

State Policy Implications of the Model Core Teaching Standards

Draft Discussion Document

Written By

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Introduction

In July 2010, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) offered for public dialogue and comment *Model Core Teaching Standards: A Resource for State Dialogue*. The “core teaching standards” presented in that document represent a major revision to the *Model Standards for Beginning Teacher Assessment and Development*, offered by CCSSO’s Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) nearly two decades ago. No longer limited to the assessment and support of *new* teachers, the current core teaching standards articulate standards of professional practice for *all* teachers (as the name change from INTASC to InTASC is intended to denote).

This paper is a companion to the *Model Core Teaching Standards* document, outlining key considerations, recommendations, and cautions for using the core teaching standards to create a supportive state policy infrastructure that leads to improved student outcomes. It is offered as a discussion document to both invite and inform ongoing dialogue among CCSSO, our members and our partners. This paper builds on CCSSO’s Education Workforce white paper (Hill et al., 2010), which outlines our strategic goals in building an educator development and support system, of which the core teaching standards are the first step. It highlights the role of state policy and focuses on key policy levers states can use to transform their systems.

This document is organized into five sections. Following this introduction is a second section that describes the new vision of teaching represented by the updated core teaching standards. The third section addresses the key policy levers that states have at their disposal that can help bring the new vision to life. Throughout this section, we offer questions for consideration and recommendations for action. Please note that this paper cannot and does not fully address the many ways states might collaborate with stakeholders to ensure the new vision leads to changes in practice. Thus, the fourth section describes how CCSSO plans to support use of the core teaching standards through future guidance and tools (e.g., performance indicators, rubrics, assessments) and transformational change (e.g., adaptive leadership, systems thinking). The fifth section invites states to exercise leadership and engage in broad collaboration by using the draft core teaching standards to catalyze inquiry and reflection.

A New Vision of Teaching

The updating of the core teaching standards was prompted by new understandings of learners and learning and represents the collaborative work of practicing teachers, teacher educators, school leaders, state agency officials, and CCSSO staff. They articulate, through the lens of the teacher, what teachers should know and be able to do to help each and every student reach the goal of being college and career ready.

The core teaching standards consist of ten individual standards organized into four priority areas: the learner and learning (standards 1–3); content (standards 4–5); instructional practice (standards 6–8); and professional responsibility (standards 9–10). While each standard emphasizes a discrete aspect of teaching, we recognize that teaching and learning are dynamic, integrated, and reciprocal processes. Thus, of necessity, the standards overlap and must be taken as a whole in order to convey a complete picture of teaching and learning. The delineation of “performances,”¹ “essential knowledge,”² and “critical dispositions”³ under each standard is

¹ The aspects of teaching that can be observed and assessed

² Declarative and procedural knowledge necessary for effective practice

³ Habits of professional action and moral commitments that underlie the performances

offered as a way to probe the complexity of the teacher’s practice. In the standards document, indicators of performance come first. The indicators are not intended to be prescriptive and should not be used as items on a checklist. Rather, they are examples to help us make meaning of the standards.

As in all clinical practice professions (e.g., medicine, clinical psychology), expertise in teaching is developed over time. Thus, demonstration of the standards will necessarily look different at different stages in teachers’ careers. What distinguishes beginning from more developed teachers is the degree of sophistication in their application of the knowledge and skills. Further, like all clinical practice professionals, teachers develop much of their expertise within the system in which they work. Thus, movement toward the core teaching standards depends on a system of education that provides teachers with continuous growth opportunities and supports, including opportunities to learn new knowledge and skills and the time and organizational structures necessary to engage both in self-reflection and in collaboration with colleagues.

Below, we discuss the key themes that frame the vision embodied in the core teaching standards, including a focus on 21st century knowledge and skills; personalized learning for diverse learners; a collaborative professional culture; improved assessment literacy; and new leadership roles for teachers and administrators.

A Focus on 21st Century Knowledge and Skills

Our current system was designed for a world that no longer exists. Today’s learners need both the academic and global skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the world—attributes and dispositions such as problem solving, curiosity, creativity, innovation, communication, interpersonal skills, the ability to synthesize across disciplines, global literacy, ethics, and technological expertise. CCSSO and the National Governor’s Association are leading the work on articulating what learners need to know and be able to do. The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics are benchmarked to international standards and include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills. As states adopt these standards, educators throughout the nation will be reexamining what students should know and be able to do throughout their K–12 education experience.

