



# Plans to adopt and implement Common Core State Standards in the Southeast Region states





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**January 2012**

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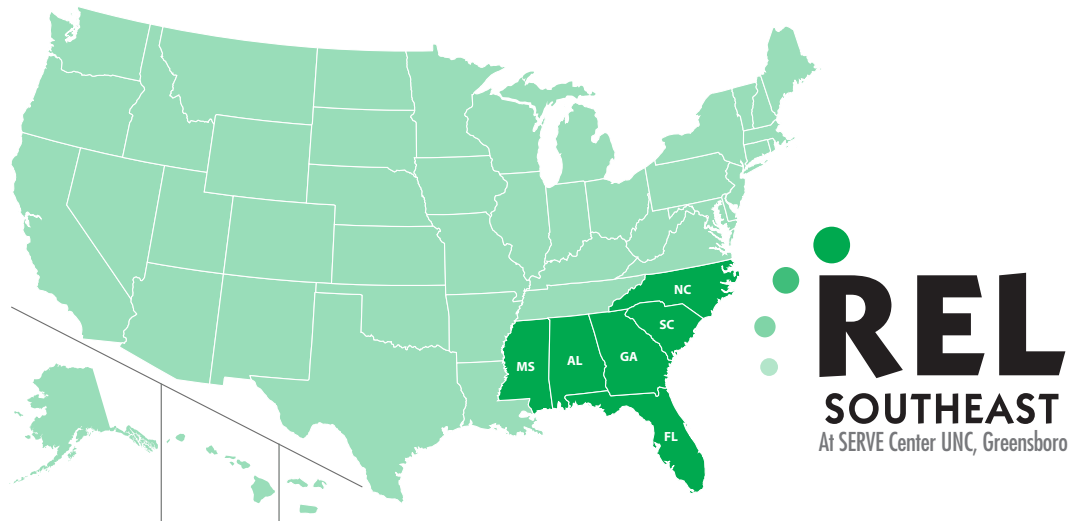
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# Plans to adopt and implement Common Core State Standards in the Southeast Region states

**Based on interviews with state officials in the six Southeast Region states, this study describes state processes for adopting the Common Core State Standards (a common set of expectations across states for what students are expected to know in English language arts and math) and plans for implementing the common standards and aligning state assessment systems to them.**

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort to establish a common set of expectations across states for what K–12 students are expected to know and be able to do in English language arts and math (Common Core State Standards Initiative n.d. b). It is coordinated through the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The Common Core State Standards were released in June 2010. As of November 2011, 45 states (including all six Southeast Region states), the District of Columbia, and two territories had adopted the standards and were planning to implement them and align assessments to them (Common Core State Standards Initiative n.d. c).

This report responds to a request from state education agencies in the six Southeast Region states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi,

North Carolina, and South Carolina) for information about what other Southeast Region states are doing in their adoption, implementation, and assessment alignment processes. The report is timely for states in other regions as well, since these activities are happening across the country.

This study used interviews with state education agency staff in the Southeast Region to examine three research questions about the Common Core State Standards:

- What processes did the six Southeast Region states use for adopting the common standards?
- What is (or will be) the process for state implementation of the common standards?
- How are the states planning to address the alignment of their assessment programs to the common standards?

The following are the key findings:

- Respondents in all six states reported that one step in the adoption process was state education agency review of the common standards to determine the extent of alignment between the common standards

and existing state standards and to gather information to disseminate to the public.

- Four states (Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina) did not adopt any state-specific standards in addition to the common standards. Alabama and Georgia did.
- Respondents in Florida and Mississippi reported that teachers in their state will begin teaching under the common standards in 2011/12. Respondents in Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina reported that teachers will begin doing so in 2012/13. The respondent in South Carolina reported that teachers will begin doing so in 2013/14. States varied in how they will roll out their teaching timeline—all at once for grades K–12 or phased in over time in different grades.
- All six states reported a general implementation process moving from developing curriculum and instruction resources to training educators to teaching the standards in classrooms. All six states have dedicated 2011/12 to educator training. Some states also plan to develop resources and materials in 2011/12, and Florida and Mississippi will also begin classroom implementation. All six implementation timelines call for teaching the common standards before preparing new assessments aligned with them (expected in 2014/15).
- All six states reported that state education agency staff are training educators on the new common standards, with three states (Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina) also involving staff at regional professional development agencies. All six state respondents reported that their states will use a combination of approaches to deliver training, including face-to-face training for school staff, online sessions for district staff and teachers, and train-the-trainer sessions for district teams, who in turn will train teachers.
- In four states (Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina), respondents reported that monitoring standards implementation will occur at the local level. North Carolina will tie monitoring of local implementation of the common standards to the statewide evaluation of implementation of the state’s Race to the Top initiative. At the time of data collection, Alabama had not yet decided whether the state education agency would monitor local implementation.
- All six respondents reported that their state will follow the timeline and process of the assessment consortium to which they belong. Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina are members of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers consortium; Alabama, North Carolina, and South Carolina are members of the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium. Alabama and South Carolina, members of both consortia, have not yet decided which consortium’s assessments they will use.

The findings of this study are limited by the small number of interviews conducted—one per state—and cannot be generalized beyond the study period since state-level plans,

policies, and procedures are continually evolving and may have been updated since the completion of data collection. The report is nevertheless useful, because it examines the six states' ongoing work on the Common Core State Standards—itsself a new and evolving reform initiative nationwide. Education leaders and policymakers can benefit from learning how other states are approaching this work.

**January 2012**

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**Based on interviews with state officials in the six Southeast Region states, this study describes state processes for adopting the Common Core State Standards (a common set of expectations across states for what students are expected to know in English language arts and math) and plans for implementing the common standards and aligning state assessment systems to them.**

## WHY THIS STUDY?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort to establish a common set of expectations across states for what K–12 students are expected to know and be able to do in English language arts and math (Common Core State Standards Initiative n.d. b). It is coordinated through the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The Common Core State Standards were released in June 2010.<sup>1</sup> As of November 2011, 45 states (including all six Southeast Region states), the District of Columbia, and two territories have adopted the standards and are now implementing them and aligning assessments to them (Common Core State Standards Initiative n.d. c).

To facilitate cross-state learning about these activities, this study examines state processes for adopting and implementing the standards and for aligning assessments to the standards in the six Southeast Region states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina). All six states have adopted the common standards and are in early stages of implementation and assessment alignment (see box 1 for key terms).

The request for this study originated with state education agency staff in Georgia. Subsequently, during informal meetings with state education agency staff involved with the common standards in the Southeast Region states, all six states expressed interest in such a study, noting that information about other states' processes for adoption, implementation, and alignment of assessments could inform their own work.

In addition, state education agency staff in the region and across the country could use this report to identify practices they might like to pursue or avenues for cross-state collaboration (collaboration across states being one of the assumed general benefits of common standards). This report could also inform the future work of the Common Core State Standards Initiative and other related efforts



## BOX 1

**Key terms**

*Adoption.* When the state standards authorizing body takes formal action to adopt and implement the Common Core State Standards as the set of statewide goals for teaching and learning in K–12 English language arts and math (Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors Association 2010). The common standards become the expectations for what students should know and be able to do, for what teachers should be teaching, and for what students will be assessed on. The adoption process may also include time for disseminating information to stakeholders and for building public support prior to the formal adoption procedure.

