

# IMPROVING OUR COMPETITIVENESS: COMMON CORE EDUCATION STANDARDS

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON

EDUCATION AND LABOR

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, DECEMBER 8, 2009

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## C O N T E N T S

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	Page
Hearing held on December 8, 2009 .....	1
Statement of Members:	
Hon. John Kline, Senior Republican Member, Committee on Education and Labor, prepared statement of .....	53
Miller, Hon. George, Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor .....	1
Prepared statement of .....	3
Thompson, Hon. Glenn, a Representative in Congress from the State of Pennsylvania .....	4
Statement of Witnesses:	
Allen, Cathy, vice chair, St. Mary's County, MD, Board of Education .....	32
Prepared statement of .....	34
Kubach, Douglas, Pearson Assessment & Information .....	29
Prepared statement of .....	31
Additional submissions:	
"Thoughts on an Assessment of Common-Core Standards" .....	54
Pearson response to Race to the Top, Internet address .....	64
Ritter, Hon. Bill, Jr., Governor, State of Colorado .....	6
Prepared statement of .....	8
Wilhoit, Gene, executive director, Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) .....	23
Prepared statement of .....	26
Additional submissions:	
Common Core Standards Memorandum of Agreement .....	64
News release, June 1, 2009, "Forty-Nine States and Territories Join Common Core Standards Initiative" .....	66
"The Common Core State Standards Initiative" .....	67
"The Common Core State Standards Initiative," frequently asked questions .....	68



## **IMPROVING OUR COMPETITIVENESS: COMMON CORE EDUCATION STANDARDS**

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**Tuesday, December 8, 2009**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Education and Labor**  
**Washington, DC**

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The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:00 a.m., in room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. George Miller [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Miller, Payne, Scott, Woolsey, Hinojosa, McCarthy, Tierney, Wu, Holt, Davis, Hirono, Altmire, Clarke, Fudge, Polis, Tonko, Titus, Chu, Petri, Castle, Ehlers, Guthrie, Roe and Thompson.

Staff Present: Tylease Alli, Hearing Clerk; Calla Brown, Staff Assistant, Education; Alice Johnson Cain, Senior Education Policy Advisor (K-12); Denise Forte, Director of Education Policy; David Hartzler, Systems Administrator; Fred Jones, Staff Assistant, Education; Sharon Lewis, Senior Disability Policy Advisor; Stephanie Moore, General Counsel; Alex Nock, Deputy Staff Director; Joe Novotny, Chief Clerk; Lillian Pace, Policy Advisor, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education; Helen Pajcic, Education Policy Associate; Kristina Peterson, Legislative Fellow, Education; Rachel Racusen, Communications Director; Alexandria Ruiz, Administrative Assistant to Director of Education Policy; Melissa Salmanowitz, Press Secretary; Daniel Weiss, Special Assistant to the Chairman; Kim Zarish-Becknell, Policy Advisor, Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities; Mark Zuckerman, Staff Director; Stephanie Arras, Minority Legislative Assistant; James Bergeron, Minority Deputy Director of Education and Human Services Policy; Kirk Boyle, Minority General Counsel; Barrett Karr, Minority Staff Director; Alexa Marrero, Minority Communications Director; Ryan Murphy, Minority Press Secretary; Susan Ross, Minority Director of Education and Human Services Policy; and Linda Stevens, Minority Chief Clerk/Assistant to the General Counsel.

Chairman MILLER. The Committee on Education and Labor will come to order.

This morning our committee meets to hold the second in a series of hearings looking at how we can improve our global competitiveness through State-led adoption of common core standards that are internationally benchmarked.

At our first hearing in April, we learned about the State-led effort to improve academic standards in our schools. Witnesses told us about the momentum and the support from not only the education community, but business leaders and stakeholders from across the political spectrum. I am glad to see bipartisan support come from Members of Congress.

Today, we will hear from our panel about the significant progress that has been made since that hearing. Forty-eight States have now signed on to this initiative. They agree that this State-led effort is critical to regain our role as a world leader in education. They know that we must ensure that all students are prepared for success in college or a career. I couldn't agree more, and we need to do everything we can to support this effort.

One of the problems we have encountered with No Child Left Behind is that the law required every State to set its own academic standards and use assessments aligned to those standards. Without a unified set of strong expectations, many States, unfortunately, chose to lower the bar, creating essentially a race to the bottom. The result is that the standards to which students are held varied widely from State to State. The quality of education a student may receive is left up to the ZIP Code, and it is a matter of geographical luck.

Having 50 different standards in 50 different States undermines the American education system. In this system a high school diploma doesn't guarantee that a student has mastered the academic tools that they will need to compete in today's world. All students should be challenged to develop the complex skills and knowledge they need to succeed in jobs in the future, to be college ready and to be workplace ready.

We are in the process of rebuilding our economy and restoring our competitiveness. That means that focusing not just on the immediate job creation, but what we can do to build a solid economic foundation for generations to come.

Today's students, our future workers, need to be prepared for jobs in high-growth industries, to innovate, and to think creatively to help solve the great challenges of the next generation, but we are still lacking academically compared to other high-performing countries. American students lag about a year behind students in top-performing countries in math. Even our best students perform worse in math than their peers in 22 other countries. Only 1.3 percent of our 15-year-olds in this country performed at the highest level of math on international assessment tests. Yet at the very same time we see States like Massachusetts and Minnesota that run right with the best-performing countries in the rest of the world, outperforming countries such as Norway and Sweden. And so this wide range of performance is very troubling when you are trying to maintain and build a world-class economy and competitiveness.

In the top 10 countries, up to 7 times as many students were performing at the highest level. It is clear we have a lot of work cut out for us.

An important step in this State-led effort is the common core of internationally benchmarked standards that can prepare all children in this country to achieve and succeed in this global economy.

The historic investment we made with President Obama's Recovery Act was a great start. Secretary Duncan's Race to the Top Fund is already helping spur reform in standards and assessments without yet having spent a dollar. This gives us a reason to be optimistic that we will see a seismic shift in the education that this country needs.

A recent survey from the Center on Education Policy showed that States are confident they can meet the assurances required by the Recovery Act, especially to create and adopt rigorous academic standards.

I commend the Governors, the chief State school officers, Achieve, ACT, and the College Board and all of the partners in the common core initiatives for their leadership. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how we can ensure that all students in every State and every grade get a world-class education that fully prepares them for colleges and for careers.

[The statement of Mr. Miller follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. George Miller, Chairman, Committee on  
Education and Labor**

This morning, our Committee meets to hold the second in a series of hearings looking at how we can improve our global competitiveness through a state-led to adopt a common core of internationally benchmarked standards.

At our first hearing in April, we learned about the state-led effort to improve academic standards in our schools.

Witnesses told us about the momentum and support from not just the education community, but business leaders and stakeholders from across the political spectrum.

I was glad to see bipartisan support from Members of this Committee.

Today we will hear from our panel about the significant progress that has been made since that hearing. Forty-eight states have now signed on to this initiative. They agree that this state-led effort is critical to regain our role as a world leader in education.

They know that we must ensure that all students are prepared for success in college or a career.

I couldn't agree more and we need to do everything we can to support their effort. One of the problems we have encountered with No Child Left Behind is that the law required every state to set its own academic standards and use assessments aligned with those standards.

Without a unified set of strong expectations, many states chose to lower the bar—creating a race to the bottom.

The result is that children in Mississippi may not be pushed with the same rigor as children in Massachusetts. The quality of education a student may receive is left up to their zip code. It's a matter of geographical luck. Having 50 different standards in 50 different states undermines America's education system.

In this system, a high school diploma doesn't guarantee that a student has mastered the academic tools they will need to compete in today's world.

All children should be challenged to develop the complex skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the jobs of the future.

We are in the process of rebuilding our economy and restoring our competitiveness.

That means focusing not just on immediate job creation, but also what we can do to build a solid economic foundation for generations to come.

Today's students—our future workers—need to be prepared for jobs in high-growth industries, to innovate, and to think creatively to help solve our next great challenges.

But we're still lacking academically compared with other high-performing countries.

American students lag about a year behind students in the top-performing countries in math. Even our best students performed worse in math than their peers in 22 other countries.

Only 1.3 percent of 15 year olds in this country performed at the highest level in math on an international assessment test. In the top 10 countries, up to seven

times as many students were at the highest levels. It is clear we have our job cut out for us.

An important step is this state-led effort for a common core of internationally-benchmarked standards that can prepare all children in this country to achieve and succeed in this global economy.

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I commend the Governors, chief state school officers, Achieve, ACT, the College Board, and all of the partners in the common core initiative for their leadership.

I look to hearing from our witnesses about how we can ensure that all students, in every state, in every grade, get a world-class education that fully prepares them for college and careers.

Thank you.

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Chairman MILLER. With that, I would like now to recognize Mr. Thompson, the senior Republican this morning on the committee.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Chairman Miller.

We are here today to take a closer look at the Common Core State Standards Initiative and how coordinated efforts to strengthen academic standards can enhance American competitiveness.

The common core initiative is being developed through the joint leadership of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The goal of the initiative is to provide a voluntary research and evidence-based set of standards for mathematics and English language arts. I want to emphasize the word "voluntary" in that description.

While the common core is still under development, I don't believe anyone involved in the initiative intended for it to become the one and only set of academic standards in the United States. For that reason, I would like to focus my remarks this morning not on the quality of the standards themselves, but on what the Federal Government is doing with those standards.

Secretary Duncan has not been shy about his intention to dramatically reshape education through the Race to the Top Fund. One key component in the Race to the Top guidelines is the requirement that States participate in and adopt a set of common academic standards. The Department has even gone one step further, offering to provide funding to help States develop assessments based on those common standards. The only common multistate academic standards that I am aware of are those being developed through the common core initiative; therefore, it stands to reason that any State wishing to receive funding through the Race to the Top program will be mandated to adopt the common core and to test its students based on those standards. In other words, the common core is being transferred from a voluntary, State-based initiative to a set of Federal academic standards with corresponding Federal tests.

I know I can speak for the committee when I say that we applaud the Secretary's enthusiasm when it comes to education reform, yet we have been particularly troubled by this aspect of the Race to the Top guidelines and the ramifications of Federal involvement in academic standards. We know academic standards vary

widely from State to State, and some States have set the bar too low, leaving their students unprepared to compete on the world stage; yet other States have risen to the challenge of setting extremely rigorous standards and holding their students accountable to these high expectations.

The common core has the potential to support those States whose standards are falling short, but mandatory adoption could have the unintended consequence of lowering the bar for States and local communities that have voluntarily established standards even more rigorous than those developed through the common core.

I also have questions about what role parents and local education officials will play if the common core becomes a de facto national curriculum. As a former school board member, I can attest that school boards have been active in the development of academic standards and assessments. We care about the kids that we serve. This allows parents, teachers, and communities to have a voice in what our children are taught. A voluntary common core could serve as a baseline to be modified and enhanced based on local needs, but by mandating adoption of the common core, the Department of Education could undermine the ability of local educators to shape and customize what gets taught in individual classrooms.

The common core initiative is an important tool in the effort to strengthen academic standards, but it is only one element of what should be a much broader strategy on the part of States and local communities working in partnership with the public and private sectors to enhance American competitiveness. I applaud the efforts to develop a voluntary set of rigorous academic standards; however, they must not be undermined by Federal intrusion. I look forward to discussing these concerns with the witnesses today.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman MILLER. I thank the gentleman.

Before we get to our first witness, I want to talk a moment of personal privilege to thank Alice Johnson, who is sitting here to the left of me, who has been with this committee since 2003. Alice will be leaving us shortly for a wonderful professional opportunity in the field of education. But while she has been on this committee and served this committee, she has been relentless in the pursuit of excellence on education on behalf of children and parents and teachers, and the entire education community. She has responded to the needs and the requests of our Members on both sides of the aisle to try to ferret out the best policies and answers and information that can be available to us. She rarely takes "no" for an answer. And if you ask a question, you will probably get an answer back in a matter of a few moments, almost it seems like. As crazy as my requests have been from time to time to look at some issues, she has always responded to them.

She will be joining the Hope Street Group, and I think they will be very fortunate to have her professional talents, her good cheer, her personality, and her willingness to assist others and to impart information to others.

On behalf of the committee, Alice, we want to thank you so very much, wish you well, and tell you how much we appreciate all of the service you have given to this committee over the last several years. Thank you so much.

The side benefit of this is she is going to get to spend more time with her husband Frank, and Shawn and Luke. I know they are looking forward to it.

Thank you.

Our colleague Mr. Polis is going to introduce our first witness. Mr. POLIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Governor Bill Ritter was elected as Colorado's 41st Governor in the year 2006. He and his Lieutenant Governor Barbara O'Brien, who has also appeared before this committee and was one of the original authors of our State charter school law, are leading the efforts on statewide education reform both at the K-12 level and the higher education level. They have created a P-20 Education Council to bring together stakeholders from across the education continuum. They have created a jobs cabinet and, in partnership with lawmakers, the State board of education and educators, are working to reform standards.

Prior to becoming Governor, Mr. Ritter served as the district attorney of Denver for 12 years. He earned his bachelor's degree from Colorado State University and his law degree from the University of Colorado. He served on the Denver Public Schools Commission on Secondary School Reform, and recently was named the Chair of the National Governors Association Education, Early Childhood and Workforce Committee.

Most importantly, he is married to a former schoolteacher, Jeanie, and their eldest child goes to college in my congressional district, University of Colorado in Boulder, and their youngest child is a junior at Denver East High School.

It is my honor to introduce our Governor from the great State of Colorado, Governor Bill Ritter.

Chairman MILLER. Governor, welcome to the committee. Thank you so much for your involvement on this issue, and also for taking your time to come and to give us a bit of a progress report on how it is going.

What we will do is when you begin speaking, there will be a green light. You will have about 5 or 6 minutes to impart the points you want to make to us. There will be an orange light that will tell you you have a minute left. When you are done, we will open it up for questions. I know you have some time constraints, so we will try to get through as many people as we can. When you have to leave, we understand that, so let us know. Welcome.

#### **STATEMENT OF HON. BILL RITTER, JR., GOVERNOR OF COLORADO**

Governor RITTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Thompson and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify to the Common Core State Standards Initiative. On behalf of the National Governors Association and as the Chair of the Education, Early Childhood and Workforce Committee, I am honored to be with all of you today.

Our economy is now truly global. Competitiveness of our education system absolutely must reflect this. To maintain America's competitive edge, all of our students need to be well prepared, ready to compete not only with their American peers, but also with

students from around the world. The State-led development of the common core standards is a critical first step to bring about real and meaningful transformation of State education systems to benefit all students.

I appreciate firsthand how important this effort is to the competitiveness of State workforces, and similarly how important it is to ensure that it remain in the hands of the States. In 2008, I pushed for the development of State-level policy that would align K-12 and higher education standards with the goal of ensuring that all students are ready for entry into postsecondary education or the workforce upon exit from high school. We called this effort the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids, or CAP for K, and it represented the first time Colorado's education systems worked together in earnest on common student-oriented policies. It was truly game-changing education policy in my State. For the first time, we shifted our collective attention from annual assessments and simple punitive accountability policies to a focus on relevancy, student growth, and an expectation that all students, regardless of their station in life, should be prepared for college and career by the time they exit from high school.

From my firsthand experience, I caution that this work takes time to implement well. After nearly 2 years of concentrated effort and deliberate outreach, we are just now at the point of State-level adoption. Next we will turn to developing a new system of assessments, and then to supporting local school district adoption and classroom implementation. We have been moving at near light speed to develop, adopt, and implement these new standards and assessments, but the tools will not be ready for use until 2012.

Although there are 48 States and territories involved in the effort to develop common standards, it is important to respect that each is in a different place regarding its readiness to adopt and implement the common core standards.

I am confident that this process has a great chance for success, but adoption of new standards is simply a step toward meaningful education reform. So I return to the critical point: The common core standards initiative is and must be a State-led effort. Adoption of the common core is and must be voluntary for States.

A decision to adopt will be made in every State by State and local leaders working with teachers, parents, businesses and citizens. To develop the standards, NGA and the CCSSO have been using the best available evidence both nationally and internationally. The first round of stated options should be considered version 1.0. Future and ongoing revisions are inevitable and necessary. Moreover, future research will inform improvements and expand the body of evidence.

States are already planning for the sustainability of this work and the possible development of standards in additional subjects. Congress can support participating States by setting high expectations for results and allowing Governors to lead. Give us the clear authority to experiment, innovate and define how to get the work done. Governors need your leadership and assistance. The Federal Government has a critical supporting role to unleash the power of State-led action. Common core standard initiative is just a tip of the iceberg on the power of State-led action.

In the next few months, we expect to begin working on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Ideally, this effort would replicate the State-Federal partnership that I just described. Work must remain on assessments, accountability, human capital, research and development, and so much more. Governors are committed and eager to work with the committee on this reauthorization.

So again, Chairman Miller and members of the committee, on behalf of the Governors across the Nation, I really appreciate the opportunity to address you today, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you very much for your testimony.  
[The statement of Governor Ritter follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Bill Ritter, Jr., Governor, State of Colorado; Chair, Education, Early Childhood and Workforce Committee, National Governors Association**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Kline, and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify on the Common Core State Standards Initiative. On behalf of the National Governors Association and as Chair of the Education, Early Childhood and Workforce Committee, I am honored to be with you today.

Our economy is now truly global, and the competitiveness of our education system must reflect this. To maintain America's competitive edge, all of our students need to be wellprepared and ready to compete not only with their American peers, but also with students from around the world. The stated development of common core standards is a critical first step to bring about real and meaningful transformation of state education systems to benefit all students.

I know through my experience upgrading Colorado's state standards how important these decisions are to setting the path for our state education's progress.

*Update on Common Core State Standards Initiative*

Since my colleague Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue testified before this committee in April 2009, states have made marked progress in improving our education systems compared to international benchmarks. Forty-eight states, two territories and the District of Columbia have joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative, which charges the National Governors Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to jointly develop common core standards in English language arts and mathematics by February 2010.

I believe that this initiative has a high probability for success. Several major national organizations, including the Alliance for Excellent Education, the American Association of School Administrators, the American Federation of Teachers, the Business Roundtable, the Council of Great City Schools, the Hunt Institute, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the National Education Association, the National Parent Teacher Association, and the State Higher Education Executive Officers are supporting the initiative. Endorsing partners also include businesses such as GlaxoSmithKline and the Intel Corporation.

The stated common core process is intended to produce "fewer, clearer, and higher" standards that are research and evidence based as well as internationally benchmarked. In preparing these standards, we drew examples from the most competitive states in the nation. The goal is to ensure that all students who meet these new standards will have the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college and a career, thereby improving the nation's competitiveness in today's global economy.

On behalf of participating states, NGA and CCSSO are taking responsibility for the production of the standards. These organizations have solicited the input of a number of leading experts and practitioners to assist in the development of college and career readiness and K12 standards for English language arts and mathematics. In addition, the organizations have sought input from states, content groups, educators' associations, and the general public. This feedback will be used to refine drafts and ensure that the standards are informed by the best research and practice. Finally, a validation committee of independent national experts—all of whom were nominated by state and national organizations' leaders and confirmed by governors—will conduct a final review of the standards process and products.

The final draft of the standards will be released in February 2010. A public draft of the college and career readiness standards was released in September 2009; NGA and CCSSO received nearly 1,000 survey responses to these standards. All the public comments are being reviewed, and work groups will determine the revisions necessary to respond to the comments received. The first public draft of the K12 standards will be available in January 2010. A detailed description of the development process as well as information about individuals and organizations involved in the process is available on [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org). A summary chart explaining the process is also enclosed with this testimony.

#### *State Adoption of Standards*

Once the standards have been finalized, states will decide whether to adopt the English language arts and mathematics standards for the students in their states. Let me stress this important point: The adoption of the stated and developed common core state standards is voluntary and allows for public input. States that choose to adopt the standards will be responsible for demonstrating that they have adhered to the terms of adoption. This is and must remain a stated effort.

The appropriate authority in each state, working with state and local leaders, teachers, and parents, will make the decision whether to adopt the standards. For many states, a state board of education will make this decision; in other instances, the chief state school officer, governor and/or legislature may play a role in the decision. The stated process of adoption will take time and will vary from state to state. The NGA/CCSSO process gives states up to three years to adopt.

#### *State Leadership for Education Improvement*

Governors recognize that the adoption of a strong set of academic standards is just an initial step toward upgrading state education systems. States have both the authority and the responsibility to provide students with a high-quality education, and many states are already deeply engaged in efforts to raise standards, advance teaching quality, and improve lowperforming schools. International benchmarking provides an additional tool for making that process more effective, offering insights and ideas that cannot be garnered solely from looking within and across state lines.

Governors are encouraged that many states have begun to move forward on the first of five bold recommendations included in the Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S. Students Receive a WorldClass Education report issued by the National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and Achieve, Inc. The highlevel advisory group that participated in the development of this report, including Colorado's chief, Commissioner Dwight Jones, unanimously agreed to five statelevel action steps:

- Upgrading state standards by adopting a common core of internationally benchmarked standards in math and language arts for grades K12 to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to be globally competitive;
- Leveraging states' collective influence to ensure that textbooks, digital media, curricula, and assessments are aligned to internationally benchmarked standards and draw on lessons from highperforming nations and states;
- Revising state policies for recruiting, preparing, developing, and supporting teachers and school leaders to reflect the human capital practices of topperforming nations and states around the world;
- Holding schools and systems accountable through monitoring, interventions, and support to ensure consistently high performance, drawing upon international best practices; and
- Measuring statelevel education performance against global benchmarks by examining student achievement and attainment in an international context to ensure that, over time, students receive the education they need to compete in the 21st century economy.

With a set of common standards in place, states may be in a position to move forward with several of these important recommendations.

NGA will soon release a publication proposing an approach to a common and comprehensive state assessment system that would maximize alignment with the common core standards; allow for comparisons across students, schools, districts, and states; and form the foundation for a new accountability system, while ultimately providing information that supports effective teaching and learning and prepares students for college and postsecondary careers.

