

Common Core State Standards in 2014:

District Implementation of Consortia-Developed Assessments

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Credits and Acknowledgments

This report was researched and written by Diane Stark Rentner, CEP's deputy director, and Nancy Kober, CEP's editorial consultant. Maria Ferguson, CEP's executive director, Jennifer McMurrer, CEP's senior research associate, and Matthew Frizzell, CEP's research associate, provided input and advice on the survey instrument and reviewed the report's content. In addition, Mr. Frizzell and Dr. McMurrer checked the accuracy of the data included in the report, and Mr. Frizzell did additional research on issues that emerged during the data analysis.

Leslie Anderson of Policy Studies Associates led a team of PSA staff that worked with CEP to develop and administer the district survey and analyze survey data. Others at PSA who worked on the project include Julie Meredith, Alisha Butler, Jackie MacFarlane, and Kenne Dibner.

We are tremendously grateful to the school district staff who took time to respond to our survey amid their many critical responsibilities. Thank you for making this series of reports possible!

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The Center on Education Policy receives nearly all of its funding from charitable foundations. We are grateful to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Collaborative for Student Success for their support of this project. The George Gund Foundation and the Phi Delta Kappa International Foundation also provide CEP with general support funding that assisted with this endeavor. The statements made and views expressed are solely the responsibility of the Center.

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Later this school year, states that have adopted the voluntary Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are scheduled to begin testing students' progress in learning the content of the standards in mathematics and English language arts (ELA). Many of these states belong to one of two consortia—the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)—that are developing online assessments aligned to the CCSS. Since the consortia assessments will be ready to administer in school year 2014-15, states, districts, and schools have just months to ensure that their teachers and students are fully prepared to teach and learn the content in the CCSS, and that systems are in place to facilitate the online administration of the consortia-developed assessments.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires states to measure student mastery of state academic standards and use those test results, along with other information, to make school accountability decisions. Therefore, CCSS-adopting states that administer the consortia-developed assessments will use the results on those tests for important accountability decisions in the coming year. In addition, some states may eventually use these assessments results as a factor in decisions about college course placement or granting of a high school diploma.¹

What steps have districts taken to prepare for the new assessments, and what challenges do districts face in implementing them? This report addresses these and other questions using data from a comprehensive survey of school districts conducted by the Center on Education Policy (CEP) at the George Washington University. The survey was administered in the spring of 2014 to school superintendents or their designees in a nationally representative sample of districts in states that had adopted the CCSS at the time of the survey.

The data in this report come from a subset of districts participating in the broader survey. The subset consists of districts that a) were located in CCSS-adopting states that belonged to either the Smarter Balanced or PARCC consortium at the time the survey was conducted; *and* b) reported that they intended to administer assessments developed by one of these consortia.

Another CEP report based on the same survey describes district leaders' general perceptions of the CCSS and their progress and challenges with implementation, and a third report discusses districts' implementation of professional development and curriculum aligned to the CCSS.

¹ Washington State, for example, has an agreement to use the 11th grade Smarter Balanced assessment results for decisions about placement in state higher education institutions (<http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2014.09.19.CTC.SBAC.Agreement.pdf>). New Jersey and Maryland are considering using the results of PARCC assessments as one option for meeting high school graduation requirements (<http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/14/10/01/administration-wants-to-be-clear-about-parcc-s-role-in-high-school-graduation/> and <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/education/blog/bs-md-high-school-tests-20140722-story.html>).

Key Findings

- **Impact of new assessments.** School districts in CCSS consortia member states appear to have a wait-and-see attitude about how useful the new assessments will be in improving instruction and providing information to teachers, parents, and students.
 - + Nearly half of these districts said it is “too soon to tell” whether the consortia-developed assessments will yield data to inform instruction in math (48%) or ELA (46%).
 - + A majority of districts said it is too soon to tell whether the new assessments will be an improvement over their state’s current assessments (54%), will drive instruction in positive ways (55%), or will produce results that will be understood and used by parents and students (64%).
- **Impact on other local assessments.** As a result of their state’s membership in a state testing consortium, many districts are planning to revise their own interim and formative assessments in math and ELA, although very few districts are considering eliminating these and other types of local assessments.
 - + More than half (53%) of these districts are considering revising their formative assessments in math and ELA, which teachers use to inform decisions about instruction. Only 2% of districts are thinking about eliminating these assessments.
 - + About 45% of districts are considering revising their interim assessments, which are used to determine if students are on track to perform well on future high-stakes tests. But just 6% or fewer of districts are considering eliminating interim assessments.
- **Technology challenges.** A majority of districts in consortia states foresee challenges with the technological aspects of administering the online consortia assessments.
 - + About three-fourths (76%) of districts report major or minor challenges in having enough computers with adequate processing speed and other characteristics to administer the CCSS-aligned assessments.
 - + Roughly three-fourths of districts report major or minor challenges with finding sufficient number of staff at the district (71%) or school (75%) level with the expertise to address technology-related problems that may arise during test administration.
 - + More than half (55%) of districts do not expect to have in place the technological infrastructure needed to administer these assessments until school year 2014-15 or later.
- **Plans for student remediation and support.** The vast majority of districts in consortia states are making plans to target support services for students who may need additional assistance to pass CCSS-aligned assessments, but some districts lack funding to carry out these plans.
 - + Most districts already have, or are developing, plans to target support services for students who scored below the proficient level on previous state math or ELA exams (88%) or for students who reached the proficient level but still need additional assistance to pass CCSS-aligned assessments (84%).
 - + About one-fourth of the districts that have or are formulating these plans lack adequate funding to implement them.