*Alignment.* A state’s process for ensuring that its statewide assessments are valid and reliable measures of levels of student mastery of the common standards.

*Common Core State Standards.* A set of standards for what K–12 students should know and be able to do in the content areas of English language arts and math. In English language arts, the standards are presented by grade level in grades K–12, with the addition of standards for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects in grades 6–12 (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010c). In math, the standards are organized by grade level in K–8 and by conceptual

categories (geometry, algebra, and so on) in high school (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010d).

The final documents published by the Common Core State Standards Initiative include several components (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010a–h):

- Application of Common Core State Standards for English language learners.
- Application of Common Core State Standards for students with disabilities.
- Common Core State Standards for English language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.
- Common Core State Standards for math.
- English language arts, research supporting key elements of the standards, and glossary of key terms.
- English language arts, text exemplars, and sample performance tasks.
- English language arts, samples of student writing tasks.
- Introduction to the Common Core State Standards.

*Common Core State Standards Initiative.* Coordinated through the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers in collaboration with 48 states, the District of Columbia, and two territories.

*Council of Chief State School Officers.* A national nonpartisan, 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. It is coordinating the Common Core State Standards Initiative along with the National Governors Association.

*Implementation.* The first year that the common standards are taught in classrooms. This initial year of teaching may be preceded by a multiyear process in which states prepare for implementation by developing instructional resources and training teachers.

*National Governors Association.* A bipartisan organization of the country’s governors tasked with promoting state leadership, sharing best practices, and addressing national policy. It is coordinating the Common Core State Standards Initiative along with the Council of Chief State School Officers.

*Standards.* A set of statements that articulate expectations for what students should know and be able to do as they progress from kindergarten through grade 12. For example, a standard for grade 3 English language arts is that students should be able to explain how specific aspects of a text’s illustrations contribute to what the words convey about a story (such as create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).

(for example, the national science standards that are currently in development).<sup>2</sup> Since publication of the common standards, the National

Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers have announced their intent to establish an ongoing

process of improvement and revision of the common standards and to support the development of assessments that are aligned to the standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative n.d. b).

### What are the Common Core State Standards?

The Common Core State Standards are a set of academic content standards for grades K–12 in English language arts and math, published by the Common Core State Standards Initiative in June 2010 ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)). The initiative is a collaborative effort of 48 member states, the District of Columbia, and two territories (Common Core State Standards Initiative n.d. a). Its stated mission is:

[To] provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy. (Common Core State Standards Initiative n.d. d)

The common standards were designed to be (Common Core State Standards Initiative n.d. b):

- Aligned with expectations for college and career success.
- Clear, so that educators and parents know what they need to do to help students learn.
- Consistent across all adopting states.
- Inclusive of both content and the application of knowledge through higher order skills.
- Built on the strengths of current state standards and on lessons learned in using them.
- Realistic, for effective use in the classroom.

- Informed by other top-performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in the global economy and society.
- Evidence- and research-based.

State adoption of the common standards

means that “the standards authorizing body within the state has taken formal action to adopt and implement the common core” (Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors Association 2010). In other words, the state formally establishes the Common Core State Standards as the set of statewide goals for teaching and learning in K–12 English language arts and math. The common standards become the state’s expectations for what students should know and be able to do, for what teachers should be teaching, and for what students will be assessed on.

States can take up to three years to adopt the common standards (McNeil 2009). The adoption process may differ across states, depending on the context in each state (Common Core State Standards Initiative n.d. b), such as governance structures and local decisionmaking processes. The adoption process might include more than the culminating, formal administrative adoption procedure. It might also include, for example, time for disseminating information about the common standards to stakeholders and time for gathering feedback and building public support before the final, formal adoption procedure.

In adopting the common standards, states agree that they will not pick and choose which standards to adopt but will adopt and implement the full set. States may, however, include an additional 15 percent of state-specific standards beyond the common standards. The reasons for deciding to include additional standards may vary (for

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**After adoption, states determine the first year that the common standards will be taught in classrooms and devise a process to prepare for that implementation**

example, to comply with a state law mandating that a certain concept or skill be taught or to include knowledge or skills that local stakeholders feel are essential for students in the state but are not included in the common standards).

After adoption, states determine the first year that the common standards will be taught in classrooms and devise a process to prepare for that implementation. The process could include preparing and disseminating curriculum and instructional materials and providing professional development on the standards for educators. In addition, states determine how and when they will align their state assessment system with the common standards to ensure that assessments effectively measure students' mastery of the standards. The federal Race to the Top<sup>3</sup> grant program supports state adoption and implementation of the common standards by awarding points for state education agency applications that demonstrate a commitment to adopt the standards (U.S. Department of Education 2009; Sawchuck 2010; National Association of State Boards of Education n.d.).

To spur development of a new generation of assessments based on the common standards, the U.S. Department of Education funded two consortia as part of the Race to the Top initiative (Achieve 2010b; U.S. Department of Education 2010). The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) both aim to design an assessment system aligned to the common standards that will provide educators and the public with information about whether students are college and career ready. However, there are some differences between the two consortia, including their approaches to the design and delivery of assessment tools and the states that have chosen to participate in each consortium.<sup>4</sup>

Forty-four states and the District of Columbia are members of at least one of the two consortia.

PARCC consists of 23 states and the District of Columbia. SBAC consists of 29 states (Center for K–12 Assessment and Performance Management at ETS 2011). Eight states belong to both consortia, and six states belong to neither. Of the Southeast Region states, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina are members of the PARCC consortium, and Alabama, North Carolina, and South Carolina are members of the SBAC consortium. At the time of data collection for this study, Alabama and South Carolina had not yet decided which of the two consortia they will follow.

### Policy context

Under the No Child Left Behind Act, each state can establish its own standards and assessments. As a result, there has been substantial variation in the knowledge and skills that students must learn and the level of mastery they must show on assessments to be considered proficient (Brown and Rocha 2005; Cronin et al. 2007; Hunt, Rizzo, and White 2008). The national discourse about the need to improve state standards and assessments has recently intensified in response to these variations in state standards and student achievement outcomes and the poor performance of U.S. students on international assessments compared with students in other developed countries (Baldi et al. 2007; Brown and Rocha 2005; Cronin et al. 2007; Finn, Petrilli, and Julian 2006; Massell 2008; National Research Council 2008; U.S. Department of Education 2011).

Several other efforts among states to create common standards and assessments have emerged. New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont formed the New England Common Assessment Program, an alliance to develop common standards and assessments for their states. The assessments were administered for the first time in 2005 (Commission on No Child Left Behind 2007). In 2005, states within Achieve's American Diploma Project Network (which includes 35 states) worked together to create a common algebra II course test (Achieve n.d.). These policy developments were

a precursor to the current Common Core State Standards Initiative.

There are two strands of research on education standards reform in the United States. One has examined policymaking, planning, and standards implementation processes across states and districts since the standards-based reform movement began in the 1990s (DeStefano and Pristine 2000; Harris and Taylor 2008; Hill 2001; Massell 2008; Regional Educational Laboratory Network 2000; Spillane 1999; Spillane and Callahan 2000). These studies have identified variations and inconsistencies in standards planning and implementation across local education agencies within states and have expressed the need for intense professional development, communication, and follow-up by states when new standards are introduced. These descriptive studies highlight the complexities that states face in their efforts to ensure consistent implementation of new standards across states, districts, and local school sites.

