

## Common Core State Standards

### **History and Background of the Standards**

In the spring of 2009, governors and state commissioners of education from 48 states, two territories and the District of Columbia committed to developing a Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for K-12 English language arts and mathematics. The CCSS were designed to consist of fewer, clearer and higher-level standards; to be aligned with college and work expectations; to include rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills; to build upon the strengths and lessons of current state standards; to be internationally benchmarked so that all students will be prepared to succeed in our global economy; and to be based on evidence and research. On July 7, 2010, with a unanimous vote, the State Board of Education adopted CCSS in English language arts and mathematics that will establish what Connecticut's public school students should know and be able to do as they progress from kindergarten through Grades 12.

State adoption of the CCSS will result in changes to what is taught, when it is taught and how it is taught. **Because the CCSS do not address pedagogy, full implementation relies on content experts at the classroom level to determine how students will advance through the grades and meet each year's grade-specific standards.** The English language arts standards require that students systematically develop literacy skills and understandings through reading, writing, speaking and listening. For Grades 6–12, there is also a set of standards for English language arts in the content areas. The mathematics standards are designed to focus on developing students' understanding of mathematical concepts and acquisition of fundamental reasoning habits, in addition to fluency skills. These standards are now the new Connecticut Standards.

### **Implementing Common Core Standards**

Implementing began as soon as the standards were released in the spring of 2010 and consisted of a multi-step process to inform and engage education stakeholders. Through an inclusive process, CSDE obtained stakeholder feedback regarding the alignment, rigor and quality of the CCSS, thus broadening acceptance and understanding of the standards in advance of implementation.

### Common Core Comparison Study

In May 2010, CSDE content standards experts together with over 50 English language arts and mathematics content specialists from Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) and from school districts conducted a comparison study between Common Core and Connecticut standards. The resulting reports summarized the percentage of matches between Common Core and state standards, as well as the strength of those matches and where there were grade level differences. Following the comparison study, English language arts and mathematics crosswalk documents were developed to show the correlation between the CCSS and Connecticut standards.

### CCSS Stakeholder Engagement

The CCSS Stakeholder Engagement Conference was held to share the results of the standard-to-standard comparison and to provide an opportunity for educational and other experts to provide feedback about the quality of the new standards. One hundred and eighty one individuals were invited to attend the June 2010 CCSS Stakeholder Engagement Conference. These individuals represented a broad sample of education stakeholders and included administrators, teachers, specialists from RESCs, and representatives from parent, community, and social advocacy organizations. During the conference, participants reviewed the gap analysis results and completed of two feedback surveys.

### Ongoing Implementation

Since June 2010, ongoing planning for implementing CCSS has occurred resulting in a number of targeted and sustained actions to support districts in transitioning to the standards. Over the course of the next three years, CSDE will continue to provide direction for full implementation. To date, many CCSS presentations have been provided for stakeholder groups including:

- P-20 Council Meetings – Fall 2010 and Fall 2011
- Northeastern Educational Research Association - Fall 2010
- Connecticut Reading Association – November 2010 and November 2011
- April 2011 *Higher Education Symposium*
- August 2011 *Connecticut Assessment Forum*
- Superintendent’s *Back to School* Meeting – August 2010 and August 2011
- Regional Curriculum Development Sessions - Summer 2011 and Fall 2011, Ongoing
- Special Education Director’s *Back to School* Meeting - September 2011
- New England Board of Higher Education Board Meeting – Fall 2011
- *Connecticut’s Vision for Implementing the Common Core State Standards* Statewide Conference – September 2011
- Associated Teachers Of Mathematics In Connecticut - 2011
- CABE/CAPSS Meetings and Newsletters - Ongoing
- RESC Language Arts Councils, Mathematics Councils and Curriculum Councils - Ongoing
- Connecticut Education Association - Ongoing
- School District Presentations - Ongoing

During the winter and spring of 2011, the CSDE created foundational documents for designing rigorous curriculums in K-12 mathematics and English language arts, based on the CCSS. State-level Rigorous Curriculum Design (RCD) teams, comprised of content specialists from the local districts, RESCs, the State Education Resource Center and higher education, convened to develop this set of guiding documents, which consists of frameworks for units of study (Attachments A and B) comprised of priority and related supporting standards and pacing calendars. **The documents, for use by districts, are part of a statewide system of technical assistance to facilitate ongoing effective implementation of**

**the standards. This set of guiding documents, together with the crosswalk documents, will provide districts with tools for revising curriculum documents and for implementing the standards at the classroom level.**

During the summer and fall 2011, regional curriculum development sessions were held to assist districts in using the guiding documents. Teams of district curriculum directors and curriculum writers attended the sessions for a hand-on opportunity to review, revise and develop district curriculum documents. These sessions will continue throughout 2011-2012.

### **SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium and other National Collaborations**

In June 2010, Connecticut educational leadership (Governor, Commissioner of Education, State Board of Education Chair, Commissioner of Higher Education, Chancellor of the State University System and Chancellor of the Community College System) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to become a governing member of the SBAC and join with 30 other states to seek federal funds under the RTTTAP grant to develop new systems of assessment. Key factors of the SBAC's proposal that led us to join SBAC included:

- Developing an online adaptive summative assessment, complemented with interim assessments aligned to the summative and extended-time performance tasks of high cognitive demand (Adaptive assessments are efficient to administer, requiring students to take fewer items than standard assessments to determine their performance level, and do a better job of assessing the lower- and higher-performing students within a grade level.);
- Creating a comprehensive system that integrates the standards, instruction, professional development and assessment;
- Creating an on-line digital repository with instructional resources and modules and educator training materials, including an extensive item bank from which potential end-of-course assessments could be drawn; and
- Planning for extensive teacher involvement (K-12 and higher education) in all aspects of the assessment development and scoring.

To date SBAC has established its governance structure and Technical Advisory Committee of national experts in the fields of education and measurement, a master Plan of the details of the work through October of 2014, 10 workgroups with state representation to craft Requests for Proposals (RFP) to subcontract most aspects of the work and has already issued RFPs for several aspects of the project.

To meet the goal of having an operational assessment administered in the spring of 2015 and a comprehensive system in place, SBAC has established the following primary milestones over the next four years:

- 2011:** Develop formative processes and tools to support states in the implementation of CCSS and specifications for the summative and interim assessments.

- 2012:** Develop the items for the summative and interim assessments and make the pool of interim items available to states, and begin pilot testing.
- 2013:** Complete pilot testing of summative items and development of the technology infrastructure.
- 2014:** Establish preliminary common achievement standards.

The rationale for this series of steps is that these are the sequence of steps that the member states agreed upon to not only ensure that tests would be operational by spring 2015, but that they would be fair, reliable and valid for the purposes for which they are being developed. SBAC has developed a detailed work-plan to meet these milestones.

Connecticut also is a member of three collaboratives of states:

- The Council of Chief State School Officer's (CCSSO) *Implementing Common Core State Standards* State Collaborative on Assessments and Student Standards (SCASS), which is working with six-member teams across states to share resources and strategies to systematically implement the standards within our states;
- The CCSSO *Next Generation of Accountability* SCASS, which is a multi-state collaborative to establish policy that will reshape accountability at the state and national levels; and
- The New England Secondary School Consortium (NESSC), which consists of five New England states that have established common goals, metrics and associated policies to improve secondary school education throughout the region.

Commissioner Pryor could be most helpful in advancing this work by playing a key leadership player in the Chiefs' meetings that each consortium holds on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. There is considerable enthusiasm among the Chiefs to reach out to constituents and support their states in successfully completing this important, complex work.