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Common Core State Standards: Progress and Challenges in School Districts' Implementation

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Introduction and Key Findings

As of August 2011, 44 states and the District of Columbia had adopted the voluntary common core state standards (CCSS) in English language arts and mathematics released in June 2010 by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers.[1] The product of a state-led initiative, the standards are intended to set clear expectations for learning for grades K-12 that are consistent from state to state. The standards also aim to ensure that high school graduates possess the knowledge and skills needed for college and a globally competitive workforce.

States are undertaking a variety of activities to implement the CCSS, but if these standards are to guide education reform in the ways envisioned by the adopting states, much work will also need to be done at the school district level. The ultimate responsibility for ensuring that students master the knowledge and skills in the standards rests with districts and schools, and their administrators and teachers. Although districts will continue to have flexibility in deciding how to accomplish this goal, many will need to change their curriculum, instruction, local assessments, teacher professional development, and other elements of education to align them with the new standards.

This report by the Center on Education Policy (CEP), an independent nonprofit organization, describes school districts' perceptions about the impact of the common core state standards, their progress in implementing these standards, and the challenges they face in doing so. The information is based on a survey of a nationally representative sample of school districts conducted in the winter and spring of 2011. The survey covered a range of topics, including district budgets, federal stimulus money, education reform, and the CCSS. The information in this report is based on responses to questions specifically about the CCSS from districts that correctly reported their state was one of the 43 states and D.C. that had adopted the standards at the time the survey was analyzed. Other topics addressed in the district survey are covered in a June 2011 CEP report (2011a).

The findings in this report provide a snapshot of what districts had done or were planning to do to implement the CCSS standards when the survey was administered in early 2011. Since then, it is likely that states and districts have moved ahead with additional implementation activities.

Six key findings about the CCSS emerged from the district survey:

- **Almost three-fifths of the districts in states that have adopted the CCSS viewed these standards as more rigorous than the ones they are replacing and expected the CCSS to improve student learning.** A sizeable proportion of the districts agreed or strongly agreed that the CCSS will be more rigorous than their state's previous standards in mathematics (58%) and in English language arts (57%). In addition, almost three-fifths of districts in the adopting states agreed or strongly agreed that the CCSS would lead to improved student skills in math (55%) and English language arts (58%).

- **Two-thirds of the districts in CCSS-adopting states have begun to develop a comprehensive plan and timeline for implementing the standards or intend to do so in school year 2011-12. Sixty-one percent of the districts are developing and/or purchasing curriculum materials.** Forty-eight percent of the districts have provided or plan to provide professional development to teachers of math and English language arts, and similar

[1] Current data on the number of adopting states were obtained from the Common Core State Standards Initiative, http://www.corestandards.org/in-the-states. At the time the data from the CEP survey were analyzed, 43 states and D.C. had adopted the standards.

percentages have developed or plan to develop new local assessments to measure students' mastery of the standards. Less than one-third are undertaking other standards-related activities, such as assigning resource teachers to help teachers integrate the CCSS or aligning teacher evaluation or induction programs with the standards.

- **Adequate funding is a major challenge.** About three-quarters (76%) of districts in CCSS-adopting states view adequate funding to implement all aspects of the CCSS as a major challenge. Another 21% see this as a minor challenge.

- **About two-thirds of the districts in adopting states cited inadequate or unclear state guidance on the CCSS as a major challenge.** Many districts face major challenges due to inadequate or unclear state guidance about modifying teacher evaluation systems to hold teachers accountable for students' mastery of the standards, creating local assessments aligned with the CCSS, and aligning the content of educator induction programs to the CCSS.

- **Districts appear to face relatively little resistance to implementing the CCSS from parents, community members, or educators.** Only 10% of districts in the CCSS-adopting states considered resistance from teachers and principals to be a major challenge in implementing the standards, although 58% considered this a minor challenge. Only 5% of the districts viewed resistance from parents and community members as a major implementation challenge; the remainder saw it as a minor challenge or no challenge.

