

# 2. REVIEW SYSTEM CAPACITY

Part of **IMPLEMENTING  
Common Core**  
State Standards and Assessments

A Workbook for State and District Leaders

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## 2. Review System Capacity

The first step for any new implementation effort is to review the system's **current** capacity to deliver its aspiration. Implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will require a clear understanding of the people and organizations that play a part in implementation — as well as an assessment of the extent to which they are already undertaking the essential elements of this work.

The diagnostic tool in this chapter will help you assess your capacity to implement the CCSS. Based on this workbook's organizing framework, the rubric considers the extent and quality of your current implementation plan. It lists the relevant questions and lays out guideposts for what “weak” and “strong” performance look like, ranging from a rating of 1 (weakest) to 4 (strongest). Finally, the rubric defines potential evidence to consider as you rate your own system's capacity.

Complete this assessment with your leadership team before reading further. The pattern that emerges can then guide your use of this workbook — in areas where you rate your planning effort as weaker, you can refer to the relevant section of the workbook, denoted by the page number in the far right column.

### Diagnostic Tool

	Critical question or action	Weak (1)	Strong (4)	Types of evidence to consider	For more, see page ...
Chapters 3 and 4. Organize To Implement	Aspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No aspiration defined for why the CCSS are important</li> <li>Aspiration not widely shared</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has defined an aspiration for how the CCSS will change classroom practice</li> <li>Department has secured wide buy-in for aspiration inside and outside the department</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If asked, how many people inside the department can name the aspiration?</li> <li>What about key players outside the department?</li> </ul>	3.3
	Internal leadership team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ownership of CCSS implementation is haphazard or unclear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has specified a clear point of accountability or defined multiple points of accountability with clearly delineated responsibility for implementing the CCSS, both inside the department and with external stakeholders (e.g., higher education)</li> <li>Those in charge have the leverage and/or relationships they need to coordinate the effort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many people in the department can name the key people responsible for the CCSS effort and their specific responsibilities?</li> <li>What about key players outside the department?</li> </ul>	3.5
	Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timeline is vague or undefined</li> <li>Only real milestone is the rollout of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment in 2014</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has articulated an ambitious but realistic timeline of implementation that will credibly prepare the system for rollout of the PARCC assessments</li> <li>Timeline defines key areas of work and milestones for each, which should enable tracking of implementation on a monthly or quarterly basis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the timeline exist?</li> <li>To what extent do those responsible for implementation use it as the guiding reference document for their deadlines?</li> </ul>	3.9

	Critical question or action	Weak (1)	Strong (4)	Types of evidence to consider	For more, see page ...
Chapters 3 and 4. Organize To Implement	Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A cost estimate may have occurred, but little or no thinking has been done about how various state and federal funds will be used to provide sufficient resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has identified most or all relevant state and federal funds that can be used to fund CCSS implementation</li> <li>Department has built a comprehensive budget for CCSS implementation that allocates all costs to relevant funding sources and takes into account the restrictions on each</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does a budget with allocation of federal and state funding sources exist?</li> <li>How confident are we in its accuracy?</li> </ul>	3.17
	Gap analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little effort has been made to compare the system's current content standards to the CCSS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has performed a detailed gap analysis that shows where new state standards will be added and where existing state standards must be augmented, moved or dropped</li> <li>Department has used this analysis to identify high-priority subject areas and/or grade spans according to the size of the gaps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the gap analysis been performed?</li> <li>Do those responsible for implementation have a clear idea of the highest priority subject areas and grade spans?</li> </ul>	3.24
	Guiding coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no deliberately identified group of external stakeholders who can drive change at all levels, or such a group is limited in its scope</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 7–10 change leaders from key backgrounds share a consistent understanding and are supportive of the aspiration and strategy for CCSS implementation</li> <li>Department consistently consults and works with this group to guide implementation and communicate to the field</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can the leadership team name the members of the guiding coalition?</li> <li>How frequent are the leadership team's interactions with the coalition?</li> </ul>	4.3
	Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communications efforts regarding the CCSS are sparse, uncoordinated and one way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has a clear communications plan for CCSS implementation that details the message and objective, audiences, modes of communication, frequency or timing of communication, and messengers</li> <li>The communications plan includes five-year strategies for ongoing communications with all audiences to maintain support</li> <li>Audiences understand both what will be accomplished and how</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent do teachers, principals and superintendents in the field understand how their work environments are going to change as a result of the CCSS?</li> <li>To what extent do core external players understand their responsibilities to make this happen?</li> </ul>	4.6

	Critical question or action	Weak (1)	Strong (4)	Types of evidence to consider	For more, see page ...
Chapter 5. Implementation Action i: Align Instructional Materials to the CCSS	Strategies to achieve success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No specific activities have been identified for alignment of instructional materials, or activities are uncoordinated and siloed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department and external stakeholders have identified and laid out a balanced and coordinated set of activities that will credibly align instructional materials with the CCSS</li> <li>Activities are benchmarked against best practices both within and outside the state</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Among those responsible for instructional materials, how many could name the core priority activities?</li> <li>How confident are we that these activities are the ones with the highest potential for impact?</li> </ul>	5.3
	Understanding how the strategies will be implemented through the field to the classroom (i.e., delivery chain)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has not yet articulated how the reform strategy will reach the field — that is, how materials will actually reach and influence teachers and their behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For all relevant activities, department has explicitly laid out the “delivery chain” that runs from the state through regions and local education agencies to schools and classrooms</li> <li>Delivery chain consists of strong relationships that create a credible path for aligned materials to reach the field, or department has identified weaknesses in the chain and has a plan for addressing them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can we explain, in one minute or less, exactly how new instructional materials will be developed or identified and delivered to every classroom in the state?</li> </ul>	5.8
	Connecting strategies to expected outcomes (i.e., targets and trajectories)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metrics and targets for success have not been identified or are not meaningfully connected to the overall aspiration</li> <li>No clear path is drawn between the planned activities and the achievement of any targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has identified a range of metrics — from outcome measures to implementation milestones — that define “success” in aligning instructional materials to the CCSS</li> <li>Department has set annual targets for each metric through 2014</li> <li>The targets and metrics provide feedback on whether the aspiration is being achieved on time and whether the right steps are being taken to achieve it</li> <li>Activities are sequenced to show how achieving implementation milestones will help department hit the outcome targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can we articulate how we will know whether we are successful with our instructional materials strategy?</li> <li>Has an analysis been done to show how completing this strategy successfully will result in improved outcomes for students? How credible is it?</li> </ul>	5.12