Another body of research and information has begun to emerge more recently focused on the Common Core State Standards Initiative. Several organizations provide general information on adoption of the common standards. The National Association of State Boards of Education (n.d), the Thomas B. Fordham Institute (n.d.), and the Common Core State Standards Initiative (n.d. c) maintain online lists tracking the states that have adopted the common standards. Other entities have gathered information from experts and practitioners about implementation of the common standards.

Finn and Petrilli (2010) surveyed education experts to identify key tasks that should be undertaken by practitioners and policymakers to implement the common standards successfully. They proposed options for how local, state, and national entities might coordinate their efforts to ensure successful implementation. The Center on Education Policy (2011) surveyed state deputy superintendents about their state's progress and plans for implementing the common standards and found

that state timelines vary for putting into place the many changes in policy and practice needed to fully implement the common standards.

In 2010, ACT examined the achievement of more than 250,000 grade 11 students from several states, using ACT test items that were aligned to the Common Core State Standards. ACT found that across all common standards content, only a third to a half of the students performed at a proficiency level considered ready for college and careers, indicating a need to strengthen teaching and learning in all academic areas addressed by the common standards (ACT 2010, p. 3). The Educational Policy Improvement Center published the findings of an analysis of the alignment between the common standards and comparison standards from highly regarded states and programs and the relative rigor of the standards (Conley et al. 2011).

This report adds to the literature by providing a detailed look at adoption processes in six states for the Common Core State Standards and plans for their implementation and assessment alignment from the perspective of directly involved state education agency staff. This perspective will increase understanding of how states in the region are approaching these efforts and why they are taking particular approaches.

**This report provides a detailed look at adoption processes in six states for the Common Core State Standards and plans for their implementation and assessment alignment from the perspective of directly involved state education agency staff**

### Research questions

This study used interviews with state education agency staff in the Southeast Region to examine three research questions about the Common Core State Standards:

- What processes did the six Southeast Region states use for adopting the common standards?

## BOX 2

**Study methods**

*Study design.* This study relies on interviews with one state official in each Southeast Region state (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina) identified by the state education agency as having knowledge of the Common Core State Standards and being the most appropriate person to provide accurate information. The six officials were management-level staff in either curriculum and instruction or assessment. Because so much of the states' work on common standards implementation and assessment alignment has not yet occurred, there is limited published information about the process.

*Data collection.* Several days before each interview, the interview protocol (appendix B) was sent to respondents,

so that they could gather resource materials and confer with colleagues. The interview protocol included questions about the state's process for adopting the common standards, its plan for the first year of teaching the common standards in classrooms, and its plan for aligning its assessments to the standards.

The interviews were conducted between February and March 2011 by the study's two co-principal investigators. Two interviews were conducted in person and four by phone. The two interviewers met and reviewed the protocol to ensure that the same questions and probes would be asked of each respondent and that the interviews collected the same quality of data for each state.

*Data analysis.* Researchers used a data organization protocol (box A1 in appendix A) to systematically

organize the details in each of the state transcripts by interview question. Using the data organization protocol, one researcher drafted tables describing the data and drafted narrative statements of the similarities and differences across the states for each research question by subtopic. A second researcher reviewed these draft findings against the interview transcripts and noted areas needing clarification. Where interpretations differed, agreement on draft findings was reached by referring back to the original data. A third team member then reviewed the draft findings and provided further comments. State respondents also had the opportunity to review the findings on their state and provide feedback; five did so. Minor changes for four states were incorporated into the report.

For more details on the study methods, see appendix A.

- What is (or will be) the process for state implementation of the common standards?
- How are the states planning to address the alignment of their assessment programs to the common standards?

The methodology used is described briefly in box 2 and in more detail in appendix A.

**STUDY FINDINGS**

This study examined the processes for adopting the Common Core State Standards in the six Southeast Region states, their processes for implementing the common standards, and their plans for aligning assessments to the common standards.

**Processes for adopting the Common Core State Standards**

This section reports findings on the rationale for initial support of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, people and actions instrumental to this initial support, steps and timeline in the state adoption process, comparison of current state standards and the common standards, adoption of additional state-specific standards, and strategies for communication about the common standards.

*Rationale for initial support of the Common Core State Standards Initiative.* The six Southeast Region states shared some rationales for their initial support of the initiative (table 1). All six respondents explained that their state supported the initiative because of a goal to create standards that would bring parity across states, specifically a high level of clarity and rigor in academic expectations,



TABLE 1

**Rationale for initial support of the Common Core State Standards Initiative in Southeast Region states as reported in 2011**

State	Common standards build on existing state standards initiatives			Common standards enable collaboration across states		
	Common standards provide parity across states in clear, rigorous expectations and support for college and career readiness	Recent rollout or revision of state standards prepares the state to roll out the new common standards	Common standards are closely aligned to the state's existing standards	Common standards enable resource sharing (instructional materials, textbooks, professional development, assessments) across states	Common standards provide consistency in academic goals and comparability of outcomes across states	Commitment to implement the common standards strengthened the state's Race to the Top application
Alabama	✓			✓	✓	
Florida	✓	✓				✓
Georgia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Mississippi	✓			✓	✓	✓
North Carolina	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
South Carolina	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Authors' analysis of interview data.

and help to ensure students' college and career readiness.

Three state respondents (Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina) also reported that they supported the initiative because it builds on their state's own standards initiatives. All three recently revised their standards, which respondents said should better prepare them for rolling out the new common standards. Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina supported the initiative because the draft standards were closely aligned to their existing standards, meaning that introduction of the common standards would not require a major shift for teachers and students.

Five state respondents (Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina) reported that their state could benefit from the cross-state collaboration fostered by common standards, such as shared instructional resources and textbooks, joint professional development efforts, and the use of common assessments.

These states also noted that the comparability of outcomes in academic targets would better enable collaboration. Respondents in four states (Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina) cited the belief that committing to implement the common standards would strengthen their state's Race to the Top grant application as another reason for supporting the initiative.

Two state respondents cited reasons unique to their states (not reflected in table 1). Georgia reported appreciation that the initiative is a state-led, voluntary effort rather than a national mandate. North Carolina believes that common standards would likely be more enduring than a single state initiative that might last just a few years.

*People and actions instrumental to initial support.* In all six states, respondents reported that the governor and chief state school officer were instrumental in the state's initial support of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, as the

**All six state respondents reported that their state education agency had reviewed the draft common standards to provide input, analyze the extent of alignment between the common standards and state standards, and disseminate information about the common standards to the public**

initiative was led by governors and chief state school officers (Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010i). Three state respondents (Alabama, North Carolina, and South Carolina) noted that the backing of their state board of education was also important. Involvement of educators and other stakeholder groups (parents, public interest groups, and the business community) was mentioned as key for initial support of the initiative in three states (Florida,

North Carolina, and South Carolina). And three state respondents (Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina) also mentioned that state education agency staff were instrumental in building needed support by informing stakeholders of the intent of the initiative.