- **District or school-level staff participated in various state, regional, or district activities in school year 2010-11 to become informed about the common score state standards.** In 88% of the districts in CCSS-adopting states, central office staff, principals, and/or teachers participated in state or regional meetings to introduce the standards. In 63% of the districts, staff participated in state or regional meetings to plan implementation of the new standards. In addition, a sizeable majority of the districts held their own meetings to introduce these standards or plan their implementation.

The sections of this report that follow describe our findings in more detail. The information in the report is based on responses from the 315 districts in the nationally representative sample that a) were located in one of the 43 states and D.C. that had adopted the standards at the time the data were analyzed; b) correctly reported their state had adopted the CCSS; and c) responded to at least some of the survey questions about the CCSS. An appendix with detailed information about study methods and confidence intervals for the data in this report is available at www.cep-dc.org.

District Views about the Rigor and Impact of the CCSS

***Rigor of standards* — Almost three-fifths of the districts in CCSS-adopting states view the common core state standards as more rigorous than the ones they are replacing.**

Figure 1 shows the percentages of districts in adopting states that agreed or strongly agreed that the CCSS will be more rigorous than their state's previous standards in math (58%) and English language arts (57%). About one-fifth of the districts disagreed or strongly disagreed that the CCSS would be more rigorous than previous state standards in math (22%) or English language arts (21%). The remaining districts in either subject were not sure about the rigor of the CCSS.

***Impact on students' learning* — Almost three-fifths of the districts in CCSS-adopting states expect the common core state standards to improve students' skills.**

Figure 2 shows the percentages of districts in adopting states that agreed or strongly agreed that the CCSS will improve student skills in math (55%) and English language arts (58%). About one-third of the districts were unsure if CCSS implementation will lead to improved skills in math (30%) or English language arts (29%). The remaining districts, about one in six districts in each subject, disagreed or strongly disagreed that CCSS will lead to improved student skills.

Figure 1. Percentage of districts in CCSS-adopting states that agreed, disagreed, or were not sure that the CCSS are more rigorous than the previous state standards in math and English language arts

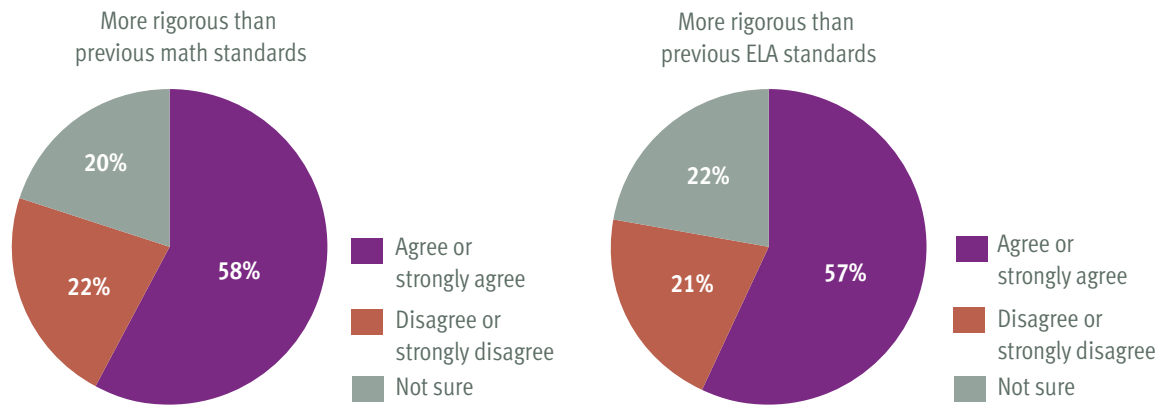

Figure reads: An estimated 58% of school districts in CCSS-adopting states agreed or strongly agreed that the CCSS in mathematics are more rigorous than the previous state math standards.