The core teaching standards describe what *teachers* should know and be able to do in today’s learning context to ensure students reach these learning goals. For example, cross-disciplinary skills (e.g., communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and the use of technology) are woven throughout the teaching standards because of their importance for learners. Additionally, the core teaching standards stress that teachers build literacy and thinking skills across the curriculum, as well as help learners address multiple perspectives in exploring ideas and solving problems. The core teaching standards also address interdisciplinary themes (e.g., financial literacy, global awareness) and the teacher’s ability to build on content that draws upon multiple disciplines.

Personalized Learning for Diverse Learners

Our current system of education has been designed in ways that have led to many students doing well, to some students excelling, and to some students failing. It was not designed to ensure that all students reach high standards. Further, inequitable experiences and outcomes persist for entire subgroups of students, especially students of color, low-income students, students with disabilities, and English language learners. This is not acceptable in a nation concerned about global competitiveness and ensuring every learner is college and career ready. The core teaching standards embrace the responsibility to ensure that every learner learns, and they require us to pursue excellence and equity simultaneously.

Further, the explosion of learner diversity means teachers need knowledge and skills to customize learning for learners with a range of individual differences. These differences include students who have learning disabilities and students who perform above grade level and deserve opportunities to accelerate. Differences also include cultural and linguistic diversity and the specific needs of students for whom English is a new language. Teachers need to recognize that students bring to their learning varying experiences, abilities, talents, and prior learning, as well as language, culture, and family and community values that are assets that can be used to promote their learning. To do this effectively, teachers must have a deeper understanding of their own frames of reference (e.g., culture, gender, language, abilities, ways of knowing), the potential biases in these frames, and their impact on expectations for and relationships with students and their families.

Finally, teachers need to provide multiple approaches to learning for each student. One aspect of the power of technology is that it has made learners both more independent and more collaborative. The core teaching standards assign learners a more active role in determining what they learn, how they learn it, and how they can demonstrate their learning. They also encourage learners to interact with peers to accomplish their learning goals.

In these ways, the standards embody a vision of teaching that personalizes each student's experiences while ensuring that every student achieves to high levels.

A Collaborative Professional Culture

Our current system of education tends to isolate teachers and treat teaching as a private act. This is counter to the way we think about teaching today. Just as collaboration among learners improves student learning, we know that collaboration among teachers improves practice. When teachers collectively engage in participatory decision-making, designing lessons, using data, and examining student work, they are able to deliver rigorous and relevant learning for all students and personalize learning for individual students.

The core teaching standards require transparency of practice and ongoing, embedded professional learning where teachers engage in collective inquiry. As articulated in Standard #10, effective teachers “collaborate with students, families, colleagues, other professionals, and community members to share responsibility for student growth and development, learning, and well-being” (CCSSO, 2010, p. 10). This includes participating actively as a team member in decision-making processes that include building a shared vision and supportive culture, identifying common goals, and monitoring progress toward those goals. It further includes giving and receiving feedback on practice, examining student work, analyzing data from multiple sources, and sharing responsibility for accountability for each student's learning.

Improved Assessment Literacy

The current system treats assessment as a function largely separated from teaching. Yet, we expect teachers to use data to improve instruction and support learner success. The core teaching standards recognize that, to meet this expectation, teachers need to have greater knowledge and skill around how to develop a range of assessments and how to use assessment data to improve instruction and support learner success. Working with the varied levels of assessment, from once-a-year state testing, to district benchmark tests several times a year, to ongoing formative and summative assessments at the classroom-level, teachers need to be prepared to make data-informed decisions. Again, much of this work occurs within a collaborative team context and involves learning and reflection.

As articulated in Standard #6, effective teachers understand and use “multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to document learner progress, and to inform the teacher’s ongoing planning and instruction” (CCSSO, 2010, p. 12). For example, the teacher might demonstrate this standard by using varied types of assessment data to identify student learning needs and to develop differentiated learning experiences.

New Leadership Roles for Teachers and Administrators

As noted above, the core teaching standards set forth new and high expectations for teachers, which include leadership. Integrated across the standards is the teacher’s new responsibility for the learning of *all* students, the expectation that they will advocate for each student’s needs, and the obligation to actively investigate and consider new ideas that would improve teaching and learning and promote the profession.

