Common Core State Standards & the Transformation of Professional Development

Summer 2014
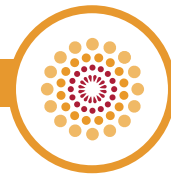
THIS BRIEF IS PART OF A SERIES:

1 THE NEW ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

2 THREE VIGNETTES THAT SHOWCASE THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING THAT HELPS TEACHERS SUCCEED

3 WHAT POLICYMAKERS CAN DO TO ADVANCE HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT SCALE

WHAT POLICYMAKERS CAN DO TO ADVANCE HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT SCALE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT THIS SERIES

With its emphasis on content aligned to the actual expectations of colleges and employers, the Common Core State Standards can provide a foundational strategy for boosting student success. But success with the standards also requires that school, district and state leaders redesign and invest in the sort of professional development that meets a much higher bar for quality and impact – and that truly helps teachers be more effective.

The standards were produced in response to American schools' stagnant achievement levels relative to the rest of the world and are benchmarked against standards in other top performing countries. They were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators and experts to provide a clear and consistent framework so that students exiting the K–12 system would not need remediation before beginning college-level classes or going into the workforce.

Education First set out to better understand the professional development that educators need to help students meet these standards, and how to deliver it at scale and at depth. Our goal is to more clearly define and illustrate the specific supports and learning opportunities educators need and to translate conclusions into a series of policy changes that state and local leaders should consider.

This three-part series offers up research, observations and recommendations about the sort of professional learning educators need to help students achieve the new standards. To inform the findings in this series, we dug deeper into the question of what works and what is needed. In sharing what we learned and concluded, we have relied on the voices of those we interviewed to describe what they are experiencing on the front lines.

We looked at the existing research on high-quality professional development (see Brief #1, Essential Elements of Common Core-Aligned Professional Development for our findings). We complemented this review with a series of interviews, gathering ideas and experiences from a diverse mix of educators, service providers and adult education experts around the country (see Appendix A for a list of interviewees and our methodology). We focused our examination on three different approaches to professional development delivery to see how districts in different circumstances and with different resources take steps toward ensuring high-quality professional learning for their educators. Finally, we benefited from the counsel and critical feedback of educators, researchers and other experts (listed in Appendix A), who read draft versions of this series and helped us to refine our conclusions and recommendations.

The series consists of the following briefs:

SUMMARY — **An executive summary of the entire series concisely outlines our findings and recommendations.**

BRIEF 1 — **In Brief #1, we describe what we learned about professional development innovations and — most important — what we think are the new, non-negotiable learning opportunities all teachers consistently need to help them succeed with the new demands of the Common Core.**

BRIEF 2 — **In Brief #2, we offer vignettes about districts that are doing this work successfully, fleshing out examples that might generate useful ideas for other districts and states.**

BRIEF 3 — **In this brief (Brief #3), we offer specific recommendations to state and district leaders in five significant areas that we believe exemplify what's needed to achieve high-quality professional learning at scale. These recommendations can help create professional learning systems that are replicable, affordable and effective.**

As debates over the Common Core have sharpened over the past few months, we've found many of the arguments for turning back to be ill informed or disingenuous. We've listened carefully to the voices of teachers, who have told us they have not consistently received the support, coaching or tools they need to be confident in teaching students to meet the new, higher expectations. But we also have seen many inspiring examples of schools and districts working hand-in-hand with educators to provide deliberate and deep learning opportunities.

Looking to the 2014–15 school year and beyond we hope this series comes at an opportune time for policymakers and school district leaders to roll up their sleeves, to recommit to the standards and their promise for both student learning and the teaching profession, but also to make the tough choices to provide the regular, intentional and thoughtful structures that are needed for all teachers as they work to put the Common Core standards into action in their classrooms.

INTRODUCTION

The Common Core presents an unprecedented opportunity to rethink and improve professional development for educators and leaders. The standards create urgency and pressure to ensure that teachers have access to high-quality professional learning they need — and want — to succeed.

The standards' clear focus on content and the instructional shifts that support delivery of that content require a long-term commitment to intensive professional learning for all educators. And, while so much of the hand-wringing over the Common Core has been about higher expectations for students and whether schools are ready, what's been overlooked is how the new standards can nudge the teaching profession in a positive direction: More coordination and collaboration, more focus on effective teaching practices that challenge students to think critically, more reflection on what works and what doesn't, more peer accountability.

But where should states and districts start? The list of necessary actions is obvious at some level, but these actions aren't being taken — much less discussed — in many places. That's because developing strong professional learning systems requires strong leadership and better choices. Policymakers from state departments of education, legislators, school board members, district leaders and school leaders have the power to ensure that all teachers and principals get the support and push they need to help students achieve the new standards.

The vignettes we describe in Brief #2 in this series and evidence from many other places where leaders have stepped up tell us that better choices are possible. Our conversations with teachers tell us that better choices are possible. And countless examples and great advice abound for those making these tough choices.