Background and Methodology

At the time the CEP survey was administered in the spring of 2014, the Smarter Balanced consortium included 21 member states and 2 “advisory” states; PARCC consisted of 16 states plus the District of Columbia, as well as 1 “participating” state. These two consortia received funding through the federal Race to the Top program to develop state-of-the-art assessments aligned to the CCSS. (The box below lists the current membership and provides more information about each consortium.)

Throughout this report, the percentages cited are nationally representative of school districts that a) were located in states that had adopted the CCSS and were members of the PARCC or Smarter Balanced consortium at the time the survey; *and* b) indicated in response to a question on the district survey that they intended to administer a consortium assessment. The survey responses have been weighted to reflect a nationally representative sample, and therefore the percentages of districts cited are estimates.

This report is limited to the responses from districts described above because the consortia-developed assessments are close to being ready, and information is available about their characteristics. Less is known about the assessments that will be administered by CCSS-adopting states that are not part of a consortium. The assessments in this latter group are in various stages of development and may differ considerably from each other; thus, it would be difficult to gather information about them through a common survey.

In the sections that follow, some of the apparent differences between two estimated responses in the tables and figures are not statistically significant. However, the narrative preceding each table or figure discusses differences that are statistically significant and other findings that are notable for various reasons. Some statistically significant differences are not discussed in the narrative but may be of interest to some readers. Users of this report are encouraged to consult the technical appendix accompanying this report, available at www.cep-dc.org, for more detailed information about study methods, including confidence intervals and information about which differences are statistically significant.

The Smarter Balanced and PARCC assessment consortia

In 2010, two multi-state consortia received funding from the U.S. Department of Education to develop new assessment systems aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

As of October 2014, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium included 20 governing states: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. In addition, Iowa and Pennsylvania are “advisory” states.

To achieve the goal that all students leave high school ready for college and career, Smarter Balanced “is committed to ensuring that assessment and instruction embody the CCSS and that all students, regardless of disability, language or subgroup status, have the opportunity to learn this valued content and to show what they know and can do.”

Smarter Balanced is developing a set of measures and tools to “inform instruction, guide interventions, help target professional development and ensure an accurate measure of each student’s progress toward career- and college-readiness.”

(Continued)

Smarter Balanced plans to develop an assessment system with these components:

- **Summative assessments** for accountability purposes that include computer-adaptive assessments and performance tasks, to be administered in the last 12 weeks of the school year in grades 3–8 and 11 for ELA/literacy and mathematics. These assessments are intended to provide valid, reliable and fair measures of students’ progress toward attainment of the knowledge and skills required to be college- and career-ready. They will produce composite content area scores, based on the computer adaptive items and performance tasks.
- **Optional interim assessments** that include computer adaptive assessments and performance tasks, to be administered at locally determined intervals throughout the school year. Results will be reported on the same scale as the summative assessment to provide information about how students are progressing. Teachers will be involved in developing and scoring constructed-response items and performance tasks. Teachers and administrators will have flexibility to select item sets to measure specific content clusters embedded in the CCSS; to administer these assessments at strategic points in the instructional year; to use results to better understand students’ strengths and limitations in relation to the standards; and to support state-level accountability systems using end-of-course assessments.
- A **digital library** of formative assessment tools and professional resources, such as exemplar instructional modules in ELA and math and instructional materials contributed by teachers. The library is interactive, allowing users to rate materials and to share their expertise with educators across the state or across the country.

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers

As of October 2014, PARCC included 13 active governing board members: Arkansas, Colorado, District of Columbia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, and Rhode Island. In addition, Pennsylvania is a “participating” state, “which means that it is interested in the consortium’s activities but has made no decision about using the PARCC assessments.”

These states are working together to “develop a common set of K-12 assessments in English and math anchored in what it takes to be ready for college and careers.”

The PARCC assessment system is designed to accomplish the following goals:

- Build a pathway to college and career readiness for all students
- Create high-quality assessments that measure the full range of the Common Core State Standards
- Support educators in the classroom
- Make better use of technology in assessments
- Advance accountability at all levels

The PARCC system will include four components:

- A required performance-based summative assessment, which will be administered after about three-fourths of the school year has elapsed, and will focus on writing in ELA and on solving multi-step problems in math
- An end-of-year summative assessment
- An optional diagnostic assessment to provide educators with timely feedback to inform instruction
- An optional mid-year assessment consisting of performance-based items and tasks with an emphasis on hard-to-measure standards.