#### *Federal Government Support*

While governors believe states must lead the international benchmarking and common state standards development effort, the federal government can play a crit-

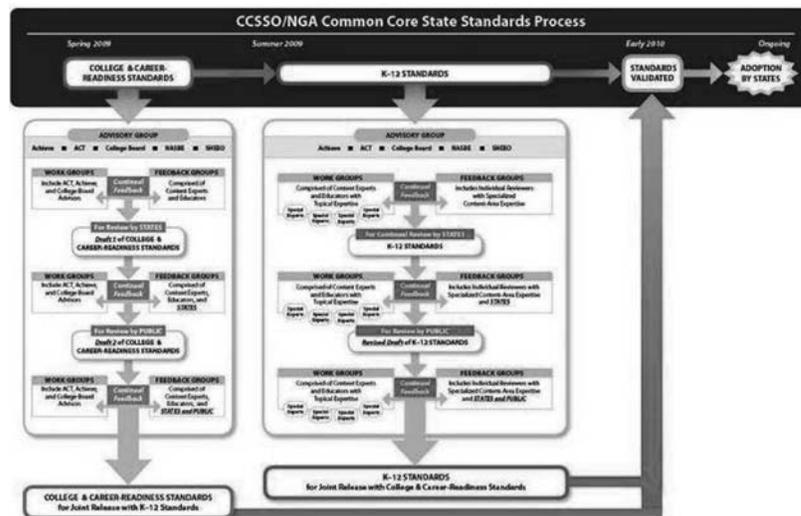
ical role to support statelevel reform efforts—specifically, one that is less restrictive and mandatedriven and more encouraging of innovation.

Through the creation of the Race to the Top Fund, Congress and the Administration took the first step in shifting the focus of federal policy from a punitive, mandatedriven compliance system toward a federalstate partnership that supports stateled innovation. For example, the Race to the Top Fund competition provides carrots—not sticks—to voluntary state adoption of common standards. Moreover, the federal government also wisely recognized that standards must be led and developed by states, for states. For this reason, I would like to thank this committee, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Administration for recognizing governors’ requests to extend the timeline for adoption of state standards as part of the Race to the Top application. Governors appreciate the acknowledgement of states’ individual contextual adoption requirements.

Moving forward, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act will be a critical opportunity to rethink and evolve the new federalstate partnership and capitalize on the power of stateled innovations to improve education. Much work remains, and governors stand ready to work with the committee on this important reauthorization.

*Conclusion*

In this time of economic difficulty, we recognize more than ever the importance of educational preparation to the wellbeing of our citizens, our states, and this nation. Thank you for your ongoing interest and support for a stateled process to develop a common core of state standards.



Chairman MILLER. You raised the issue which I think many of us on this committee have heard or have discussed with education leaders in our own States, and that is sort of the constant question of how to meld our current standards with the changes we will have to make. Many States would argue that their standards may be better, higher, whatever the adjective is that you want to use, and other States’ clearly are not sufficient. How does that melding process take place so we end up with a common standard, we end up with an internationally benchmarked standard so we know how our students are doing compared with our competitors in a very competitive economy?

Governor RITTER. One of the things that should be recognized, like you mentioned and I mentioned, 48 States are participating in

that. That participation alone is helpful in knowing where the standards fall out relative to what States already have in place.

Secondly, the ambition has always been that the standards be set high, and that we not do what we have done in other situations where we set the standards lower in order to make sure that there is achievement and progress as defined by law.

Really these standards are rigorous, and the intention has always been not to back off on rigor. We believe at the end of the day they will be fairly rigorous.

It is interesting, we were in the process—apart from the National Governors Association process, the State of Colorado was in the process of forming our own content standards, and when we received the first draft from the policymakers, there was very much sort of an early alignment, because States are thinking the same way about this. And there is a fair body of evidence about what rigorous standards look like.

For our purposes, we believe there will be more alignment than you might expect when you have 48 States working on it because of the body of evidence that has been built up about what is necessary to be rigorous and benchmark it internationally.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

One of the tensions in No Child Left Behind is that because we took the States as we found them when we passed the law, the challenge really is to meet how your children are doing against your State standards, be that what it was, and States have changed their standards back and forth. But when you go to try to hold districts and States accountable, they very often say, we have higher standards, so it is more difficult for the same number of students to make AYP as in another State. You constantly hear this back and forth, that the system isn't fair because of the differences in State standards that exist to date. And it raises a lot of political tensions because the theory is that "we should be given some leeway because our standards are higher. That State is doing better because their standards are lower." It is an interesting political discussion, but it doesn't tell us where we should be in terms of the performance of students against what standards.

But I assume as States make the decision, should they make the decision, to participate, that argument sort of goes by the wayside, and if you have an ability to have a good growth model, we will be able to determine whether States across the country are making the kind of progress that is necessary.

Governor RITTER. Mr. Chairman, I think that is correct, because the starting point is that we believe it is important for our students to compete globally, compete with other kids across the world. So we start with the notion what is it going to take for them to do that. You have to look at the concentration of higher ed degrees as just one measure of that, but in order to get to the place where we can compete there, we have to look at the K-12 system and ask, how are kids doing in terms of how they come out of high school, what numbers are graduating, what percentage, and then what remediation is necessary for kids when they enter higher ed? And all of those things are part of where you want to wind up in terms of defining it.

For our purposes, a common set of standards that are internationally benchmarked allows us to think about that end point, where we want kids to end up. And then, as you said, growth-modeling that where you change the standards, but you also change the assessments and the way to assess that and then model it, see how kids are doing along the spectrum, and there is more commonality among States in doing that. You have a better way to answer the question about how these kids will do when they compete on a global level or compete even among other States. There is a real ambition on the part of the Department of Education to ensure that there is benchmarking among States as a way for us to measure as well. So I think it does do away with some of the complaints that our State might be different, and therefore we are being punished unfairly by what was in the past No Child Left Behind.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

Mr. Thompson.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Governor Ritter, thank you so much for coming here and providing your testimony today and your leadership on early childhood education as part of the association. I very much appreciate it.

I have heard from a number of States that have high academic standards that they support the common core initiative, but may not adopt its final standards because their own existing State standards are higher, somewhat related to the conversation you just had. Right now it is too early to know since the standards are still under development, yet these States will be penalized for not adopting common standards if they choose to compete for the Race to the Top.

The Department is, in effect, encouraging some States to lower their State standards, which I think is an extremely bad idea. I am not sure that you have talked to the Department about their involvement within this initiative. Why would they decide to put this requirement in the Race to the Top? What has been the response to these concerns raised by these States?

Governor RITTER. I have actually spoken with the Secretary about Race to the Top. And, again, in my role as the Chair of the Education, Early Childhood and Workforce Committee at the National Governors Association, we have had these conversations.

First of all, I think the ambition here is that States look at content standards as an important part of reform, and that if States have standards that they have set higher than what might ultimately become the common core standards or when we are ready for States to look at them to adopt them, I think that is a good problem to have.

We did talk with the Secretary about this notion that there must be some kind of compliance with the standards in order to compete in the Race to the Top, and it is clear to me that you don't have to have identical standards, but you do have to have some level of compliance in order for you—I think you are going to have to—as a State going to have some level of compliance because of this ambition of developing content standards.

I think we were the first State in the country—and I think Texas is maybe second or may have done it kind of contemporaneously with us—the first State in the country to actually rework all of our

content standards. This is something that the Department of Education has as an ambition, and one of the ways for States to be able to compete is to understand that important role. If you leave it out altogether, it doesn't necessarily get done, and I think that is what the Department of Education is trying to focus on. I am not trying to speak for them.

What I can tell you is we as Governors think it is important that this process was State led, and we have had the participation we have had from States, and we do know there are States that may have participated and at the end of the day may not adopt. But the fact of the matter is we have what we believe is a great evidence-based product that States can look to and know to get us to a place where we are comfortable saying it is something we can benchmark against internationally.

Mr. THOMPSON. I certainly support your commitment that these are—the setting standards, for the States to do that and making it voluntary.

As a former school board member, I am always, I guess, curious to see within the process as these are being developed. I know they are still under development. As opposed to a Race to the Top, I have always defaulted to raising, developing each child's individual potential, and while we have children that certainly are destined for a 4-year college program and that kind of academic preparation, we have children who are going to do extremely well in trade school or technology training or community college. Some of those we are preparing just to go into the workforce, or those who may choose go into the military and serve the country and develop a trade or a skill there.

Based on your interaction looking at this program, is the program that flexible to be able to address the needs of each individual child's potential as opposed to a cookie-cutter approach, which is kind of what the Federal Government has imposed on our States and local school boards up to this point?

Governor RITTER. The first part of this common core standards initiative has been about two things: math and English language arts. We have developed the common standards with those two things and have not gone to the other parts of the education system because we had to start somewhere, and I think there is not right now agreement necessarily on whether or not you can develop common standards on vocational and technical education.

I will tell you, Governors, I think, understand the importance of technical and vocational education. We passed in Colorado this past year a concurrent enrollment bill that allows students to stay in high school and get both a high school diploma and an associate's degree, and I think we are the first State in the country to make that available statewide. Those associate degrees very much can be out of a vocational or technical discipline.

It was important for us as part of thinking about how to get kids to graduate from high school to give them some additional light at the end of the tunnel, and these common standards won't change that. What they have changed is the fundamentals that are necessary to be able to get through a high school program and then really to be able to manage some type of a college curriculum. Whether it is a junior or community college, you have to start with

math and English language arts in order just to have the fundamentals in place.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, sir.

Chairman MILLER. Mrs. McCarthy.

Mrs. MCCARTHY. Thank you, Governor, for being here and testifying.

As you were testifying, I was thinking about a couple of my schools back in my district. One school is certainly in a very diverse community. I have toured that school for a couple of years now. From seeing the principal, the superintendent, the teachers and students, they have all set higher standards for all of them. And I think one of the important things that we learned from this particular school was that everybody expected them to do better, these parents, which we know is probably the most difficult part, trying to get the community involved with the students' life.

My district is changing on a yearly basis. I have several schools that are failing, constantly failing. One school was taken over from the State almost 5 years ago, still no improvement. I am trying to think where does this all start?

I know my State is changing from the Board of Regents on what they are going to be doing as far as the teaching colleges in our State. Many feel our teachers are graduating not with the knowledge that they need to be able to teach. And what always blew my mind is that the youngest teachers start with kindergarten, first, second, and third grade, and yet we know that is the most important time to reach these students.

Also, the diversity of language in many of our States now, I certainly see in my district, some districts have to teach eight or nine languages and deal with the children on trying to get them through. With the younger students we are doing fine. Junior high and up, we end up losing our students. That is a shame because they end up going into gangs.

I see where my State is going, and I see where you are certainly talking about the flexibility. Many of us thought Leave No Child Behind, we were actually going to look at the child, individually, and then work with that child to meet their best potential. So I guess what I am looking at as we go for Race to the Top, it is a nice title, but I still have concerns are we going to be able to do this.

Your State has taken a lead. All Governors should be taking a lead mainly because it is profitable for the State. If you have well-educated students in your State, you will have businesses come to your State, technology come to your State. It is good for the country.

One other thing. I belong to what they call the NATO Parliamentarians, and education is one of the big topics we always talk about. And yet I hear from ministers of education constantly that they talk about our students, even though the scores are a little lower, that our children are the most innovative, and how do we teach everything that we want to do in a 7-hour day? That is where I guess I am going.

I certainly applaud Colorado for doing what you are doing, but with that being said, I think we have a lot on our plate. I agree that States have to be flexible.

The other end, I hope we don't leave out those children with special needs and children with language difficulties. And I guess how are we going to be dealing with that into the future?

Governor RITTER. Thank you.

Let me just say a couple of things. The National Governors Association Chair chooses a theme, and 2 years ago, maybe 3, the theme was innovation. How do we in America remain the innovators? That is what distinguishes us from other places around the globe and can help us compete. If you talk about innovation, the conversation gets back to the education system. It just did. Every conversation we had, everybody who appeared, the private sector CEOs came in, and at the end of the day they talked about how important it was for us to maintain an education system that inspired innovation.

Our thinking in Colorado is not that much different from other States in the country, which is that it is not just one thing. Content standards are a helpful way to think about changing from stem to stern the tools that teachers might have, to say how do we ensure that the right fundamentals are in place?

But for us in Colorado, at-risk kids who were on a waiting list to go into State preschool programs were not getting an opportunity. Once they turned 5, if they were on a waiting list, they didn't wait. They went into kindergarten without preschool. Quite frankly, we have had the State program long enough to know that we can more than double the graduation rate of at-risk kids if we put them into a quality preschool. That is like one thing that is going to have a payoff in 14 years, but not for 14 years when we begin to see those kids who are now 3 years old graduating from high school.

Full-day kindergarten is also important in this mix. Looking at standards that were developed for 3- and 4-year-olds was part of our thinking. We also looked at middle schools where they have difficult issues, challenges of kids not being proficient in many respects, and trying to put additional counselors into those middle schools to help them with what is necessary to get them to a place where they are more successful in high school.

And then we have done a variety of things as it relates to high school and aligned our standards with higher ed, and all of that is a quick summary of things we have been working on, because we really do believe there is not just one thing. I think as a country we have to view it that way.

I would say as it relates to special needs kids, I think in this country we think the right way about special needs kids. I believe the right amount of dollars are being invested. There could probably be some more things that would be helpful, but there is some flexibility with respect to what school districts can do with the money that flows to them for special needs. But my sense is that we try very hard to accommodate special needs kids in the public school districts of America and do a pretty good job.

We have been working on this for three legislative sessions, and it is clear to me how many different things you need to bring together in order at the end of the day to make it about student learning.

Teacher effectiveness, you mentioned that as well, and we are working with our schools that educate teachers who are going into the public school system. We are working with higher ed to ensure that we have the right way of instructing them and then asking questions: How do we retain the good ones and ensure they are quality teachers? Those are all part of a fairly, I think, difficult conversation sometimes, but a fairly important conversation if you are going to really get at student learning.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Castle.

Mr. CASTLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Governor, you have obviously talked at length about the common core standards, and I think there are 48 States involved in this, including my State of Delaware. If they are adopted in some way or another, that could be good. But I am a little concerned about the assessments. You mentioned the assessments, but you didn't go into any details on it. Would there be common assessments that would be developed at the same time, or would each State be allowed to have its own assessments? How is that being looked at by the NGA and chief State school officers, et cetera?

Governor RITTER. Going back to our experience as a State where we developed common standards and believed it was important to retool the assessments so that they measured how you were doing against those standards, and we are in the process of doing that right now, but I believe it would be important to retool the assessments for those States that want to participate and adopt common core standards. They are going to have to do that.

Mr. CASTLE. Do you think they would be common so everybody would have more or less the same assessments?

Governor RITTER. I think so. I shouldn't speak for the National Governors Association because I haven't been a part of that conversation with the National Governors Association; but my sense is, yes, it should happen. This is not—and I don't want to make it sound like it is—easy, but at the same time, like I said, when we developed our standards, and we saw the first draft coming out of the National Governors Association and the CCSSO, those standards very much looked like what we had already put in place. And I suspect that is true of assessments as well.

There is a lot that we do in this country that involves common assessments. It is not a foreign concept. If you think about the ACT or the SAT or things of that nature, it is just that we haven't done it in a fashion that, number one, uses the technology that is now available to us, or that allows us to do it on an ongoing basis. But absolutely I think we have the ability to develop common assessments that States can adopt or not adopt that help them measure against the progress of the standards.

Mr. CASTLE. I am concerned about how the States will react if there are common standards as well as the assessments, and all of a sudden you are in a State that may be ranked 45th, as opposed to fifth, and you may say, I don't want any part of this. The concept, to me, makes a lot of sense. It is like the NAEP tests make a lot of sense to a degree, but Governors are very wary of that as well.

It concerns me that you are going to have trouble getting all the States to cooperate and agree on this. If you start having some-

thing where people can look at it and rank it, which in many ways I think it would be good because it forces the States that are not doing well to do more, but I am not sure how happy the Governors and legislators are going to be in those States.

Governor RITTER. I think we all agree the education system has to improve. The public education system in America has to improve. We have to graduate more kids than we currently do. Those kids should need less remediation to go to college than they currently do. We need to do a better job benchmarking internationally. If that is your aspiration, we need to be willing to submit to the hard realities that some States are going to do better than others, and then put in front of them some aspiration how to get to a better place. I think this notion of allowing States to benchmark among themselves is also very valuable because you can group yourself with other States. Again, you want it to be a competition that is about being rigorous and about inspiring schools to do better.

My dealings with educators, not just in my own family, Mr. Polis mentioned that I was married to a schoolteacher, but my dealing with educators is largely that they want to do better and figure this out. I think the same is true of Governors and legislators.

Mr. CASTLE. I tend to agree, and I think your answer is very properly idealistic. But if you are a Governor who is going to come in with low rankings and wants to get reelected, watch out trying to get them signed up and be involved with this. I think political concerns can get in the way of it all. I hope it doesn't, but that is a part that concerns me a great deal.

My other concern is what, if anything, do you think Congress should be doing to react to this? I have been following this and following what Governors have been saying, et cetera. Right now you developed the standards and assessments anyhow. Whatever we do with No Child Left Behind, which will involve some fundamental changes next year probably, do we just leave it up to the States as we do now to develop the standards and assessments, and within that context you can do what you have to do to follow the course that you are following at this time?

Governor RITTER. I just took a swing through the eastern part of my State. It is very rural. We had discussion with educators about some of the difficulties they continue to have with No Child Left Behind. Part of it was the punitive nature of that. Some of the goals that were set are going to be hard, if not impossible, to achieve, and they look at being punished by that if nothing were to change.

And so in discussing this very thing, the Governors and with my own policy people, what can Congress do and what can the Federal Government do to assist us, I think the Federal Government has a role in helping us continue to set goals. We need to do a better job. We have to look at our graduation rate and say that is not acceptable in a 21st century world to have 25 percent of the kids drop out of high school. What is the goal going to be?

I think the Department of Education is doing a very good job of setting goals of the number of kids that must graduate from college, and backing that up saying, if that is the case, how do you get those kids into a 4-year program? What does that mean for

graduation rates? And in order to change the graduation rate by 2020, what are the things that you have to do today? That is the most helpful thing.

I think the punitive aspects of No Child Left Behind have actually received a greater focus from school districts than if we had said, this is the goal, how do we organize around this value or goal, and then look at best practices that we at the National Governors Association are pretty proud of and say, what kinds of best practices then help us move toward that goal?

I know that sounds pretty idealistic, but we are doing this in a concrete way in Colorado where it is very much goal-oriented. We set an ambition for ourselves to cut the dropout rate in half in 10 years from 2 years ago, and that gives us an organizing goal, an organizing value, and that makes a difference to educators when you articulate that.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Polis.

Mr. POLIS. Thank you, very much.

First, I would like to congratulate you, Governor Ritter, for being selected as Chair of the NGA's education committee this past July. Your appointment recognizes Colorado's major education reforms that you and Lieutenant Governor O'Brien have initiated since taking office in 2007. In this position with the NGA, you can help shape the national dialogue over education reform that President Obama and this Congress have launched with a bold vision and a strong commitment to excellence and opportunity for all.

I want to thank you for providing this update on the State-led development on common core State standards, which is an essential component in our Nation's effort to transform our education system so it provides all students with the skills and knowledge needed to successfully compete and thrive in the global economy.

As Governor you spend a lot of time working to bring new businesses to Colorado and helping existing companies grow, something that is high on the agenda of all of our Governors, particularly as our Nation faces a recession. Promoting green energy jobs and strengthening Colorado's competitiveness both in the U.S. And internationally has been a major focus of your administration. Can you please discuss with us the importance of a high-quality education system and a highly skilled workforce in your economic development efforts and conversations with domestic and global businesses? How do you think the common core standards initiative will help improve our innovation and economic growth both as a Nation and for the States who adopt internationally benchmarked standards?

Governor RITTER. Thank you, Mr. Polis.

Mr. Chairman, I don't know that I have ever had an economic development conversation with a company that didn't ask questions about our education system, or before they spoke to me at least there were other conversations about that. Certainly partly people care about how their own kids will be educated. If they move into a State or will be moving employees in, they want to market that State based upon the education system. But they also care about the readiness of the workforce.

I think there are a lot of businesses in America, small businesses, moderate or middle-sized and big businesses, that are con-

cerned about workforce readiness and the level of training that is needed once they hire people, because the education system in some respects has not provided the levels of education necessary. Again, remediation is what we call it when a person enters into higher ed and needs to go back and do things over that they should have learned in high school, but that is also a concern on the part of employers. So we are very proud. We have the second highest concentration of higher ed degrees of any State in America in Colorado. That is something that is very impressive to employers.

We have been focusing on what we call 21st century industries with sustainable jobs: clean energy, aerospace, bio science, life science, and then information communication technology. Those are industries that are part of our focus. Those are all fairly intense industries that require—for our part require a workforce that has something beyond just a high school diploma, and even in the skilled workforce, some kind of additional training.

We have partnered with community colleges to find ways to ensure that they are participating in our training of these, of this part of the workforce. We brought in Danish companies. We had recently a German manufacturer of solar inverters who decided to come to Colorado. It is the first place in the world that they are going to make solar inverters outside of Germany, and it has everything to do with a variety of factors, not the least of which is our education system.

Mr. POLIS. I am glad to hear that our efforts in education reform are leading to tangible improvements and jobs in Colorado and the economy, and are a major selling point that you as Governor and other promoters of Colorado use in bringing businesses to Colorado.

In your testimony you mentioned that your experience upgrading Colorado State standards was critical. I want you to describe some of the key efforts in Colorado to increase rigor in our schools and also to better align K-12 and postsecondary education. Specifically, I would like you to discuss how the work of your P-20 Education Coordinating Council that you established helped pave the way for Colorado to become one of the first States in the Nation to align its academic policies from preschool all the way through higher education.

Governor RITTER. Our starting point was the appointment of this P-20 Council. And with all due respect to educators, we thought it was important to have subject matter experts help us develop policy. We thought it was important to sort of remove ideology from the debate and form a bipartisan group of people who would really work in the world of preschool through postgraduate work. That is the 20 in P-20; 4 years after you have completed a college degree, if you are still in some kind of an advanced degree program, we really think about how to align standards.

We had the first meeting in the history of the State of Colorado between our Commission on Higher Education and the State board of education to adopt these standards. We had never met before to really ask the question: How do we align standards? So we said it wasn't just what you got K through 12, but ensured that there was participation by the higher education system to say, you want to manage your curriculum in your first year of college, this is what is necessary when you graduate.

Thirty percent of our kids graduating from Colorado high schools needed remedial help; whether it was a junior college, a community college or a 4-year college, 30 percent of those kids needed remedial help. So for our purposes, we aligned based upon the recommendations of the P-20 Council about really how to do that.

Mr. POLIS. Thank you.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman MILLER. Just for the information of the Members, Mr. Guthrie and then Ms. Chu will ask questions of the Governor, and then the Governor will have to leave. We are expecting a vote relatively shortly, but we will try to get the second panel in place, and we will begin the questioning with those who haven't had an opportunity to question in this round.

