

Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels signed two bills from his comprehensive education reform package at an event at the State House.

IMPACTING THE FUTURE

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Across the nation, thoughtful, state-specific strategies for Common Core State Standards implementation are being developed and put into action.

Teachers, governors, business leaders and others contend that implementing a set of high-quality, comprehensive and rigorous education standards across states will help to ensure America's place as a global leader. It will help to strengthen our economy while giving each child an equal opportunity to achieve the American dream. With each state in charge of its own educational standards, experts agree that successfully implementing a core set of education standards in math and English language arts shared by all states will be a complicated undertaking. They also agree it is vital to the nation's global competitiveness.

Inconsistent, varied learning standards lead to disparity in the quality of instruction across states. As a result, a child's readiness for a career or for college is often determined by where he or she lives. Families that relocate cannot count on their children being prepared for their new school, and the educational impact can be significant—especially for military families and others who move frequently.

To ensure a high-quality, globally relevant education for all Americans, educational leaders from across the country have developed a consistent set of requirements in core subjects to prepare students for careers and college. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which draw from the best state and internationally benchmarked standards, set a rigorous definition of career- and college-readiness. They focus on students' development of high-order thinking and the application of complex concepts to the real-life situations that most people face in college and the workplace. The CCSS are also designed to guide instruction in a logical manner, resulting in students mastering core concepts sequentially and in depth.

With a shared set of standards, states can use education dollars more efficiently and build a foundation for more sophisticated learning tools. To date, 44 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Standards and are beginning to implement them.

"Anything which encourages or forces students and teachers to aim higher and expect more of themselves is great in education these days. We know students can achieve more," says Gov. Mitch Daniels of Indiana. "It is important to know, with clarity, how our kids are doing compared with students in this country and abroad."

With a shared set of standards, state leaders are better able to measure the progress of their educational systems and ensure students in their school systems are ready to compete for entry into institutes of higher learning and in the global economy.

"This is the new reality for schools and students, and it implies more than just superficial change. These new state Standards are a common-sense step toward progress," says Dr. Judith Rizzo, executive director and CEO of the James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy.

According to Jeb Bush, former Florida governor and founder of the Foundation for Excellence in Education, state leaders can now hope to have comparability across states and internationally. He also adds that successful implementation—including assessments, accountability measures and good instruction—is imperative to reaching that goal.

"Starting with high standards is key," he says. "But it's just the first step."



Delia Pompa, Senior Vice President, Programs, National Council of La Raza, hosts a workshop on the Common Core State Standards.

Making Consistent Standards a Reality

The CCSS were developed by state leaders under the guidance of two associations: the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in collaboration with representatives from participating states and a wide range of educators, content experts, researchers, national organizations, community groups and elected officials from both sides of the aisle. The Standards do not prescribe curriculum or dictate how students should be taught. Rather, they define what students should understand and be able to do, setting grade-specific targets.

“States have been engaged in standards-based reform for decades but previously did that work on their own,” says James B. Hunt Jr., former North Carolina governor. Development of the CCSS was an inclusive process. Lucille Davy, former New Jersey commissioner of education, notes that in addition to the input of education content experts and researchers, there was an inclusive public comment period that yielded more than 10,000 comments from across the country.

Massachusetts: Developing Curriculum and Assessment Models at the State Level

Massachusetts is a model for implementing standards-based education reform. Before adopting the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), the commonwealth had already moved to implement its own standards, called frameworks, in 1993, with accompanying assessments referred to as MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System). After adopting the CCSS in July 2010, teachers and specialists from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education were significantly involved in developing new frameworks that incorporate the CCSS.

Many business groups showed support for the effort as well. According to Linda Noonan, executive director of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, the MBAE commissioned a review of the Standards to ensure they were at least as rigorous as the commonwealth's before business would take a position on adoption. Based on a comprehensive analysis performed by WestEd, the MBAE concluded, and other business organizations agreed, that the CCSS were comparable to the

According to Gene Wilhoit, executive director of the CCSSO, a set of principles was established to guide the development process. “We decided we would hold to a standard of high quality, of coherence and of focus,” he explains. “Those became our principles throughout the process, and we kept coming back to them.”