District Views on the Impact of the Consortia Assessments

School districts in consortia member states appear to be reserving judgment about the impact of the new CCSS-aligned assessments on instruction and student learning. The CEP survey asked district leaders about several possible effects of the consortia assessment to be administered in their state. Many of these leaders—between 46% and 64%, depending on the impact in question—said it is “too soon to tell.” (See **table 1.**)

Since the assessments will not begin to be administered to students until school year 2014-15 (except for pilot testing), many district officials may not be familiar enough with the exams to know how they will affect instruction and student learning. Some of this uncertainty may also stem from the volatile political situation surrounding the Common Core, which has led some states to drop or suspend implementation of the CCSS or to withdraw from an assessment consortium.²

- Less than half of district leaders agreed that the consortium assessment to be administered in their state will provide data to inform instruction in ELA (45%) and math (43%). Similar percentages (46% in ELA and 48% in math) said it is too soon to tell.
- An estimated 40% of districts expected the consortia assessments to do a better job of measuring higher-order analytical and performance skills than their state’s current assessments, while 50% said it is too soon to tell.
- About one-third of district leaders believed the consortia assessments will be an improvement over their state’s current ELA (35%) and math (34%) tests, while over half (54% in either subject) said it was too soon to tell.
- About one-third of district officials (33%) agreed that the assessment will drive instruction in positive ways, but 55% said it is too soon to tell.
- About one-quarter of districts (26%) said the consortia assessments will meet the district’s needs for student achievement information, but according to 62%, it is too soon to tell.
- One-fourth or less of districts expected the consortia assessments to produce results that will be understood and used by teachers (25%) or by parents and students (20%). Nearly two-thirds believe it is too soon to tell whether the results will be understood and used by these groups.

CEP directed a similar question about the impact of consortia-developed assessments to state officials on a 2013 survey administered in CCSS-adopting states.³ On the whole, state officials surveyed last year were more certain than the 2014 district survey respondents that the consortia-developed assessments would do a better job of measuring higher order skills than the state’s previous assessment, have positive effects on instruction, and represent an improvement over the previous state assessments in ELA and math. This is not surprising because states have been involved much more directly than districts in the development of assessments aligned to the Common Core. There were only a few areas in which nearly half or half of the states responding to the survey said it was too soon tell—whether the consortia assessments would yield information for diagnostic purposes in both tested subjects and whether the results would be understood and used by parents and students.

² For a fuller discussion of the political volatility surrounding the Common Core, see the CEP report, *Common Core State Standards in 2014: Districts’ Perceptions, Progress, and Challenges*.

Table 1. District views of the impact of their state's consortium assessments

Impact of assessment	Agree	Disagree	Too soon to tell	Don't know
Yield information that will inform instruction in ELA	45%	5%	46%	4%
Yield information that will inform instruction in math	43%	5%	48%	4%
Do a better job of measuring higher-order analytical skills and performance skills than the state's current assessments	40%	5%	50%	5%
Be an improvement over the state's current assessments in ELA	35%	6%	54%	4%
Be an improvement over the state's current assessments in math	34%	7%	54%	4%
Drive instruction in positive ways	33%	8%	55%	4%
Meet the district's needs for student achievement information	26%	6%	62%	7%
Produce results that will be understood and used by teachers	25%	7%	62%	7%
Produce results that will be understood and used by parents and students	20%	8%	64%	9%

Table reads: An estimated 45% of districts in states that belonged to a CCSS assessment consortium agreed that the consortium-developed assessment to be administered in their state will yield information to inform instruction in English language arts. Another 5% disagreed with this statement, 46% said it is too soon to tell, and 4% did not know.

Note: Percentages do not always total 100% due to rounding.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this table are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this table can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

The 2014 district survey also gave district officials an opportunity to write in additional comments about the impact and usefulness of the consortia-developed assessments. A few of these comments speak to district leaders' uncertainty about the details of the new assessments or the limitations of their state's commitment to a consortium:

There are too many unknowns at this time to discern if the new assessments will improve student achievement.

You cannot make a determination of the effectiveness of an instrument that has not been developed and implemented to date.

While our state nominally is participating with both consortia, we have no plans to implement assessments from either one.

Other comments speak to particular concerns about the new assessments:

I am concerned that due to technology or lack thereof, the tests will assess technology skills of students rather than content.

As long as these exams are used for accountability purposes and concealed from teachers and parents for the sake of security, based on fear of cheating or manipulation, then they will not be helpful for assessing student progress or achievement.

³ CEP, Year 3 of implementing the Common Core State Standards: States prepare for Common Core assessments, 2013.

Technology-Related Challenges in Administering Consortia Assessments

The assessments being developed by Smarter Balanced and PARCC will be administered online, although initially students in schools that lack the necessary technology will be able to take a paper-and-pencil version.⁴ Because many state assessments are not currently administered electronically, districts may face some challenges in readying their systems for all students to take the consortia-developed tests. In light of this situation, the CEP survey asked district leaders in consortia member states about challenges they anticipate in administering assessments. **Table 2** shows their responses.