Mr. Guthrie.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will just ask one quick questions.

Thank you for coming. I was in the State legislature, and it is where the rubber meets the road in education. There were a couple of minutes in the introduction about setting performance-based goals measured against global benchmarks. What kinds of global benchmarks and what kind of process are you setting? Have you already started working on those benchmarks? And just the process, just elaborate. That is all I will be asking.

Governor RITTER. I think the Chairman alluded to the fact that we know where we stand in terms of proficiency as it relates to other States and other countries and how those students performed in math and science and different language abilities. We can then look at ourselves and benchmark it against other countries and ask the question, how do we do a better job? How do we get more kids who are proficient in math or who perform at the highest levels in math? That is the kind of benchmarking that we are talking about. That data is there. The data is available. We already in some respects are able to benchmark against that, and so then the question is how do we measure progress as we use those standards?

Mr. GUTHRIE. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman MILLER. Ms. Chu.

Ms. CHU. Governor Ritter, your testimony mentions how the Obama administration is providing carrots, not sticks, to encourage States to toughen academic standards. However, California standards are already rigorous. If California were to adopt the proposed standards, there is the possibility that students wouldn't be able to meet the requirements for admission to California State University and the University of California. I know that you said you would want to have the highest standards, as I learned from your earlier discourse, but how would your initiative address States with higher standards?

Governor RITTER. Again, the Department of Education has to decide what it ultimately wants to do with these common core standards. For us it has been a State-led process that has involved 48 out of the 50 States, including California, in the writing of those. We demanded rigor. They are not fully completed yet, so I am not sure how States can come in and say that our standards are higher than these standards, but at the end of the day, they can adopt them or decide not to adopt them. What we are trying to do is set

a high bar, and we believe that that has been part of our process is finding a way to set a pretty high bar, rigorous bar, that pulls States up.

So not being familiar with the California standards or able to say—I guess not being able to accept the premise is what I am saying, we have tried to make it so these standards are such that States don't fall above them, that they actually are a good measure of where States should find themselves when they are considering it. And at the end of the day, it is absolutely voluntary on the part of the States to see if they want to do that or not.

Even in my discussions with the Secretary, they are not demanding 100 percent compliance with these standards. They are asking that there be some kind of substantial compliance if you are going to get Race to the Top money. But Race to the Top, while it is important, it is one thing. If States have done a better job of adopting standards than what we are doing at the National Governors Association, I say that is a really good problem to have.

Ms. CHU. It sounds to me like you have taken a substantial role in upgrading standards in Colorado. What was the greatest challenge in doing so?

Governor RITTER. In Colorado, it is very much a local system. It is based upon local school districts. In a population of 5 million people, we have 175 or 178 school districts, and ensuring that you take into consideration the special needs of those school districts. There are very different characteristics in those, and to adopt a common set of content standards that really can be something implemented in each of those districts is going to require a great deal of work, and that is why I said it takes some time to do that. That has been our greatest challenge is to ensure that it is something that works for all 178 school districts.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Governor, following up on Mr. Polis' question, can you say a quick word about how competitive the United States can be internationally in business if we continue to languish at the bottom in math and science and education?

Governor RITTER. I think the Lumina Foundation maybe has done the best work on this. The Lumina Foundation looked at where we were when my generation—and I am 53 years old—my generation sort of came out of college, and 37 percent of us had higher ed degrees. My son's generation, he is 23 years old. Those 25 to 34 years old, 25 percent of them have a college degree. We have actually lost ground. We are the first generation to have another generation beyond us lose ground in concentration of higher ed degrees.

Meanwhile, Japan is over 50 percent. South Korea is over 50 percent. Most Scandinavian countries are at where we are or have exceeded where we are. So we can't continue to lose ground against other countries in terms of how well educated our population is without also losing a competitive edge. I think that is a way to think about this. It is absolutely important for us to focus on what the end game is, and the end game is that other places in this world, there are more students receiving college degrees than when my generation came out of college. And in order for us to really

maintain our competitive edge, we have to solve that issue. We don't solve that issue without solving the issue of what is happening in K-12 with respect to our dropout rate, but maybe more importantly with respect to how we are working with the fundamentals and our inability to really compete because of our math and English grades.

Mr. SCOTT. And because when the corporations make their decisions, they look at that, and if we don't show good numbers, they are going somewhere else.

Governor RITTER. Absolutely. They very much care about that.

Mr. SCOTT. You mentioned the study of the waiting list on preschool and the effect on graduation rates. Did that study also show the cost-effectiveness of preschool compared to the cost of remedial education on crime and welfare?

Governor RITTER. What it showed—it was a children's campaign study, and they may have based the information on something else, but it was in a publication that was called The Colorado Children's Campaign, and it showed the lost earned income for dropouts, for school dropouts. Again, I can't quote the figure off the top of my head, but it looked at this and said if a student drops out, compared to a student who graduates, this is the income you lose. That is what the earner loses, but then the State revenue that is piled on top of that because of an inability to tax that lower income; and then the necessity for really a variety of services that the State expends, whether social services or even criminal justice services, because a person is a dropout and therefore is at greater risk of having those intersections with the State government.

Mr. SCOTT. It did include the future costs of crime, welfare, and remedial education?

Governor RITTER. It did, I believe.

Mr. SCOTT. If we can get a copy of that, I would appreciate that.

Governor RITTER. Okay.

Mr. SCOTT. There seems to be some religion. Sometimes I think I am the only one on this panel who really thinks there really ought to be a national standard. What is the advantage of having each State home-bake its own standards and assessments rather than there be a—since we are competing internationally, why can't we have—or what is the advantage of having the 50 States do their own rather than a bare core national standard that, if a State wants to, it can exceed, but it needs to come up with at least the basic standard?

Governor RITTER. I don't think there is an advantage. That is why we are involved in this process of having 48 States pull together to develop a common core standard, because we think an approach that allows 50 different States to have 50 different standards and 50 different assessments will not get us to the place we need to get to to compete internationally.

So for our purposes, a common core standard is what should be, at the end of the day, drawn up, and then allow States to decide whether to participate or not.

Mr. SCOTT. Does the common core include things other than the math and science and English? How about conflict resolution, physical ed and general culture kind of things?

Governor RITTER. At this juncture it really does not. We started with math and English language arts. That is the starting point. I guess what else is amenable to the development of a common core standard is an open question, but we appreciate this is the starting point, these two disciplines.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you, Governor. Thank you very much for your time and your expertise on this. We look forward to the results. We wish you and the other Governors all the best.

Governor RITTER. Thank you to the members of the committee and to you, Mr. Chairman, for the time and opportunity.

Chairman MILLER. Great. Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Our next panel, if they would come and take their seats, we will begin with Gene Wilhoit, who became executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers in November, 2006. He has served as a program director for the Indiana Department of Education; administrator in Kanawha County, West Virginia; and special assistant to the U.S. Department of Education. Mr. Wilhoit has also served as executive director of the National Association of School Boards of Education, and director of the Arkansas Department of Education, and deputy commissioner and commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Education.

Doug Kubach is the president and CEO of Pearson Assessment and Information. Mr. Kubach joined Pearson Assessment and Information in May 2001 as senior vice president for strategy and chief technology officer for Pearson Education. In 2003, he was appointed president and CEO of Pearson's assessment and testing business, which has become the leading assessment and information system provider in the U.S. education market. Formerly Mr. Kubach was the chief technology officer for McGraw-Hill Education, senior executive of Harcourt school division.

Cathy Allen is from St. Mary's County Board of Education in Maryland. Cathy Allen has been on the board of education for St. Mary's County Public School for 9 years, having served both as vice chair and chairman of the board. She is the current president-elect of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education and has served on numerous committees on that board.

We welcome you today to the committee. We look forward to your testimony. Unfortunately, at some point we will be interrupted by a vote, but hopefully we will quickly discharge our duties and return here.

Again, the lighting system is the green lights come on, and you have 5 minutes. An orange light comes on, and you have a minute to wrap up, and then we will go to questions after all of you have testified. Thank you so much for taking your time.

Mr. Wilhoit, you may begin.

**STATEMENT OF GENE WILHOIT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICES**

Mr. WILHOIT. Thank you, Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Thompson, and members of the committee, it is a pleasure to be with you today. All of us know that there have been efforts in the past to come to commonality around standards, and those have not been successful. So why should this one be more successful than

the past, I think, is an important question. I would say this is fundamentally different in ways that will assure success.

First of all, as the Governor has indicated, this remains a State-Led effort. And as a former chief in two States, it is important in our conversations among the chiefs that it remain so.

Secondly, we have said to the States from the very beginning this is voluntary; and if a State does not want to comply, they may choose not to do so. But we are pleased that 48 States and two territories are currently engaged in the process.

Third, we are aiming higher with these standards than we have attempted in the past. And by that, we are again attempting to make these standards higher because we know that there is tremendous disparity among the States in terms of expectations. Secondly, we are trying to make them clear so that a teacher in the classroom and an administrator in a building will be able to read those standards and understand them. And we are also attempting to make them more direct and fewer, because what we have done in many States, as you read those standards, is expand the expectations.

And well-meaning and hard-working teachers are attempting to teach to all those standards, and in doing so we are losing the deepness of understanding that students have in covering all of that.

So these are higher, clearer, fewer standards than we have before. And as the governor said, we are internationally benchmarking these against the other countries. We are not only including content here, we are talking about the cognitive capacities that these students are going to need to be successful in this new world economy.

And, finally, we are building on the idea that we will try to put as much evidence on the table as possible in terms of coming up with these standards. I will say, frankly, that there is not enough evidence out there as we go through this process in 2009, but we have changed the way in which we are setting standards, trying to make sure that we make a direct link between the experiences students have at K-12 and the ultimate success they have in careers and in colleges.

So this is different. This will assure success, we think, in the future. It is an intensive process. We have been open and transparent. We have had all educational organizations who are interested give us direct comments. We have had members of the unions, we have had the administrators, the local boards all engaged in conversations with us. We have had the civil rights community providing advice. We have had university professors who are well known and respected in the field to provide advice. That is highly complex and diverse and, frankly, very dynamic in terms of the work that we are engaged in. But we do feel that out of that process, in addition to having over a thousand individual comments come in to us about the nature of these standards, we are coming up with the best effort we have had as a country. So we feel good about that. And what we are now attempting to do is move this to a point where this State-led effort will lead to a process of adoption by the States.

We have a two-part document that has been created. The first part is a statement about what we call readiness standards for college in mathematics and English language arts. What are the expectations for a student to know and be able to do to enter a credit-bearing course, not remediation, in college and be successful in that course? And that is a question we have asked higher ed to answer for us. It is a question we brought to organizations who have expertise and knowledge about it, like the ACT and the college board, other organizations like ACHIEVE through the American Diploma Project. We have reached out to others to answer that question. We have had a validation committee of national individuals, respected individuals who are answering that question.

And then we are asking those individuals to give us a sense of what those readiness standards would look like if we began to articulate those into learning progressions through the K-12 experience. If we know what and can agree upon what those readiness standards are, what would it look like at a third-grade level for a teacher to look at those standards and be clear about what is expected and what happened at the second and the first grade prior to that, and then what would be expected of that student as that student moves through the learning process. So it is a two-part document, the readiness standards being very open and transparent about what we expect for success, and then an articulation of those standards through the learning experience.

We have, at this point, produced those learning readiness standards. We put them out for public comment. We have received advice. We are now in the process of finalizing and revising those statements. We have put in the hands of the States those K-12 learning progressions. They are now providing us feedback. Friday was the deadline for the States to do so. They have done that, and we are weeding through the numerous and very thoughtful presentations that are being made by the States. Every State has been given an invitation to provide that sort of feedback, and we are asking other individuals to do the same.

We have a validation committee that will be reviewing all of this, and our goal is still by the end of January to have a document that can be shared with the country in terms of our expectations. So it is moving forward according to schedule.

We see direct benefits for this at every level for the students and the system who are now very mobile, not only within States, but across the country, in being able to set some expectations that they can follow as they move throughout their career. It should not matter where a student goes to school. Those same expectations should be held for every one of them.

For the parents, there is a hopefully a set of statements which are much clearer than what we have had in the past. You can actually read those and interpret them and understand them and understand the role that you, as a parent or guardian, play in that educational process.

For teachers, this will be the first time we have put in front of them a set of very clear statements about their roles and responsibilities, and broken this down in a way that an individual teacher would be able to understand and know what contribution that teacher can make to the process.

And for universities, this is a statement about readiness. It is a commitment on the part of K-12 to send prepared students into the higher education system, but also to say to the higher ed community: We have a lot of work ahead of us to align what you are doing at the university system with K-12 experience.

That leads us to, I think, this final issue I would like to talk about, and that is the Federal role. We do believe this has its strength because it is a State-led initiative. We want it to remain a State-led initiative, but we do feel that there is a Federal role in supporting this kind of work. And I think that comes, first of all, in the area of research. We need more practical research on what is going on in classrooms around the implementation of these standards, because we know this is only a first step.

When we get standards in front of individuals, we then need to develop assessment systems, program supports, and support for our teachers, and we need support in multiple ways. The Federal Government can support that kind of.

Chairman MILLER. If you can wrap up.

Mr. WILHOIT. That is it.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Wilhoit follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Gene Wilhoit, Executive Director, Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)**

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Kline, members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to speak today about the state-led common core standards initiative directed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA).

We know that efforts to produce common education standards have been tried and have failed many times before. However, this current effort is fundamentally different as standards are in place in all states, states are frustrated by the inability to make fair and accurate comparisons and they see the benefits that can come from collective state action and have determined to drive this initiative themselves. Currently, forty-eight states, two territories, and the District of Columbia are voluntarily engaged in this initiative and this is why our collective state work is going to succeed. Further, while developing these core standards in English language arts and mathematics, our goal was not just that they be common across states, but that they reflect certain principles: be higher, clearer, and fewer; be internationally benchmarked; include both content knowledge and skills; be evidence and research based; and prepare students for college and career. This initiative is, and has been since its inception, a state-led, voluntary effort and by following these principles we are developing better, higher standards that will support all students, parents, and educators.

Over the past three years, the members of CCSSO who lead state education agencies have been taking strong, innovative steps to reform and improve our nation's system of education. When I became executive director of CCSSO over three years ago, the leadership and I embraced a policy agenda based on our states no longer tolerating incremental reform but taking the lead in making bold changes. I believe this effort being voluntarily led by the states on behalf of all of the nation's children does just that.

In 2007, international comparisons through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) indicated that American children were ranked well below their peers in leading education countries like Finland, Singapore, Korea, Australia, and Canada. CCSSO, along with NGA, vowed to change these looming statistics. In December of last year, after much research and discussion with our members, we released a report with Achieve Inc. on international benchmarking and made our first priority the creation of better, higher core standards that are common across states like those high performing countries. Many of our members had already begun efforts along this line with the American Diploma Project and were seeing commonalities emerge. This current state-led effort builds on that and expands it to ensure that all children regardless of zip code are taught to the same high stand-

ards that prepare them for college and career and allow them to compete with their peers around the globe.

States have told CCSSO what they need, and we have developed a process that will best support their needs, and ultimately the needs of all students across this nation. Our process is thorough and transparent; we have engaged a tremendous number of stakeholders and interested parties: individual teachers, national organizations, teachers' unions, as well as members of the general public. I am here today to give you complete confidence that states are taking the lead to develop the best standards our country and our states have ever seen. We are committed to the highest quality and our process will result in standards worthy of all of your states' students.

#### *The Common Core State Standards Initiative Explained*

I will highlight three important points as I talk about this initiative. First, by keeping this a collective and state-led initiative, we are able to ensure that high standards are applied to each and every student and that will form the basis for many other educational reforms. Second, we are adhering to four foundational principles and a transparent process to develop these standards. Finally, we believe that there are clear benefits of shared standards to all students, parents, and teachers.

##### *I. Collective State-Led Education Reform*

Throughout this work, we remain cognizant that the states have the primary responsibility to provide an equitable and adequate education for every child in this country through our 57 public education systems (including the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and all five extra-state jurisdictions), and it is each state's right to determine and define what each student, in each grade level, should know and be able to do. This means that each state defines what its standards are, how those standards will be taught by teachers, and how student learning will be assessed. Through collective state action, we will produce a high-quality set of learning outcomes that the states agree will ultimately produce strong student outcomes while still allowing flexibility for local districts to innovate to get all students to these goals, including English language learners and students with disabilities. We do not believe we would be able to serve all students if this was not a collaborative, state-led process. The establishment of common core standards is a first step toward bringing about real and meaningful transformation of our education system and toward the ultimate goal of preparing all children for college, work, and success in the global economy. We are very proud that 48 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia have signed onto the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

We also realize that better, common core standards are only the first step in a longer reform process. However, the standards lay the groundwork for states to continue collective education reform. Even those states that are thought to already have high standards are able to benefit from this work in a variety of ways. With the common core standards adopted, states may take on the process of developing shared assessments, which, among other benefits, would potentially lead to tremendous cost savings at the state level. The standards also allow states to be aligned in how they prepare teachers and how they advance the teaching profession. Further, teachers can have the instructional supports and materials that are aligned to these core standards in order to be effective in teaching them. We are working with several organizations to make sure that these materials will be produced in an effective and open way to allow access to all teachers and schools. With common core standards, states can continue their collective reform efforts in nearly all facets of the education system.

##### *II. Common Core Standards Development Principles and Transparency*

As mentioned earlier, even before development of the standards began, this initiative has been driven by the following four fundamental principles to ensure better, common state standards that all students should meet to be college and career ready.

Our first principle involves the design of these common standards to be higher, clearer and fewer. Each one of these design elements is crucial. Higher standards raise the bar to prepare students for international competitiveness. Being committed to higher standards ensures that no state involved in this process will have to lower its standards by adopting the common core. Clearer standards allow parents, students, and teachers to understand exactly what is expected of students as they advance through the system. Fewer standards allow teachers in the classroom to focus on topics in a much deeper way. One challenge that we consistently hear from educators about current standards is that there are too many to cover in the school year. We are focusing the standards in order to maximize student learning.

The second principle is that these standards will be internationally benchmarked. American students are entering a global economy that requires them to compete with students from across the world. Through our development of the common standards, we have looked at other high achieving countries' standards to ensure that we are using the best standards in the world. By doing this, we are creating a set of standards that will allow our students to be internationally competitive when they leave our public schools.

The third principle is that our standards development process is being driven by evidence and research. In the past, standards were based largely on personal judgment. By allowing personal judgment to determine what concepts are in or out of standards, the process often becomes a negotiation, rather than a reflection on what the evidence and research tells us about the connection between K-12 experiences and success in higher education and promising careers.

The final principle is to align the common standards with college and work expectations. By preparing all students to be both college and career ready, all students are able to be competitive in their post-secondary education and/or career choice. Focusing on all students being prepared for college and career is absolutely critical to the long-term success of our country. Having a set of expectations that are clear to students, parents and educators about what it takes to be college and career ready, the states have taken a major step forward in producing students who are ready for the world.

Now that I have described the principles that guide our state-led work, I want to speak a bit about the process. CCSSO and NGA committed to their respective memberships that we would honor and keep this process as transparent and open as possible. In April 2009, over forty states met to discuss the possibility of creating common core standards in English language arts and mathematics grounded in these principles. By the end of the conversation, 48 states signed on to be a part of the standards development work. Since then, a tight timeline for the standards development process has been fully underway. The first step in our process was to develop college and career readiness standards in the fall of 2009, and then, back-map those standards through K-12, grade-by-grade in early 2010. Using experts and practitioners from across the nation and throughout the world, we have remained true to our original timeline. We have developed the initial version of the college and career readiness standards, which was released in September of this year. These standards have already been reviewed by states, the public, and a range of national organizations and experts. Based upon the college and career readiness standards, we have begun the development of the K-12 standards which are currently being reviewed by states and others. The development of the K-12 expectations will be complete in early February 2010 once the states and the public have had a chance to weigh in.

Once developed, states will begin the process of adopting and implementing the standards. We have defined adoption of the common core standards as the following: a state must adopt one hundred percent of the common core standards; in addition to one hundred percent of the common core, states are able to add up to an additional fifteen percent at their discretion; and, the standards authorizing body within the state must take formal action to adopt and implement the common core. Ultimately, states are responsible for demonstrating that they have adhered to this definition of adoption and states are expected to within three years fully implement the standards by developing instructional supports and aligning assessments.

### *III. Benefits of Common Standards: Students, Parents, and Teachers*

Not only are the common standards a positive development for all students because they help prepare them with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and careers, but, common standards for all students provides consistency in high expectations for learning across the nation, regardless of in which state the student lives. Having common standards is a critical issue for many students who may have different expectations depending on where they live and which school they attend. These standards will allow students to more easily transition from one state to another without losing valuable learning time adjusting to different standards. Given the mobility of the student population in the United States, common standards is essential. Also, having higher, clearer, and fewer standards makes it very apparent to students what we expect of them so that they can take part in being accountable for their own learning.

For parents, common standards are a positive development because they help them understand exactly what their children need to know and be able to do at each step in their education. With clearer and fewer standards, parents will be better positioned to facilitate conversations with their child's teachers about what they

should be learning and how they can reach their goals creating even more accountability in system.

Finally, common standards are critical for teachers as it makes it clear what is expected of their students from year to year. It also allows for more focused educator training and professional development. Strong training of our teachers is paramount, and common standards allow for teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional development to be focused on these key objectives.

#### *The Federal Role*

To preserve the integrity of this work, it is imperative that this remains as a state-led initiative. However, even while remaining state-led, there are avenues in which the federal government can offer support and ongoing research. Federal law needs to reward this kind of state leadership, not just with funding for assessments, professional development, and other supports, but also by codifying a new form of state-federal partnership that promotes innovation and values state judgment on accountability, particularly in terms of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The current accountability system established under the No Child Left Behind Act will undercut movement toward high standards. By adopting the common core standards, states are voluntarily raising the bar for all students and should be allowed flexibility as they implement them.

#### *Conclusion*

As stated previously, there have been previous failed attempts to create a set of common expectations for students in the United States; however, this time states are at the forefront, leading this successful work. Given that international assessments are demonstrating that the United States is falling behind in key measures, the states are collectively and aggressively acting to create better, common core standards which will set the high bar for continuing the hard work of taking all students to college and career ready levels. This is challenging work. We also recognize that having common standards is the necessary starting point, and that there is much work ahead. Now is the time to take action, and the states are responding with thoughtful commitment and collective leadership.