*Steps and timeline in the state adoption process.* All six Southeast Region states adopted the standards in 2010. North Carolina adopted them in June, followed by Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina in July, Mississippi in August, and Alabama in November. While the adoption process differed (Common Core State Standards Initiative n.d. b), approval of the Common Core State Standards by the state board of education was the culminating action required for adoption in all six states.

All six state respondents reported that their state education agency had reviewed the draft common standards to provide input, analyze the extent of alignment between the common standards and state standards, and disseminate information about the common standards to the public.

Other steps leading up to formal adoption varied. Two state respondents reported that state law required collaboration between the state education agency and partner entities before new standards could be adopted:

- Alabama law required that the Alabama Course of Study Committee (made up of teachers,

administrators, representatives of institutions of higher education, and gubernatorial appointees representing all congressional districts) recommend adoption of the new standards to the Alabama State Board of Education.

- South Carolina law required that the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (made up of members appointed by the governor, members of the general assembly, and the state superintendent) recommend adoption of the new standards to the South Carolina State Board of Education.

The Florida respondent also noted the essential role that collaboration with the Florida Parent Teacher Association played in the state adoption process (the association provided a briefing for the State Board of Education in support of the common standards).

*Comparison of current state standards and the common standards.* As part of learning about how adopting the common standards would change instruction and assessment, all six Southeast Region states analyzed how their state standards aligned with the common standards. These analyses varied in approach and level of detail. Respondents in Alabama, Florida, and Georgia noted that their state used the Achieve Common Core Comparison Tool (Achieve 2010a) in their analysis.<sup>5</sup> The South Carolina respondent reported use of the Council of Chief State School Officers Survey of Enacted Curriculum tool (Council of Chief State School Officers n.d.). The respondents in Mississippi and North Carolina said that their states did not use an external organization's tool in their analysis.

Respondents in three states (Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina) reported standards alignment as the percentage match between state standards and the common standards. Alabama reported the percentage match between its state standards and the common standards for English language arts and for math. South Carolina reported the percentage match by grade span in English language arts (for grades K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12) and for each grade K–8 in math and for each high school

math course. South Carolina also reported a single composite percentage match across all grades in English language arts and math. Georgia provided detailed percentage matches by grade span for both English language arts and math (K–5, 6–8, and 9–12), identifying the percentage matches as excellent, good, weak, or no match.

Respondents in three states (Florida, Mississippi, and North Carolina) provided qualitative statements of levels of match. The Florida respondent reported that the state standards were “at least comparable in terms of rigor” to the common standards. Mississippi’s and North Carolina’s published reports describe whether each state standard aligned to a standard in the common standards and, if so, how closely.

#### *Adoption of additional state-specific standards.*

Adoption of the Common Core State Standards requires adoption of all of the content of the common standards, but with the option of adding up to 15 percent of state-specific standards content.<sup>6</sup> In the Southeast Region, states varied on adopting additional standards and their reasons for doing so.

Four states (Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina) did not adopt additional state-specific standards. Respondents from two states (Mississippi and South Carolina) reported that their states had determined that the common standards were sufficiently rigorous and comprehensive without additional state standards. Respondents from two states (Florida and North Carolina) reported that the decision not to adopt additional standards was motivated in part by concerns about assessment since their assessment consortium would be developing a common assessment instrument for all participating states. Any state with additional standards would thus have to determine on its own whether and how to assess the additional standards.

Two states (Alabama and Georgia) adopted additional standards. Alabama reported adding standards to cover content considered important for Alabama students, to strengthen the standards

for students, and to align standards with content in high school history/social studies courses. In English language arts, 24 standards or sub-components of standards were added, moved from one grade to another, or revised (14 in reading and 10 in writing). In math, 24 standards and 5 standards subcomponents were added to the high school math course structure (for example, algebra or geometry), and standards were added for three Alabama-specific high school math courses (for a total of 37 added standards).

Georgia reported adding standards to address the need for particular content as expressed in public feedback on the common standards. One additional element was added to each of eight English language arts standards in the common standards (standards were slightly augmented, but new standards were not added)—two each in grades 1 and 2 and one each in grades 3, 4, 9–12. Added elements address prewriting and graphic organizers (grades 1 and 2) and legible printing or cursive (grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 9–12). No additions were made to the common standards in math.

*Strategies for communication about the common standards.* To build public support for the common standards, states launched multiple mass communication efforts. Respondents identified four types of communication strategies (table 2):

- Informational materials distributed through the Internet and other media or in hard copy.
- Direct meetings with stakeholders.
- Informational materials distributed through organizations and electronic mailing lists.
- Press releases.

All six state respondents reported that one of their state’s top three strategies was the distribution of

**Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina did not adopt additional state-specific standards; Alabama and Georgia did**



TABLE 2

**Communication strategies to build public support for Common Core State Standards adoption in Southeast Region states as reported in 2011**

State	Distribute informational materials through the Internet and other media or in hard copy	Meet directly with stakeholders	Distribute informational material through organizations and electronic mailing lists	Issue press releases
Alabama	✓	✓	✓	
Florida	✓			
Georgia	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mississippi	✓	✓	✓	✓
North Carolina	✓	✓	✓	✓
South Carolina	✓	✓	✓	✓

Sources: Authors' analysis of state interview data.

informational materials through the Internet and other media or in hard copy. Identified materials included dedicated common standards web pages on the state education agency website, informational and training webinars and video streaming, and published informational materials (downloadable hard-copy brochures and PowerPoint presentations). States also used existing online instruction and assessment resource formats to communicate about the common standards. Georgia reported using its Georgiastandards.org resource site and Florida its Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test Explorer resource site.<sup>7</sup> Five state respondents (Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina) cited in-person informational meetings with stakeholders (parents, teachers, local district superintendents, and the general public) as one of the top three communication strategies. The same five states mentioned using organizations of education professionals, business groups, and community groups to disseminate information to stakeholders in person or through electronic mailing lists. Four state respondents (Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina) named press releases among the top three communication strategies.

### Processes for implementing the Common Core State Standards

This report uses implementation to refer to the first year that the Common Core State Standards

are used to guide instruction statewide and to the process leading up to that first year, as states prepare to teach to the common standards by developing instructional resources, training educators, and engaging in similar activities. Findings on implementation are reported below on the first year of teaching under the common standards in classrooms statewide, preparation for the first year, approach to training educators, state role in acquiring new curricular materials for use with the common standards, and approaches to monitoring implementation.

*First year of teaching under the common standards in classrooms statewide.* The respondents in Florida and Mississippi reported that teachers in their state will begin teaching under the common standards in 2011/12 (table 3). The respondents in Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina reported that teachers will begin doing so in 2012/13. The respondent in South Carolina reported that teachers will begin doing so in 2003/14. Table 4 presents more detail on the multiyear rollout by grade level and content area of the first year of teaching under the new common standards in some of the states.