While the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top (RTT) competition provided points (40 out of a total 500) to states that committed to adopting career- and college-ready standards for all students, RTT did not specify the CCSS or any other specific standards. The U.S. Department of Education played no part in developing the CCSS. In fact, the effort of state and local leaders was well under way before the Obama Administration took office. More than 30 of the states that have adopted and committed to implementing the CCSS did not win RTT funding, and that work continues to move forward.

Of the five states that have not yet adopted the Standards, three are expected to upgrade their existing standards to align with the CCSS. This means more than 80 percent of the nation's students will be held to the same high expectations.

Separately, and in support of this work, two assessment consortia of states have been created: the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). While each consortium takes a different approach, both are focused on helping states create assessment systems and supporting tools to increase the number of students who graduate high school ready for careers and college.

Moving Implementation Forward

The goal is to be ready by 2014-2015, when changes to teacher pre-service preparation, professional development, instructional materials, new assessments, and curriculum and instruction alignment will be in place. “To succeed, you have to do all of these things together,” says Davy.

A crosswalk, or comparison of, current state standards and tests and the CCSS is required to determine gaps and redundancies. Curriculum and instruction aligned with the Standards must be delivered to every child—including English language learners, children with special needs, at-risk youth and children of poverty—in every classroom. “Some of these children are taught now under a separate set of standards with low expectations because they are poor,

commonwealth's standards—and even a little stronger from an employer's perspective in some areas.

Massachusetts is charging ahead with assessments by incorporating the CCSS into the commonwealth's assessment system for some grades in the 2012-2013 school year. The Standards will be fully incorporated into MCAS by 2014-2015.

According to Dr. Mitchell Chester, Massachusetts' commissioner of elementary and secondary education, for effective implementation to occur in Massachusetts, the state must also help school districts cultivate curriculum and instruction aligned with the CCSS and professional development to support that work. “There is a need for model curricula, courses, units of study, resources and assessments all aligned with the Standards. This summer the department supported 200 teachers who were involved in developing curriculum resources and products.” Providing this kind of support may not be what many state-level agencies are used to. It is, however, essential.

immigrants or their parents did not go to college,” contends Delia Pompa, a senior vice president at the National Council of La Raza, which supports the CCSS.

“We need to get more of our strongest teachers to the highest poverty schools, which get fewer strong teachers than other schools now,” says Kati Haycock, president of The Education Trust. Teachers also must translate the Standards into their everyday work, she says. “The CCSS have the potential to be a very important arrow in the arsenal of strategies to equalize opportunity in this country.”

To help teachers make this transition successfully, professional development should be appealing and readily available to sitting educators. Likewise, colleges and universities that offer educator preparation programs must adjust their programs to align with the CCSS. And, not to be forgotten—communication among stakeholders remains crucial. To that end, many states have set up websites and collaboratives to help ensure communication between stakeholders in the implementation process.

Engaging Stakeholders Across Sectors

As a matter of national competitiveness, the business community has an interest in educating the next generation. Business leaders from a variety of sectors recently signed a letter in support of the CCSS, noting that the CCSS meet the business community’s expectations of college- and career-readiness. Dr. Craig Barrett, retired Intel CEO and chairman of the board, was one of the signatories. He asserts that “an educated workforce is important to business. The quality of the workforce is related to the quality of education.”

Barrett, who is now chair of Change the Equation, says that business should provide advocacy and support but should not do the reform. “Business can and should advocate with legislators, support best practices and disseminate them,” he says, adding that the private sector’s support of governors engaged in implementation is critical. “Society must give the next generation a good education for a good standard of living. Who better than CEOs to stand up and say that? They are the employers.”