These leadership responsibilities are implicit as teachers participate in the new collaborative culture. Teachers are expected to work with and share responsibility with administrators and school leaders as they work together to improve student learning and teacher working conditions. The term “leader” is now being applied to both teachers and administrators as evidenced in the recent development of teacher-leader standards and preparation programs.

This change in the understanding of leadership is noted in *Performance Expectations and Indicators for Education Leaders*, which says: “State and federal requirements to increase student learning necessitate a shift in leadership, from managing orderly environments in which teachers work autonomously in their classrooms to one in which administrators, teachers, and others share leadership roles and responsibilities for student learning. Research and best practice indicate the value of collaborating on shared vision, goals, and work needed to ensure that every student learns at high levels” (CCSSO, 2008, p. 7).

In the section that follows, we discuss how policy can help transform the system to achieve the new vision articulated in the core teaching standards along these key themes.

Policy Levers to Support Systems Change

Policies that promote teacher effectiveness operate at multiple levels within federal, state, and local government. This section is designed to distill the appropriate role and potential leverage of state policies that impact teacher effectiveness. Though no two states have exactly the same policy infrastructure, several common policy levers can be informed by the core teaching standards and used to improve teaching and learning. For ease of discussion, the policy levers have been organized by key components of a teacher effectiveness system:

- Standards;
- Preparation;
- Licensing and certification;
- Induction and mentoring;
- Growth opportunities and supports;
- Evaluation and high stakes levers;
- Working conditions and system accountability.

The components individually and collectively function better if grounded in and aligned to well-crafted teaching standards. In the following section, we discuss each of these components and their key policy levers, and offer recommendations as well as a few cautions to states as they create the policy infrastructure that supports the new vision of teaching articulated by the core teaching standards.

Standards

The core teaching standards are offered as a model that states may adopt and/or adapt, depending upon their context. The first step in designing a coherent system of education is setting the expectations for student outcomes and for the behaviors of teachers and leaders within the system. Core teaching standards provide an anchor for state policy by outlining the professional responsibilities, behaviors, and expectations of teachers. Thus, the core teaching standards have been designed to be compatible with:

- The Common Core State Standards for students in mathematics and English language arts;
- The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) accomplished teaching core principles;
- The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accreditation standards;
- The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) professional development standards,
- The Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISLSC) 2008 educational leadership policy standards and CCSSO's companion document outlining performance expectations and indicators for education leaders.

Consistency among all these standards ensures a coherent set of expectations for teachers from beginning through accomplished practice and the conditions necessary to support professional growth along the career continuum. Consistency also increases the probability of building aligned systems of teacher development and support that begin with recruitment and preparation and include induction, ongoing professional development, accomplished teaching, and leadership roles.

When aligned, these standards can drive change in the whole system. However, alignment must do more than ensure terminology is shared among and between the various sets of standards. Instead, all of the standards should be aligned to a common vision for learning, teaching, and leading. When this alignment occurs, the conditions are set for using the multiple standards to achieve the coherent, comprehensive, and compelling change we need.

Some states also have promulgated performance standards for additional educational entities, such as regional educational service agencies and providers of professional development. Similarly, other professionals in the school setting—such as school counselors and instructional coaches—are governed by professional standards that may be implicated in the new vision for learning and teaching. As states consider adoption or adaptation of the core teaching standards, they also may want to explore reviewing other professional standards.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- A-1. Who has the authority to adopt or adapt the core teaching standards in your state?
- A-2. Which experts and stakeholders should be on a team to compare the core teaching standards to existing standards in your state?
- A-3. How will you help stakeholders understand the relationship between and among the various sets of standards that are currently being used?
- A-4. What factors might impact the adoption or adaptation of the core teaching standards in your state and their use in the field? Consider such factors as the professional culture of teaching, the level and type of union involvement, economic considerations, public sentiment, potential legal pitfalls, and pressure from the media?
- A-5. How might the potential uses of the core teaching standards in the current political climate effect your strategies for adoption or adaption?
- A-6. What technical assistance will you need to help stakeholders understand the implication of the core teaching standards?
- A-7. How can states design a process for adopting the core teaching standards in a way that recognizes the role of teachers in establishing and/or enforcing standards in their own profession?

