education (CTE) expectations as

they modify and develop instructional tasks. The brief was released the same day NASDCTEc held a webinar on the project, with Achieve and state representatives participating. View the webinar [here](#). Download the first six completed instructional tasks, developed by high school and postsecondary math and design/pre-construction educators in Illinois, [here](#).

- Increased access to Advanced Placement classes, more rigorous math courses, dual enrollment classes, and early college high school programs are the best ways to strengthen high school curricula, according to a report released by the National School Boards Association's Center for Public Education. The report, "[Is High School Tough Enough?](#)" reviews research behind effective strategies to strengthen high school curricula and improve the college and career readiness of public high school graduates.

Patte Barth, director of the Center, said that the main problem is a lack of access to strategies designed to increase the rigor of curricula in schools with high proportions of low-income or minority students. "It's been clear for some time that 21st century jobs are going to demand higher level knowledge and skills," said Barth. "No student can learn anything if they don't have the opportunity to learn it." Studies cited in the report determined that completing Algebra II more than doubles the odds of successfully completing college. Nearly 3,000 high schools serving 500,000 students nationwide do not offer Algebra II. "Without access to even Algebra II, these new graduates really, really don't have much of a chance," Barth told the *Bellingham Herald*.

- The Center for Public Education report echoes new U.S. Department of Education [data](#), based on the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) 2009-10 sample from more than 72,000 schools that encompass about 85% of the nation's students. The data analysis finds that nationwide, a third of first-year college students require remediation, typically in math. In some schools, students can't take the higher-level courses because they simply are not offered. For example, about a third of high schools in the United States don't offer Advanced Placement courses. Maureen Downey of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* [notes](#) that "the argument that tougher high school courses should be limited to the college-prep track ignores the fact that even blue-collar jobs now demand higher-order reading and math skills." U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan said the CRDC findings are a wake-up call to educators at every level and issued a broad challenge to work together to address educational inequities.
- Education Sector recently issued a series of short policy briefs on the broad array of reforms states are currently working to implement — at the same time and in a cohesive manner — as part of their publication,

[Getting to 2014: The Choices and Challenges Ahead](#). Topics include accountability and implementation (written by Achieve president, Michael Cohen), the dual challenge of raising graduation rates and raising standards, teacher evaluation, new models of teaching and learning, and getting results with limited resources.

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