Note: In this figure, if the difference between two estimates is 14% or greater, then the difference is statistically significant. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

Figure 2. Percentage of districts in CCSS-adopting states that agreed, disagreed, or were not sure that implementation of the CCSS will improve skills among students in the district

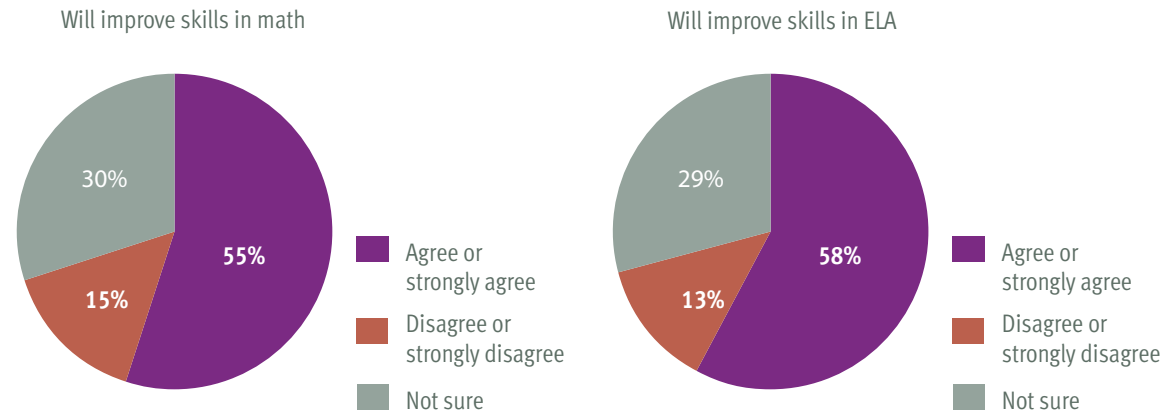

Figure reads: An estimated 55% of school districts in CCSS-adopting states agreed or strongly agreed that implementation of the CCSS in mathematics will lead to improved math skills among students in the district.

Note: In this figure, if the difference between two estimates is 14% or greater, then the difference is statistically significant. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

***Need for new or substantially revised curriculum materials* — More than half of the districts in CCSS-adopting states believe that implementing the common core state standards will require new or substantially revised curriculum materials.**

Figure 3 displays the percentages of districts in adopting states that agreed or strongly agreed that the CCSS will require new or substantially revised curriculum materials in math (64%) and English language arts (56%). Smaller proportions of the districts disagreed or strongly disagreed that new or revised curriculum materials will be needed in math (16%) or English language arts (22%). Roughly one-fifth of the districts in either subject were unsure.

Figure 3. Percentage of districts in CCSS-adopting states that agreed, disagreed, or were not sure that the implementation of the CCSS will require new or substantially revised curriculum materials

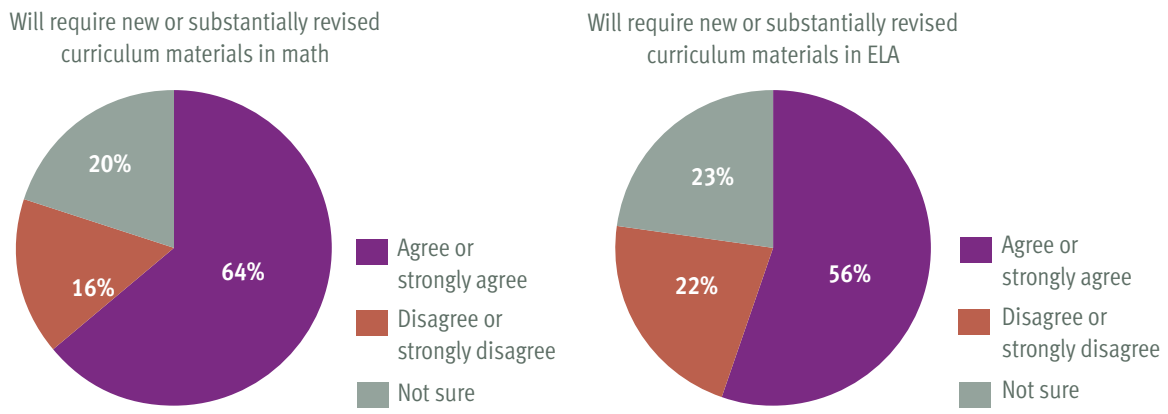

Figure reads: An estimated 64% of school districts in CCSS-adopting states agreed or strongly agreed that implementation of the CCSS in mathematics will require new or substantially revised curriculum materials.