I welcome any comments or questions regarding this state-led initiative, the principles we are adhering to, our transparent process, and how this effort will benefit each and every student, parent, and teacher in our educational system.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before the Committee today. I submitted a more formal statement for the official record.

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Chairman MILLER. Mr. Kubach.

#### **STATEMENT OF DOUGLAS KUBACH, PRESIDENT AND CEO, PEARSON ASSESSMENT AND INFORMATION**

Mr. KUBACH. Thank you, Chairman Miller, Congressman Thompson, and all the members of the committee for the invitation to be here today.

Pearson is the global leader in educational assessment and education technology, drawing on our expertise in large-scale assessments, longitudinal data systems, and instructional support systems, we are actively working to inform the public dialogue about high-quality standards and assessments. We share the administration's and the committee's goals of improving student learning, increasing college readiness, and our global competitiveness.

In my testimony today, I will focus on three key points. The first point is that to successfully develop and implement higher quality standards, diverse education stakeholders will be required to collaborate and cooperate in new ways. For example, Pearson is collaborating with ETS and the College Board, two organizations with a shared longstanding commitment to investing in education research and development. Together, we are exploring how innovative approaches and best practices in high-quality assessments can contribute to a new common core standards assessment system.

Our joint paper is being submitted for the record along with Pearson's full written response to the Education Department's recent request for input on the Race to the Top assessment program.

The second point I would like to make is about the role of annual assessments as the foundation for a quality management system for public education. We are proud of the role that we play in helping 30 States implement valid, reliable, and efficient systems. We believe that transparency into student performance is essential to achieving lasting education reform. Nothing is more fundamental to ensuring transparency than accountability systems based upon annual assessments of individual student achievement and providing parents and the public with the results.

It is only through annual assessments that we know what progress we are making in providing equal access to a quality public education for all children. It is the only way for parents and educators to know whether curriculum and instructional practices are working, what is effective, and what needs to improve. It is the only way for parents, policymakers, and administrators to know whether schools are effectively serving students, holding teachers and school leaders accountable for making progress, and improving student outcomes.

Here, I would like to make a special point about assessment systems developed in connection with No Child Left Behind. Both the Federal Government and the States have invested significant amounts of time and money into these systems which rely primarily on paper-based, multiple choice assessments. With all of the resources provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and Race to the Top, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to go paperless. And that is my final point this morning, the unprecedented opportunity we have before us to go online to improve learning.

Now is the time for States to build out the infrastructure and capacity for online assessments, online management system, online content instructional delivery systems.

Online assessments will allow us to do some truly revolutionary things. For example, we can use a wider range of performance-based tasks such as multi-step problems, simulations, and inquiry-based investigations. We can use new language evaluation technologies that automate the scoring of open-ended oral and written responses. We will have less cumbersome assessment progresses and faster delivery of results, allowing more real-time adjustments and instruction. We will get greater use out of our longitudinal data systems through improve data timeliness and data quality. And, we will be able to offer a wider range of accommodations for students with disabilities and for English language learners.

Online assessments better reflect the world of college and work that students will live in. Also note that the emerging common course standards in both math and English language arts define constructs that can best be measured through the use of technology. New assessment innovations allow to go beyond traditional tests to measure complex tasks like problem solving, critical thinking, and analysis, or making inferences within and across core subjects. Advances in technology, coupled with advances in assessment

design, make it possible for us to obtain a richer and more nuanced picture of what students know and can do than ever before.

In closing, we are committed to developing assessment systems that provide accountability data and actionable information to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and policymakers. Improvements in innovations and assessment methods and technology, coupled with the development of higher standards focused on both content and skills, will allow us to better measure student performance and ultimately to improve student learning.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the opportunity to participate in this conversation with you and your colleagues. I look forward to answering your questions.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Kubach follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Douglas Kubach, Pearson Assessment & Information**

Thank you, Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Kline, and all the members of the committee for the invitation to be here today. I am Douglas Kubach, President & CEO for Pearson's Assessment & Information group.

Pearson is the global leader in educational assessment and education technology.

Drawing on our expertise implementing large-scale assessments, longitudinal data systems and instructional support systems, we are actively working to inform the public dialogue about higher quality standards and assessments. We share the Administration's and the Committee's goals of improving student learning, increasing college readiness and global competitiveness.

*(1) Collaboration for the greater good*

In my testimony today I will focus on three key points. The first point is that to successfully develop and implement higher quality standards, diverse education stakeholders, such as state consortia, the US Department of Education, non-profit and for-profit entities, K-12 and higher education leaders, and assessment developers, to name a few, will be required to collaborate and cooperate in new ways. For example, Pearson is collaborating with ETS and the College Board, two organizations with a shared, longstanding commitment to investing in education research and development. Together, we're exploring, not for individual gain, but for the benefit of our students and our nation, how innovative approaches and best practices in high-quality assessments can contribute to a new Common Core Standards assessment system. Our joint paper is being submitted for the record along with Pearson's full written response to the U.S. Education Department's recent request for input on the Race to the Top Assessment program.

*(2) Preserving Accountability, Increasing Transparency*

The second point I'd like make is about the role of annual assessments as a foundation for a quality management system for public education. We are proud of the role that we play in helping 30 states implement valid, reliable and efficient assessment systems. We believe that transparency into student performance is essential to achieving lasting education reform.

Nothing is more fundamental to ensuring transparency than accountability systems based upon annual assessments of individual student growth and achievement and providing parents and the public with the results.

It is only through annual assessments that we know what progress we are making in providing equal access to a quality public education for all children. It's the only way for parents and educators to know whether curriculum and instructional practices are working, what's effective and what needs to improve. It's the only way for parents, policymakers and administrators to know whether schools are effectively serving students, holding teachers and school leaders accountable for making progress in improving student outcomes.

Here I'd like to make a special point about assessment systems developed in connection with No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Both the federal government and the states have invested significant amounts of time and money in these systems, which rely primarily on paper-based, multiple-choice summative assessments. With all of the resources provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and Race to the Top we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to go to paperless testing.

*(3) Once-in-a-Lifetime Opportunity to "Go Online"*

And that is my final point this morning: The unprecedented opportunity we have before us to "go online" to improve learning. Now is the time for states to build out the infrastructure and capacity for online assessments, online management systems, and online content and instructional delivery and reporting systems.

Online assessments will allow us to do some truly revolutionary things. For example\* Wider use of performance-based tasks such as multi-step problems, simulations, and inquiry-based investigations;

- New language evaluation technologies that automate the scoring of open-ended oral and written responses;
- Less cumbersome assessment processes and speedier delivery of results—allowing more real time adjustments in instruction;
- Greater use of longitudinal data systems through improved data timeliness and quality;
- Wider range of accommodations for students with disabilities and English-language learners.

Online assessments better reflect the world of college and work that students will live in.

Moreover, the emerging Common Core standards in both Mathematics and English Language Arts define constructs that can best be measured through the use of technology. New assessment innovations allow us to go beyond traditional tests to measure complex tasks like problem-solving, critical thinking and analysis, or making inferences within and across core subjects. Advances in technology, coupled with advances in assessment design, psychometrics and cognitive models, make it possible for us to obtain a richer and more nuanced picture of what students know and can do than ever before.

In closing, we are committed to developing assessment systems that provide accountability data and instructionally actionable information to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and policymakers. Improvements and innovations in assessment methods and technology, coupled with the development of common standards focused on both content and critical thinking skills, will allow us to better measure student performance and ultimately improve student learning.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the opportunity to participate in this conversation with you and your colleagues. I look forward to answering your questions.

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Chairman MILLER. Ms. Allen.

**STATEMENT OF CATHY ALLEN, VICE CHAIR, ST. MARY'S  
COUNTY, MD, BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Ms. ALLEN. Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Thompson, and members of the committee, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to you today regarding common core standards. As you noted, I am a member of the St. Mary's County Board of Education; I have been so for 10 years. I am also president of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, and I am here to share my perspective not only as a local board member, but also the concerns of local school boards across the Nation.

St. Mary's County is it located at the southernmost tip of Maryland 60 miles south of the Nation's capital. We have over 17,000 students enrolled, supported by over 2,000 teachers. Student performance on the Maryland school assessments in mathematics, reading, and science is in the top quartile and outranks statewide data in every grade level assessed. We have implemented a broad range of innovative programs to prepare our students for the highly competitive 21st century workforce.

I share this pride to demonstrate that our school district remains committed to improved academic achievement for all students. My colleagues throughout the Nation recognize the importance of rigorous academic standards to ensure that students enrolled in our public schools are competitive in the global society. With the pas-

sage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the accompanying Race to the Top fund and the proposed innovation grants, we will be able to further intensify our efforts.

With respect to common core standards, local school boards believe that such standards should be developed by States individually or collectively by groups of States to achieve this goal. Local school boards also recognize that the Federal Government must play a role. However, the Federal role must be one of partnership and support to States, not only in terms of funding for those students with the greatest needs, but also in serving as a clearinghouse to share and promote best practices regarding actions to overcome shortfalls in student achievement.

Consistent with the language of the formal resolution adopted this year by the National School Boards Association Delegate Assembly, we believe the Federal Government should support State and local efforts to provide students with an education that is focused on the skills and knowledge needed in the global world of the 21st century by finding multiple education entities, including regional education entities, to develop models for voluntary adoption for those purposes, to support funding for research, and for States and developing and implementing standards; to ensure that the National Assessment of Educational Progress, NAEP, and international tests do not exceed their intended use; and to refrain from requiring or coercing the use of these standards by States in developing their own standards for high stakes accountability purposes.

More specifically, local school boards across the Nation oppose making any of these activities mandatory on States or local school districts, or as a condition for the receipt of other Federal aid. And, we oppose efforts to involve the Federal Government, directly or indirectly, to develop mandatory or model national content standards or to mandate the development of common content standards among groups of States.

Local school boards are well aware of the ongoing efforts by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers on Common Core Standards, and we will continue to support State-led common core standards that includes sufficient flexibility in operations to address unique challenges of local communities. The National School Boards Association applauds their work in assembling an important first step, the draft common core standards in English, language arts, and mathematics. We believe that the groups have bought clarity to a widely varied and disparate set of State standards.

However, local school boards do have some reservations with what appears to be greater coercion from the Federal Government in adopting such standards. As an example, the Department of Education's Race to the Top program will award competitive grants to States that have worthy school reform plans. This Race to the Top component effectively would favor States using these common standards. The proposed requirements for innovations grants recently released by the Department of Education suggests support for similar consortia-led approaches to developing assessments. The proposed expansion of this approach raises some serious questions that will have to be sorted out.

Again, we believe that this system of common standards and any proposals for a system of assessments must remain voluntary, and States and local school districts must have the capacity to successfully implement the standards. Local school boards urge Members of Congress to keep in mind that real progress is being made and will continue to be made at the local level with local school boards, administrators, and teachers working together to establish clear goals aligned with a rich curriculum and comprehensive instructional plan.

In summary, local school boards in Maryland and across the Nation support the notion of common core standards, voluntarily developed by groups of States, as distinguished from and preferable to a national or Federal entity. Federal funding for the activity, provided it is not in the nature of a mandate or coercion such as a condition for receiving grants in aid funding for ESEA, or title I, individual States or groups of States developing assessments for common standards but oppose a national test, the NGACSSO process and the progress it has made on standards to date with our full support, but pending the ultimate outcome, and any other valid process undertaken by other groups of States.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you very much.

[The statement of Ms. Allen follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Cathy Allen, Vice Chair, St. Mary's County, MD,  
Board of Education**

Dear Mr. Chairman: I am pleased to have this opportunity to share with you a local school board perspective regarding the implications of common core standards. I currently serve as Vice-President of the St. Mary's County, Maryland Board of Education, and I am in my ninth year.

St. Mary's County is located at the southernmost tip of Maryland, 60 miles south of the nation's capital. We are best known for our world class technology corridor that supports the operations of the Patuxent Naval Air Station (NAS). We have over 17,000 students enrolled and supported by over 2,000 teachers. At St. Mary's County Public Schools we are committed to improved student achievement. Student performance on the Maryland School Assessments in Mathematics, Reading and Science is in the top quartile and outranks state-wide data in every grade level assessed. In reviewing alternate Maryland School Assessments for the 2008-2009 academic year, our students continue to rank in the top quartile, and exceed the Maryland-wide performance in each grade level tested.

Additionally, we have implemented a broad range of innovative programs to prepare our students for the highly competitive 21st century workforce through a unique program of study emphasizing the core areas of mathematics and science with an infusion of technology and engineering. This STEM program is offered to all SMCP students and housed at three schools: Lexington Park Elementary School, Spring Ridge Middle School, and Great Mills High School. The proximity of these three schools to the Patuxent Naval Air Station and the technology corridor make them ideal sites.

I share this pride to demonstrate that our school district remains committed to improved academic achievement for all students. My colleagues on the St. Mary's County school board as well as other school boards throughout the state recognize the importance of rigorous academic standards to ensure that students enrolled in our public schools are competitive in the global society. With the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the accompanying Race to the Top (RTTT) Fund, and the proposed Innovation Grants—we will be able to further intensify our efforts.

As you are aware, research indicates there is strong consensus among state education officials and local school board members to ensure rigorous standards, strong curricula aligned with those standards, and valid and reliable systems of assessments that fairly and accurately reflect the performance of students, schools and school districts. With respect to common core standards, we believe that such stand-

ards should be developed by states individually or collectively by groups of states to achieve this goal.

We also recognize that in order to further ensure global competitiveness the federal government must play a role. However, the federal role must be one of partnership and support to states—not only in terms of funding for those students with the greatest needs, but also in serving as a clearinghouse to share and promote best practices regarding actions to overcome shortfalls in student achievement. Additionally, we believe that the federal government should increase incentives to states and local school districts to create constructive remedies, and provide technical support to the states to assess those state standards.

In order to better understand what specific role the federal government should play related to state-led common core standards, consistent with the Resolutions adopted this year by the National School Boards Association (NSBA) Delegate Assembly, we believe the federal government should:

- support state and local efforts to provide students with an education that is appropriately focused on the skills and uses of knowledge needed for success in the global and technological world of the 21st century by funding multiple education entities, including regional education entities, to develop model standards for voluntary adoption for those purposes;

- support 1) funding for research; 2) financial assistance to states or groups of states, when requested, to assist them in developing and implementing standards around the skills and uses of knowledge that students will need in the 21st century; and 3) direct financial assistance to states or groups of states, when requested to assist them in developing and implementing content standards; and

- ensure that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and international tests do not exceed their current use to provide comparative data through sampling and oppose requiring or coercing the use of these standards by states in developing their own standards for high stakes accountability purposes.

Additionally, we, as other local school boards across the State of Maryland:

- oppose efforts to make the aforementioned activities mandatory on states or local school districts or as a condition for the receipt of other federal aid; and

- oppose efforts to involve the federal government directly or indirectly (e.g. through an entity over which it can exercise control) to develop mandatory or model national content standards or to mandate the development of common content standards among groups of states.

We will continue to support state-led common core standards that include sufficient flexibility in operations to effectively and efficiently address the unique challenges of local communities.

We are well aware of the ongoing efforts by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers (NGA/CCSSO) on common core standards. We are aware that, with the exception of Texas and Alaska, the states have entered into a memorandum of understanding signed by the Governor and state superintendents declaring their intent to adopt common standards in language arts and mathematics within three years. We are also aware that draft common standards were released that define the knowledge and skills students should have to succeed in entry level, credit-bearing, academic college courses and in workforce training programs.

We join the National School Boards Association in applauding the work of the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers for their work in assembling an important first step—the Draft Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics. We believe that the groups have brought clarity to a widely varied and disparate set of state standards.

However, we do have some reservations with what appears to be greater coercion from the federal government in adopting such standards. As an example, the Department of Education's \$4.35 billion Race to the Top program will award competitive grants to states that have worthy school reform plans—including the adoption of college and career ready common standards developed by a substantial number of states. This Race to the Top component effectively would favor states using the CCSSO/NGA common standards. Additionally, the proposed requirements for Innovations Grants recently released by the Department of Education suggest support for similar consortia addressing assessments.

Further, this proposed expansion of the consortia-driven concept to the adoption of assessments raises serious questions that will have to be sorted out. For example, should there be a common assessment or should individual states or groups of states develop their own? If there is a common assessment, who should develop it? What will be the grade by grade timetable for phasing in the changeover? What will be the resource needs of local school districts, such as technical assistance and funding for professional development, curriculum alignment, new course material and new

reporting requirements? How will school districts and schools be held accountable during the transition as test scores are likely to be negatively impacted as teachers and students adjust to the changes? After all, as good as standards and assessments are, they won't have the desired effect unless school districts have the capacity to implement them and have a fair chance. These questions are only the tip of the iceberg.

How this nation deals with standards and assessment is a major policy issue. Such proposed federal requirements, in our view, would enlarge the federal role and its relationship to the state and local levels. Our concern, like many local school boards across the nation, is that the effort to date is being led by the executive branch without the specific level of legislative direction that would ordinarily be expected for measures of this magnitude. We believe that this system of common standards and any proposals for a system of voluntary assessments must remain voluntary.

In addressing standards, St. Mary's County, Maryland Board of Education urges you to keep in mind that it will be only at the local level, with local school boards, administrators and teachers working together, that we establish clear goals aligned with a broad and rich curriculum and instructional plan, and a climate fostering student achievement, that real progress will be made.

In summary we support:

- the notion of common core standards voluntarily developed by groups of states (as distinguished from, and preferable to, a national/federal entity);
- federal funding for the activity, provided it is not in the nature of a mandate or coercion (such as a condition for receiving grant in aid funding for say ESEA Title I);
- individual states or groups of states developing assessments for common standards but oppose a national test;
- the NGA/CCSSO process and the progress it has made on standards to date with our full support pending the ultimate outcome; and
- any other valid process undertaken by other groups of states.

Finally, we want you to know that NSBA, representing local school boards through their state school boards associations, has also been clear in working with the NGA/CCSSO project and in its official comments on the Race to the Top requirements that local school districts will need to have the capacity to successfully implement the standards. This means both funding and technical assistance for professional development, as well as curriculum and course material alignment.

Additionally, NSBA has also been clear that during the year of implementation, transition accountability rules will need to apply, recognizing that test scores will likely be lower in the adjustment year. This will especially be true if the current NCLB framework is still in place.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

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Chairman MILLER. We will begin our question with Mr. Tonko.

Mr. TONKO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Interesting discussion. You know, as we look at the need to advance stronger standards and assessments, and Mr. Wilhoit, I heard you talking about improved standards, vastly improved. What is the difference between what we might realize today and those that we are advancing, you are advancing for the future?

Mr. WILHOIT. There have been a number of efforts in the past to set standards around, first of all, content only. And what we have ignored in many of those is the idea of application of that content. We are finding out from the business world and from international competitors that not only are they asking students to master essential knowledge, they are asking those students to apply that knowledge in higher level cognitive ways than we have done in the past.

So simply being able to State what a content recall is is one level of knowledge. Another is, what does a student do to apply that knowledge to an unknown solution? What does a student do to take existing knowledge and apply it? So I think one major shift here

is that we paid a lot of attention not only the content but the application of that in terms of student learning.

Secondly, I think many of the State standards have been too low in the past, and what we have found is that, in essence, it has created a great deal of confusion by parents and by citizens, and that is, that on one set of assessments by a State standard you may be deemed proficient, and then we hear from another set of standards that you are very woefully needing improvement. So this should bring us together in a greater cohesion around expectations.

Mr. TONKO. I like the emphasis on cognitive skill development because it is important, but I also know like, as an engineer, that we are dreadfully low on the numbers that we are producing for science, tech, international and math, and this is an international problem. So how can we best address it if we do it State by State? There has such transiency to college grads today. They will go coast to coast looking for jobs. How do we accomplish this when we go State by State participation or community by community? Does that not hold us back?

Ms. ALLEN. If I might respond to that question, Mr. Chairman. I can speak to what we are doing in St. Mary's County, and I know that it has widespread application across the State and the country.

We are home to the premier test and evaluation base for the Navy, the Patuxent River Naval Air Station. Outside of the gates of that base that is filled to capacity with very highly talented, highly qualified engineers and research scientists we have three schools, an elementary, a middle, and a high school that have implemented a very comprehensive STEM program, science, technology, engineering, and math, that is in conjunction with the engineers on that base. They spend time in our classrooms working directly with our students. The students are spending time on the base working on current projects that the base is undertaking. And while not every community may have a naval air station in it, there are certainly various industries that are in many of our communities that would have equal value in providing hands-on application and a collaborative approach to the teaching of such subjects and make it much more applicable and understanding to the students.

Mr. TONKO. But, still, the standards that are needed out there for cognitive skill development and educational skills are universal in terms of supplying the needed workforce out there in the future. And I just don't understand how we can do that without some sort of universal approach with high standards that need to be responded to.

Ms. ALLEN. And the National School Board Association as well as NAEP and my board do support common core standards, as I noted in my presentation, but we are waiting to see what the application of that is and how it all falls out.

Maryland spent 2 years developing very high standards and implementing those at a cost of over \$2 billion over the last six years. We have spent a great deal of time and energy in implementing this and in bringing it down to the classroom level with all of the requisite textbooks involved, the assessments, and so forth. To now

take that and set it aside when we have reached so far would be quite a challenge.

Mr. TONKO. Also, the goal of education is to speak to the future and be ahead of the curve. How do we take that changing scene where many suggest it is going to be team efforts at the workplace, dealing with these cognitive ideas of coming up with solutions, while we develop a system that measures individuals? How do we incorporate that team concept in its assessment also?

Mr. WILHOIT. There are ways in which those issues can be measured, but not through the current kinds of assessments that are being provided through the State assessments for accountability purposes.

If we are going to measure those, we are really going to have to move down to the classroom level, and that is going to have to count as part of the evaluation. One of the problems we have had in terms of implementation of the current requirements, State and Federal requirements, is that we have counted on the summative test to determine accountability solely. And when you do that, you remove capacity of States to measure those kinds of skills. So one of the changes that we are going to have to think about is not just improving a summative test but developing assessment systems that allow decision-making and build the skills of teachers at the local level to measure those kinds of very important skills. You are right. When we talk to business and industry, they do talk extensively about the ability to work in a team to be able to solve problems, to be able to play an important role in the problem-solving process.

But, again, if we don't charge local educators with that kind of responsibilities and give them the kinds of tools to help assess whether students are able to perform in those kinds of ways, then we will fall short of our ability. That is where transforming a set of very good standards could fall apart if we are not very mindful about how we develop assessment systems.

Chairman MILLER. Ms. Woolsey.