Professional associations also can contribute significantly to the implementation of the Standards because they have the potential to facilitate the cooperation necessary among stakeholders for it to be successful. Dr. Paul Lingenfelter, president of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) association, says higher education officials will need to work with other stakeholders in new ways. “The current established relationships are around pre-service, which is governed and reinforced by certification and also shaped by incen-

Utah: Investing in Teachers and the Next Generation

Utah made a significant investment in professional development to help ensure smooth implementation. During the summer of 2010, with financial support from the Utah State Office of Education (USOE), the state created the Utah Common Core Academy for more than 5,000 teachers and principals to help districts and charter schools effectively redesign curriculum and implement the Common Core State Standards. “These teachers will lead the next wave of curriculum development,” says Larry Shumway, Utah’s superintendent of public instruction. “The failure in the past to get teachers on board and on the front line has destroyed confidence. We are building confidence through the academy.”

The academy held sessions in 14 locations. Districts and charter schools were invited to send a specified number of teachers to assigned locations, and they were encouraged to select teachers who would best be able to share the information with their colleagues.

Utah also provides supporting resources and materials on the USOE website for academy participants and educators throughout the state.

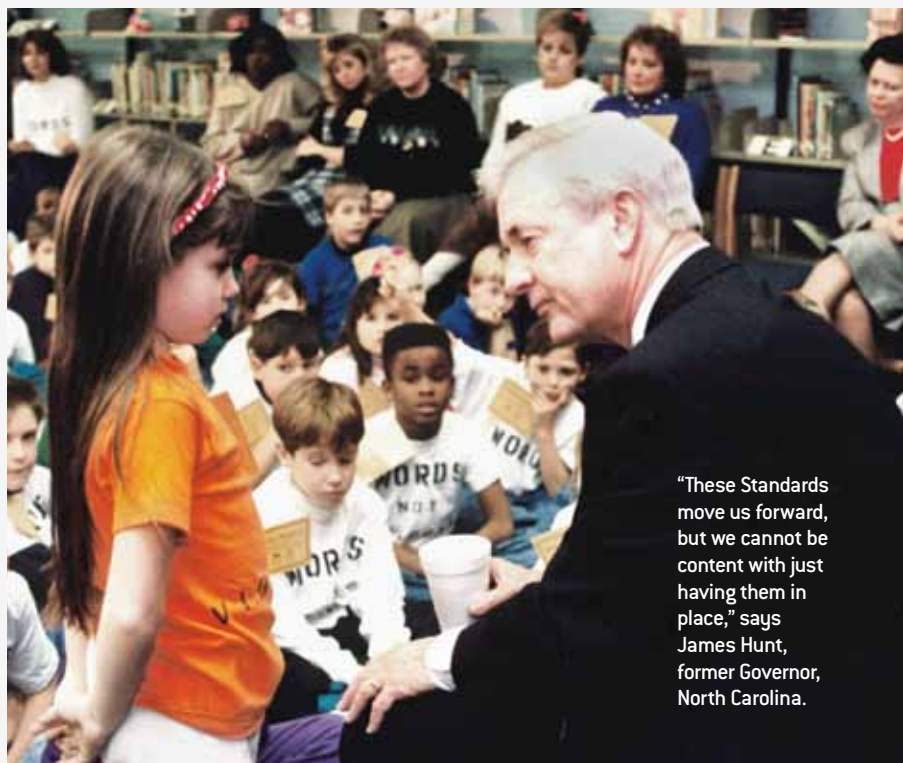
tives for teachers to increase pay.” SHEEO recently formed a partnership with the CCSSO and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. The objective, he says, is to improve teacher preparation programs in colleges and universities by engaging K-12.

Rising to the Challenge

While many now believe that the rewards will be great for students, far-reaching change is daunting and requires a sense of personal investment from all of the key stakeholders—especially teachers, many of whom have been given the “reform of the month” for many years. This time it must be different.

The CCSS also improve efficiency in the educational system, which ultimately benefits students—and that may sway some hesitant educators. The Standards may make it easier for educators to find appropriate tools because publishing houses are making materials available to support the CCSS. Currently, states and school districts are overwhelmed by the vast array of content and technology available to support disparate state standards.