Note: Percentages do not always total 100% due to rounding.

Note: In this figure, if the difference between two estimates is 14% or greater, then the difference is statistically significant. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

***Impact on instruction* — Half of the districts in CCSS-adopting states believe that fundamental changes in instruction will be needed to implement the common core state standards.**

In both math and English language arts, 50% of districts in the adopting states agreed or strongly agreed that the CCSS will require fundamental changes in instruction, as shown in **figure 4**. Less than one-third of the districts disagreed or strongly disagreed that fundamental changes will be needed in math (29%) or English language arts (27%). About one-fifth of the districts were uncertain on this point.

Figure 4. Percentage of districts in CCSS-adopting states that agreed, disagreed, or were not sure that the CCSS will require fundamental changes in instruction

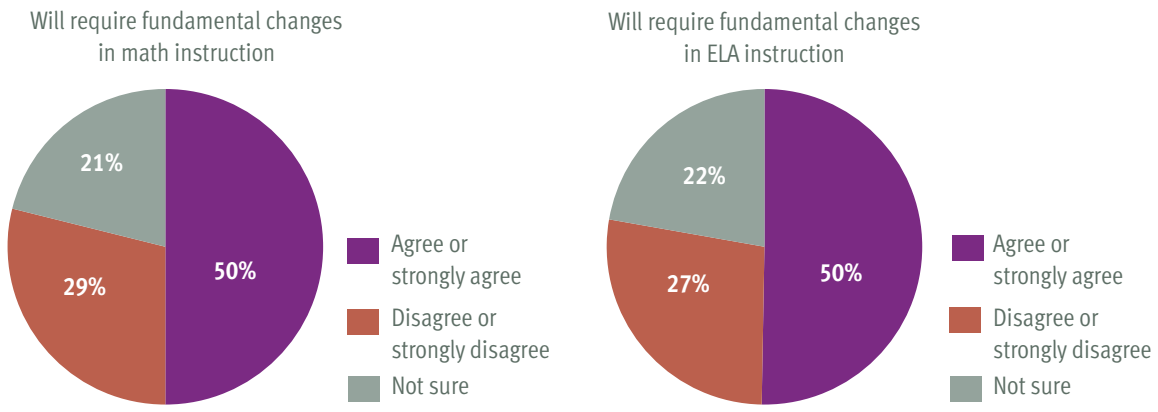

Figure reads: An estimated 50% of school districts in CCSS-adopting states agreed or strongly agreed that the implementation of the CCSS in mathematics will require fundamental changes in instruction in their district.

Note: Percentages do not always total 100% due to rounding.

Note: In this figure, if the difference between two estimates is 14% or greater, then the difference is statistically significant. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

District-Initiated Activities Related to CCSS Implementation

Our survey asked districts in CCSS-adopting states whether each activity in a list of *district-initiated* activities related to CCSS implementation was a) underway or planned in the district for school year 2010-11 and b) planned for school year 2011-12. **Table 1** shows the combined percentages of districts that a) had begun implementing or planning these various activities in 2010-11 and/or b) planned to carry out these activities in 2011-12. The percentages in the table represent districts' activities and plans at the time of our survey in early 2011; the situation may have changed in the intervening months.

Altogether, an estimated 80% of districts had one or more of the activities in table 1 underway or planned for school year 2010-11 and/or 2011-12. The activities being undertaken or planned by the largest percentages of districts include developing a comprehensive plan for CCSS implementation, developing and/or purchasing curriculum materials, and providing professional development. Several activities in the table were being conducted or planned by less than a third of the districts in either school year.