- More than three-fourths of districts in consortia states foresee potential challenges with having a sufficient number of computers with adequate processing speed and screen characteristics for administering the consortium assessments. An estimated 42% of districts saw this as a major challenge, 34% as a minor challenge, and 22% as not a challenge.
- Roughly three-quarters of districts in consortia states reported major or minor challenges with the availability of staff at the *district* (71%) or *school* (75%) level who have expertise to address technology problems that may arise during administration of the consortia assessments.
- Having adequate bandwidth and internet access in schools was seen as a challenge in a majority of districts in consortia states. An estimated 29% of districts said this was a major challenge, 38% a minor challenge, and 31% not a challenge.
- Ensuring that security measures are adequate to protect the online assessments from cheating was considered a major challenge by 14% of districts in consortia states and a minor challenge by 32%. An estimated 37% of districts in consortia states did not view this as a challenge, and 15% said it is too soon to tell.

Table 2. District technological challenges in implementing consortia-developed assessments

	Major challenge	Minor challenge	Not a challenge	Too soon to tell	Don't know
Availability in the schools of sufficient numbers of computers with adequate processing speed and screen characteristics	42%	34%	22%	2%	—
Availability in the <i>district</i> of expertise to address technology problems that may arise during test administration	30%	41%	27%	3%	—
Availability in the <i>schools</i> of expertise to address technology problems that may arise during test administration	35%	40%	20%	5%	—
Availability in the schools of adequate internet access and bandwidth	29%	38%	31%	3%	—
Adequacy of security measures to protect the online assessment from cheating	14%	32%	37%	15%	2%

Table reads: An estimated 42% of districts in states that belonged to a CCSS assessment consortium reported that they are facing major challenges in having available in their schools sufficient numbers of computers with adequate processing speed and screen characteristics for administering the consortium assessments. An estimated 34% indicate that this is a minor challenge, 22% of districts said it was not a challenge, and 2% indicated it was too soon to tell if they had enough adequately equipped computers.

Note: Percentages do not always total 100% due to rounding.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this table are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this table can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

⁴ For example, Smarter Balanced will have a three-year transition period during which paper and pencil tests can be administered (<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/resources-events/faqs/>).

In light of the percentages reporting major or minor challenges with the technology issues listed above, it is not surprising that only 32% of districts in consortia states report that they already have the necessary technological infrastructure to administer the CCSS-aligned assessments (**figure 1**). Roughly similar percentages of districts in consortia states expect to have the necessary infrastructure in the 2014-15 school year (29%) or in school year 2015-16 or later (26%).

Figure 1. When do districts in consortia states estimate they will have the technological infrastructure to administer CCSS-aligned assessments?

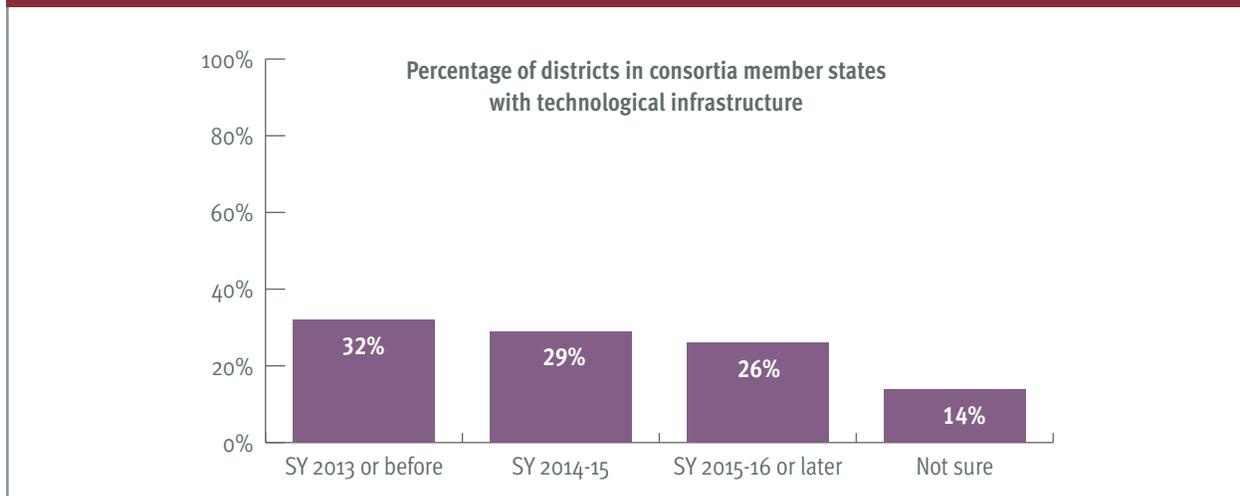


Figure reads: An estimated 32% of districts in states that belonged to a CCSS assessment consortium reported that they already have the technological infrastructure to administer the consortia assessments, while about 29% expected to have the infrastructure in school year 2014-15 and about 26% will have it in school year 2015-16 or later. An estimated 14% are not sure when they will have the technological infrastructure to administer the CCSS-aligned consortia assessments.