The CCSS represent an opportunity to prevent duplication of effort and better leverage scarce resources. Instead of 50 individual state tests, there can now be a handful, designed as appropriate alternatives to match learning styles and the variety of organizational structures across the country. “Pooled resources can support innovation that most states would not be able to afford on their own,” Hunt says. The CCSS do not prescribe one



“These Standards move us forward, but we cannot be content with just having them in place,” says James Hunt, former Governor, North Carolina.

curriculum. Multiple curricula will continue to be developed by states, but all will have the Standards at the core.

Resources

Common Core State Standards Initiative:
www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for
College and Careers: www.parcconline.org

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium:
www.smarterbalanced.org

The James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational
Leadership and Policy: www.hunt-institute.org

As global competition grows, the U.S. must create an educational system that supports innovation. America's pre-eminence as a world leader is threatened. For the first time, we have standards for educational outcomes that most states agree on, but the work is not finished.

"These Standards move us forward, but we cannot be

content with just having them in place," says Hunt. "It is important that we push for solid implementation, continue to build our knowledge base about career- and college-readiness, and look for ways to improve the Standards in the future."

The CCSS set the bar at a level of excellence that states, the nation and every citizen can both depend on and be proud of. Leaders from government, education agencies and institutions, and the business community must come together and ensure effective implementation to secure America's future. After all, it is in the interest of every state to give our children the high-quality education they are entitled to, regardless of where they live.

Kentucky: First Out of the Gate

In February 2010, Kentucky became the first state to provisionally adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Its early acceptance, coupled with an ambitious agenda of curriculum and assessment development, explains the commonwealth's readiness for classroom implementation in the 2011-2012 school year.

In 2010, schools and districts began transitioning to the Kentucky Core Academic Standards for mathematics and English language arts, which are based on the CCSS. The Kentucky Department of Education produced a crosswalk from Kentucky's previous standards to the CCSS, which was intended to help educators inform instruction, plan professional learning and determine necessary curriculum materials.

Dr. Terry Holliday, Kentucky's commissioner of education, explains that a top priority in Kentucky's implementation is increasing the number of high school graduates who don't need remediation before moving on to college or careers.

Developing the proper implementation tools is difficult, but Kentucky remains committed to implementing the CCSS. "Creating the entire process—curriculum, instruction and assessment—when you have very little money was a challenge," Holliday says. Although Kentucky was a finalist

Indiana: Setting Expectations and Preparing Teachers to Meet Them

Soon after adopting the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in August 2010, Indiana became the first state to align its teacher-preparation standards with the CCSS and require colleges to incorporate them into their pre-service preparation programs. The revisions also reflect Indiana-specific initiatives, including Indiana's third-grade reading bill and Response to Instruction. The former Indiana Professional Standards Advisory Board, in conjunction with the Indiana Department of Education, approved the new developmental and content standards for educators in December 2010. Hundreds of educators and representatives from K-12 and higher education participated in the development of the new teacher preparation standards.

Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Tony Bennett says he believes the new teacher-preparation standards will help schools of education in Indiana shape the way students are taught. "The revised teacher-preparation standards reflect the content pedagogy that teachers must have to effectively implement Indiana education initiatives and the Common Core State Standards, which ultimately will lead to Indiana students being better prepared for college and careers."

Indiana schools have begun teaching the CCSS in the 2011-2012 academic year and will have a fully implemented program by 2014-2015.

for federal Race to the Top money, it was not awarded the grant, forcing the state to look elsewhere for funding. In the end, the process was financed by a combination of sources and by redirecting state and federal monies.

Despite funding hurdles, state leaders championed the Standards. The Kentucky Legislature provided considerable support and the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, a nonpartisan group of citizens that aims to improve Kentucky schools, worked to build understanding and support for the Standards.

Holliday and other CCSS proponents also came across local education leaders who were nervous about executing this shift in such a compact timeline. Ultimately, crafting the implementation strategy brought together Kentucky educators at the high school and college levels, who now meet regularly. This collaboration enables teachers to align their expectations in accordance with the CCSS.

"There was quite a gap between what high school teachers and secondary faculty expected," says Holliday, adding that working together on the CCSS is helping to bridge that gap.

Kentucky will begin using assessments aligned to the Standards in spring 2012.



The Hunt Institute works at the intersection of policy and politics to secure America's future through quality education.