Ms. WOOLSEY. I have a common question for the three of you, and it comes from Mr. Kubach's closing statement. I will quote him. He said: "Improvements in innovation and assessment methods and technology, coupled with the development of higher standards." And then he goes on, focused on both critical and content and thinking skills.

But, Mr. Kubach, you, in your written testimony, it says "common standards." You said higher standards. And that is my question: How do we assure that common standards remain the higher standards when you have got 48 States, you have got all the feedback coming in now of—where is the assurance that we are not going to slide to the very lowest denominator on this one? And one little aside. How do we ensure that we have art and music in our children's lives when we are working on math and reading? So start wherever. Start with you, Mr. Kubach. Why did you change that word?

Mr. KUBACH. Well, I think, first, to address the issue of how do we ensure that the common standards remain high. I think it starts with having the evidence base, as Gene Wilhoit has described, and the development of the standards. It also means that

we need to develop a way to internationally benchmark these standards so we can ensure that our standards are in line with the highest performing countries in the world.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Well, who says that these—I mean, who gets to make the decision of what is the higher standard versus a lower common standard? Mr. Wilhoit?

Mr. WILHOIT. We have built into the process a very highly interactive conversation about maintaining high standards. Again, the dynamic that is underway right now in the process is, how do we hold on to these critical principles that we have had, and yet accommodate the kinds of input that people are giving us, input from States as well as other individuals?

I can say that the pressure in the interactive process is on maintaining high standards. Most of the people providing input at this point are saying, let's maintain the high ideals that we have for these standards, and are offering advice about how that can be done. So I expect revisions in the mathematics standards that will even raise them higher than the draft we have on the table. And I think that conversation English language arts is one where we are pushing us to define more specifically the kinds of skill development that students are going to need. And so I have been really pleased that people are pushing on this upward trajectory in terms of high expectations.

Now, that is going to create pressure at two ways on the States. There are States that have very high standards at this point that we have made a promise to, that no State would be asked to lower its current standards to participate in these standards, in the common standards. And we have also been very frank with the other States that it is going to require some changes, and will require both higher levels of expectations of educators in those States, but also there is a conversation with the public that is going to have to be had about the need to improve over time. And that is where we are going to have to give these States some time to move from where they are to where they need to be.

Ms. WOOLSEY. I think we should let Ms. Allen, because I am going to run out of time here.

Ms. ALLEN. I don't believe that Maryland would ever sign on to common standards that were below the high standards we have already spent so much time and money implementing.

That said, we all—and it doesn't matter if you are in Maryland or California or Minnesota or Florida. We all expect to educate our children to the highest standards. We all understand the necessity of our children being able to effectively compete in a global society.

Ms. WOOLSEY. So tell me then, where does art and music come into the program?

Ms. ALLEN. Art and music is a very full and rich part of the curriculum in St. Mary's County. We have found innovative ways to bring them and maintain them, and we would hope to maintain them throughout. It is something we will be looking at.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Kubach.

Mr. KUBACH. I also agree, what we don't want to do is just focus on the common core. I think it is an important foundation, but art, music, science, history, social studies, all of the subjects are impor-

tant, and we don't want to have a system that ends up narrowing the curriculum.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you. Mr. Tierney. Ms. Titus.

Ms. Titus. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the fact that 48 States are participating in drawing up these standards. I suspect many of them are at the table defensibly, but nonetheless they are at the table. Having your bureaucrats draw up standards and then having your legislature adopt those standards are two very different things. And so I think, looking forward, we have to take into account all those political dynamics that occur at the State level.

I don't see how you are going to make this work without some sanctions. And we know, as Ms. Allen said, States don't want sanctions. I am not sure carrots are enough, though, because right now in Nevada you have got a big fight going on about whether or not to repeal the law about having test scores be used in teacher evaluations just so we can qualify for the Race to the Top. So I would like to hear more about how we are going to get beyond that.

And the second thing I would be curious to know, I have heard a lot about working with colleges and universities to see what you need to do to make K-12 better so students can succeed and graduate, but I haven't heard a lot about what those colleges of education are going to do to better teach the teachers or future teachers how to deal with these new standards and meet the standards once they are out into the field.

So if you might address those two questions.

Mr. WILHOIT. I will take the latter first.

We have had some very serious conversations. In fact, yesterday I had a conversation with the New England States college and university system came together to talk about what they could do differently in support of and being full partners in this. So those conversations are going on.

This means, first of all, that there is going to be a clear set of expectations around what teachers should know. So it naturally follows, if students need to know certain things, then teachers need to have certain capacities to deliver that. And it means greater emphasis on data systems, being able to interpret information, being able to intervene in the lives of students who need special assistance. Teachers need those kinds of skills that many of them are telling us they don't have right now. So it means kind of a redesign of many of the preparation programs we have in place. It also will mean a much stronger relationship between the university resources and what is going on in the schools as the teachers are trying to implement a much stronger support structure for those teachers than we have right now.

Mr. KUBACH. This really is a large effort, and it goes way beyond just adopting the standards and having assessments that are in line with those standards. It really does start with the preparation of teachers and how they are evaluated. It goes into the curriculum, training of teachers, what is going on in the classroom, our methods, instructional methods. So it is a very comprehensive system that needs to be addressed, and it is going to take time.

And I think we are going to need some patience as this is implemented State by State.

Ms. ALLEN. I would say to you that sanctions don't work. We have had them for years, and things haven't gotten better. So I think we have to do something differently.

With respect to teacher education, it is an ongoing dialogue, and it has been a matter of great concern to local boards of education through all of our advocacy groups for a very long time, and it is, the discussions continue. And I think that whatever happens with the common core standards, whatever they ultimately look like, that may have an impact on teacher education. But when you talk to the experts in teacher education, they talk about the basics of understanding and how to deliver that model more so than they talk about the specifics of what those standards are.

Ms. TITUS. Colleges of education I have often found are very hard to get to change their approaches and very bureaucratically bound has been my experience in higher education.

Just one other quick thing. I think standards will and probably should change over time. You are going to get new technology, hopefully you are going to add new subjects. I would add geography to that list of art and music as something that students need. But are you building in any mechanism for the ability for the standards to change over time, or are you just going to wait 10 years and have to do the whole thing all over again?

Mr. WILHOIT. No. This is an issue that we are struggling with on a regular basis. We know that this is the best we can do in 2009 and 2010. We have confidence, we have had an extensive process. But we also know that we will fall short. We know that we will learn a lot as we attempt to implement. We know that there will be research put on the table. And so we are accommodating that process and encouraging it. We have even had conversations with foundations and with the Federal Government about supporting this kind of research of implementation and school level, something that is very helpful to us as we begin the revision process.

We don't know in the future what sort of entity might be created to sustain this effort, but we think something will need to be created. We think, obviously from our point of view, that there needs to be a very strong voice of the States and that entity as it moves forward. But, again, we have not settled on exactly what that might look like.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Roe.

Mr. ROE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am sorry I am late for the meeting. US Air had a little different problem for me this morning. I am going to yield my time to Mr. Thompson. I apologize for missing your testimony, but I will read it. Thank you.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Roe.

Ms. Allen, first of all, congratulations on the STEM program that your district has. It sounds like a very exciting use of local expertise and resources combined to meet the needs of the children, the kids. My first question really has to do with that. What role did the local school board exercise in creating that opportunity?

Ms. ALLEN. The local school board recognized the need for engineers, for growing our own. St. Mary's County, being a rather rural

place on a peninsula, it doesn't necessarily have the pizzazz that some other places do. And it is a beautiful destination, but you have to get people there to convince them that it is a beautiful destination.

We have wonderful children, wonderful people in our community. There is no reason why they are not talented enough and skilled enough to be able to have high-paying jobs on the base. So we have done a number of things. The Navy reached out to us. We have a higher education center that provides graduate degrees on site there as well. And through a collaborative process between the local board, our superintendent, our Congressman, Steny Hoyer, the higher ed center, and the Navy, we came together to discuss what was it going to take in order to make sure we were growing our own. And that developed into a very comprehensive STEM program. It begins in fourth grade. Students apply, countywide, based on their math scores, their assessments. They provide a writing sample. They must have recommendations. And they are screened to determine their interests and their ability. It is a very diverse group of individuals who are participating in this program.

Mr. THOMPSON. So it sounds like a program that really, if it wouldn't have been for the local school board, the local leadership is what created that opportunity.

Ms. ALLEN. Yes, sir.

Mr. THOMPSON. Which is great. In that light of role, what role did the local school boards have, yours and others that you represent as part of your leadership with the State School Board Association, to your knowledge, have in the development and implementation of Maryland State standards in reading and math? And what role did local school boards have in the development of the state's assessment?

Ms. ALLEN. We were invited to be a part of a stakeholder process, we were invited to give our input. Whether that input was acted upon is a matter of debate, one I am sure that you can understand having been a school board member yourself.

Are we completely happy with the efforts? No. But we are happy with the fact that our students are increasingly successful. We still have areas that need attention, and we are continuing to work on those areas.

Mr. THOMPSON. And what role are local school boards having in the common core standards initiative, those developments?

Ms. ALLEN. I know that Mr. Wilhoit mentioned that local boards were involved. My knowledge does not extend to that, so I will have to defer on that question.

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. Wilhoit, can you speak to that question?

Mr. WILHOIT. We have been interacting with the national association throughout this process, engaging them in the process. We have provided support to them. We have had open invitations for them to participate, and they have done so. And we have had local board members, individual board members engaged in the feedback work and in terms of responding to the standards as we have brought them forward. We have had an open invitation to all the education constituency groups.

Mr. THOMPSON. Open invitation. What has been the success of their response and engagement in the process? How much have they actually contributed to the development of those standards?

Mr. WILHOIT. I would have to be more specific for you, and I could get that to you.

Mr. THOMPSON. I would appreciate that. If you would provide that in writing. And based on our time constraints, I would yield back the balance.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you. Ms. Hirono.

Ms. HIRONO. Thank you. We are very interested in supporting evidence-based school reform that truly positively impacts student learning. And as we move toward these higher, clearer, fewer common standards, and Mr. Wilhoit, you touched upon this a little bit. How do we assure ourselves that these common standards, once we get them—and I hope that we come up with the appropriate assessments—that these are the standards that truly are going to enable our students to be able to succeed in school and in life?

Mr. WILHOIT. We have attempted to draw from the higher education community their impression of what the essential skills and knowledge would be, and we have incorporated those into the standards. We have done so with the business community, particularly in those areas where we have emerging growth opportunities and rewards for students. So we built—in essence, built the standards off of those expectations. So there is a good reality check against success in terms of the definition.

Whether those are ultimately the ones that will make the direct tie, we are using evidence as best we can through this process. As I stated earlier, there are gaps in that evidence base that will need further investigation. We will have a process of ongoing review and analysis to make sure that, in effect, we are following up on the statements we have in front of folks. And we will be learning from the local schools as they try to implement, and from colleges and universities and from businesses as they accept these students into their ranks. But this is the first time that we have gone from just an opinion sort of thing about what should be taught to more strong evidence-based kind of process. Again, I would say all of that with the stipulation that we have a lot to learn as we move forward.

Ms. HIRONO. I think that is really important, because one of the areas that we know there is evidence that supports the importance of this kind of experience for our children is quality early education, and there is all kinds of evidence that shows that it is the foundation for a child to succeed in school and life. So the longitudinal information and evidence, that may be one critical role that the Federal Government can play in supporting that kind of research.

Mr. Kubach, you mentioned that this situation provides us with an opportunity for us to use technology in assessing. I am not a big fan of yearly testing, et cetera. I am learning that tools, such as smart boards, is a really great way for teachers in particular to be able to diagnose whether a particular child is learning what he or she needs to learn. Is that the kind of technology that you were referring to in your testimony?

Mr. KUBACH. Right. What I am referring to is really thinking about this as a system that doesn't just include the annual assessments, but also includes resources and tools and models of performance that teachers could use in the classroom with students so that they can understand how their students are doing relative to the expectations that they are going to be held to at the end of the year.

In terms of the delivery of formative assessments in the classroom, we see that there is an explosion of different kinds of devices, whether they are smart boards or smart phones. And there are enough standards in the technology world that we should be able to deliver and work with any of these emerging technologies.

Ms. HIRONO. It seems to me that as we incorporate these kinds of ability on the part of our educators to be able to assess very quickly whether a curriculum is working on any particular student, I think that is probably, in my view, more important than the kind of testing that we have been doing in this country. And, Ms. Allen, I saw you nodding your head. Is that something that you are doing in your State, incorporating more of these kinds of assessment tools to give immediate feedback that results in the teacher being able to revise his or her instruction?

Ms. ALLEN. Absolutely. In fact, we are doing two things I would like to talk about. One are the smart boards. And the recent infusion of Federal dollars has allowed St. Mary's County Public Schools to purchase over 247 smart boards to be utilized in our classrooms. When you walk into a classroom where students are being assessed using a smart board system where they have keypads and are able to answer questions immediately and the teacher is able to see exactly what the learning curve is for the students and who is getting it and who isn't, that is of significant value. Add to that the fact that that is the way children are bombarded today is by all the electronics. That is how they learn. For us to ignore the fact that that is what they are interested in and that is the way they learn I think is for us to ignore a huge opportunity, at our peril and their peril as well.

Ms. HIRONO. And these smart boards are not exactly cheap, so that is probably another way that the Federal Government could provide assistance to the schools.

Ms. ALLEN. Absolutely. You are looking at about \$5,000 a board, I believe, and then there is teacher training in order for them to be able to utilize as effectively as possible.

The other thing we are doing is using a data warehouse in St. Mary's County that allows real-time data to be used, and look at each child individually, outcome by outcome, to determine how they are doing. And it has made a significant and positive impact on the achievement of all of our students.

One other point I would like to make in response to something that Mr. Kubach talked about, and that would be the online assessments. Coming from an emerging rural area that has limited broadband access, I would say to you, I am not sure that there is a benefit in simply using a computer to record your answers if you cannot at the same time be on-line and sending that information to be evaluated immediately. And that is a problem that is particular not just to St. Mary's County but across the Nation.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Ehlers.

Mr. EHLERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for the delay in arriving. I had several other meetings that were really urgent. I just want to bring up a different issue. Earlier this year, I introduced as, I have for the past several years, introduced a bill to provide a educational achievement for kids called the Speak Act and Senator Dodd introduced a companion bill in the Senate. The whole purpose was to try to work with NAEP to provide national voluntary standards in science, math, and reading. I would like to think that the emergence of this potential act probably stimulated the States to beginning the work that they have done. And more power to them. If they wish to take on this task of creating voluntary standards, so much the better.

However, one concern I have is, as I understand it, Mr. Wilhoit, you can respond to this, I believe they are working just on the reading, language arts, and math, and not science. And yet, one of the biggest concerns is, how do we prepare our kids for the jobs of the future? And you all, I am sure you know all the statistics about how much better than other nations are doing than we are informally on the OECD nations we are usually near the bottom in science and math. And China produces three to four times as many engineers per year as we do. And it goes on and on.

What was the reason for not tackling the science standards? Because I think that is equally important than math and reading and in some ways more important. Let me just give an example. If you don't get kids excited about science in elementary school, they are not likely to take the advanced science courses in high school. If they don't take them in high school, they are in for a big shock when they go to the university and say, I would like to be an engineer, because they face 2 years of makeup work before they can even really get into the engineering curriculum. And so I think it is very, very important to get started with science in the elementary and secondary schools. I appreciate any comments you can make.

Mr. WILHOIT. We would agree with the urgency of improving science experiences for students at the elementary and high school level and agree the importance of it. We simply started with these two areas because that is about all we could handle at this point. I would say to you that the science community is very interested in a similar process around science standards, and toward that end they are convening currently to bring forward their consensus of what they think those science standards could be. So there is activity going on within the science community to bring forward something for States to look at. It is just trailing in terms of its development. We are at this point simply immersed in the work of these two content areas.

Mr. EHLERS. And what do you think the chances are that your work will carry on and use whatever is provided by the science community?

Mr. WILHOIT. Well, I think this is a very healthy process for us, unlike the one we just engaged in. It would be nice to have that kind of consensus coming from the community. I think it would make a smoother process for State consideration. But there is an

interest on the part of the States to address science at some point, and so it seems to me it is a matter of the community coming together with their recommendations and then bringing it to work at some public process that the States could engage in.

Mr. EHLERS. Okay. You said you were somewhat sure.

Mr. WILHOIT. Yeah. And I would say that basically, at this point, despite some concerns about adoption town the road that this has been a successful experience. It has had—it has been very dynamic, as I said. But I think, if the States can come together around these two areas, we see success. I see no other reason why we could not move forward in some of the other disciplines. We have also had an interest in citizenship education and interest in the arts, so there are some other communities out there that are interested in promoting a commonality across their content areas.

Mr. EHLERS. Two additional questions. One, I noticed Alaska and Texas have not participated. Do you expect they will participate once the standards are developed?

Mr. WILHOIT. We have had some direct interaction with the folks in Alaska around us. They are watching this. We have had direct statements that in Texas they probably will not participate. So those things can change as we move forward. We are treating everyone as equal partners. We are still engaging those individuals who want to be a part of the process. So there is no closed door to anyone on this.

Mr. EHLERS. Thank you very much.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Holt.

Mr. HOLT. Thank you. I would like to follow on some of what Mr. Ehlers has been asking. Rather than lead you Socratically through a long list of questions to establish the point that perhaps not the only but the best way in today's schools to develop critical thinking and independent thinking is through science, science education.

I noted early on when you said that the emphasis in this will be what students should know. I believe that is what I heard you say. And you established this by going down the two paths of talking to industries and people out in the world about what they need, and then looking through the educational process.

There is at least as much need for how students think to develop—at least as much need to develop how students think as there is to develop what students know, and science, it seems to me, is a critical part of this. And so I would like to find out how it is that science got put on the slower track in this, just to follow up on Mr. Ehlers' questions.

Mr. WILHOIT. Just—I hope I said “know” and “are able to do,” because I do think that both of those are critical attributes. And being able to apply it is just as critical as having content knowledge.

In terms of the development process, it was simply a call on our part to take the two areas that were being emphasized in terms of student performance at this time. There was no attempt to eliminate science in the long run; it was merely a matter of how many of these can we move forward at a single time. And I think, in retrospect, two of them at this point was about all we could have handled. And because there was such a strong voice out there in terms of mathematics development, the fact that many of our students

were eliminated from the math curriculum, that we were falling behind in terms of math achievement, the fact that NAEP had been reporting more continuously against English, language arts, and mathematics sort of led us to that beginning point, again, with no attempt to slight the other content areas.

Mr. HOLT. So where is it in those two areas, in the reading and the math, that students will learn to ask critical questions about how ideas are developed and how they are tested in empirical and verifiable ways how ideas get into the realm of general acceptance? Where will they learn that in those two areas?

And let me just finish with the footnote is, again, I think the most effective way for students to learn this, I think, has been demonstrated over and over is through science education.

Mr. WILHOIT. I would say that the general—conversation in the science community at this point is really about how do we merge the scientific inquiry methodology with the essential knowledge, and how do those two come together in an important conclusion that leads to a set of standards that we can all be proud of and promote. So that conversation is going on in science. A similar conversation is going on in mathematics and in English language arts. That is, not only should students know good literary work, but they should know how that literary work compares to other literary work, how one draws conclusions about an author's intent compared to the intent of another author. How do we take a certain literary work and the components of that literary work and apply it to a new piece that a student might write. How does a student express oneself in ways that bring meaning to that enterprise? In mathematics, obviously, it is not simply learning the formulas or being able to recite those formulas, but being able to take a mathematical dilemma and solve that dilemma using prior knowledge and bringing together content from other areas.

So each one of those disciplines brings to it both a central content knowledge, a content base, and an application process. It is unique in science, and it does push this to a wonderful conclusion in science and one that we are looking forward to working with.

Mr. HOLT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MILLER. Ms. Clarke.

Ms. CLARKE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

To the panel, I proudly hail from the city of New York, borough of Brooklyn. And in New York City, with one of the largest, most diverse school districts in the Nation, we have two types of diplomas; we have a local diploma and we have a regions diploma. The academic standards required to obtain a local diploma are not as rigorous as the standards required to obtain a regions diploma. However, we are currently in the process of phasing out the local diploma.

There is great concern in minority communities, in particular, that once this happens, the already low minority high school graduation rate will plummet even further. Likewise, once national standards are instituted, many educators predict that it will be the minority students who will disproportionately suffer from the challenge and impact of these new standards.

So here is my question. How should we address this achievement gap?

Secondly, are there any discussions taking place that truly integrate multicultural curriculums?

Finally, I think this question is especially pertinent in light of the fact that by 2045, it is predicted that minority students will be in the majority in most of the schools in America. So I just wanted to get your response.

Mr. KUBACH. One of the great advantages of moving to an online platform and bringing that technology into the classroom and using that technology to assess and diagnose and help teachers and students move forward is that we can offer a much broader range of options and accommodations. So, for example, we can support English language learners in their native language. We can provide materials and we can provide activities and projects in a much richer set of approaches to engage and capture kids' imaginations on those subjects.

Ms. CLARKE. Let me just sort of add my take on multi-cultural curriculums. It is not just necessarily about the ethnicity or the person's language barriers, but it has to do with a comprehensive look at all of the contributions that the diversity of our Nation makes, and incorporating that wholly into the curriculums.

If you look at American history today, there are deficiencies. It does not speak to the whole of who participated in American history. Certainly when students look at the curriculum, if it is not reflective of their experience right there, you begin with a deficit. I just wanted to add that.

Mr. WILHOIT. Our sense is that the creation of common high standards will bring to light the concern you raised. It will be perfectly clear which students are not achieving and which ones are, and what resources are behind certain students and what resources are not.

So I think the potential here would be to take a set of high standards and put them on the shelf or to take these high standards and begin to think about how we remediate and deal with the problems that exist in the system. It will make it much more transparent about where the students are learning and where they are not, and it will put some pressures on the system that we don't have right now because we will get by this argument about what does one student know and what one does not. We will get to the issue of what resources need to be put behind students to make them all successful.

Ms. ALLEN. If I may also respond, Mr. Chairman, we expect that common core standards are going to be the be-all solution for our students, we are mistaken. It is a multi-pronged approach. It must be a multi-pronged approach. We cannot wait until we are administering high stakes exit exams to discover that our students aren't where they are supposed to be. It has to start with quality, early childhood education, full day kindergarten. Our students have to understand and know how to read by the end of second grade because they learn to read by the end of second grade. By the beginning of third grade, they read to learn. They must be able to read to learn.

So I would say to you that there is not a single solution, but it is something that is on the minds of every single school board member across this country.