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this figure are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

District Plans for Extra Assistance and/or Remediation for Students

Because the CCSS are viewed as more rigorous than many states' previous standards, experts have predicted that a substantial portion of the student population may not pass the CCSS-aligned exams. Results from states that have already administered their own CCSS-aligned assessments (but not consortia assessments) support this contention to some extent. In school year 2011-12, the first year Kentucky administered its new CCSS-aligned tests, scores dipped dramatically: about one-third fewer students in that state scored at the proficient level or above than did students under the state's previous assessment. In 2012-13, the second year of administering the new Kentucky assessment, performance improved compared with the previous year for students in some grades and subjects. And in the most recent year in which Kentucky students were assessed on Common Core content, the upward trend in scores continued.⁵ In New York, another state that administered its own CCSS-aligned tests for the first time in 2012, scores plunged compared with the previous assessment. In the second year's administration of the CCSS-aligned tests in 2013, results improved somewhat in math but not in ELA.⁶

⁵ Andrew Ujifusa, Scores drop on Ky.'s common core aligned tests, *Education Week*, November 2, 2012, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/11/02/11standards.h32.html>; Andrew Ujifusa, Ky. mixed on Common-Core-aligned tests, *Education Week*, November 8, 2013, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/10/09/07kentucky.h33.html?qs=KY+common+core+test+results>; and Andrew Ujifusa, Third-year scores from Common-Core tests released by Kentucky, *Education Week*, October 3, 2014, http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/state_edwatch/2014/10/third-year_scores_from_common-core_tests_released_by_kentucky.html

⁶ Andrew Ujifusa, New York test-score plunge adds fuel to Common-Core debate, *Education Week*, August 19, 2013, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/08/21/01newyork.h33.html>; and Andrew Ujifusa, Mixed bag for N.Y. state students in second year of Common-Core tests, *Education Week*, August 14, 2014, http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/state_edwatch/2014/08/mixed_bag_for_ny_students_.html?qs=NY+common+core+test+results.

Because of concerns about student performance on CCSS-aligned tests, a majority of districts are engaging in outreach to principals and teachers, and to parents and students, to explain why student performance may be lower on CCSS-aligned assessments than on previous state math and ELA tests. Sizable shares of districts are also providing this type of outreach to community members and other stakeholders. More detail on district activities related to outreach on the CCSS can be found in a companion CEP report, *Common Core State Standards in 2014: Districts' Perceptions, Progress, and Challenges*.

In addition, states and districts are making plans to provide extra services to students who may need additional support to be adequately prepared for the CCSS-aligned assessments. The vast majority of districts in consortia states indicated that they have or are developing a plan to target support services on a) students who scored below the proficient level on previous state math or ELA exams (88% of districts); and/or b) proficient-scoring students who may need additional assistance to pass CCSS-aligned tests (84%). (See **table 3**.) Conversely, more than 10% of districts in consortia states do not have a plan to provide targeted services for these groups of students.

However, according to an analysis of survey data not shown in table 3, many districts that reported having a plan to provide these types of support services also said they lacked the resources to implement their plans. This was the case for 25% of districts with a plan to assist non-proficient students and 28% of the districts with a plan to assist proficient-scoring students who may need extra services to succeed.

Table 3. Plans of districts in consortia states to provide targeted support services to help prepare students for CCSS-aligned assessments

	Have plan	Are currently developing plan	Do not have plan	Not sure
Targeted support services for students who did not score at the proficient level on previous state math and/or ELA exams	67%	21%	11%	1%
Targeted support services for students who scored at the proficient level on previous state math and/or ELA exams but who may need extra assistance to pass the CCSS-aligned assessments	62%	22%	14%	2%

Table reads: An estimated 67% of districts in states that belonged to a CCSS assessment consortium reported that they have a plan to provide targeted support services for students who did not score at the proficient level on previous state math and/or ELA exams; another 21% said they were developing such a plan at the time of the survey. An estimated 11% of districts said they do not have such a plan, while 1% were not sure.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this table are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this table can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

Impact of CCSS-Aligned Consortia Assessments on Other District Exams

In addition to state-mandated summative assessments, which measure student learning at the end of instruction and are used for accountability purposes, districts often give other types of exams to measure students' learning and provide information to help teachers adjust their instruction. The following are among the most common types:

- **Formative assessments**, which are low-stakes tests that teachers administer at the beginning of instruction and at other points to obtain information that can be used to diagnose students' needs and modify instruction accordingly.

- **Interim assessments**, which are given periodically during the year to evaluate students’ progress in learning and see whether they are on track to perform well on a future high-stakes exam.
- **District-developed end-of-course (EOC) exams**, which secondary school students take when they have completed a course, such as geometry. (Although many states, and even schools, also administer EOC exams, the CEP survey asked only about EOC exams that are developed and administered by districts.)
- **Career and technical assessments** of students’ career readiness and other skills.

The CEP survey asked districts in consortia states whether they intend to revise or eliminate these types of exams as a result of their state’s membership in a CCSS assessment consortium. Their responses, shown in **table 4**, suggest that although many districts are considering revising these other assessments, relatively small percentages of districts plan to eliminate them altogether.