Table 1. Percentage of districts in CCSS-adopting states that had begun to implement or planned to implement various activities related to the CCSS in school years 2010-11 and/or 2011-12

Activity	Percentage of districts in adopting states with activity underway or planned for 2010-11 or 2011-12	
	Math	English language arts
Develop and/or purchase **new curriculum materials** aligned with the CCSS	55%	53%
Develop **new local assessments** (e.g., benchmark assessments, quarterly assessments) to measure student mastery of the CCSS	48%	45%
Provide **professional development** on the CCSS in a specific subject to teachers who teach that subject	47%	45%
Assign **resource teachers** (or staff in similar positions) to assist teachers in integrating the CCSS in classroom instruction	29%	29%
Develop a **comprehensive plan and timeline** for implementing the CCSS	66%	
Design a **teacher evaluation system** to hold teachers accountable for student mastery of the CCSS	30%	
Align content of **educator induction programs** with the CCSS	27%	

Table reads: An estimated 55% of school districts in CCSS-adopting states had developed and/or purchased new curriculum materials aligned with the CCSS in math in school year 2010-11 or planned to do so in school year 2011-12.

Note: In this table, if the difference between two estimates is 15% or greater, then the difference is statistically significant. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix of this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

Not shown in table 1 are the percentages of districts that a) did not implement or plan to implement a specific activity in 2010-11, and b) did not plan to conduct the activity in 2011-12 or said it was too soon to tell. A sizeable share of districts fell into this category—from 34% to 77%, depending on the specific activity.

It is not surprising that many districts had not moved ahead with implementing or planning several CCSS-related activities at the time of our survey. States adopted the standards at different points in time, and in early 2011, even the first wave of states would have had just months to get started with implementation. Districts may have been waiting for additional state guidance in such crucial areas as curriculum, assessments, and teacher induction and evaluation before taking local action. It is likely, for example, that states have provided professional development related to the standards in the summer of 2011, and districts may have been anticipating these state activities before planning their own efforts. Similarly, districts are probably waiting for the state to develop or adopt assessments aligned to the CCSS before revising their local assessments. In addition, a large majority of the nation's school districts experienced budget cuts in school year 2010-11 and are anticipating further cuts in 2011-12, and this may have caused some districts to slow or postpone new reforms, including those related to the CCSS (CEP, 2011a).

Following is a more detailed discussion of each of the broad areas displayed in table 1.

***Comprehensive plan* — Two-thirds of districts in CCSS-adopting states have developed or intend to develop their own comprehensive plan and timeline for implementing the common core state standards.**

Developing a comprehensive plan and timeline was the most common CCSS implementation activity being undertaken or planned by school districts.

***New curriculum materials* — Overall, 61% of the districts in CCSS-adopting states have begun to or plan to take actions to develop and/or purchase new curriculum materials aligned with the CCSS in math and/or English language arts.**

Table 1 breaks out this cumulative percentage by subject: 55% of the districts have developed and/or purchased new curriculum materials aligned to the CCSS or plan to do so in math, and 53% have done so or plan to do so in English language arts. (Some districts are taking action in both subjects.) About one-fifth of districts are both developing and purchasing these materials. The remaining districts—a rounded 46% in math and 47% in English language arts—have not developed or purchased these materials and had no plans to do so in the upcoming school year.

A closer look at the data reveals that in both subjects more districts are developing materials aligned to the CCSS than are purchasing them. This may be because materials aligned to the CCSS are not yet available for purchase, because it is less expensive for districts to develop their own materials, or because they are awaiting additional state guidance about curriculum.

***Professional development* — Altogether, 48% of the districts in CCSS-adopting states have provided or plan to provide professional development on the CCSS for teachers who teach math and/or English language arts.**

Table 1 breaks out this combined percentage by subject: 47% of the districts that have provided or planned to provide professional development for teachers on the CCSS in math, and 45% have done so or plan to do so in English language arts. Thus, at the time of our survey, a majority of the districts—53% in math and 55% in English language arts—had not provided professional development on the CCSS for teachers of these two subjects and had no plans to do so for school year 2011-12.