Chairman MILLER. Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wonder if you can give me a sense of the urgency in this. We talk about this all the time. We have looked at some of the countries that come basically from the bottom to the top and what their governments did to make those changes. I would like to know from your perspective, and what role should we be playing? I know people care deeply. I know that the Race to the Top is one effort, and that's substantial now. In your opinion, where is the urgency lacking as well and how can we move that forward?

Mr. WILHOIT. I am not sure it is as much an issue of lack of will as it is not knowing where to go. I think we have been bombarded with lots of different solutions recently. We have been forced, in a positive way, to realize that our country needs to dramatically improve the opportunity for our children, and we have made direct connections between that lack of achievement and our economic circumstance in our future.

What we need now, and I think the sense of urgency around the common standards, is a true one. I described it as essential but insufficient in terms of our work that is ahead of us. If we can develop this base of understanding and agreement across the country among the States about what students should know and be able to do, then we can get about that task of development. But it will require considerable effort in terms of development of curricula framework that translate those standards so a teacher can then apply those standards in a classroom.

It will take a redesign preparation program system in the country. It will require new forms of professional growth that we don't have currently in place. It will require significant focus, attention and diligence to this task over the next few years for us to get it done.

If we waiver on those issues, we will probably find ourselves 5 to 10 years from now back to where we are now which would be a crime for this country.

Mrs. DAVIS. Do you see those commitments based on resources available today? It is important to have the resources and to have the financial support, and on the other hand, we are never going to have what we need.

Mr. WILHOIT. I think it is partially resources, but it is also thinking about how we educate each child. I think there is a major conflict right now. Our historic education school, as we have designed it, is in conflict with the goals we set for our children. So the attention, the energy in the future is how do we design learning programs so that every child is successful, and we may not be able to do it unless we change some of the basic assumptions around schooling.

Mrs. DAVIS. I think the other concern that we see is the way in which we approach subjects and the kind of depth with which professionals are encouraged to deal with those topics. We have a tendency to move through textbooks at a rapid rate, and we are really not getting the depth. I think we know that, we have been studying that, and yet do you see that reflected in the standards and the discussions that are being held throughout the country?

Mr. WILHOIT. Yes, definitely. This issue has been brought to our attention by teachers very directly. We have asked them to teach too many things in shallow ways. Students are not reflecting the depth of knowledge they need to know. We have not asked teachers to teach to mastery around those essential knowledge and skills so that the students can move and progress through the educational system.

There is a great awareness of that in the standards development, and hopefully that will be reflected as a part of the new document.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. We have a couple of moments, and we have just a few more questions.

Mr. Kubach, in your statement on page 7 you raised the question about whether or not the common core standards are simply a summit of assessment or part of an integrated system. With the smart boards and with online content being more and more part of the education system, we really see the ability to move up and down the assessment, if you will. If you are stuck with a textbook and you have the questions at the end of the textbook, you are stuck with the questions more or less. But in this one, a student may not only recite the facts and understand that they got the facts about that subject at that moment, they may also be able to demonstrate that they understand how those facts would be applied to a series of problems and move back and forth.

A teacher may get, as Ms. Allen pointed out, real-time feedback exactly what is taking place in that class, whether it is the clickers or the pads, or what have you. But then to be able to move to a more expansive assessment, to maybe pull a teacher and students together in real-time to deal with those deficiencies in however those concepts or material didn't get translated. That is very different from today, but I also think it is very promising.

But the blast against No Child Left Behind, and I think quite correctly so, and I say that as a proud author of it, is that we ended up putting a very high stakes outcome on a single assessment. I think what you are suggesting to us is we need not do that. We can be much better informed about what is taking place in this school or this school district because of these other ways of measuring what students are learning and also be able to remedy deficiencies in real-time. We may end up having a year of course assessment or end of high school assessment, exit exams, however you want to do that, but you now have, you keep talking about an online platform, it seems to me you have the ability of really allowing teachers and principals and others to move back and forth across the knowledge base that students have to reinforce it, expand it, or remediate it.

Mr. KUBACH. You are absolutely right. There are a couple of issues here.

First, there is a primary role that the summit of assessments have when we are introducing these new common core standards of really defining what the goal is. Until we define that goal, the standards really will not be clear and we won't be able to then show teachers and show students where they need to be to truly be ready for college or ready for work based on these international benchmarks.

That being said, if we can move the assessment system to a technology-based platform and get out of paper, then we do have the opportunity to manage a system across the year where there are rich activities that are going on throughout the year, where there is information that can be immediately fed back to teachers so that they can adjust instruction and personalize the learning experiences to help each individual child get to the end goal.

Chairman MILLER. Don't you also, in theory, have the ability to have a student build their own portfolio, to accomplish tasks that are consistent with the standards, and accomplish projects consistent with the standards; online curriculum test challenges, depth of knowledge, can all be presented to them, and the students can challenge themselves. And to build a portfolio that, in many ways, would be much richer than whether they were reading at grade level at 4th grade and that is the end of the assessment, and we don't know a hell of a lot more about that student other than they made AYP and we are worried about the kid next to them?

Mr. KUBACH. You are absolutely right. One of the traps that we fell into, with a paper-based system and the budgets available, many States have eliminated lots of the rich performance tasks from their assessment systems, and they are really just implementing the least expensive kind of assessment they can deliver which is a multiple choice, paper-based, machine-scored assessment.

If we can move beyond that, we will be changing the focus away from preparation to succeed on those kinds of assessments to the kinds of rich experiences that you have been talking about where children are demonstrating what they can do and how they can apply knowledge in different ways.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you. Turning to my colleagues, I would just encourage my colleagues on the committee to read the paper that your collaborative effort put together on addressing these assessments because I think they will see that many of the criticisms and concerns, and very legitimate concerns we have had about accountability under No Child Left Behind, are really addressed in this in terms of where we can go in the future, which I think is very exciting for teachers, parents, and students in many, many ways in having that kind of body of information about how their children are doing or students are doing.

Mr. Thompson.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to express my appreciation to the panel for your testimony, and I am going to yield to Mr. Castle.

Mr. CASTLE. I thank you for yielding.

Mr. Wilhoit, where are the chief State scholars with respect to the common assessments? I understand the standards and the commonality there, it has been explained today. But it is still unclear to me about exactly what everybody is thinking about assessments down the line, which is a necessary part in determining where we are. I wonder if you have a position or what you are looking at or what you are doing in that area?

Mr. WILHOIT. We have had a number of conversations, the latest being a couple of weeks ago, about where the States are against assessments. I think basically the point is we have got to get past

this constant conversation in the country about which assessment really does measure student progress and get by the differences that exist.

There is a desire on a part of a large majority of the States to come together around commonality and assessments. How that will come about is yet to be determined. There are some individual areas of the country, New England States have already had a good experience around a common assessment program. That has been reported very positively. Other State are looking at expanding that network.

There have been conversations in the Midwestern States about a similar kind of assessment design, and there is this conversation about how many States would like to come together around a common assessment, around the common core standards. And there has been a considerably positive response to those areas. We are in those early phases of conversation and we will see how it plays out, but there is a very positive environment.

Mr. CASTLE. I assume it would be on a voluntary basis?

Mr. WILHOIT. That is correct.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Kubach, if we had common assessments, then you get to the whole area of security. If we go to the online assessments, as you have advocated here, that may raise some questions too as to the fact that they can be flashed all over the country in a hurry, or whatever it may be. What are your thoughts about that aspect of the assessments, the testing process?

Mr. KUBACH. That is a very important question, and security is a really important concern. Security and data privacy is an important concern as we move things online. I think there are aspects of moving to an online assessment where they are actually much more secure than the current system. So when the current system, which is primarily paper based, we are creating tests that are shipped all over the State in whatever State we are working in, and are stored in schools, sometimes weeks before the tests are given. Then after the tests are given, they have to be packaged up and assembled in order to be shipped back. So there are actually weeks when these assessments are either sitting in a room at the school or they are traveling by UPS or FedEx back and forth to the scoring company. Those are all places where the tests can escape. And in an online environment, there is actually much less opportunities for that to happen.

Mr. CASTLE. I yield back to Mr. Thompson any time he has remaining.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you very much. Thank you for taking your time and expertise and all you are doing on behalf of this effort. I continue to believe it holds out great promise for our Nation's students.

Thank you. Members who want to submit an opening statement can do so for the next 14 days.

With that, the committee stands adjourned.

[The statement of Mr. Kline follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. John Kline, Senior Republican Member,  
Committee on Education and Labor**

Thank you Chairman Miller, and good morning. We're here today to take a closer look at the Common Core State Standards Initiative and how coordinated efforts to strengthen academic standards can enhance American competitiveness.

The Common Core Initiative is being developed through the joint leadership of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The goal of the initiative is to provide a voluntary, research and evidence-based set of standards for mathematics and English-language arts.

I want to emphasize the word "voluntary" in that description. While the Common Core is still under development, I don't believe anyone involved in the initiative intended for it to become the one and only set of academic standards in the United States.

For that reason, I'd like to focus my remarks this morning not on the quality of the standards themselves, but on what the federal government is doing with those standards.

Secretary Duncan has not been shy about his intentions to dramatically reshape education through the Race to the Top fund. And one key component of the Race to the Top guidelines is the requirement that states participate in and adopt a set of common academic standards. The Department has even gone one step further, offering to provide funding to help states develop assessments based on those common standards.

The only common, multi-state academic standards I am aware of are those being developed through the Common Core Initiative. Therefore, it stands to reason that any state wishing to receive funding through the Race to the Top program will be mandated to adopt the Common Core—and to test its students based on those standards.

In other words, the Common Core is being transformed from a voluntary, state-based initiative to a set of federal academic standards with corresponding federal tests.

I've met with Secretary Duncan on several occasions and I applaud his enthusiasm when it comes to education reform. Yet I am particularly troubled by this aspect of the Race to the Top guidelines and the ramifications of federal involvement in academic standards.

We know academic standards vary widely from state to state. Some states have set the bar low—too low, in my opinion—leaving their students unprepared to compete on the world stage. Yet other states have risen to the challenge, setting extremely rigorous standards and holding their students accountable to these high expectations.

The Common Core has the potential to support those states whose standards are falling short. But mandatory adoption could have the unintended consequence of lowering the bar for states and local communities that have voluntarily established standards even more rigorous than those developed through the Common Core.

I also have questions about what role parents and local education officials will play if the Common Core becomes a de facto national curriculum. Traditionally, local school boards have been active in the development of academic standards and assessments. This allows parents, teachers, and communities to have a voice in what our children are taught.

A voluntary Common Core could serve as a baseline, to be modified and enhanced based on local needs. But by mandating adoption of the Common Core, the Department of Education could undermine the ability of local educators to shape and customize what gets taught in individual classrooms.

The Common Core Initiative is an important tool in the effort to strengthen academic standards. But it is only one element of what should be a much broader strategy on the part of states and local communities working in partnership with the public and private sectors to enhance American competitiveness.

I applaud the NGA and the CCSSO for their leadership. Their efforts to develop a voluntary set of rigorous academic standards must not be undermined by federal intrusion. I look forward to discussing these concerns with our witnesses today, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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[Additional submissions by Mr. Kubach follow:]

### Thoughts on an Assessment of Common-Core Standards

STEPHEN LAZER, *Vice President, Assessment Development, ETS*; JOHN MAZZEO, *Vice President, Statistical Analysis & Psychometrics Research, ETS*; JON S. TWING, *Executive Vice President, Assessment & Information, Pearson*; WALTER D. WAY, *Senior Vice President, Psychometric & Research Services, Pearson*; WAYNE CAMARA, *Vice President, Research & Development, The College Board*; KEVIN SWEENEY, *EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PSYCHOMETRICS, THE COLLEGE BOARD.*

DRAFT (NOVEMBER 16, 2009)

#### *Preface*

The College Board, ETS, and Pearson have formed a collaboration to explore how innovative approaches and best practices in high-quality assessments can be applied to the creation of a common assessment system. Our objective is to work with states to develop an assessment system that will improve learning. We propose to design an integrated system that can provide accountability data, instructionally actionable information, and can inform teacher professional development and evaluation. Combined, we have extensive experience in the research, development, and delivery of a wide variety of assessments. We have worked within and across all 50 states and have worked together collaboratively for many years. Our expertise includes the development of innovative computer-based assessment systems and student growth measures, and the application of a wide range of item types and scoring approaches to provide timely feedback to teachers and students.

This paper is an attempt to raise key assessment design questions and discuss some ideas for a systematic high-level assessment design that satisfies many of the needs expressed by stakeholders. It is meant only to begin discussion, and not to serve as a firm and fixed recommendation.

#### *Introduction and Summary*

American educators stand at a moment of unprecedented opportunity. With opportunity, however, comes risk: decisions we make may well affect the course of assessment in the United States for years to come. Advances in technology, coupled with innovative assessment task design and advanced psychometric and cognitive models, make it possible for us to obtain a richer, more intelligent, and more nuanced picture of what students know and can do than ever before. While the historical opportunity to change the direction of education is real, so are the challenges inherent in any change in assessment paradigm. At the heart of this challenge is one point that is too often missed in these discussions: Different stakeholders will set diverse priorities for an assessment system. Some of these stakeholders value snapshots of what students know and can do at fixed points in time and consider the use of these data for accountability purposes as the highest priority. Others value obtaining multiple points of data that can be used to evaluate schools and teachers systemically. For some, instructionally actionable data at the student level for the purpose of improved instruction is the main system goal, while others are more interested in data at higher systems levels for auditing or “return on investment” type of decisions. Most want formal assessments to be as short and inexpensive as possible, while others would trade some cost and time efficiency to have more authentic, complex, and reliable tasks. Some stakeholders require data that are unambiguously comparable across states and districts, while others would rather see some substantial state and local control over the content of assessments.

No single assessment, not even an integrated assessment system, can optimally serve all possible purposes. Any assessment design is therefore a compromise. Tests that provide optimal instructional feedback may not be the best way to get an overall snapshot of what students have learned over the course of a school year. The need for formative information is not necessarily consistent with the need for data that can be used to evaluate teacher or school effectiveness. Tasks that model good instruction are not always consistent with desires for tests to be as short as possible and for scores to be returned immediately. The desire for comparability of data across jurisdictions stands in tension with wishes to allow those jurisdictions and their teachers and curriculum specialists substantial and variable input into the form and content of assessments. The need for low operational cost may be at odds with many other goals of the system. Efficiency in the long term involves investments in technology and human capital in the short term.

Policymakers should consider the three principles following from this discussion:

- First, we should think of systems of assessments rather than individual tests, as this is likely the only way to satisfy the various information needs identified by stakeholders.
- Second, we are at a moment when new technologies and assessment methodologies provide us an unprecedented opportunity to satisfy many perceived needs in a carefully structured integrated system.

- Third, we must realize that, even in a complex system, we will need to choose among competing and conflicting priorities.

This document represents an attempt to create a high-level framework for an assessment of common-core standards. We arrived at this framework in the following way: First we considered a series of questions regarding the likely design requirements of such an assessment system. Then we considered various factors and made judgments about competing priorities. This led to a high-level assessment model, along with a discussion of various matters that require further research and more thought. Different decisions about priorities would certainly result in different assessment designs, and we tried to point out places where alternate decisions might have such impact. For this reason, this document is meant to begin a conversation about not only these priorities but all aspects of such an assessment design and is not intended to provide the answer or solution. This is also meant to be a high-level design document. We will prepare additional documentation that will discuss, in greater depth, topics such as elements of the assessment system that are designed to provide instructionally actionable information, exercise types that can be used, how scoring might be accomplished, the special needs of high school testing, the assessment of students with disabilities and English-language learners, and how the assessment system might measure student growth.

#### *Executive Summary*

The bulk of this document describes how we answered the key design questions and explains our suggested assessment framework. Before moving to this discussion, we have included an executive summary of what we believe to be key design elements of a forward-looking assessment system:

1. The educational system needs both accountability and instructionally actionable data, and no single test will be optimal to provide both. Therefore, we believe that the goals of this new effort will be best served by an integrated assessment system that includes summative and formative or interim elements built to a common framework. If the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds support only the development of the summative elements of the system, we should ensure that the system and system infrastructure are designed to work with formative and interim elements designed and developed by others.

2. The system must measure common standards and must allow for state-to-state comparability on the common standards. To accomplish this, the new summative measures should have a set of common components assessing the common standards, and produce scores and performance indicators that are comparable across states. However, the system should also allow states to augment this core with materials of their choosing to produce separate state-specific information.

3. The summative portions of this battery will need to include, at a minimum, end-of-year tests for grades 3 through 8 in both math and English language arts (ELA) at the elementary and middle-school levels. At high school, the system may include either “end-of-domain” or “end-of-course” assessments. The elementary and middle-school tests should support growth modeling and across-grade comparability. The assessments should also support within-grade proficiency standards. While we believe these end-of-year and end-of-course/domain assessments should be part of the system, we also believe we should consider using data collected over the course of the year as part of the summative system (see point 9 below).

4. Assessment designers will likely need to incorporate international benchmarking and facilitate comprehensive alignment efforts, although the methods for accomplishing these goals have not yet been determined.

5. The tests should be delivered on computer or other similar technology. Student mastery of emerging standards can likely not be measured based on paper assessments alone. Further, summative assessments should make use of adaptive administration, although adaptive models will need to make allowances for the full range of item types needed to measure emerging constructs, including those that will be scored by humans. We envision that such a system will ultimately support the on-demand needs of a personalized education system.

6. The development of assessment tasks will be based on an Evidence-Centered Design (ECD) process that involves experts and stakeholders. To measure the intended constructs, the tests will likely need to use a range of tasks and stimulus materials, and will need to include more than traditional multiple-choice questions. Important decisions will need to be made regarding how constructed-response questions are scored, though we picture a mixed model that uses technology and professional (e.g., teachers and other subject matter experts) scoring that is supported by assessment technology infrastructure. Such a system will also provide opportunities for professional development.

7. Compared to current summative tests, items and tasks should be created based on an improved understanding of learning and development, both to promote better interaction with formative elements of the system as well as to provide models consistent with good instruction.

8. Tests should be as accessible as possible to students with disabilities and English-language learners, and designers should make use of technology to improve such accessibility.

9. Certain forward-looking ideas should be considered that may or may not be ready for operational implementation at the time of initial rollout of the new system. Perhaps most important among these considerations is that summative assessments may not be single-testing events but could augment end-of-year tests with data collected over the course of the year.

10. We should have careful plans in place to validate assessment scores and claims made based on them, as well as a long-term research agenda to continuously improve the efficacy of the assessment system for its intended purposes.

### *Discussion*

The pages that follow detail the process through which we arrived at the general parameters listed above.

1. Should we consider the test of common-core standards as simply a summative assessment or as part of an integrated system that involves interim and/or formative components as well as summative assessments?

As previously stated, no single assessment can be optimal to serve all possible needs. It is possible that the United States Department of Education (USED) will use the Race to the Top (RTTT) grants to focus on the development of summative assessment systems. Summative assessments will remain a key element of an educational quality-management system, and one of the main goals of this effort is to improve the quality and efficiency of our summative systems. However, without questioning this goal, we believe that American education would be best served by an integrated system where summative and interim or formative components are built from common frameworks and cohere as an information provision system. The system, taken as a whole, should provide both accountability and instructionally actionable information without unduly or unrealistically burdening any given component (for example, summative tests should not be expected, on their own, to provide in-depth instructionally actionable data). It is not necessary for the USED common assessment grants to pay for the development of formative elements. It is essential that the summative systems be designed to work in tandem with these formative elements.

There are a number of reasons to favor an integrated system. First, formative and summative components will likely both function better if built to work together. Specifically, they should be built to meet the same skills standards and to a common assessment framework. They should be constructed using open technology standards and assessment frameworks so that material can flow from one set of instruments to others. Second, an integrated system should relieve pressure from the summative tests to serve a purpose for which they are not ideally suited: to provide in-depth, reliable, and valid instructionally actionable data. This is particularly true at the level of individual standards, where coverage on any summative test will be, by necessity, limited (even in cases where, as we propose, flexible or adaptive administrations or multiple administrations throughout the school year can be used to get better information at this level). Attempts to provide such data from a summative test will increase pressure to lengthen tests—pressure that will become especially important since we believe the system should exploit technology for delivery. An integrated system should prove far more likely to meet the varied goals people have set for the assessment.

While the ability of summative measures to provide formative data is limited, one could, in a carefully designed and integrated system, view summative assessments as providers of information to formative systems, particularly for students who have “outlier performance” in some area. In these cases, summative data might focus teachers on areas where more testing or diagnosis seems indicated. This could involve thinking across grades. For example, a summative result at grade 5 could identify students who appear to be struggling in certain areas. Based on the specific nature of the results, the system might identify “diagnostic intake test” components that would be administered at the beginning of grade 6. These would not go to all students but only to those whose grade 5 results had indicated the need for further testing.

There are, of course, a number of different models for how an integrated assessment system might provide instructionally actionable information. An integrated system can include formal elements like interim assessments, which are given

throughout the year to get a snapshot of how students are doing in mastering the required skills, or diagnostic adaptive assessments, which provide more in-depth information on the gaps in student learning or performance. Both components could utilize banks of performance tasks/assignments and scoring rubrics available for teacher use. While this paper focuses on summative elements of the new system, we plan to address different models of providing instructionally actionable information in a future paper. However, any of these models assumes certain educational system requirements, including the ability to deliver various assessment components via computer, an automatic way of linking assessment results with enrollment and teacher information, and a series of connections between assessment results and curricular materials.

Formative assessment components of an integrated system may be excellent areas to allow for customization, differentiation, and local education agency involvement in development. While there are common standards, to the extent that districts and states use different curricula to address the common standards it is possible that they will prefer to incorporate different formative systems within their instructional programs.

As mentioned above, this paper focuses on summative components of the assessment system. One open question is whether accountability data will come solely from single summative tests, or whether data gathered over the course of the year can be part of a formalized accountability system. In the latter case, we can possibly increase the amount of instructionally actionable data that comes out of summative systems (although not to the point where it obviates the need for formative systems) and improve the quality of the summative data. This will be addressed briefly below and will also be the subject of a follow-up discussion.

2. What sort of general design should the assessments that make up the summative system have?

We believe these tests should have at least two major components, although it is likely federal funding will address only the initial one. Our understanding is that states may augment the common-core standards with 15 percent of their own standards. Thus the common-core assessment system must provide data on the common standards that are strictly comparable across states and must allow states to measure state-specific content as needed.