- More than half (53%) of districts in consortia states are considering revisions to their *formative assessments* in math and ELA, but only 2% are thinking about eliminating these exams. About one-fourth of districts in these states are not considering changes to these formative assessments, and 17-18% are not sure.
- An estimated 45% of districts are considering revising their *interim assessments* in math and ELA, while 5% are thinking about eliminating them. About one-fourth are not considering changes to these interim exams, and 17-18% are not sure.
- About one-third of districts in consortia states are considering revising *their own EOC exams* in math or ELA, while less than 10% plan to eliminate these exams, and about one-fifth are not considering changes. Notable percentages of districts in consortia states do not administer EOC exams in math (16%) or in ELA (19%).

Table 4. District plans for changes in other assessments as a result of their state’s membership in a CCSS assessment consortiums

	District is considering revising these assessments	District is considering eliminating these assessments	District is <i>not</i> considering changing these assessments	District does not use these assessments	Not sure	Other
Formative assessments of student knowledge in math	53%	2%	23%	2%	18%	1%
Formative assessments of student knowledge in ELA	53%	2%	25%	2%	17%	1%
Interim assessments of student knowledge in math	45%	5%	26%	5%	18%	2%
Interim assessments of student knowledge in ELA	45%	5%	25%	6%	17%	2%
District-based end-of course exams in math	36%	6%	21%	16%	20%	1%
District-based end-of-course exams in ELA	34%	7%	21%	19%	19%	1%
Career/technical education assessments	22%	1%	23%	27%	26%	1%

Table reads: An estimated 53% of districts in states that belonged to a CCSS assessment consortium reported that they are considering revising their formative assessments in math as a result of their state’s membership in the consortium. An estimated 2% said they intend to eliminate these assessments, and 23% are not considering any changes to these assessments. The remaining districts did not use these types of assessments (2%), were not sure of their plans for revising or eliminating their formative assessments in math (18%), or provided another response (1%).

Note: Percentages do not always total 100% due to rounding.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this figure are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

- An estimated 22% of districts in consortia states are considering revising their *career and technical education assessments*, while only 1% are considering eliminating them due to CCSS-aligned exams. About 23% are not considering any changes to their career and technical exams, and 27% are not sure. Finally, more than one-fourth (27%) of districts report that they do not administer these types of exams.

Some district leaders provided additional comments about the issue of revising local assessments in an open-ended portion of this survey question:

Teachers are routinely developing formative assessments to be able to make better instructional decisions for their students and classrooms in our district. We continue to work on common formative assessments in areas like math and ELA.

While we'll make revisions and changes to all of these assessments because of CCSS, none of these revisions will be driven by consortium participation.

District Participation in SEA Meetings on New CCSS-Aligned Assessments

More than two-thirds of districts in consortia states reported that district staff had participated in SEA-convened meetings to discuss differences between the CCSS-aligned assessments and the prior state math and ELA assessments (**figure 2**). Among districts with staff participating in these meetings, 28% reported that the meetings were very helpful, 63% found them somewhat helpful, and 9% did not find them helpful.

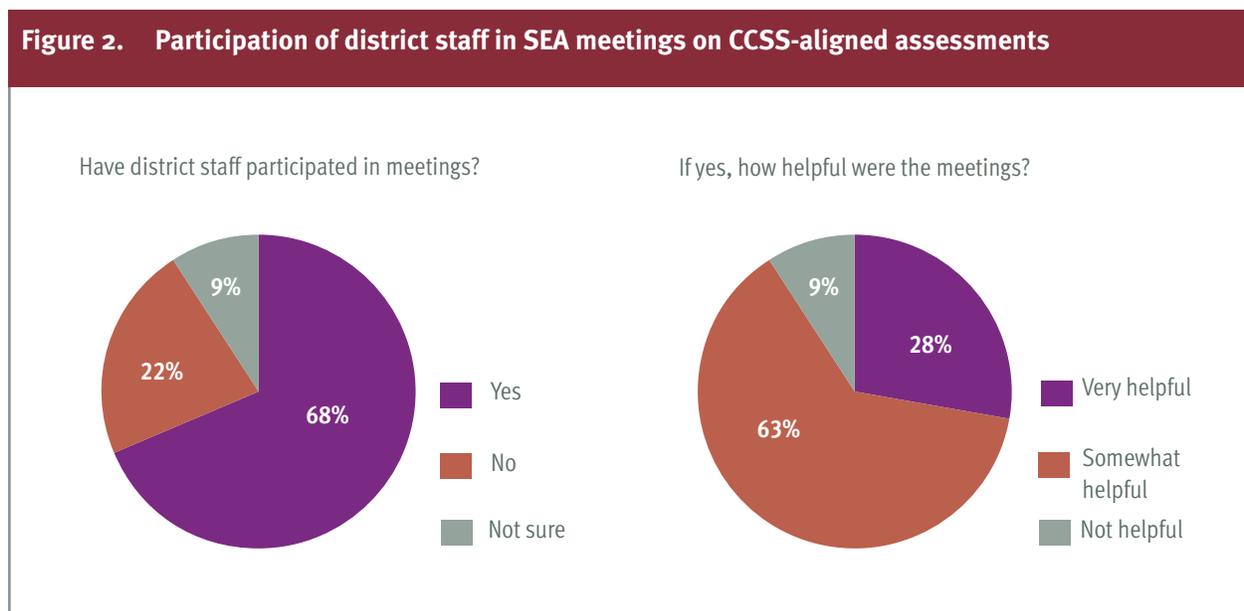


Figure reads: An estimated 68% of districts in states that belonged to a CCSS assessment consortium reported that their staff had participated in SEA-convened meetings to discuss the differences between the CCSS-aligned assessments and the prior state math and ELA assessments. An estimated 22% reported that their staff had not participated in such meetings, and 9% were not sure. Among districts in which staff participated, an estimated 28% reported that the meetings were very helpful, 63% responded they were somewhat helpful, and 9% indicated that the meetings were not helpful.