We also asked districts about the duration of the CCSS-related professional development being provided in these subjects. We found that in each subject, 32% of districts were offering both shorter-term (less than three days) and longer-term (three days or more) professional development.

***Local assessments* — Less than half of the districts in CCSS-adopting states have developed or plan to develop new local assessments to measure student mastery of these standards.**

Roughly 48% of the districts have developed or plan to develop these types of assessments in math, and 45% have done so or plan to do so in English language arts.

***Resource teachers* — Just 29% of the districts in CCSS-adopting states have assigned or plan to assign resource teachers to help teachers integrate the CCSS into their classroom instruction in math and English language arts.**

This proportion of districts was the same for math and English language arts. This is a high-cost strategy, which may explain the relatively low percentage of districts that are employing it.

***Educator induction and evaluation* — Less than one-third of the districts in CCSS-adopting states have changed or plan to change their educator induction or teacher evaluation systems to make them more consistent with the CCSS.**

Twenty-seven percent of the districts have aligned or plan to align the content of their educator induction programs with the CCSS. An estimated 30% have designed or plan to design a teacher evaluation system to hold teachers accountable for student mastery of the CCSS.

Challenges Districts Face in Implementing the CCSS

About three-fourths of the districts in CCSS-adopting states cited inadequate funds to carry out all aspects of standards implementation as a major challenge. About two-thirds of the districts also considered inadequate or unclear state guidance on particular aspects of CCSS implementation to be a major challenge.

Of the possible challenges to CCSS implementation listed in our survey, the largest proportion of districts in the adopting states, 76%, viewed inadequate funds for all aspects of implementation as a major challenge. (See **table 2**). An estimated 21% of the districts considered inadequate funding to be a minor challenge, and 4% did not see it as a challenge.

In addition, sizeable shares of the districts considered inadequate or unclear state guidance in the following areas to be a major challenge: modifying teacher evaluation systems to hold teachers accountable for students' mastery of the standards (53% considered this a major challenge); creating local assessments aligned with the CCSS (48%); and aligning the content of educator induction programs to the CCSS (45%). Altogether, 63% of the districts said they faced a major challenge with inadequate or unclear state guidance in at least one of these areas.

As shown in table 2, many other districts considered inadequate or unclear guidance in these areas to be a minor challenge. Furthermore, 40% of districts in CCSS-adopting states viewed inadequate or unclear information about the state's plan and timeline for implementing the standards as a major challenge, and 47% called this a minor challenge.

Additionally, 47% of districts in the adopting states cited inadequate curriculum materials to support integration of the CCSS in classroom instruction as a major challenge. Forty-two percent of the districts considered inadequate curriculum materials to be a minor challenge.

Resistance to implementing the common core state standards from parents and community members appears to be limited in the vast majority of districts in CCSS-adopting states, as shown in table 2. Only 5% of the districts

viewed parent and community resistance as a major challenge, while 35% considered it a minor challenge, and 60% said it was not a challenge. Resistance from teachers and principals was seen as a major challenge to implementing the standards by just 10% of the districts but was thought to pose a minor challenge by 58%.

Table 2. Percentage of districts in CCSS-adopting states that cited various aspects of CCSS implementation as a major, minor, or no challenge

Challenges associated with district implementation of the CCSS	Major challenge	Minor challenge	Not a challenge
Inadequate funds to carry out all aspects of implementing the CCSS	76%	21%	4%
Inadequate or unclear guidance from the state education agency (SEA) related to modifying the teacher evaluation system to hold teachers accountable for student mastery of the CCSS	53%	35%	12%
Inadequate or unclear guidance from the SEA related to creating local assessments aligned with the CCSS	48%	41%	11%
Inadequate curriculum materials to support integrating the CCSS in classroom instruction	47%	42%	12%
Inadequate or unclear guidance from the SEA related to aligning the content of educator induction programs with the CCSS	45%	42%	13%
Inadequate or unclear information regarding the SEA's plan and timeline for implementing the CCSS	40%	47%	13%
Resistance to implementing the CCSS from teachers and principals	10%	58%	32%
Resistance to implementing the CCSS from parents and community members	5%	35%	60%

Table reads: An estimated 76% of districts in CCSS-adopting states cited inadequate funds to carry out all aspects of implementing the CCSS as a major challenge.