Preparation

The core teaching standards articulate a vision of teaching very different from the vision most teacher education programs are organized around. This new vision—that teachers engage learners in developing 21st century knowledge and skills including deeper critical/creative thinking and collaborative problem solving, personalize learning to new levels, make teaching more transparent and work collaboratively with colleagues to improve practice, develop deep skills around assessment and participate as a team member in a problem solving data-informed culture to improve student learning—requires us to change not only the content and organization of coursework, but also the practicum experience.

Recognizing teaching as a practice-based profession, some preparation programs and districts have partnered to provide preservice teachers with more intensive, school-embedded experiences, including residencies. In an effort to make these “islands of excellence” the norm, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education has organized a Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation, Partnerships and Improved Student Learning to examine the characteristics and elements of exemplary programs, review the research, and make recommendations for how such programs can be supported in policy. The Panel describes what the new clinical experience may entail:

Significantly enhanced clinical preparation may mean, for example, more extensive use of simulations, case studies, analyses of teaching and other approximations of teaching, as well as sustained, intense, mentored school-embedded experiences. Enhanced clinical preparation should give aspiring teachers the opportunity to integrate theory with practice; develop and test classroom management and pedagogical skills; hone their use of evidence in making professional decisions about practice; and understand and integrate the

standards of their professional community. These clinical settings also provide the opportunity for evaluating not only what candidates know, but importantly, what they are able to do (NCATE, 2010).

With access to stronger clinical experiences during preparation, preservice teachers will know sooner whether teaching is, indeed, their career of choice and beginning teachers will be better prepared for the new demands of teaching. However, though calls for stronger clinical practice in teacher preparation are growing louder, it still is likely it will take time for this change to move into mainstream teacher preparation. Through policy levers, states have options to help accelerate this change.

For example, states can use the policy levers of program approval and accreditation to drive the new vision of teaching embodied in the core teaching standards into teacher preparation. This could include requiring program and unit alignment to the updated standards as well as providing robust clinical practice experiences and building data systems that would inform program improvement. Whether the authority for program approval lies in the state board of education, the board of educational examiners, an independent professional standards board or the state department of education, and whether teacher preparation is taking place in institutions of higher education or in alternative programs, well-defined teaching standards provide the basis for strengthening the policy lever of program approval.

Alternatively or additionally, states can collaborate with teacher preparation programs that are eager to change their practice, by providing resources, encouragement, and regulatory flexibility needed to redesign their programs. From this kind of collaboration, evidence proofs and models for change can emerge.

Another lever states are considering has the potential for being strong, but it also has the danger of being used prematurely. There is a movement under way to connect student achievement data to teacher preparation programs in order to hold those programs accountable for results. While the impulse to measure the effectiveness of a teacher preparation program based on measurable student outcomes is reasonable, the standardized measures of student achievement currently in use are limited. In order to credibly evaluate teacher preparation programs based on the effectiveness of their graduates, current standardized test results must be augmented with additional measures of student achievement and growth that are comparable across classrooms and across the full range of content and skills required for college and career readiness. Federal investments in states and assessment consortia through the Race to the Top competitions may yield such measures, accelerating the potential use of this policy lever.

There also has been little research done on the relative impact of teacher preparation on teacher effectiveness when compared to factors beyond the control of preparation programs, such as the culture, climate, resources, induction practices, and supports that teachers experience in their first teaching assignments. At some point the working conditions a teacher experiences become a more powerful influence on a teacher's effectiveness than the preparation program. To appropriately use accountability as a lever to change teacher preparation practices, state policy needs to account for the complexities of using student data to make decisions related to teacher preparation.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- B-1. What roles will preservice providers play in transforming the system toward the vision articulated in the new core teaching standards? How will the K-12 system and the teacher preparation system work together?
- B-2. What can states do to encourage and/or compel change in preparation programs to reflect the core standards?
- B-3. How do states currently monitor preservice programs to ensure they produce highly effective teachers, as defined by the standards? How might states use their responsibility and authority for monitoring to encourage and support change?
- B-4. How, and for how long, should preparation programs be held accountable for the effectiveness of the teachers they produce? How will we account for other factors that impact teacher effectiveness (e.g., leadership, culture and climate, continuous growth opportunities and supports) when holding preparation programs accountable for results?