Note: Percentages do not always total 100% due to rounding.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this figure are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

A large majority (70%) of districts in consortia states indicated that their staff had participated in SEA meetings to discuss the technological capacity needed to administer the new CCSS assessments (**figure 3**). One-third of the districts with participating staff viewed these meetings as very helpful, while 58% considered them somewhat helpful, and 10% thought they were not helpful.

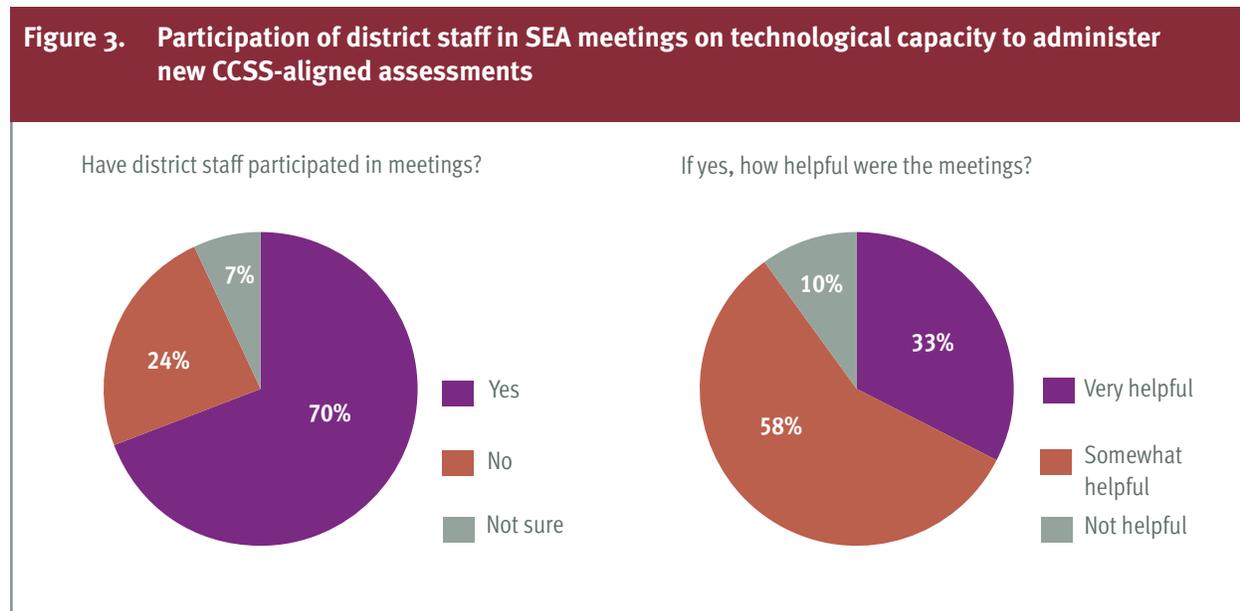


Figure reads: An estimated 70% of districts in states that belonged to a CCSS assessment consortium reported that their staff had participated in SEA-convened meetings to discuss the technological capacity needed to administer the new CCSS-aligned assessments. An estimated 24% of districts in these states said their staff had not participated in such meetings, and 7% were not sure. Among those districts with staff participating, an estimated 33% reported that the meetings were very helpful, 58% responded that they were somewhat helpful, and 10% indicated that they were not helpful.

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this figure are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

Assessment-Related Implementation Challenges

Nearly all districts in consortia states foresee potential major or minor challenges in implementing CCSS-aligned assessments (92%) or identifying resources to acquire the necessary technological infrastructure for the assessments (87%). **Figure 4** shows the specific percentages for each category of challenge.