Respondents reported various reasons for their state's selection of the first year of teaching under the common standards (see table 3). Respondents in five states (Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina) stressed that the

TABLE 3

**First year of teaching under the Common Core State Standards in Southeast Region states**

State	First year of teaching under the common standards		Rationale given for the specified implementation year
	English language arts	Math	
Alabama	2013/14	2012/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing over two years spreads out the cost of purchasing textbooks</li> </ul>
Florida	2011/12, kindergarten 2012/13, grade 1 2013/14, grade 2 2014/15, grades 3–12	2011/12, kindergarten 2012/13, grade 1 2013/14, grade 2 2014/15, grades 3–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gives time to conduct professional development for teachers</li> <li>Allows for ramping up to teaching all grades by the first year of assessments in 2014/15</li> </ul>
Georgia	2012/13, grades K–12	2012/13, grades K–9 2013/14, grade 10 2014/15, grade 11 2015/16, grade 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gives time to align and prepare instructional resources and to conduct professional development for teachers</li> <li>Allows for ramping up to teaching all grades by the first year of assessments in 2014/15</li> </ul>
Mississippi	2011/12, grades K–2 2012/13, grades 3–8 2013/14, grades 9–12	2011/12, grades K–2 2012/13, grades 3–8 2013/14, grades 9–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grades K–2 do not participate in high-stakes assessment</li> <li>Public input favored beginning with K–2</li> <li>Kindergarten students in 2011/12 would be first grade 3 students assessed on the common standards in 2014/15</li> <li>Allows for ramping up to teaching all grades by the first year of assessments in 2014/15</li> </ul>
North Carolina	2012/13	2012/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committed to 2012/13 in the state's Race to the Top grant application</li> <li>Need time to conduct professional development for teachers</li> <li>Allows for teaching all grades before the first year of assessments in 2014/15</li> </ul>
South Carolina	2013/14	2013/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows for teaching all grades by the first year of assessments in 2014/15</li> </ul>

Source: Authors' analysis of interview data.

decision was made in part after considering when assessments aligned to the common standards would become available (expected in 2014/15), since students would need to be taught under the new standards before they could be assessed on them. Other reasons mentioned included the cost of acquiring new textbooks (Alabama), the need to train teachers (Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina), and commitments made in the Race to the Top grant application (North Carolina).

*Preparation for the first year of teaching under the new common standards.* States laid out multiyear plans beginning in 2010, the year the common standards were released, for preparing for the first year

of teaching under the new standards (see table 4). Respondents in all six states reported a general process that moves from the development of curriculum and instruction resources and training materials to the training of educators to teaching under the new common standards—all with 2014/15 in mind as the first year for assessment on the common standards.

Respondents in all six states reported that 2010/11 was devoted to preparatory activities, such as building greater awareness of the common standards among stakeholders and developing training resources and curriculum materials aligned to the standards. Three states (Georgia, Mississippi, and North Carolina) also began educator training.

TABLE 4

**Preparation timelines for the first year of teaching the Common Core State Standards in Southeast Region states**

State	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Alabama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning and developing materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First year of teaching under the common standards in grades K–12 math</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First year of teaching under the common standards in grades K–12 English language arts in classrooms</li> </ul>	
Florida	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning and developing materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First year of teaching under the common standards in kindergarten English language arts and math</li> <li>Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First year of teaching under the common standards in grade 1 English language arts and math</li> <li>Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First year of teaching under the common standards in grade 2 English language arts and math</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First year of teaching under the common standards in grades 3–12 English language arts and math</li> </ul>
Georgia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning and developing materials</li> <li>Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning and developing materials</li> <li>Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First year of teaching under the common standards in grades K–12 English language arts and in grades K–9 math</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First year of teaching under the common standards in grade 10 math</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First year of teaching under the common standards in grade 11 math<sup>a</sup></li> </ul>
Mississippi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning and developing materials</li> <li>Training</li> <li>Cultivating awareness of the common standards among stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First year of teaching under the common standards in grades K–2 English language arts and math</li> <li>Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First year of teaching under the common standards in grades 3–8 English language arts and math</li> <li>Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First year of teaching under the common standards in grades 9–12 English language arts and math</li> <li>Training</li> </ul>	
North Carolina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning and developing materials</li> <li>Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning and developing materials</li> <li>Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First year of teaching under the common standards in grades K–12 English language arts and math</li> </ul>		
South Carolina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning and developing materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning and developing materials</li> <li>Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning and developing materials</li> <li>Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First year of teaching under the common standards in grades K–12 English language arts and math</li> </ul>	

*Note:* The first year of assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards is expected to be 2014/15.

a. First year of teaching under the common standards in grade 12 math is 2015/16.

*Source:* Authors' analysis of interview data.

Respondents in all six states reported that efforts in 2011/12 would focus on training educators. Two states (Florida and Mississippi) also began teaching under the common standards. Florida would begin in kindergarten in both English language arts and math; Mississippi, in grades K–2, also in English language arts and math. Respondents in three states (Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina) indicated that planning and developing materials and training would continue in 2011/12.

Respondents in three states (Alabama, Mississippi, and North Carolina) reported that teaching under the new common standards will begin in 2012/13. Teaching under the new common standards will begin in math in grades K–12 in Alabama, in English language arts in grades K–12 and math in grades K–9 in Georgia, and in grades K–12 in both English language arts and math in North Carolina. Two states (Florida and Mississippi) reported that their rollout of teaching under the common standards will continue in 2012/13: in Florida, grade 1 will begin with English language arts and math, and in Mississippi, grades 3–8 will begin with English language arts and math. South Carolina reported that it will continue its educator training and planning and its development of materials aligned to the common standards in 2012/13.

Respondents in four states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina) reported that their rollout of teaching under the common standards will continue in 2013/14. Alabama will add English language arts in grades K–12; Florida will add grade 2 in both English language arts and math; Georgia will add grade 10 in math; and Mississippi will add grades 9–12 in English language arts and math. The South Carolina respondent reported that teaching under the common standards will begin in both English language arts and math in 2013/14.

Respondents in two states reported that their rollout of teaching under the common standards will continue in 2014/15. Florida will add grades 3–12 in English language arts and math, and Georgia will add grade 11 in math (grade 12 math will be

added in 2015/16). Respondents reported that states expect to implement assessments aligned to the common standards in 2014/15.

*Approach to training educators.* Respondents in all six Southeast Region states reported taking a multipronged approach to training educators on the common standards

(table 5). Respondents in all six states said that their state will use different types of personnel to deliver the training, and all six will use state education agency staff. However, respondents in three states (Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi) noted that the state education agency does not have enough staff to deliver all the training needed to prepare all educators in their state, so collaboration with other entities is planned. North Carolina's respondent stressed the importance of building local capacity as the reason for such collaboration; Florida's respondent said that the state was still considering various forms of collaboration at the time of data collection. Three states (Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina) reported that they will coordinate training with professional development staff from the regional service centers. Mississippi's respondent mentioned that the state will work with an outside expert to deliver training.

Respondents in all six states reported that their state will use a combination of approaches to reach educators statewide (see table 5). All six will use the Internet to provide online training sessions, including webinars and professional development modules and (in Georgia and South Carolina) web streaming of live or prerecorded broadcasts. All six states also reported offering some combination of face-to-face, direct training for school staff and a train-the-trainer approach in which state education agency staff train district teams (a small number of district office staff and school staff) who in turn train school staff throughout the district.

