



Implementing Common Core: Still Many Lessons to Learn

Even though Louisiana is in its fourth year of implementing Common Core State Standards, its experience and that of other states is that there are still many lessons to be learned about the best path forward. In addition to the on-the-ground work that the Louisiana Department of Education and local school districts have been doing, the state has adopted a set of transition policies to lessen the impact of the new standards and assessments on district, teacher and student accountability. In spite of these practices and policies, critics continue to voice concerns about the implementation process. Much of this is purely political rhetoric, but even valid concerns are not reasons for abandoning Common Core and PARCC. Instead, we should view these challenges as opportunities to make adjustments and corrections where necessary.

Last month, the Center for American Progress released a new set of guideposts: *Roadmap for a Successful Transition to the Common Core in States and Districts*. <http://www.americanprogress.org/events/2014/06/18/91999/a-roadmap-for-a-successful-transition-to-the-common-core-in-states-and-districts/>

Building on the best practices of states that are implementing Common Core, the report recommends that states and districts should:

1. Administer better, fairer, and fewer tests.
2. Continue to improve and implement education evaluation and support systems but phase in high-stakes consequences for teachers and students that are based on the new Common Core-aligned assessments.
3. Maintain accountability systems based on disaggregated results on state assessments using the outcomes of the system to target more dollars and resources to students and schools that are struggling.
4. Ensure that teachers are engaged in the development of-and have access to-comprehensive curricula and instructional materials aligned with the Common Core standards.
5. Invest in training and ongoing professional development for educators.
6. Provide teachers with more time for ongoing professional development as well as to plan and collaborate together.
7. Engage educators, parents, and other stakeholders in the implementation effort.

8. Assist districts and schools to further develop their technological capacity to support the new computer-based Common Core assessments and provide instructional tools that allow for more individual instruction.
9. Leverage additional resources to improve the Common Core implementation process.

We strongly urge Louisiana's education leaders to gauge their transition progress against each of these best practices and to invite the participation of key stakeholders in the self-assessment. Practice No. 3 cautions that the new standards and common assessments will bring greater transparency to achievement gaps. Although Common Core will eventually help to close achievement gaps, states and districts must direct additional funding, resources, and supports to schools with high-poverty and high-need students. This could include direct financial support as well as initiatives such as expanding the school day, tutoring, and expanding summer academic programs. We also believe that practice No.7 is critically important. To be successful, the Louisiana Department of Education and local school districts must have communication and outreach strategies that regularly engage parents, teachers, community members, businesses, higher education, and student advocates.

The Center for American Progress recommends the following additional resources to aid in the implementation process.

Common Core Implementation Workbook by Achieve and the U.S. Education Delivery Institute

<http://www.achieve.org/ImplementingCommonCore>

Implementation of the Common Core State Standards: A Transition Guide for School-Level Leaders by the Aspen Institute and Society Program, Education First, Insight Education Group, Student Achievement Partners, and Targeted Leadership Consulting

<http://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/implementation-common-core-state-standards-transition-guide-school-level-leaders>

Implementation of Common Core State Standards: Roles for Advocates by the PIE Network and Education Trust

<http://www.pie-network.org/buzz/summit-2012/implementation-of-common-core-state-standards-roles-for-advocates>

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