Licensing and Certification

A key policy lever that most states control is the licensing and certification of teachers. Adoption of the core teaching standards allows states to revisit their licensure requirements and make adjustments to ensure that teachers are licensed on the basis of these updated and rigorous new standards. Licensure as a policy lever will drive change in teacher preparation. If teachers are not able to successfully gain entry into the field, the programs that prepare and induct them will face tremendous pressure to change. Licensure also can drive change in the working conditions of teachers. As teachers progress from initial licensure to professional and advanced licensure, the licensure requirements make transparent to districts, to professional development providers, and to teachers the conditions and opportunities teachers need to grow in their careers.

States have another powerful policy lever in the form of teacher licensing assessments, which will need to be updated to align with the core teaching standards. States can demand development of assessments that reflect the standards, are performance-based, use multiple measures, leverage the efficiency and potential of technology, and provide valid and reliable results. One such new preservice performance assessment, which CCSSO is exploring in partnership with the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) and Stanford University, is the Teacher Performance Assessment Consortium (TPAC) model. TPAC is informed by California's experience with the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT). In addition to meeting the criteria outlined above, this model assessment has the benefit of promoting a strong collaborative culture among teacher preparation faculty as they work together to redesign their curriculum to ensure alignment to the TPAC indicators, participate in scoring the assessment, and provide feedback to their candidates.

The core teaching standards also have implications for the way we assess and recognize teacher growth across the career continuum. A key assumption underlying the standards is that teachers develop over time and they cannot be expected to perform all the standards at high levels right out of the gate. Many states have implemented or are considering tiered licensure systems that recognize this growth over time. This kind of system will require a continuum of assessments across the teacher's career that reflects different levels of performance against the standards. CCSSO's next step in following up the standards work is to explore developing a model continuum of development aligned to the standards that would include detailed performance indicators and rubrics.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- C-1 How can licensure requirements and related assessments of teacher effectiveness be used to clarify expectations of teachers? How can we make sure they do not trap us in the paradigm of the individual teacher in the individual classroom?
- C-2 How can licensure requirements, assessments, and related incentives be used to encourage teachers to accept new roles and responsibilities as they grow in their practice?
- C-3 In what way will the assessment instruments and processes used in states need to be changed to make sure that teacher candidates are well prepared to teach? How can states use the core standards as indicators of effectiveness?
- C-4 How can renewal and advanced licensure requirements encourage teachers to seek out training needed to gain the knowledge and skills advanced by the core teaching standards? ...to seek out training needed to best serve the needs of the school or their immediate professional community?
- C-5 Who are the stakeholders needed to study and recommend changes to licensure and certification to push the system to higher levels of teacher effectiveness?

Induction and Mentoring

The core teaching standards suggest that induction and mentoring be central organizing features of a professional collaborative culture. Support during the first years of teaching and new teaching assignments is critical to the development and retention of teachers. That said, with the new emphasis on professional collaboration and personalized learning, induction and mentoring programs that orient new teachers to traditional roles and old classroom designs are not going to support the transformation in professional practice intended by the standards. The new core teaching standards imply that existing induction and mentoring programs need to be re-examined with this in mind.

We face a dilemma, however, in that teachers must still learn how to work within the system and the culture as they find it in their context. Thus, how do we prepare and induct teachers into a collaborative culture that may not yet exist? States can use policy levers to incentivize change at the district level at the same time they are working to cause change in teacher preparation as described above. One policy lever that may help accomplish this would be a state *requirement* that new teachers and teachers with new roles have access to induction and mentoring. Requiring induction and mentoring would honor the concept of continuous growth of teachers and the need for an infrastructure of support for teachers in their early years.

A second policy lever would be setting standards for quality induction and mentoring programs to ensure that they align to and embody the vision and values outlined in the core teaching standards. Other potential policy levers related to mentoring include linking the training, approval/endorsement, and compensation of mentors to their ability to effectively demonstrate the core teaching standards and improved student outcomes. Also, states will need to provide incentives such as funding for districts to redesign existing induction and mentoring programs and to provide training to mentors. States should further craft policies that encourage partnerships between forward-looking preparation programs and schools with collaborative cultures that would provide more seamless transitions for new teacher candidates into the kind of teamwork environment envisioned in the core teaching standards. States may benefit from exploring different types of professional collaboration that could lead to new and more powerful ways of providing induction and mentoring.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- D-1. How does the vision of a collaborative professional culture change the role and expectations of mentor and induction programs?
- D-2. What are additional implications of the core teaching standards for induction programs?
- D-3. How can states monitor the induction and mentoring supports that teachers receive?
- D-4. What is the appropriate level of shared responsibility and resources among preparation programs, districts, and teacher associations in the induction of new teachers?
- D-5. Beyond requiring induction and mentoring programs, what else can states do to support new teacher development?