**Respondents in all six Southeast Region states reported taking a multipronged approach to training educators on the common standards using different types of personnel to deliver the training and a combination of approaches to reach educators statewide**

TABLE 5

**Approaches to training educators on the Common Core State Standards in Southeast Region states**

State	Personnel delivering the training			Format of the training		
	State education agency staff	Regional professional development agency staff	Outside experts	Online (online modules, webinars, web-streaming of television broadcasts)	Face to face	Train the trainer
Alabama	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Florida	✓			✓	✓	✓
Georgia	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Mississippi	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
North Carolina	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
South Carolina	✓			✓	✓	✓

Source: Authors' analysis of state interview data.

Respondents in all six states reported that their educator training on the common standards would include specialists in the design and delivery of training that addresses the needs of special populations, particularly students with disabilities and English language learner students. This focus was a continuation of their teacher professional learning efforts before adoption of the common standards.

*State role in acquiring new curricular materials for use with the common standards.* Implementation of the common standards may require new instructional resources and materials. All six state respondents reported that their state approves a list of textbooks and instructional materials from which local districts can make their own purchasing decisions. All six respondents reported that their state will continue to use this process to integrate materials addressing the common standards. Respondents in all six states also noted that the state education agency was creating or had plans to create additional supplementary instructional resources that districts and schools can choose to use.

The three states that were awarded Race to the Top grants will use these funds to support this work.

The Georgia respondent reported that the state Department of Education hired English language arts and math specialists for the elementary, middle, and high school levels and a technology expert to work with teachers around the state to create supplementary materials and resources based on the common standards. In addition, Georgia has a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to develop curricular materials. The Florida respondent reported that Race to the Top funds are being used to update the state's supplemental materials in the online assessment tutorial resource system (FCATexplorer.com) and standards resource database (Floridastandards.org). The North Carolina respondent reported that the Race to the Top funds are being used to hire regional professional development leads and to create online professional learning modules with related supplementary instructional materials.

*Approaches to monitoring implementation of the common standards.* In four states (Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina), respondents reported that the state education agency does not have plans for large-scale, direct monitoring of implementation of the common standards but will rely on local districts for monitoring. One reason cited for not monitoring implementation at the

state level is that ensuring curriculum implementation is a local matter not within the purview of the state education agency. In addition, one state respondent (Mississippi) noted that the state education agency does not have the staff capacity for implementation monitoring. According to the Alabama respondent, the state had not yet decided at the time of data collection whether the state education agency would monitor implementation. In North Carolina, local implementation will be monitored as part of the statewide evaluation of implementation of the Race to the Top initiative, which includes comprehensive implementation of the common standards.

**Plans for aligning assessments to the common standards**

Respondents in all six states reported that the alignment of state assessments to the common standards is in the early stages of development. All six noted that alignment of state assessments to the Common Core State Standards will take place through the assessment consortia of which they are members. Therefore, they will follow their consortium’s planned timeline and process along with the other consortium member states (table 6). Based on the work plans of these assessment

consortia, all six states identified 2014/15 as the first year they expect to use annual summative assessments in English language arts and math aligned to the common standards (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers n.d.; SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium 2010).

**CONCLUSIONS**

All six states have adopted the Common Core State Standards, and all reported that a step in the adoption process was a review of the common standards by state education agency staff. Four states did not adopt any state-specific standards in addition to the common standards, and two states (Alabama and Georgia) did.

The first states that will begin using the common standards to guide classroom instruction are Florida (grade K English language arts and math) and Mississippi (grades K–2 English language arts and math) in 2011/12. Three states will begin implementation in 2012/13: Alabama (K–12 in math), Georgia (K–12 in English language arts, K–9 in math), and North Carolina (K–12 English

TABLE 6

**Alignment of Southeast Region state assessments to the Common Core State Standards: federally funded assessment consortia timelines**

Consortium	Member states	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alabama</li> <li>Florida</li> <li>Georgia</li> <li>Mississippi</li> <li>South Carolina</li> </ul>	Launch and design phase	Development begins	First year pilot/field testing and related research and data collection	Second year pilot/field testing and related research and data collection	Common standards-aligned assessments
SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alabama</li> <li>North Carolina</li> <li>South Carolina</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development begins for formative tools, processes, and practices</li> <li>Item specifications developed</li> </ul>	Item development activities completed	Field testing of adaptive summative items completed	Preliminary achievement standards proposed and other policy definitions adopted	Common standards-aligned assessments

Sources: Authors’ compilation based on data from Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (n.d.) and SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (2010).

language arts and math). South Carolina will begin in 2013/14 (K–12 English language arts and math). All six states reported a general implementation process moving from developing curricular and instruction resources, to training educators, to teaching in the classroom. All state implementation timelines account for teaching under the common standards before the expected administration of assessments aligned to the common standards (expected to be available through the assessment consortia in 2014/15). All six state respondents reported using multiple formats to train educators in using the common standards. Finally, all six respondents shared that their states will align the assessment program to the common standards by following the timeline and process of the assessment consortia of which they are a member.

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## STUDY LIMITATIONS

The findings of this study have several limitations. First, there was a small number of interviews conducted—one per state. The information collected was factual and at a level that a knowledgeable state official could be expected to report, and each respondent was identified by his or her state

education agency as the person most competent to provide state information to the study team.

Second, because the data were collected at one point in time, the study findings cannot be generalized beyond the study period, as state-level plans, policies, and procedures are continually evolving and might have been updated since the completion of data collection.

Third, this report offers only a state-level perspective on the adoption, implementation, and assessment alignment processes for the common standards. The decision to interview just one person per state means that the study team did not hear any alternative perspectives from district and school level staff.

Fourth, although use of a structured interview protocol means that the same questions and probes were asked of each respondent, there was some variation in the level of detail volunteered by respondents in response to the questions.

Despite these limitations, the report is useful as an early look at these six states' work on the Common Core State Standards, which is itself a new and evolving reform initiative nationwide.



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**NOTES**

1. See [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).
2. See [www.nextgenscience.org](http://www.nextgenscience.org).
3. Race to the Top is a competitive grant program to encourage and reward states that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform; achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring student preparation for success in college and careers; and implementing ambitious plans in four core education reform areas: standards and assessments, data systems, effective teachers and principals, and school improvement (U.S. Department of Education 2009). For more information, see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>.
4. For information on PARCC, see [www.parcconline.org](http://www.parcconline.org); for information on SBAC, see [www.k12.wa.us/smarter](http://www.k12.wa.us/smarter).
5. The study team asked only what was reported on the comparison of state standards and the common standards. They did not ask states to explain how they used the analysis tools or why they reported their findings as they did (quantitative or qualitative, level of detail). As part of their response, three states reported using the external organizations' tools (the Achieve Common Core Comparison Tool or the Council of Chief State School Officers Survey of Enacted Curriculum tool).
6. When states adopt the Common Core State Standards, they commit to adopting and implementing the full set of standards rather than selecting just some of them. In English language arts, the common standards include 210 standards for grades K–5 and 145 for grades 6–12; in math, there are 148 standards for grades K–5, 76 for grades 6–8, and 154 for grades 9–12 (this count is the authors' tally of standards from Common Core State Standards Initiative 2010c,d). States may decide to add an additional 15 percent of state-specific standards for various reasons, such as to comply with a state law mandating that a certain concept or skill be taught or to include knowledge or skills that local stakeholders feel are essential for students but are not included in the common standards.
7. See <https://www.georgiastandards.org/Pages/default.aspx> and [www.fcatexplorer.com/](http://www.fcatexplorer.com/).