Note: Percentages do not always total 100% due to rounding.

Note: In this table, if the difference between two estimates in any row or column is 14% or greater, then the difference is statistically significant. The exception is that all of the differences between the 4% and the other estimates in that column are statistically significant. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

Local Staff Participation in Information Activities about the CCSS

District staff have already participated in a variety of state, regional, or district activities to become informed about the common score state standards.

In 88% of districts in CCSS-adopting states, staff participated in state or regional meetings to introduce the standards in school year 2010-11, as shown in **table 3**. In 63% of the districts, staff participated in state or regional meetings to plan implementation of the new standards, and in 62% staff participated in state or regional professional development to increase understanding of the CCSS.

Districts have also undertaken their own efforts to inform local staff about the CCSS. Over half of the school districts in CCSS-adopting states have held meetings to introduce these standards (72%) or plan their implementation (61%) or have provided professional development to increase understanding of the CCSS (54%).

Table 3. Percentage of districts in CCSS-adopting states in which district staff, principals, and/or teachers participated in opportunities to learn about the CCSS in school year 2010-11

Opportunities to learn about the CCSS	Percentage of school districts in CCSS-adopting states
State or regional activities	
State and/or regional meetings to introduce the CCSS	88%
State and/or regional meetings to plan implementation of the CCSS	63%
State and/or regional professional development to increase understanding of the CCSS and their implications for instruction	62%
District-sponsored activities	
District meetings to introduce the CCSS	72%
District meetings to plan implementation of the CCSS	61%
District professional development to increase understanding of the CCSS and their implications for instruction	54%

Table reads: In an estimated 88% of school districts in CCSS-adopting states, central office staff, principals, and/or teachers attended a state or regional meeting to introduce the CCSS in school year 2010-11.

Note: In this table, if the difference between two estimates is 16% or greater, then the difference is statistically significant. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

We asked districts about the specific types of staff—central office staff, principals, or teachers—that participated in activities to learn more about the CCSS in school year 2010-11 (not shown in table 3). In general, administrative level staff had more opportunities than teachers to participate in state or regional activities. A greater proportion of districts had central office staff or principals attend state or regional meetings to introduce the CCSS than had teachers attend. Higher proportions of districts had central office staff participate in state or regional planning meetings or professional development on the CCSS than had teachers participate. There were no statistically significant differences among districts by the types of staff attending various district-sponsored activities to learn about the CCSS.

State Strategies to Support District Implementation of the CCSS

Only half or fewer of the districts in CCSS-adopting states had received any of the various supports listed in the survey from their state education agency to assist with district implementation of the standards for 2011-12.

As displayed in **table 4**, 51% of the districts in adopting states had received a comprehensive plan for statewide implementation of the CCSS from their state education agency. Thirty-eight percent of the districts had received guidance or models from their state for developing local assessments aligned with the CCSS, and roughly 34% had received new curriculum materials aligned with the CCSS. About one-third of the districts in the adopting states (32%) had been required by their state to develop plans to implement the CCSS. Less than one-third of the districts had received guidance or models from their state education agency for designing educator evaluation systems (29%) or local educator induction programs (28%) aligned with the standards.

Table 4. Percentage of districts receiving various types of support from their state education agency to assist with district implementation of the CCSS for school year 2011-12

State strategies	Percentage of districts in CCSS-adopting states receiving this type of state support
Disseminate a comprehensive plan for statewide implementation of the CCSS	51%
Provide guidance and/or models for the development of local assessments (e.g., benchmark assessments, quarterly assessments) aligned with the CCSS	38%
Disseminate new curriculum materials aligned with the CCSS	34%
Require districts to develop plans to implement the CCSS	32%
Provide guidance and/or models for the design of local educator evaluation systems aligned with the CCSS	29%
Provide guidance and/or models for the design of local educator induction programs aligned with the CCSS	28%

Table reads: An estimated 51% of school districts in CCSS-adopting states had received a comprehensive plan for statewide implementation of these standards from their state education agency.