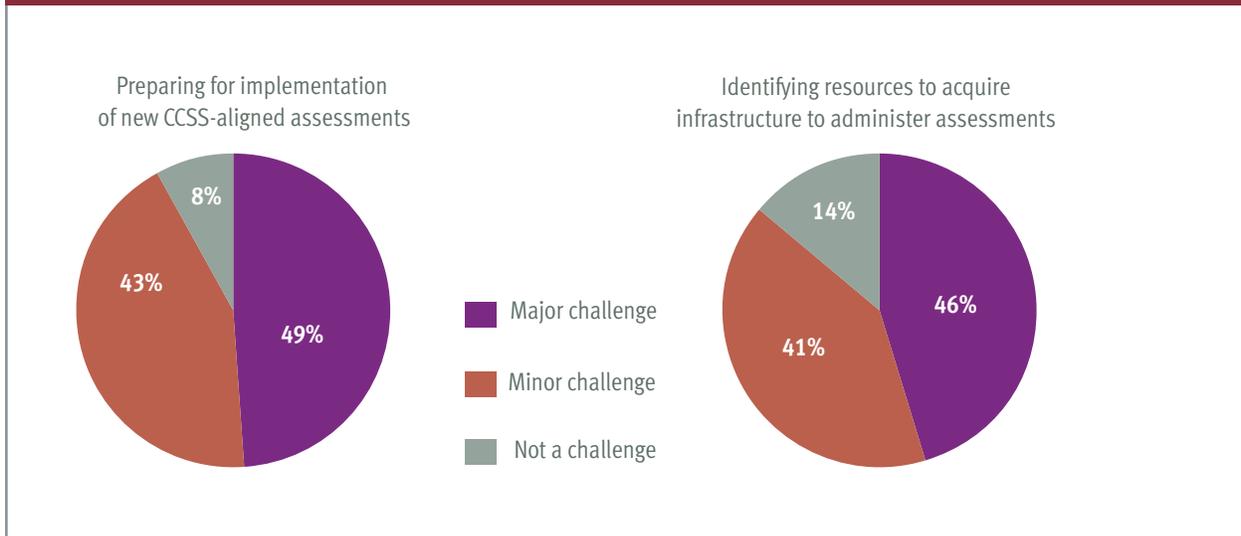
Figure 4. Assessment-related implementation challenges

Figure reads: An estimated 49% of districts in states that belonged to a CCSS assessment consortium viewed the implementation of new CCSS-aligned assessments as a major challenge, while 43% considered it a minor challenge, and 8% did not consider it a challenge.

Note: Percentages do not always total 100% due to rounding.

Note: Not all estimated responses shown in this figure are statistically different. Confidence intervals for the estimates in this figure can be found in the technical appendix for this report, available at www.cep-dc.org.

Conclusion

The 2014-15 school year will be an eventful one for school districts implementing the CCSS and the consortia assessments. While district leaders agree that the CCSS are more rigorous than their previous standards and will lead to improved student skills (see the first CEP report in this series, *Common Core State Standards in 2014: Districts' Perceptions, Progress, and Challenges*), they appear to be withholding judgment on the consortia assessments. Faced with new technological requirements and the potential for a public backlash in the face of lower pass rates, district leaders will need both time and support to maintain momentum as they implement more rigorous math and ELA standards and aligned assessments.

Considering how little time and experience district leaders had with new assessments at the time of our survey, this hesitation and reservation of judgment is not surprising. Although some district leaders agree that the assessment results will inform instruction and do a better job of measuring higher-order skills than their state's previous assessment, equal or greater proportions expressed uncertainty and about these and other potential impacts of the assessments on teaching and learning. While the newness of the assessments may not be the only reason district leaders appear to be in a "wait and see" mode about how they will be used, it is fair to assume we may see a change in attitude among district leaders as they become more familiar with the consortia-developed assessments. Information about larger decisions regarding the assessments, such as whether or not they will be used as an indicator of college and career readiness, will likely evolve over time as well.

District leaders also foresee a number of important technology challenges related to the assessments, with roughly 70% of districts expressing concerns about hardware, staffing, and technical expertise. Although the consortia-developed assessments may initially be administered as paper-and-pencil tests, districts will still need to address

their unique technological challenges. Since the computer-administered tests represent a new era in test-taking for many districts, these challenges left unresolved, could affect support for and trust in the assessments.

At this point districts also seem committed to revising or keeping their current local interim and formative assessments. As a result of their state's pending administration of the consortia assessments, about 45% of districts are considering revising their interim assessments, but just 6% or fewer are considering eliminating them—presumably to use the interim assessments being developed by the consortia. This gap between plans to “revise” current assessments rather than “eliminate” them could indicate a hesitation among district leaders about how well the consortia-developed tests will suit their local needs.

Districts appear to be taking seriously the possibility that some students may need additional assistance in order to pass the CCSS-aligned assessments. In light of the prospect of lower passing rates on consortia assessments, which are aligned to more rigorous standards, concerns about how the public will react are likely looming large for district leaders. The vast majority of districts report making plans to target students who were below or at the proficiency level on previous state math and ELA exams, but resources may be an issue for districts wanting to provide extra support for struggling students. A notable proportion of districts said they do not have the funding at this point to actually implement their plans.

Districts will also require technical assistance from their SEA and other sources as they work to implement the new assessments. A majority of districts report that their staff have participated in SEA-convened meetings to discuss the differences in the new assessments and how to manage the technological requirements of the tests. A majority of districts view these meetings as at least somewhat helpful.

The implementation of consortia-developed assessments for the CCSS will continue to be a work in progress beyond this eventful school year. How district leaders view and use the assessments will likely change over time as they become more familiar with the benefits and challenges of these new tests. As with the standards, district leaders will need time and support to maintain momentum as they process their experiences from this first year and make plans for the next school year.



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