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## APPENDIX A

### STUDY METHODS

This appendix describes the study design, data collection, data analysis, and protection of confidentiality.

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#### Study design

This descriptive study, conducted between February and August 2011, relied on interviews with one state official with knowledge of the Common Core State Standards in each of the six Southeast Region states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina). The interviews were conducted after all six states had adopted the common standards but before teaching under the common standards had begun.

Each state education agency identified one knowledgeable person to serve as the respondent for their state (and, in one state, the respondent requested that we follow up with another state education agency staff member on one interview question). Since the handling of large initiatives such as this can differ according to the organizational structures and policy requirements of each state, the study team relied on each state education agency to select the person who could provide the most accurate data. Each state's selection process was unique. The study team did not inquire about how each state selected its representative; they simply asked that the state select an state education agency staff person with enough involvement in the common standards initiative to provide accurate information.

The six respondents were management-level staff in the areas of curriculum and instruction or assessment. Because so much of the work on common standards implementation and assessment alignment has yet to occur, there is limited published information about the process. Interviews were thus the only way to obtain the latest information on what each state was doing and planning at the time. Interviews allowed the study team to gather in-depth information on the research

questions from the perspective of a state education agency staff member directly involved in the state's work on the common standards.

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#### Data collection

Several days before the interview were conducted, the study team sent the interview protocol to the respondents. This allowed respondents time to prepare answers, gather resource materials, and confer with colleagues. Interviews were conducted between February and March 2011. A quick reference guide (states "at a glance") was created showing key information on the Common Core State Standards in each state drawn from web searches and the interviews (appendix C).

The interview protocol (appendix B) includes questions about the state's process for adopting the common standards, its plan for the first year of teaching them, and its plan for aligning its assessments to the common standards. Before the interviews, the two interviewers (the study's two co-principal investigators) met and reviewed the protocol to ensure a common understanding of the questions and probes. After the first two interviews, the interviewers were debriefed to review the protocol and discuss any challenges. No changes needed to be made to the protocol, and the four remaining interviews were conducted using the same protocol.

The interviews were scheduled to ensure the respondents' full participation. Two of the respondents chose dates that allowed the interview to be conducted in person, but the other interviews had to be conducted over the phone. The Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast liaison for the state was present at all six interviews to collect the hard-copy of the participants' signed consent form and to facilitate introductions.

The interviews took 60–90 minutes and were digitally recorded and transcribed. The structured interview protocol ensured that the interviews were conducted in a similar manner so that data of the same quality were collected for all states.

However, there were some variations in the kinds of information and the level of detail volunteered by respondents, as is to be expected.

After all the interviews were conducted, the interviewers met again to discuss the data collected and determine whether any follow-up was needed. None was identified.

**Data analysis**

Researchers used a data organization protocol to organize the responses by interview question (box A1; see appendix B for interview protocol). One co-principal investigator drafted tables describing similarities and differences across the states for each research question by subtopic, along with illustrative examples from the data. The second co-principal investigator reviewed these draft findings against the state data organization protocols and noted any areas needing clarification. The original transcripts were used to resolve any disagreements. A third team member reviewed the draft findings and provided further comments. State respondents also had an opportunity to review the findings on their state and provide feedback. Five state respondents provided feedback; for four states, minor changes were incorporated into the report.

**Protection of confidentiality**

Although no names appear in the report, the respondents were informed that the confidentiality of their responses could not be guaranteed because they represent a small sample of respondents, each associated with a particular state. They were also told that the study could reveal information that is not publicly available. The information collected is descriptive, detailing state education agency implementation practices and plans, none of which would be considered confidential or sensitive.

Respondents were asked to sign a consent form that clearly informed them of the potential use of the information gathered for this report. The computers on which the study team saved the transcripts and other documents are password-protected and available only to the study team. The original digital recordings of the interviews were destroyed after transcription. All documents and data will be erased or shredded three years after the completion of this study.

An Institutional Review Board application submitted to the Office of Research Compliance at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro was approved on September 20, 2010.

<p>BOX A1 <b>Data organization protocol by research question and interview questions on the Common Core State Standards, 2011</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Communication</li> <li>5. Comparison of current state standards to commons standards</li> <li>6. Addressing additional standards</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Training/professional development</li> <li>10. Curricular materials approach</li> <li>11. Monitoring</li> </ol>
<p>What processes did the six Southeast Region states use for adopting the common standards?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rationale</li> <li>2. Instrumental people and actions</li> <li>3. Steps and timeline</li> </ol>	<p>What is (or will be) the process for state implementation of the common standards?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. School year</li> <li>8. Preparation for initial implementation (teaching)</li> </ol>	<p>How are the states planning to address the alignment of their assessment programs to the common standards?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Process</li> </ol>

## APPENDIX B

### STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

This appendix presents the introductory script used for each interview and the interview protocol.

#### Introductory script

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study about your state's adoption, implementation, and assessment alignment of the Common Core State Standards. Before we begin the interview, let's review the Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent form that was provided to you via email when we scheduled this interview. I have two hard copies for you—one for you to keep for your files and one to sign and submit, if you decide to do so.

This interview will take approximately 60–90 minutes. The interview will be digitally recorded and then transcribed; however, the recordings will be permanently destroyed once they have been transcribed.

In terms of confidentiality, your name will not be used in the final published report. While your name will be masked, state names will be used in the report. Thus, confidentiality is not guaranteed. Your identity may be discernible to readers of the report as a respondent because there are so few states in the study. The final report will include identifying information about your state that is not technically publicly available as it comes from your interview responses. However, the level of risk for participating in this study is considered minimal due to the fact that the interview questions do not ask for personal opinions. The study's intent is to collect information regarding your state-level organizational processes and therefore will not reveal personal information about you or any participating individuals. Furthermore, you will have an opportunity to review the section of the report about your state before it is released.

Researchers will have access to a transcribed file linking your responses to you; however, this linked transcribed file will be stored separately from

the coded data. This and all other data collected for this project will be stored at the SERVE office located at the Gateway University Research Park in Browns Summit, North Carolina. The transcripts will be stored within locked file cabinets for three years after the closure of the study; at which point, all documents and data will be shredded or erased.

Do you have any questions about the study or the IRB consent form? [Interviewer will record and answer all questions at this time. Notetaker will give respondent the Consent Form to sign.]

The research and the consent form have been approved by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research involving people follows federal regulations. Any future questions regarding your rights as a participant in this project can be answered by calling the Director of the Office of Research and Compliance at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Mr. Eric Allen (his phone number is provided on the consent form). Or if you have any questions that emerge after I leave today, please contact Dr. Karla Lewis (whose phone number is also provided on the consent form).

By signing the consent form you are agreeing that:

- You read and you fully understand the contents of the document.
- You are openly and willingly consenting to take part in this study.
- All of your questions concerning this study have been answered.
- You are 18 years of age or older.