Note: In this table, if the difference between two estimates is 17% or greater, then the difference is statistically significant. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

It is not clear why only a minority of districts reported that their state was undertaking most of these strategies. In a CEP survey of state education agencies conducted in the fall of 2010, a majority of the 42 responding states said they planned to change their assessments, curriculum materials, professional development and educator evaluation systems to bring them in line with the CCSS (CEP, 2011b). However, many states did not expect to fully implement some of these changes until 2013 or later. The district responses may indicate that states are focusing on building a statewide infrastructure for the CCSS before assisting districts with local implementation. It is also possible that the strategies being used by states are limited in their reach or that districts are unaware of everything the state is doing. Although it is likely that some states have initiated additional activities since our state and district surveys were administered, it is also possible that budget problems have caused many states to curtail some planned activities to assist districts with CCSS implementation. In our state survey, 19 states noted that finding funds needed to support implementation of the CCSS was a major challenge, and 11 states cited it as a minor challenge (CEP, 2011b).

Conclusion

Implementing the common core state standards in the adopting states will require considerable work by school districts as well as state education agencies. The majority of districts in CCSS-adopting states expect these standards to be more rigorous than the ones they are replacing and anticipate that the CCSS will help to improve students' skills in math and English language arts. Large proportions of the districts also recognize that implementing the CCSS will require new or substantially revised curriculum materials and fundamental changes in instruction.

At the time of our district survey in early 2011, many districts had just begun to make changes in curriculum, instruction, local assessments, professional development, teacher evaluation, and other areas to bring these key elements of education in line with the new standards. Other districts planned to institute changes in these areas in the coming school year. Still others were unsure of their plans. The slow pace or uncertainty in some districts may be due in part to what they see as a lack of clear or sufficient guidance on the CCSS from the state. About two-thirds of the districts in adopting states saw inadequate or unclear state guidance about various aspects of CCSS implementation as a major challenge.

Districts' implementation of the CCSS will very likely depend to on how quickly states put in place the necessary framework. Most of the states responding to our state survey on CCSS implementation expect to accomplish changes in professional development programs by 2012 or earlier, but many do not expect to fully implement major changes in assessment, curriculum, teacher evaluation, and teacher certification until 2013 or later (CEP, 2011b). Moreover, many states do not plan to institute a requirement for local districts to implement the common standards until 2013 or later.

Of greater concern is the fact that critical district actions related to CCSS implementation are being undertaken at a time when local, state, and federal budgets are expected to decrease. Eighty-four percent of the nation's school districts anticipate declining budgets in school year 2011-12, and 54% of the districts with shortfalls expect to respond by slowing progress on, postponing, or stopping education reforms (CEP, 2011a). Another 27% of districts with budget decreases were unsure how these shortfalls would affect education reforms. These findings suggest that funding cuts could slow districts' plans to implement the CCSS. Districts in CCSS-adopting states acknowledge this reality; 76% consider inadequate funds to be a major challenge in implementing the new standards.

Staff in many districts in CCSS-adopting states have participated in meetings and professional development to learn more about the new standards. Still, districts would like more and better state guidance on various aspects of CCSS implementation. State efforts to help districts with implementation may be affected by the state fiscal climate. Twenty-three of the 42 states (including the District of Columbia) that responded to a CEP state survey in the fall of 2010 projected that their operating budgets for 2011 would decrease by 5% or more, and another 6 states projected flat budgets (CEP, 2011c).

In short, the common core state standards hold promise for bringing greater consistency and rigor to key elements of education across states and school districts, but funding problems at all levels of government could hamper this worthwhile initiative.

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