	Critical question or action	Weak (1)	Strong (4)	Types of evidence to consider	For more, see page ...
Chapter 6. Implementation Action II: Train Educators on the CCSS and Related Assessments	Strategies to achieve success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No specific activities have been identified for training educators, or activities are uncoordinated and siloed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department and external stakeholders have identified and laid out a balanced and coordinated set of activities that will credibly train educators to use the CCSS</li> <li>Activities are benchmarked against best practices both within and outside the state</li> <li>A sustainability strategy is in place to support long-term implementation of aligned professional development (e.g., creating systems for training trainers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Among those responsible for professional development, how many could name the core priority activities?</li> <li>How confident are we that these activities are the ones with the highest potential for impact?</li> </ul>	6.4
	Understanding how the strategies will be implemented through the field to the classroom (i.e., delivery chain)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has not yet articulated how the reform strategy will reach the field — that is, how professional development for educators will be identified, adapted and deployed to have an impact on educator behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For all relevant activities, department has explicitly laid out the delivery chain that runs from the state through regions and local education agencies to schools and classrooms</li> <li>Delivery chain consists of strong relationships that create a credible path for professional development to reach the field, or department has identified weaknesses in the chain and has a plan for addressing them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can we explain, in one minute or less, exactly how new professional development will be identified, adapted and delivered to every educator in the state?</li> </ul>	6.8
	Connecting strategies to expected outcomes (i.e., targets and trajectories)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metrics and targets for success have not been identified or are not meaningfully connected to the overall aspiration</li> <li>No clear path is drawn between the planned activities and the achievement of any targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department has identified a range of metrics — from outcome measures to implementation milestones — that define “success” in training educators on the CCSS</li> <li>Department has set annual targets for each metric through 2014</li> <li>The targets and metrics provide feedback on whether the aspiration is being achieved on time and whether the right steps are being taken to achieve it</li> <li>Activities are sequenced to show how achieving implementation milestones will help department hit the outcome targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can we articulate how we will know whether we are successful with our professional development strategy?</li> <li>Has an analysis been done to show how completing this strategy successfully will result in improved outcomes for students? How credible is it?</li> </ul>	6.13

	Critical question or action	Weak (1)	Strong (4)	Types of evidence to consider	For more, see page ...
Chapter 11. Put It All Together: Establish Routines To Monitor Performance and Solve Problems	Monitoring data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance dialogues make little reference to data</li> <li>Data may occasionally be brought up but not in a systematic and consistent way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance dialogues center on the range of metrics that department has used to set its priority targets</li> <li>More frequent data (leading indicators, intermediate metrics, process milestones) are discussed when outcome data are unavailable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How frequently are performance data discussed by the system leader and those who are accountable?</li> </ul>	11.3
	Sharing progress with the system leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance dialogues are haphazard and often take place only in the context of addressing immediate and urgent issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance dialogues are true routines: They are scheduled regularly and given consistent priority by the system leader and key senior managers</li> <li>Routines balance frequency and depth to give the system leader a comprehensive view of all priorities regularly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How regular and/or consistent are performance dialogues:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From the point of view of the chief?</li> <li>From the point of view of those accountable?</li> </ul> </li> <li>In the course of a given month, are these routines giving the system leader the right performance information at the right level of depth to drive decisionmaking?</li> </ul>	11.3
	Regularly solving problems to get implementation back on track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problem-solving may occur but only on an ad hoc basis to “fight fires”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Routines surface problems that may require additional attention</li> <li>As problems arise, the system categorizes and allocates resources to them according to severity and urgency</li> <li>Department staff exhibit a culture of problem-solving in addressing both large and small issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When an issue arises at the leadership level, how is it handled? Is there a standard operating procedure that effectively gets the issue resolved with minimal disruption?</li> <li>If we had to guess, what percentage of issues are resolved at the leadership level vs. lower down?</li> </ul>	11.8

**EXERCISE: DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT**

**Purpose:** Use this template to assess your capacity to implement the CCSS.

Chapter	Critical question or action	Rating (1–4)	Evidence
Chapters 3 and 4. Organize To Implement	Aspiration		
	Internal leadership team		
	Timeline		
	Budget		
	Gap analysis		
	Guiding coalition		
	Communications		
Chapter 5. Implementation Action I: Align Instructional Materials to the CCSS	Strategies to achieve success		
	Delivery chain		
	Targets and trajectory		
Chapter 6. Implementation Action II: Train Educators on the CCSS and Related Assessments	Strategies to achieve success		
	Delivery chain		
	Targets and trajectory		
Chapter 11. Put It All Together: Establish Routines To Monitor Performance and Solve Problems	Monitoring data		
	Sharing progress with the system leader		
	Regularly solving problems		

## NOTES