Because there will be both common-core standards and state additions, the tests would likely have at least two major components. The first would be the test of common-core standards. This would be consistent across all participating states, districts, and schools. Note that we do not mean the same exact test form is required but rather the same assessment. The common components of the test will be designed to yield state, district, school, and individual results on the common-core standards and will not include state-specific augmentation. The second component could be composed of state-specific content or augmentations. Such augmentations could focus solely on the up to 15 percent of unique state-specific standards that are in place or provide additional measures or coverage of common-core standards. These augmentations would be analyzed in tandem with common-core items to yield state-specific results.

Why do we believe that the common-standards components of the summative measure should not be customizable, and that state choices should be located in state-specific sections? Comparability of results on the common-core standards and test development efficiency will be high priorities of the system. Comparability across states and the economies of scale will be enhanced if there is a common assessment of the common standards. Other designs are possible if the ability of states to customize the common-core assessment is viewed as desirable, but these will likely threaten comparability of results and will lead to higher cost.

In system terms, the approach we recommend means adopting a single national delivery package and permitting states (or groups of states) to add components as needed, as opposed to "opening up" the common materials for each state. Finally, this approach allows some states to decide they do not need state-specific content, without affecting the comparisons on the common components (which embedding items in the common core would risk).

This approach has other advantages: Even if a single consortium develops the common-core assessments, states would be free to work with whomever they wished for state-specific components. If developers of the common-core components of the system were to work to some open and shared standards for test material, packaging, and delivery, all components could be delivered as a single test by any number of assessment-delivery systems. Alternately, the developers of the common-core assessment could build some special components that could be used at state discretion.

Note that in any of these models, provision will need to be made for field testing new content. For the common components, this could either be accomplished through a variable section or by embedding field-test items within operational sections.

One open question is how big a system (in terms of assessment exercises) would be needed to ensure security. The answer will depend on the length of the test window, which in turn depends on the number of students who can be tested at any time. It will also be affected by the rapidity with which test developers can rotate content, or the number of different aggregations of content we can provide.

A second open question concerns the length of the individual tests. It is likely that tests at grades 3 and 4 will be limited to 50 minutes, while tests at grades 5 through 8 will take 60–120 minutes (for both common and state-specific components). High school tests could, conceivably, take between 2 and 3 hours. If extended tasks are used, assessment time may need to exceed these limits.

### 3. What grades and subjects?

We assume that the summative assessment system will include end-of-year ELA and math tests at grades 3 through 8, all of which need to produce individual scores as well as aggregate scores and will need to work together to track student growth. As discussed under point 9 below, these end-of-year tests may not be the only components of the summative system. At high school, we believe two summative models are possible: either end-of-domain tests in both ELA and math that cover the knowledge and skills needed to be ready for college and career training, or a series of end-of-course tests. Each approach has advantages and disadvantages, depending on the priorities selected.

Annual testing between grades 3 and 8 will be an optimal way to support student growth modeling, which we believe to be a key goal of the new system. It also provides data at fixed points, which should be usable by parents, teachers, and policy-makers.

One assumption we make is that these tests could replace the current generation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) assessments. Through use of technology, we believe we will be able to provide a state-of-the-art range of accommodations to students who need them. We also believe that through use of computer administration, we may be able to tailor tests to individual students. Such personalized assessment may even cause us to reevaluate the need for modified (or “2%”) assessments. Additionally, it would be appropriate to think of 1% or Title 3 tests as part of a common assessment system that shares data among components.

Closing comments in this area: End-of-year testing at grades 3 through 8 is likely necessary given an educational system that is still organized by grade and which needs annual accountability data. However, just because students are “housed” into educational institutions based on this classification system, it does not mean that this should restrict how we teach and assess these students. For example, the system we propose here could evolve into an on-demand system that will make sense as school schedules and student needs continue to evolve. It also would allow for a system in which students take tests when they are ready based on their personalized instructional paradigm. Second, as mentioned above, one could consider systems in which accountability data are not solely the province of the end-of-year test (see point 9 below). This would not, of course, necessarily obviate the need for the end-of-year snapshot of what students know and can do.

### 4. Cross-grade or within-grade scaling and reporting?

Given the overall interest in student growth metrics (and the use of such metrics in teacher evaluation), the assessment should support cross-grade comparability, and the assessment will need to be set up to allow for such comparisons. This work will, of course, be greatly facilitated if the content standards and expectations are coherent across grades. In addition to supporting growth modeling, cross-grade comparability facilitates another element we view as desirable in the system: the ability of flexible administration engines to select “out-of-grade” content for either advanced or struggling students. We assume that this out-of-grade content will mirror the instruction the student has received regardless of his or her grade level or age. Note that use of off-grade content is forbidden under current rules of NCLB, and USED would have to facilitate dispensation.

While we believe we need cross-grade comparability, we will also need to have within-grade performance levels. This does not pose a problem but simply must be considered as part of the work planning.

There are interesting questions that will need to be answered in this area. For example, while it is likely that some constituents will want to see tests at grades 3 through 8 on a vertical scale (perhaps mistakenly thinking vertical scales are required for growth measures), it is not at all clear that high school tests should (or need to be) placed on such a scale. Frankly, the notion of comparing performance

in various high school subjects, such as chemistry and Algebra II, is problematic in itself. In the past, states have not tended to require this, and high school content may not be as friendly to cross-grade comparability. But there is a real need for data on whether or not high school students are proceeding as necessary.

It is worth mentioning that there are several ways to produce measures of growth and cross-grade comparability. How the requirements of specific growth models affect the system will need to be studied, and we plan to devote more thought to this topic as follow up to this paper.

Two closing points: First, the need for cross-grade comparability is likely to be required for the common-core standards. State-specific augmentations may or may not need to support such cross-grade comparability.

Second, given the number of standards and the pressures on assessment time available, it would make the most sense from a measurement standpoint to establish any passing scores on the summative system as a whole and not just at the level of specific standards. We will almost certainly need to produce sub-score and collateral information as well as disaggregated performance by standard (and other breakouts), and the presence of an underlying comparability paradigm would facilitate all these purposes. Such system wide comparability may also be used to guide any adaptive administration and an integrated system to improve the quality of the standard-level data. Reporting meaningful information at the standard level will become easier if new standards are fewer and more cognitively distinct.

#### 5. National or state-specific scales and performance levels?

The system must support both common and state-specific performance levels. A comprehensive system might work as follows: There could be a single-scale score and a set of achievement levels on the common test component. This would allow for comparisons among participating states and placement of individual scores in the context of the common standards. Recall that this is possible because each state in a consortium is taking the same assessment on the same standards.

The common-core standards assessments will likely need to be internationally benchmarked. The easiest way to accomplish this is through judgmental processes: either through the use of the internationally benchmarked standards as key descriptors of goals in a level-setting process, or through some assurance from an independent body that the standards themselves conform to international best practice and that the assessment is aligned with the standards. Alternately, the system could rely on statistical linkages to international studies such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Regardless, a key step involves meeting with stakeholders to determine the specific uses stakeholders wish to make of the international benchmarks.

This paper assumes that the new assessments will have performance standards. Therefore, using appropriate methods and sources of information to set standards will be of key import. Standard setting is often not considered when designing an assessment, but the validity of claims made based on the assessment will be no stronger than the performance standards allow. Assessment designers should ensure that crucial evidence is brought to bear regarding topics such as what successful students around the world know and can do in different grades, and what sorts of texts should students be prepared to encounter to succeed at the next grade. Overall, we should have a solid evidentiary basis for stating that students have reached a level that will allow them to succeed in future education.

The comments above relate to the scale and performance levels for the common-core components of the assessment. In addition to this, there will need to be separate state-specific scales and levels for states that augment the common core with their own materials. In all likelihood, these would be based on state-by-state analyses of the conjoined sets of items (that is, common plus state specific). In practical terms, it may be hard for states to explain major differences between their standards and national standards. But the system needs to support these types of data.

#### 6. The use of technology in delivery

One of the major questions facing the designers of a common-standards assessment is “how much technology, how soon?” Certainly, the current state of technology availability in many states and the current price structures of testing programs would argue that an assessment system should offer a paper-based test, or at least a program that could be administered on paper as well as online. In spite of this, we believe that the assessment of common standards should be computer-based (or other technology-enabled) tests in which paper is used solely for certain special accommodations. There are several reasons for this:

- Emerging standards in both mathematics and ELA define constructs that can only be measured through the use of technology. This is likely to be true in subjects such as science as well. Maintaining parallel paper and computer systems on which

results were supposed to be interchangeable would effectively prevent measurement of such skills. This “assessment tail wagging the education dog” has been a large criticism of education reform efforts in the past, and we want to avoid this.

- Technology allows for the use of a range of forward-looking exercise types, including item types that ask students to engage with digital content and formats, and bring to bear skills that wouldn’t (and couldn’t) be invoked on a paper test.

- Testing some skills on paper may simply yield invalid results in the future.

- Technology allows for flexible (adaptive) and on-demand testing, which we believe should be a part of this design.

- Technology allows for electronic scoring of some sorts of items, and thus for use of a broader range of items than does paper-based testing. Technology also facilitates the distribution of student responses to teachers, monitoring the quality of teacher scoring, and increased opportunities for professional development in terms of assessment development and scoring.

- Rapid return of scores and seamless data/information interchange is facilitated by technological delivery.

- It is easier to see the summative test (or tests) as part of an integrated-assessment system if it is built around a technology platform based on accepted standards for content and data transfer.

- We assume technology will continue to improve, become easier to use and more common in the future such that our proposed system will be operationally feasible.

- Technology allows for provision of a range of accommodations for students with disabilities and English-language learners that might not otherwise exist.

- Using technology as the single delivery paradigm simplifies issues with comparability.

This decision, of course, has major operational implications. Even with expanded technology access we cannot rely solely on mass administrations, so scheduling becomes essential. Testing windows will need to be open long enough to accommodate test takers, and exercise pools will need to be large enough to protect test security. The final system must allow for trade-offs between assessment purpose (like high-stakes graduation decisions) and the size of the testing window allowed. Finally, since it is likely that state-specific content will be developed by a number of different entities, we would need a set of data transfer and delivery protocols that could be used by all involved.

As mentioned above, we believe that the summative-assessment system should make use of adaptive administration. A variety of approaches may be used for this purpose (e.g., traditional computer-adaptive testing, multistage testing, variable or fixed-length testing). The appropriate adaptive testing solution will depend on the content and structure of the exams.

Some arguments in support of adaptive testing follow:

- It allows for on-demand testing.

- It allows for somewhat shorter testing times than linear testing, which helps from various perspectives, particularly if access to computers is an issue.

- It allows us to measure the “higher” standards, while at the same time gaining some meaningful information about what lower performers know and can do.

- Considered appropriately, it may allow us to identify standards on which students are struggling without unduly lengthening tests. Particularly in ELA with a heavy emphasis on authentic reading, we believe variations in traditional CAT approaches (e.g., section-based or passage-based adaptivity) can be implemented in an advantageous manner. Again, this will allow for far more personalization than traditional assessments.

- It will allow us to get better “bang for the buck” out of open-ended/performance-based testing.

One possible challenge is the use of items that require human scoring in an adaptive system. There are in fact ways to use such items. In a multistage system, for example, routing decisions can be made based on a machine-scorable stage, with performance or open-ended exercises requiring human scoring administered during later stages.

While we believe the assessment should be adaptive, it is not certain we will be able to make it adaptive in the first year of administration. We would, of course, do large-scale piloting of items before roll-out. However, given issues associated with calibrating a pool under sub-optimal motivational conditions, it is likely that in the roll-out year of the program we would assemble a large number of linear tests and assign these randomly to candidates. The system could, however, use adaptive administration in subsequent years.

7. What item types should we assume?

This question is in many ways premature: Final internationally benchmarked standards do not exist at all grades. Decisions about the sorts and arrays of tasks

that ought to be included on these assessments should be the result of a careful Evidence-Centered Design (ECD) process in which we gather expert groups, review research, and identify the sorts of behaviors that would convince us that students have reached the stated standards. Simply stated, we want to use the assessment task or item that most appropriately measures the construct desired.

However, we need working assumptions. Our task design should be guided by the general goal of measuring each construct as validly, effectively, and thoroughly as possible. This will certainly involve a range of exercise types that move well beyond traditional multiple choice. These may include, though not be limited to, scenario-based tasks, long and short constructed responses, tasks that involve the exercise of technology skills, and simulations. This is particularly true given the general goals of providing college readiness information, eliciting more than content mastery information (i.e., problem solving and critical analysis), and exploiting the assessment medium (namely online technology).

To optimize the speed and cost-effectiveness of scoring these items, we should be prepared to adopt a range of strategies. First, we may need to push the limits of what can be scored electronically: machine scorable must not equal multiple choice. Computerized-scoring systems are getting more effective all the time. Second, we can and should develop better ways to analyze data obtained from simulations that go beyond simple student responses. Third, while some tasks can be machine scored, we must realize that emerging standards will likely necessitate the use of items that, given the current state of scoring technology, will require human scoring for some number of years. If this is true, we will have to find ways to balance the need for these items with other imperatives. We will also need to make effective use of technologies for distributing responses for scoring, and for monitoring and assuring the quality of such scoring. To summarize, we believe it is likely that the new assessment system will need to make use of three types of scoring: simple-machine scoring using online testing, intelligent scoring using online technologies, and human scoring using online technologies.

Human scoring is, of course, in many ways a positive. It allows items that are not constrained by limits of the current electronic-scoring systems. Use of teachers in the scoring process would also represent a powerful professional development activity. Teacher scoring in a system that will also be used for teacher evaluation will necessitate careful safeguards. Therefore, any final design will need to find ways to use human-scored items in ways that optimize the instructional and professional development impact of those items, without placing undue or unrealistic burdens on the system. We should also be prepared to make aggressive use of emerging computer constructed-response scoring technologies, to make sure that teacher involvement is in fact professional development and not solely additional labor. We believe there are ways to involve teachers in scoring, without necessarily expecting them to conduct all the scoring (at least of the common-core standards components that require rapid score turnaround). The good news is that much progress has been made recently in using automation in human scoring in ways that improve quality and professional development potential.

During the design effort, other questions will emerge about the sorts of items and tasks that can be used. These will surround issues like use of audiovisual stimuli (as called for in the Council of Chief State School Officers-National Governors Association ELA standards), as well as interactive tasks involving spreadsheets and databases. One interesting matter that will need to be resolved early in the process concerns the inclusion of tasks that measure ELA standards for speaking and listening (if these are in the final version of any set of standards). This is not uncommon in current state standards, but these skills are rarely if ever covered in assessments (which are normally limited to reading and writing). We will need to decide how to assess in these areas as this has broad implications for test design and administration. One possible approach is to include listening and speaking in the individual score portions of high school tests (which can be longer), and only assess these skills at state discretion in tests at earlier grades depending upon the goals of assessing listening and speaking or the outcome measures desired in these domains.

If we are to do something new and different, it is necessary that our items and tests be developed with an awareness of how students learn. A test built around an understanding of available learning progressions is likely to be a better provider of information to formative components of the system. Items that model good learning and instruction should make “teaching to the test” less of a problem. Of course, this sort of thinking cannot mean that we fail to meet psychometric standards for quality, score comparability, and fairness, particularly given the high-stakes nature of the potential use for high school graduation, college readiness/college placement and possibly college admissions. Finding the appropriate balance will be key.

8. Pre-equating or post-equating?

Given the discussion immediately above (that is, a desire to use adaptive testing), one might assume we would also recommend a pre-equating approach. It will certainly be necessary to calibrate the items to allow routing decisions. But, if the testing windows are at all long, and vary by states, post-equating might make some states wait rather long for scores. Therefore, we believe the system will eventually need to be geared toward pre-equating as allowed. One complexity associated with pre-equating, however, is the use of human-scored items. Pre-equating will only work if we can ensure that the scoring of the responses is of the same effective rigor as that used to calibrate the items; this will require very careful control over the human-scoring process.

Finally, it is almost certain that some form of post-equating and post-calibration will be needed during the first year of the program.

9. Should the summative assessment be a single test or use multiple sources of data?

In the previous sections, we have for the most part discussed the tests as if they were given at fixed points during some course of study (either the end of a school year or the end of high school). Furthermore, we believe that such tests should be part of any coherent system of assessments. However, this is not the same as arguing that they should be the only components of a summative system.

There are several ways in which one could consider other "assessment events" or data sources to be formalized parts of the summative-assessment system. In one family of approaches, there would be multiple assessments over the course of the year whose results would be aggregated into a summative score or scores. Such an approach could conceivably take one of two general forms. In the first, a larger assessment that would theoretically cover the entire year would be broken into component pieces covering different, and possibly non-overlapping, sets of content and skills. For example, a three-hour test might be broken into three one-hour tests that would be given over the course of the year. In this conception, the end-of-year test would essentially cover the last third of the year. A similar possibility is to build assessments around discrete instructional units (even if those were not equally spaced over the course of the year).

A variant on this approach is a system in which the end-of-year test did cover the entire year's worth of content, but that earlier standardized tests covered content from the first part of the school year in more depth. This is similar to the "mid-term-final" approach used in many universities and high schools, in which scores from midterms and finals are averaged according to some preset weights and often combined with other information to derive a final grade.

There are obvious advantages to such approaches and real challenges as well. On the plus side, one would get some early-warning data on students from the summative system itself; students might be able to retake modules they have failed over the course of the year. Because such systems would allow more aggregate data, they might give more stable results. On the other hand, the challenges are real. Such a system almost certainly involves making decisions about the ways content and skills are to be ordered (or at least combined) in the curriculum, and this may be beyond what is possible. While the aggregate data may be solid, the reliability of the periodic measures may be lower than one might like, which will be a problem if those data are used on their own for high-stakes purposes. Finally, in the second of these models, the system would need to be prepared to deal with a possible conundrum. If two districts got the same average scores on the end-of-year test, that would normally be interpreted to mean that those two districts ended that school year "in the same place." Rating one district higher because of performance on intermediate ratings might be problematic.

An alternate model, used in some other countries, is described below. There would still be an end-of-year test, but accountability scores would also use data from standardized projects conducted over the period of the course of study (for example, research papers, laboratory reports, or book summaries). Scores from these projects would represent a fixed percentage of the final summative score.

This model would have clear advantages and disadvantages as well. Through making these sorts of tasks part of a formal accountability system, it encourages the use of tasks that are elements of good instruction and learning. In addition, this approach avoids the problem that usually keeps these sorts of tasks out of large-scale testing: they simply take too long to be included in a fixed-event assessment. These kinds of tasks might also provide a logical place to rely on teacher scoring and to enjoy the professional development benefits attendant upon it. Finally, centrally designed tasks and scoring guides may be able to mitigate certain comparability issues.

There are a number of issues that would need to be addressed in making such a system operational. It would need mechanisms for ensuring that students them-

selves completed the tasks. While steps might be taken to standardize task protocols and scoring rubrics, short of adoption of a common curriculum, some choice of tasks would need to be provided at the local level. Even with the best safeguards in the world, such choice, combined with local scoring, will almost certainly call into question the strict comparability of results both over time and across jurisdictions. This is not a reason to reject such approaches, but rather represents the sorts of trade-offs that must be considered carefully and suggests the sort of research that is necessary. It may be possible to find interesting compromise positions: we might conceptualize an accountability system in which not all data elements are used for cross-jurisdiction comparisons, for example.

The use of assessments or projects conducted over the course of the year as part of a formal summative-assessment system is a major and important idea. There are challenges to be met before such a system could be implemented, and the existence of such a system presupposes infrastructures for data maintenance and transfer that are currently beyond the scope of many states. Thus it is possible that these assessment features will begin as part of the state augmentations described above, until such time as they can be added to the accountability system. We believe that strong, forward-looking end-of-year assessments will be part of the system. We also believe that they may not be the only elements and that the system available on day one may not be the final system. We will consider this more thoroughly in follow-up discussions to this paper.

10. How do we help ensure that the assessment results validly support claims being made about students, teachers, and schools?

We must consider the need for provision of research evidence that supports intended uses of scores from the assessment system. Even if we start with internationally benchmarked standards, we will need an ongoing method for checking and updating these standards, and for making attendant changes to test specifications. We may also not be able to simply rely on those standards: Since the high school tests will claim to measure college readiness, we should plan to have some data validating that claim. There are various ways to obtain these data; the key point is that some plan to gather validity data should be part of the design from the beginning. Discussions of validity data are beyond the scope of this paper; we will come back to this topic in a later paper.

#### *Conclusion*

We stand at a moment of unprecedented opportunity. Improvements in methods and technology, possible agreement on a set of common standards, combined with a generous commitment of federal resources, should allow us to build assessment systems that provide accountability data and instructionally actionable information. However, these opportunities will surely be wasted if we do not carefully consider the trade-offs inherent in any large-scale assessment design. We must, and can, ensure that a new generation of assessments is innovative and meets all pertinent psychometric standards for quality, fairness, and best practice. This paper represents a first attempt to consider the trade-offs and to set up a "straw design" consistent with those trade-offs.

While there is reason for caution, the opportunity far surpasses the potential problems. We believe that we can create a summative assessment system that uses innovative exercise types and computer adaptive delivery to measure depth of student understanding and track student growth. The system can be designed in ways that allow it to work hand-in-hand with formative assessment elements to produce instructionally actionable data. We can provide solid data on common-core standards while giving states a chance to add their own augmentations. We can do this in a way that is operationally and economically feasible.

ETS, Pearson, and The College Board are excited to be part of the national discussion of new assessment systems. This paper represents an attempt to begin discussion by laying out key questions and central elements of a possible assessment system. We plan to write further papers examining specific topics in more depth. We hope others will join in this conversation: only through open communication will the country build the assessment system it needs.

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[The Pearson response to *Race to the Top* may be accessed at the following Internet address:]

<http://www.pearsonassessments.com/NR/rdonlyres/CF3F0357-1B0E-4460-96DB-6F680994ADFC/0/RacetothetopAssessment.pdf>

[Additional submissions by Mr. Wilhoit follow:]

THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS AND THE  
NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION CENTER FOR BEST PRACTICES

### Common Core Standards

#### MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

*Purpose.* This document commits states to a state-led process that will draw on evidence and lead to development and adoption of a common core of state standards (common core) in English language arts and mathematics for grades K-12. These standards will be aligned with college and work expectations, include rigorous content and skills, and be internationally benchmarked. The intent is that these standards will be aligned to state assessment and classroom practice. The second phase of this initiative will be the development of common assessments aligned to the core standards developed through this process.

*Background.* Our state education leaders are committed to ensuring all students graduate from high school ready for college, work, and success in the global economy and society. State standards provide a key foundation to drive this reform. Today, however, state standards differ significantly in terms of the incremental content and skills expected of students.