Growth Opportunities and Support

The types of induction and mentoring opportunities described above are a component of a robust system of educator development. Within such a system, high quality professional growth opportunities and supports are essential to teachers as they move along a developmental continuum and demonstrate the core teaching standards in increasingly sophisticated ways.

Growth opportunities and supports include the kinds of professional resources, activities, organizational designs, and system features that both contribute to individual teacher development and enhance the collaborative dimensions of the educational environment. The performances, essential knowledge, and critical disposition statements within each of the standards are built upon a vision of teaching that is, at its heart, collaborative in nature. Teachers develop expertise not as isolated individuals but through job-embedded professional development, and as members of collaborative, interdisciplinary teams with common goals for student learning. Further, teachers learn as much from each other as they do from more formal professional development experiences. Thus, mentoring that continues beyond the first years of teaching and among colleagues contributes to the continuous development of all teachers regardless of their level of experience. To date, however, state policy related to growth opportunities and support typically has held individuals as the unit of change and accountability.

Similarly, state policy typically focuses on professional development as the sole investment in teacher growth. While important, traditional professional development is only one component of a system of educator development. A comprehensive system of educator development should include not just traditional professional development but a full range of growth opportunities and resources including individual inquiry, action research, collaborative learning teams, professional learning communities, curriculum and instructional initiatives, workshops with quality training elements, mentoring, coaching programs (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010), and access to data collection and analysis tools.

Teachers also need opportunities to grow in their professional responsibilities and practice. Instead of career ladders that require teachers to leave teaching and move into administration in order to advance, teachers need multiple options for differentiated roles with increased compensation and recognition as they progress in their careers. Policymakers should encourage, invest in, utilize, reward, and build upon the expertise we have currently in the teaching profession by providing career pathways for teachers as they grow in their knowledge and expertise. As developmental continuums for the standards are crafted, states may want to invest in exploring how to help the field recognize and reward teacher leadership. One such effort is already under way by the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, which has crafted draft teacher-leader standards that articulate new roles for expert teachers while keeping them in the classroom.

In each of these ways, the core teaching standards encourage states to reassess their educator development policies with a new lens, determining how their policies can reach beyond traditional professional development, beyond the individual as the unit of change, and beyond the view of teaching as a flat profession. States can incentivize local policy changes such as restructuring school days to provide teachers with more collaboration time, promoting a leadership culture of shared responsibility for student learning, and providing financial support and rewards for teacher growth such as sitting for National Board advanced certification.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- E-1. How might professional development standards and practices at the state level support the vision of the new teaching standards? What are the implications of the core teaching standards for how we determine what counts as meaningful professional development?
- E-2. As adoption of the core teaching standards increases demand for more meaningful and robust professional development, how will we find the resources (fiscal and human) to meet that demand?
- E-3. How might states expand their reach beyond professional development to promote a more robust system of educator development?
- E-4. What state-level policies act as barriers for the design of innovative growth opportunities and supports?
- E-5. How can we design local professional learning communities so they can play a strong role in professional development?
- E-6. How can the core teaching standards be used to evaluate the effectiveness of educator growth opportunities and supports?

Evaluation and High Stakes Levers

There is a move under way to transition away from a focus on teacher “quality” to a focus on teacher “effectiveness.” This move signals an interest in measuring not only inputs (number of degrees, years of experience) but also outcomes (teacher performance, student performance).

Evaluation systems that assess teacher effectiveness are a key component of a professional growth system designed to build capacity and raise student achievement. Teachers, schools, and districts use results of evaluation systems to determine professional development investments, the organization and staffing of schools, and changes to learning environments and instructional strategies. They also use evaluation information for individual high stakes decisions such as compensation, promotion, and removal. States considering alternative compensation strategies for teachers will find that well-grounded and clear teaching standards are essential to the decision-making processes inherent in compensation systems tied to teacher performance and student results.