Thanks for agreeing to participate in this interview. This report's description of how the six Southeast Region states adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSR), how each plans to implement them, and how each plans to align its state assessments to them will be a valuable resource for

the Common Core State Standards Initiative and potentially other future, related efforts.

Interview protocol

**First, I am going to ask you a set of six questions about your state’s process for adopting the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). More specifically, I am going to ask questions about your state’s rationale for initially supporting the standards, the adoption process, and the state’s communication with stakeholders.**

1. What was the expressed rationale used for *initially supporting* the CCSS (i.e., the rationale for becoming one of the 48 states that joined the NGA-CCSSO effort to produce the standards)?
2. What actions, taken by whom, were instrumental in the state’s initial decision to support

the CCSS? By instrumental, we mean individuals or groups without whose support the state would not have made this decision.

3. What were the steps and timeline in the adoption process (i.e., steps taken between the time the CCSS were released nationally in June 2010 and the time your State Board of Education approved the adoption of the CCSS)?
4. How is (and/or will) the state education agency (SEA) handle communication within the state to build awareness regarding the CCSS adoption (please discuss the top three key strategies)?

Probe:

- a. Interviewer will use the following chart to probe.

Top three communication strategies					
Probes					
Format/mode (e.g. in-person meetings, e-mail, press release, other)	Person (Title)/state education agency (= division conducting/ leading)	Any collaborating organizations (if applicable)	Stakeholders targeted	Topics addressed	Materials developed/ used (e.g., CCSSI official materials, state education agency–produced materials, other)
Strategy 1					
Strategy 2					
Strategy 3					

- 5. As part of your state’s process of CCSS adoption, were (or will) the state’s existing standards explicitly compared (“mapped,” “cross-walked”) to the Common Core State Standards? Yes / No

Probes:

- a. If yes, why was it/will it be done?
  - b. If yes, how was it/will it be done (e.g., did the SEA use an external consultant, did the SEA curriculum division do it, was the Achieve Common Core Comparison Tool used, other approach?)
  - c. If no, why not?
- 6. Adopting the CCSS requires states to adopt 100% of the CCSS content with the option to add an additional 15% of state-specific standards content. Has/will your state utilize this option to adopt additional standards content? Yes / No?

Probes:

- a. If yes, why (e.g., to meet an existing state law/requirement, to address a strategic priority, other reason)?

- b. If yes, what content area(s) are /will the additional standards be in?
- c. If no, why not?

**Now I am going to ask you five questions about your state’s initial implementation of the CCSS. The questions will focus on timelines, leadership, and process.**

- 7. What school year will your state expect teachers to begin teaching the CCSS in the classroom (initial implementation year)?

Probe:

- a. Why was that year selected?
- 8. What is your state’s planned process for preparing for that initial year of implementation? Please walk us through *year by year*.
- a. Interviewer will use the following chart to probe:

Years applicable to state’s preparation process	Focus of efforts (e.g., resource development, training, implementation, or other)	Materials used	SEA staff/or other organization(s) involved
2010			
2011			
2012			
2013			
2014			
Etc.			

10. What is your SEA's approach to training teachers on how to implement the CCSS (e.g., direct SEA training, indirect SEA training via published materials, direct local education agency (LEA) trainings, others)?

Probes:

- a. What were the SEA's reasons for this approach?
  - b. How will this training, and initial implementation to follow, address the needs of subgroups—particularly English language learners and students with disabilities?
11. As part of the initial implementation, how will the state address the issue of new curricular materials (e.g., textbooks, online resources, other curricular or instructional resources) should they be needed to address the CCSS?

Probes:

- a. Regarding what such new materials might be, does the SEA anticipate the use of externally created materials (materials purchased from vendors) and/or internally-created materials (whether created by the SEAs, LEAs, or schools)?
  - b. Regarding the state role in the use of new materials, does the SEA anticipate requiring, encouraging, or recommending that districts/schools use particular new materials, or taking no action at all regarding district/school use of new materials?
  - c. Other approach?
12. During the initial year of implementation of the CCSS, will your state monitor LEAs'/schools' implementation of the standards? Yes / No

Probes:

- a. If yes, which of the following monitoring strategies will be used?

- i. Self-report from teachers/schools/districts (e.g., thorough written reports, surveys)
  - ii. Classroom observations (e.g., observations by SEA staff, by technical assistance provider staff, etc.)
  - iii. Other
- b. If no, why not?

**Now I am going to ask you one question about how your state is planning to address the alignment of its assessment program to the CCSS.**

13. What process will your state use to accomplish the alignment of its assessment program to the CCSS?

Probes:

- a. What are the key steps that the SEA will use to accomplish the alignment of the assessment program with the CCSS (as part of this, if applicable, please describe any involvement with assessment consortia or other partnerships)?
- b. What is the timeline the SEA expects to follow to accomplish this task?
- c. What is the first year the SEA expects the CCSS-aligned assessments to be administered to students in your state?

**Now I have one last question.**

14. Are there any questions you have for us or any additional information regarding your state's CCSS adoption, initial implementation, or assessment alignment that we haven't asked about that you would like to share?

**Thank you for participating. We appreciate your time.**

## APPENDIX C

### QUICK REFERENCE STATE INFORMATION ON THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

State	Adoption date	First year teaching under commons standards		Assessment consortium membership	Race to the Top funding	State common standards website
		English language arts	Math			
Alabama	November 18, 2010	2013/14	2012/13	Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)	Not awarded	<a href="http://www.alsde.edu/home/General/alccs.aspx">www.alsde.edu/home/General/alccs.aspx</a>
Florida	July 27, 2010	2011/12, kindergarten 2012/13, grade 1 2013/14, grade 2 2014/15, grades 3–12	2011/12, kindergarten 2012/13, grade 1 2013/14, grade 2 2014/15, grades 3–12	PARCC (Florida is the fiscal agent for the consortium)	Awarded (2nd round)	<a href="http://www.floridastandards.org/Standards/Common_Core_Standards.aspx">www.floridastandards.org/Standards/Common_Core_Standards.aspx</a>
Georgia	July 8, 2010	2012/13, grades K–12	2012/13, grades K–9 2013/14, grade 10 2014/15, grade 11 2015/16, grade 12	PARCC	Awarded (2nd round)	<a href="http://www.gadoe.org/CCGPS.aspx">www.gadoe.org/CCGPS.aspx</a>
Mississippi	August 20, 2010	2011/12, grades K–2 2012/13, grades 3–8 2013/14, grades 9–12	2011/12, grades K–2 2012/13, grades 3–8 2013/14, grades 9–12	PARCC	Not awarded	<a href="http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/acad/id/curriculum/ccss.htm">www.mde.k12.ms.us/acad/id/curriculum/ccss.htm</a>
North Carolina	June 2, 2010	2012/13	2012/13	SBAC	Awarded (2nd round)	<a href="http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/acre/standards/">www.dpi.state.nc.us/acre/standards/</a>
South Carolina	July 14, 2010	2013/14	2013/14	PARCC SBAC	Not awarded	<a href="http://ed.sc.gov/agency/pr/standards-and-curriculum/South_Carolina_Common_Core.cfm">http://ed.sc.gov/agency/pr/standards-and-curriculum/South_Carolina_Common_Core.cfm</a>

Sources: Authors' analysis of interview data and state education agency website information accessed December 1, 2011.



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