Over the last several years, many individual states have made great strides in developing high-quality standards and assessments. These efforts provide a strong foundation for further action. For example, a majority of states (35) have joined the American Diploma Project (ADP) and have worked individually to align their state standards with college and work expectations. Of the 15 states that have completed this work, studies show significant similarities in core standards across the states. States also have made progress through initiatives to upgrade standards and assessments, for example, the New England Common Assessment Program.

*Benefits to States.* The time is right for a state-led, nation-wide effort to establish a common core of standards that raises the bar for all students. This initiative presents a significant opportunity to accelerate and drive education reform toward the goal of ensuring that all children graduate from high school ready for college, work, and competing in the global economy and society. With the adoption of this common core, participating states will be able to:

- Articulate to parents, teachers, and the general public expectations for students;
- Align textbooks, digital media, and curricula to the internationally benchmarked standards;
- Ensure professional development to educators is based on identified need and best practices;
- Develop and implement an assessment system to measure student performance against the common core; and
- Evaluate policy changes needed to help students and educators meet the common core standards and “end-of-high-school” expectations.

An important tenet of this work will be to increase the rigor and relevance of state standards across all participating states; therefore, no state will see a decrease in the level of student expectations that exist in their current state standards.

#### *Process and Structure*

• **Common Core State-Based Leadership.** The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) shall assume responsibility for coordinating the process that will lead to state adoption of a common core set of standards. These organizations represent governors and state commissioners of education who are charged with defining K-12 expectations at the state level. As such, these organizations will facilitate a state-led process to develop a set of common core standards in English language arts and math that are:

- Fewer, clearer, and higher, to best drive effective policy and practice;
- Aligned with college and work expectations, so that all students are prepared for success upon graduating from high school;
- Inclusive of rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills, so that all students are prepared for the 21st century;
- Internationally benchmarked, so that all students are prepared for succeeding in our global economy and society; and
- Research and evidence-based.

- **National Validation Committee.** CCSSO and the NGA Center will create an expert validation group that will serve a several purposes, including validating end-of-course expectations, providing leadership for the development of K-12 standards, and certifying state adoption of the common core. The group will be comprised of national and international experts on standards. Participating states will have the opportunity to nominate individuals to the group. The national validation committee shall provide an independent review of the common core. The national validation committee will review the common core as it is developed and offer comments, suggestions, and validation of the process and products developed by the standards development group. The group will use evidence as the driving factor in validating the common core.

- **Develop End-of-High-School Expectations.** CCSSO and the NGA Center will convene Achieve, ACT and the College Board in an open, inclusive, and efficient process to develop a set of end-of—high-school expectations in English language arts and mathematics based on evidence. We will ask all participating states to review and provide input on these expectations. This work will be completed by July 2009.

- **Develop K-12 Standards in English Language Arts and Math.** CCSSO and the NGA Center will convene Achieve, ACT, and the College Board in an open, inclusive, and efficient process to develop K-12 standards that are grounded in empirical research and draw on best practices in standards development. We will ask participating states to provide input into the drafting of the common core and work as partners in the common core standards development process. This work will be completed by December 2009.

- **Adoption.** The goal of this effort is to develop a true common core of state standards that are internationally benchmarked. Each state adopting the common core either directly or by fully aligning its state standards may do so in accordance with current state timelines for standards adoption not to exceed three (3) years.

This effort is voluntary for states, and it is fully intended that states adopting the common core may choose to include additional state standards beyond the common core. States that choose to align their standards to the common core standards agree to ensure that the common core represents at least 85 percent of the state's standards in English language arts and mathematics.

Further, the goal is to establish an ongoing development process that can support continuous improvement of this first version of the common core based on research and evidence-based learning and can support the development of assessments that are aligned to the common core across the states, for accountability and other appropriate purposes.

- **National Policy Forum.** CCSSO and the NGA Center will convene a National Policy Forum (Forum) comprised of signatory national organizations (e.g., the Alliance for Excellent Education, Business Roundtable, National School Boards Association, Council of Great City Schools, Hunt Institute, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Education Association, and others) to share ideas, gather input, and inform the common core initiative. The forum is intended as a place for refining our shared understanding of the scope and elements of a common core; sharing and coordinating the various forms of implementation of a common core; providing a means to develop common messaging between and among participating organizations; and building public will and support.

- **Federal Role.** The parties support a state-led effort and not a federal effort to develop a common core of state standards; there is, however, an appropriate federal role in supporting this state-led effort. In particular, the federal government can provide key financial support for this effort in developing a common core of state standards and in moving toward common assessments, such as through the Race to the Top Fund authorized in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Further, the federal government can incentivize this effort through a range of tiered incentives, such as providing states with greater flexibility in the use of existing federal funds, supporting a revised state accountability structure, and offering financial support for states to effectively implement the standards. Additionally, the federal government can provide additional long-term financial support for the development of common assessments, teacher and principal professional development, other related common core standards supports, and a research agenda that can help continually improve the common core over time. Finally, the federal government can revise and align existing federal education laws with the lessons learned from states' international benchmarking efforts and from federal research.

NEWS RELEASE June 1, 2009

**Forty-Nine States and Territories Join Common Core Standards Initiative***NGA Center, CCSSO Convene State-led Process to Develop Common English-language arts and Mathematics Standards*

WASHINGTON—The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) today released the names of the states and territories that have joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative: Alabama; Arizona; Arkansas; California; Colorado; Connecticut; Delaware; District of Columbia; Florida; Georgia; Hawaii; Idaho; Illinois; Indiana; Iowa; Kansas; Kentucky; Louisiana; Maine; Maryland; Massachusetts; Michigan; Minnesota; Mississippi; Montana; Nebraska; Nevada; New Hampshire; New Jersey; New Mexico; New York; North Carolina; North Dakota; Ohio; Oklahoma; Oregon; Pennsylvania; Puerto Rico; Rhode Island; South Dakota; Tennessee; Utah; Vermont; Virgin Islands; Virginia; Washington; West Virginia; Wisconsin; Wyoming.

In the twenty-six years since the release of *A Nation at Risk*, states have made great strides in increasing the academic rigor of education standards. Yet, America's children still remain behind other nations in terms of academic achievement and preparedness to succeed.

By signing on to the common core state standards initiative, governors and state commissioners of education across the country are committing to joining a state-led process to develop a common core of state standards in English language arts and mathematics for grades K-12. These standards will be research and evidence-based, internationally benchmarked, aligned with college and work expectations and include rigorous content and skills.

"To maintain America's competitive edge, we need all of our students to be prepared and ready to compete with students from around the world," said NGA Vice Chair Vermont Gov. Jim Douglas. "Common standards that allow us to internationally benchmark our students' performance with other top countries have the potential to bring about a real and meaningful transformation of our education system to the benefit of all Americans."

"As state school chiefs, we have been discussing and building momentum for state-led, voluntary common standards that are both rigorous and internationally benchmarked for the past two years," stated CCSSO President and Arkansas Commissioner of Education Ken James. "The broad level of commitment we have received from states across the nation for this unprecedented effort is both gratifying and exciting. It also clearly illustrates that this is an idea whose time has arrived."

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is being jointly led by the NGA Center and CCSSO in partnership with Achieve, Inc; ACT and the College Board. It builds directly on recent efforts of leading organizations and states that have focused on developing college-and career-ready standards and ensures that these standards can be internationally benchmarked to top-performing countries around the world.

The goal is to have a common core of state standards that states can voluntarily adopt. States may choose to include additional standards beyond the common core as long as the common core represents at least 85 percent of the state's standards in English language arts and mathematics.

"Measuring our students against international benchmarks is an important step," said Virginia Gov. Timothy Kaine. "Today, we live in a world without borders. It not only matters how Virginia students compare to those in surrounding states—it matters how we compete with countries across the world."

"Only when we agree about what all high school graduates need to be successful will we be able to tackle the most significant challenge ahead of us: transforming instruction for every child," said CCSSO President-Elect and Maine Education Commissioner Sue Gendron. "Common standards will provide educators clarity and direction about what all children need to succeed in college and the workplace and allow states to more readily share best practices that dramatically improve teaching and learning. Our graduates and frankly, the future of our economy, cannot wait any longer for our educational practices to give equal opportunity for success to every student."

The NGA Center and CCSSO are coordinating the process to develop these standards and have created an expert validation committee to provide an independent review of the common core state standards, as well as the grade-by-grade standards. This committee will be composed of nationally and internationally recognized and trusted education experts who are neutral to—and independent of—the process. The college and career ready standards are expected to be completed in July 2009. The grade-by-grade standards work is expected to be completed in December 2009.

Founded in 1908, the National Governors Association (NGA) is the collective voice of the nation's governors and one of Washington, D.C.'s most respected public policy organizations. Its members are the governors of the 50 states, three territories and two commonwealths. NGA provides governors and their senior staff members with services that range from representing states on Capitol Hill and before the Administration on key federal issues to developing and implementing innovative solutions to public policy challenges through the NGA Center for Best Practices. For more information, visit [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org).

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public. [www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org)

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### The Common Core State Standards Initiative

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a significant and historic opportunity for states to collectively develop and adopt a core set of academic standards in mathematics and English language arts. Forty-eight states and three territories have joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative. The initiative is being jointly led by the NGA Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers in partnership with Achieve, ACT, and the College Board. It builds directly on recent efforts of leading organizations and states that have focused on developing college- and career-ready standards and ensures these standards are evidence- and research-based and internationally benchmarked to top-performing countries.

#### *Why is this initiative important?*

Currently, every state has its own set of academic standards, meaning public education students in each state are learning to different levels. All students must be prepared to compete with not only their American peers in the next state, but with students from around the world. If all 51 states and territories adopt the common core state standards, this initiative will affect 45.1 million students which is about 91 percent of the student population (Source: [SchoolDataDirect.org](http://SchoolDataDirect.org); 2007).

#### *Why is a common core of state standards good for students?*

These standards will help prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and careers and to be prepared to compete globally. Additionally, expectations for students will be consistent across all states and territories; this consistency will support students transitioning between states. Also, clearer standards will help students better understand what is expected of them and allow for more self-directed learning.

#### *Why is a common core of state standards good for parents?*

A common core of state standards will help parents understand what is expected of students and for college and work success. This understanding of what is expected of students will provide parents the opportunities to meaningfully engage in their children's education.

#### *Why is a common core of state standards good for educators?*

A common core of state standards will allow for more focused pre-service and professional development. Additionally, a common core will help assure that what is taught is aligned with assessments including formative, summative, and benchmarking. Also, educators will have the opportunity to tailor curriculum and teaching methods and promote the sharing of best practices.

#### *Why is a common core of state standards good for states?*

A common core of state standards will clearly articulate to parents, teachers, and the general public expectations for students. Shared standards will also help states better evaluate policy changes and identify best practices and needs for students and educators.

#### *What is being produced and when?*

A draft of the common core of state standards in mathematics and English language arts is available for public comment on [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org). They are ex-

pected to be validated in November 2009. Additionally, in the winter of 2009/2010, the draft standards for grades K12 will be released.

*What does the process look like?*

One of the first official steps in the Common Core State Standards Initiative was for CCSSO and the NGA Center to form a National Policy Forum which met initially in January 2009. This forum is intended as a way to establish a shared understanding of the scope and elements of the common core state standards initiative and coordinate implementation and adoption.

The Standards Development Work Group is currently engaged in determining and writing the college and career readiness standards in mathematics and English language arts. This group is composed of content experts from Achieve, ACT, and the College Board. The Work Group's deliberations will be confidential throughout the process. States and national education organizations will have an opportunity to review and provide evidence-based feedback on the draft documents throughout the process.

Also, as a step in the standards development process, CCSSO and the NGA Center are overseeing the work of a Feedback Group. The role of this Feedback Group is to provide information backed by research to inform the standards development process by offering expert input on draft documents.

The final step in the development of these standards is the creation of an expert Validation Committee comprised of national and international experts on standards and in the content areas. This group will review the process and substance of the common core state standards to ensure they are research and evidence-based and will validate state adoption of the common core standards. Members of the committee will be nominated by governors and chiefs of the participating states and selected by a group of four governors and four chiefs.

*What will the common core standards look like?*

The common core state standards will be fewer, clearer, and higher. They will articulate to parents, teachers, and the general public expectations for what students will know and be able to do grade by grade and when they graduate from high school. The standards will be internationally benchmarked, evidence- and research-based, and ready for states to adopt.

*What happens after the common core standards are developed?*

Adoption of the common core state standards is voluntary for states; states choosing to align their standards to the common core state standards have agreed the common core will represent at least 85 percent of the state's standards in mathematics and English language arts. Additionally, there is an obvious role for assessment; some states will voluntarily come together to develop new, innovative, common assessments.

*What happens after states adopt common core standards?*

The common core state standards are the first step in transforming our education system. For systemic change to occur educators must be supported (e.g., time, resources, professional development) in changing classroom practice based on the standards. Instructional materials and assessments that align to the standards and measure and support student progress will need to be developed.

*How can my organization get involved?*

- Visit the Common Core State Standards Web site at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)
- Subscribe to Common Core State Standards updates at [www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org) or the NGA newsletter at [join-nganews@talk.nga.org](mailto:join-nganews@talk.nga.org)
- Write a statement of support for the initiative and send it to [commonstandards@ccsso.org](mailto:commonstandards@ccsso.org) and [webmaster@nga.org](mailto:webmaster@nga.org)

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE

### Frequently Asked Questions

*What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative?*

This Common Core State Standards Initiative is a significant and historic opportunity for states to collectively accelerate and drive education reform toward the ultimate goal of all children graduating from high school ready for college, work, and success in the global economy. The initiative will build off of the research and good work states have already done to build and implement high-quality standards. The standards will be research- and evidence-based, aligned with college and work expectations, include rigorous content and skills, and be internationally benchmarked.

*Why is the Common Core State Standards Initiative important?*

Today we live in a world without borders. To maintain America's competitive edge, we need all of our students to be well prepared and ready to compete with not only their American peers, but with students from around the world. These common standards will be a critical first step to bring about real and meaningful transformation of our education system to benefit all students.

States know that standards alone cannot propel the systems change we need. The common core state standards will enable participating states to:

- Articulate to parents, teachers, and the general public expectations for students;
- Align textbooks, digital media, and curricula to the internationally benchmarked standards;

- Ensure professional development for educators is based on identified need and best practices;

- Develop and implement an assessment system to measure student performance against the common core state standards; and

- Evaluate policy changes needed to help students and educators meet the common core state college and career readiness standards.

*Who is leading the Common Core State Standards Initiative?*

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) have initiated a state-led process of developing and adopting a common core of state standards.

As part of this process, they have convened a National Policy Forum composed of signatory national organizations (e.g., National School Boards Association, Council of Great City Schools, and many others) to share ideas, gather input, and inform the common core state standards initiative.

*How will states adopt the common core state standards?*

States will adopt the common core state standards through a process that respects unique state contexts. CCSSO and the NGA Center will ask states to share their adoption timeline and process in early 2010, when the K-12 common core state standards are completed. A validation committee will verify that states have accurately adopted the common core state standards.

## PROCESS

*What will make this process different from other efforts to create common standards?*

Both the timing of this initiative as well as the process gives it a high probability for success. There is a growing belief among state leaders, education leaders, and business leaders that differences in state standards, in an era of increasing student mobility and global competition, no longer make sense.

This process is different since it is a state-led, versus a federal, effort and has the support of several major national organizations, including CCSSO, the NGA Center, National Association of State Boards of Education, the Alliance for Excellent Education, the National Parent Teacher Association, the American Association of School Administrators, the Hunt Institute, and the Business Roundtable, and involves participation of leading standards developers from Achieve, ACT, and the College Board.

States have been the leaders of standards-based reform efforts. The proposed adoption process respects and takes into consideration unique state contexts and encourages states to adopt the common core state standards.

*Are these national standards?*

No. This initiative is driven by collective state action and states will voluntarily adopt the standards based on the timelines and context in their state.

*Who or what entity determines the common core state standards?*

CCSSO and NGA Center are responsible for the development and cross-state adoption process.

A Standards Development Work Group is responsible for determining and writing the common core state standards. [Click here to view the list of work and feedback group members.](#)

A Feedback Group provides information backed by research to inform the standards development process by offering expert input on draft documents.

A Validation Committee composed of independent, national experts will review the process and substance of the common core state standards to ensure they are research and evidence based and will validate state adoption of the common standards. Members of the validation committee will be selected by governors and chiefs.

Members of the work and feedback group are listed on the site [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).

*By what criteria will the standards be judged? Who or what entity sets such criteria?*

The standards will be judged based on research and evidence to ensure that they meet the following criteria:

Aligned with college and work expectations  
Inclusive of rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills

Internationally benchmarked  
Criteria have been set by states, through their national organizations CCSSO and the NGA Center.

*What is the role of the validation committee?*

The validation committee is charged with validating the process and products of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, the college and career readiness standards in English language arts and mathematics. The committee will also validate state adoption of the common core. The group will provide feedback and suggested revisions during the standards development and will use evidence as the driving factor in validating the common core state standards. The future role of the validation committee will be determined as the initiative proceeds.

*How was the validation committee nominated?*

Nominations for the validation committee were open states and national organizations. In particular, governors and chief state school officers were invited to nominate two individuals to the committee based on a set of criteria.

*How was the validation committee selected?*

The validation committee members were confirmed by a group of six governors with leadership positions at NGA and six chiefs on the CCSSO executive board. The governors and chiefs were provided with a full list of nominees and recommended members suggested by CCSSO and the NGA Center.

*What is the expertise of those serving on the validation committee?*

The validation committee members were chosen based on their national or international expertise on standards and demonstrated record of knowledge in English language arts, mathematics or a related field (e.g., special education, assessment development, curriculum development). Consideration was also given to ensuring a diversity of perspectives and expertise on the committee.

*What grades will be covered in the common core state standards?*

The English-language arts and math standards will be K-12 standards. This will not cover pre-k, but the common core state standards will be informed by research from the early childhood community.

*How are teachers involved in the common standards initiative?*

NGA and CCSSO have asked for and received feedback from national organizations representing educators, such as the National Education Association (NEA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). These organizations each brought together groups of teachers to provide specific, constructive feedback on the standards. The feedback was used to inform the public draft of the college- and career-readiness standards. Numerous teacher organizations are also involved with the initiative through the National Policy Forum, which provides a means to share ideas, gather input, and inform the common core state standards initiative.

Individual teachers and practitioners can also submit comments and feedback on the standards through the web site [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).

*What does this work mean for students with disabilities and English language learners?*

In the development of these standards, the inclusion of all types of learners was a priority. Chosen language was intended to be open and accessible to different learners.

*How will we be sure that the standards are based on evidence and not on individual beliefs about what are important?*

The validation group of independent, national experts will review the process and substance of the common core state standards delineated by the standards development group to ensure they are research and evidence based.

*Why are the common core state standards just in English-language arts and math? Are there plans to develop common standards in other areas in the future? Will this work just narrow the curriculum in schools?*

English-language arts and math were the first subjects chosen for the common core state standards since states have the longest history of standards in these areas, they are the core of our current national accountability system, and they provide the greatest areas of leverage. Other content areas and domains are crucial to children's education and their success in college and careers. Once the English lan-

guage arts and math standards are developed, states plan to develop a common core of standards in science and potentially additional subject areas. The emphasis now is on the English-language arts and math standards because these two subjects are foundational skills.

The common state standards should not narrow the curriculum since the standards will be fewer than current standards, allowing teachers to create deep, multi-disciplinary projects and lessons that help their students reach the standards.

*Will these standards incorporate both content and skills?*

Both content and skills are important and will be incorporated in the common core state standards. One of the criteria by which the standards will be determined is whether or not they are inclusive of rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills.

#### IMPLEMENTATION AND FUTURE WORK

*What will these common core state standards mean for students?*

This initiative will potentially affect 45.1 million students which is about 91 percent of the student population (SchoolDataDirect.org, 2007). Currently, every state has its own set of academic standards, meaning public education students in each state are learning to different levels. This initiative will allow students equal access to an excellent education regardless of where they live. This next generation of students must be prepared to compete with not only their American peers in the next state, but with students from around the world. These standards will help prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and careers

*How will these standards impact teachers?*

The common core state standards will allow for more focused pre-service and professional development; provide the opportunity for teachers to be involved in the development of assessments at classroom and state levels that are truly linked to curriculum and student achievement; inform the development of a curriculum that promotes deep understanding for all children; and because the standards are fewer, teachers will be able to use their professional expertise in utilizing multiple strategies to best support learning for all students.

It is also clear that educators will require additional supports and resources to help students meet these fewer, clearer, and higher expectations.

*Will the Common Core State Standards be updated?*

Yes. There will be an ongoing state-led development process that can support continuous improvement of this first version of the common core state standards based on research and evidence-based learning.

*Will common assessments be developed? Will one national test be created that looks like the current tests we have today?*

States know that standards alone cannot propel the systems change we need. Assessments aligned with the common core state standards will play an important role in making sure the standards are embedded in our education system.

Some states will voluntarily come together to develop new innovative, common assessments as part of the Race to the Top program. However, states do not want to see one national assessment given once a year that relies on multiple-choice items. A common assessment system will include multiple forms of assessment so that what a student knows and can do, not the form of the assessment, determines performance. An assessment system must provide assessment for learning as well as assessment of learning.

Instructional materials and curricula are key components to making standards usable and real in the classroom. Will you be creating common instructional materials and curricula?

The standards must be aligned to assessments and classroom practice to be effective. CCSSO and the NGA Center are focusing now on developing high-quality standards for states to adopt. NGA and CCSSO understand the importance of instructional materials in order to ensure the teachers have tools to successfully implement these standards.

*What is the role of the federal government in this initiative?*

The federal government can:

Support this effort through a range of tiered incentives, such as providing states with greater flexibility in the use of existing federal funds, supporting a revised state accountability structure, and offering financial support for states to effectively implement the standards as through the Race to the Top Fund authorized in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Provide additional long-term financial support for the development and implementation of common assessments, teacher and principal professional development sup-

ports, and a research agenda that can help continually improve the common core state standards over time.

Revise and align existing federal education laws with the lessons learned from states' international benchmarking efforts and from federal research.

*What is the timeline for the common core state standards initiative?*

Key dates in the project are identified below.

November 2009—College- and career-readiness standards validated.

Winter 2009/2010—K-12 common core state standards in English-language arts and mathematics completed and publicly released.

Early 2010, states submit timeline and process for adoption of common core state standards in English-language arts and mathematics.

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[Whereupon, at 1:15 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