Teacher evaluation primarily has been a local responsibility, but federal programs such as Race to the Top are signaling a shifting interest to using evaluation to meet state and federal goals. This will require an adjustment in the purpose, design, and mechanisms of evaluation systems. The vast majority of evaluations have been designed to provide information to a system that considers teaching private and isolated. In that system, it makes sense to evaluate individual teachers, thus, evaluation systems and their rewards and sanctions are primarily focused on the individual as the unit of accountability. The new system will require a next-generation

approach to performance review, as we continue to explore team-based accountability, rewards, and sanctions. It would be fruitful for education policymakers to look for models in other fields that reward team-based performance, professional growth, increasing responsibility, and that recognize the role of working conditions.

The evaluation models being called for also require additional valid and reliable measures of student achievement and growth that are comparable across classrooms, that include each and every teacher (including teachers in subjects beyond English language arts and mathematics), and that have sophisticated value-added components that address complexities in parsing out what teachers can appropriately be rewarded for or held accountable for (such as, how should a teacher be evaluated when a student is above grade-level in one subject and far below in another, when the system fails to provide high quality growth opportunities and supports, or when the teacher works in a school that fails to provide even the most basic resources?). Fairness demands that accountability be tied to a teacher's opportunity to learn and to teach, to multiple measures of effectiveness, and to the working conditions in which the teacher practices.

Finally, the core teaching standards were created as standards of practice across an entire career continuum. In order for the core teaching standards to drive performance evaluation, they must be accompanied by credible, agreed-upon performance standards and rubrics for evaluation. Once the draft standards are finalized, CCSSO will begin work on crafting a developmental continuum aligned to the standards. Simultaneously, the standards will be validated, after which they can undergird high quality evaluation systems. Adoption of the core teaching standards and supporting tools and processes will ensure that evaluation practices are based on solid definitions of effective practice. State policy also can ensure evaluators have the training they need to learn to use the standards, tools, and processes to provide thorough and fair performance reviews.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- F-1. What can states do to require or incentivize change in evaluation practices at the local district level?
- F-2. What supports will district administrators and teachers need to implement evaluation processes that improve instruction (e.g., use of multiple measures, performance-based indicators, authentic observation, peer feedback)?
- F-3. How might the increasing interest in using student data to inform performance evaluation and related personnel decisions affect the rollout of the core teaching standards? Are there potential implications for policies related to student assessment practices?
- F-4. What are the implications of alternative compensation systems for teacher motivation?
- F-5. How can compensation systems include multiple measures of teacher performance (e.g., observation, instructional artifacts, portfolios, and evidence of teacher collaboration, student and parent surveys) and student outcomes (e.g., student value-added test gains, other student performance indicators, graduation rates, standardized test scores, SAT/ACT/AP scores, student engagement)?
- F-6. What challenges will states face in establishing fair and equitable measures of teacher effectiveness for every teacher in every grade span and content area?
- F-7. How can we ensure that decisions about compensation support other parts of the teacher effectiveness system?
- F-8. Are the benefits of alternative compensation systems worth the cost?

Working Conditions and System Accountability

As states develop their interests in teacher evaluation and in applying high stakes consequences to the outcomes of evaluations, they will need to design evaluation systems that not only take into consideration the issues noted above—such as individual and group accountability and multiple measures of outcomes. Evaluation designs also will need to take into consideration the features of the systems in which teachers work. How much of a teacher’s effectiveness is dependent upon circumstances beyond the teacher’s control? Do teachers have reasonable supports as they engage in their work? Are they a part of quality, collaborative professional learning cultures? What are the conditions of learning over which they have no control but which impact student achievement? Are administrators who conduct evaluations fully prepared?

As Elmore (2004) reminds us, accountability should be considered a reciprocal process, with both high expectations for educators to address the changing needs of students and a systems strategy for investing in the knowledge and skills of educators who are challenged to do their work in new ways. We are coming to understand the impact of working conditions on teacher retention, and research findings suggest improved working conditions impact teachers’ well-being and satisfaction and significantly influence the ability of schools to reach achievement goals (Emerick & Berry, 2005). Policymakers also should further investigate the impact of working conditions on teacher effectiveness and, ultimately, on student learning.

While clearly some conditions are never conducive for learning (e.g., unsafe schools, underresourced schools), preliminary research indicates that teachers perform better in some conditions than in others based upon a match with their strengths and skills (see, e.g., Jackson, 2010). We encourage policymakers to follow this line of research and examine practices for teacher assignment and transfer as new findings come available.

The same can be said for the organization of schooling, which continues to operate in large part to maximize efficiency. We are coming to understand how the organization of schooling restrains and possibly prevents the very practices the standards promote, such as teacher collaboration. Policymakers should consider how the structure of schooling gets in the way of effective teaching, how we can create “systems of learning” that expand beyond schooling, and how we can reorganize systems to encourage and support effective practice. Learning environments that have strong cultures of professionalism and the support of highly skilled leaders who keep the focus on teaching and learning will make implementation of the core teaching standards possible.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- G-1. What does a new focus on team/school/district accountability mean for the current infrastructure?
- G-2. What aspects of the system should be scrutinized to make sure appropriate supports, and when necessary, pressures are in place?
- G-3. Which systems variables are shaped by state-level guidance and mandates?
- G-4. What role do unions play with context and conditions?
- G-5. What is the current condition of the work place in our schools? Do we have procedures in place that consider working conditions? How might we measure teachers’ perceptions of working conditions?
- G-6. If we had data to show that working conditions needed improvement, what actions do we have at our disposal to improve them?
- G-7. According to teachers, having a skillful principal is one of the most important working conditions. What does our system do to build strong leaders? Are we doing enough with policy and guidance to support and/or remove underprepared principals?

The Limits of Policy

Having outlined several components of state policy or potential state action, along with providing discussion questions to fuel deliberation and policy development, we offer one final caution to put this work into perspective. Though policy can encourage or discourage behaviors, and the policy levers above can have a broad impact, the scope of behavior change through policy is limited. Getting the rules and regulations right will help to set expectations. Resources can be used and incentives and sanctions can be created to encourage behavior change. But systems-thinking tells us that the inertia of a system in place is incredibly strong; rarely does systemic change occur by edict alone. The core teaching standards are most effectively embodied when the culture and organization of schooling is transformed toward a collaborative focus on student learning, a shared sense of responsibility for improving professional practices, and collective expectations and beliefs about what students can and should do. This calls for systems change that is beyond the reach of policy change. Taking lessons from organizational development and change management will be critical when developing implementation plans, in order to help transform the system.

It is worthwhile to think about the eventual change management work when laying out a plan for policy review and revision. One of the major lessons learned from the study of effective implementation strategies is that collaboration among the full range of stakeholders is critical to the successful implementation of new policies. Involvement of those affected by the standards in the development of the policies that affect them increases the likelihood that they will be understood, perceived as useful, and contribute to significant changes in practice. Thus, the process of using core teaching standards to inform policy also necessitates active engagement of stakeholders in the earliest stages of policy deliberation. For example, stakeholder groups such as professional standards boards, boards of examiners, professional organizations, membership associations, unions, boards of regents, teacher educators, professional developers, local school boards, and teachers and administrators in the field need to be engaged in discussion to clarify feasibility, mobilize interest, anticipate and prevent barriers, and ensure high fidelity implementation of changes required by policy.

Engage in Dialogue

The model core teaching standards have been written to allow for a future we cannot yet see and to encourage innovative policy actions we have not yet imagined. Given the transformative nature of this endeavor, we hope that the national conversation started around the Model Core Teaching Standards and this companion document will be robust and productive. For the next several months, both documents will be widely circulated to members of the education profession and the public and reviewed extensively by individuals and groups representing various educational stakeholders. CCSSO will explore with our members and partners how we can together leverage our expertise and resources to use these standards to improve the quality of teaching in this country.

We encourage you to bring your stakeholders into the discussion and to add your voice by commenting on the core teaching standards before October 15, 2010. (Provide comment on the draft Model Core Teaching Standards by completing the public comment survey at www.ccsso.org/intasc.) After revising the standards based on public comment, CCSSO will work to translate the core teaching standards into performance standards and rubrics that can be used to assess performance at key points along the developmental continuum of a teacher's career. Some of that work has already begun.

As we embark on this work together, we look forward to further considering how policy should change to support the vision articulated by the core teaching standards and creatively exploring how K–12 schools and teacher education programs can be restructured to advance this vision. Your comments and ideas are welcome.

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