In our research, we learned of ways that leaders are working to intensify and extend professional learning opportunities to reach all teachers and administrators. The following actions can be taken individually or collectively and depend upon local context, but they exemplify the types of actions that are needed to achieve high-quality, Common Core-aligned professional learning at scale:

→ Clarify where your dollars are going and prioritize how they can be used most effectively.

→ Find — or create — the time needed for high-quality professional development.

→ Look for proof that professional development materials and programs are high-quality and effective.

→ Shift leadership priorities to emphasize schoolwide instructional change and ongoing professional development.

→ Ensure that all teachers and administrators receive sustained, high-quality professional development.

While so much of the hand-wringing over the Common Core has been about higher expectations for students and whether schools are ready, what's been overlooked is how the new standards can nudge the teaching profession in a positive direction: More coordination and collaboration, more focus on effective teaching practices that challenge students to think critically, more reflection on what works and what doesn't, more peer accountability.

1 CLARIFY WHERE YOUR DOLLARS ARE GOING AND PRIORITIZE HOW THEY CAN BE USED MOST EFFECTIVELY

The Common Core has increased the demand and need for professional development exponentially over the last three years. States and districts have struggled to find resources to pay for the kinds of professional learning experiences that will support the deep changes in teacher practice described throughout these briefs. Given the tight budgets in most states and districts, finding resources and funding for ongoing support of teachers' learning — including for example providing on-site coaching, freeing teachers to collaborate and paying for new and better teaching materials — requires tough choices among competing priorities. Creativity, innovation and a clear set of standards and outcomes are necessary.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DOLLARS ARE NOT ALWAYS USED EFFECTIVELY

Allan Odden, a widely consulted expert on professional development spending, has estimated that "most urban districts are spending a lot more than they realize on in-service days and training, from $6,000–$8,000 a year per teacher."[i] Overall professional development spending (including federal, state and local sources) is estimated at $12.7 billion annually. The majority of these funds ($5.7 billion) goes toward internal activities provided by states, districts and schools, though a significant portion ($2.9 billion) also goes to third-party providers, including for-profit and nonprofit organizations.[ii] The question is not whether the school or district has money to work with, but how exactly it is being used to support professional learning.

Decision-making and approval processes for hiring or providing professional development vary across states and do not always support the professional learning and curriculum focus of a particular school or district. Constrained by inflexible bureaucratic regulations and a lack of data about the efficacy of different programs, state and district leaders often distribute professional development money in ways that do not support learning goals. And while some schools are given the flexibility to decide how to spend their own professional development funds, explicit oversight of smart spending is an important step toward ensuring quality, alignment and efficiency.

SOME DISTRICTS AND STATES ARE MAKING HEADWAY IN REALLOCATING FUNDS

Recent research indicates that some state and district leaders are making efforts to reallocate existing professional development funds to focus on their key goals and priorities and maximize return on investments.[iii] A recent study by the Brookings Institute shares the good news that about $2.3 billion of this year's Title II funds will go toward professional development aimed at equipping teachers with the instructional capacity needed to implement the Common Core.[iv]

The three approaches by three school districts that we describe in Brief #2 also address the issue of funding high-quality, Common Core-aligned professional development. For example, as the CORE districts in California began working together, they discovered they were using the same vendors but being charged different prices. By banding together into a network, the CORE districts were able to achieve economies of scale and reduce cost and redundancy.

A leader from one of the school districts we profiled in New York, Monticello Central, reported her search for funds started with existing expenditures: "We had to stop doing programs that weren't giving us a return on investment. That's the first place I found funds." She also found that stipends for math and English language arts grade-level leaders could be funded through Title I.

In Greece Central School District, also profiled in our vignettes, leaders leveraged the state's strong professional development program by sending a large team to the statewide Network Team Institute trainings and taking advantage of free curricular and instructional resources to create trainings in the district. Leaders also scaffolded resources to pay for various initiatives to which the district had committed: "We said we were going to phase things in, in two years," one leader explained. "We're not eliminating anything, but shifting how much time we spend on each initiative outside of the school. For the Common Core, the first year we spent a considerable amount of time training principals on the standards and the Expeditionary Learning modules and making sure they knew what to look for in the classroom. This year we don't have to do that."

District leaders also indicated that they used "soft" money (government or private grants to support specific priorities, such as school improvement grants) to offer supplemental professional development from external service providers operating on a fee-for-service model.

MORE EFFECTIVE SPENDING: RESOURCES FOR POLICYMAKERS

Learning Forward has been working with a network of states to address the policies and practices that will support high-quality professional development. Its initiative, _Transforming Professional Learning to Prepare College- and Career-Ready Students: Implementing the Common,_ provides resources and tools to assist states, districts, and schools in providing effective professional learning for current and future education reforms, including implementing Common Core standards.[v]

Education Resource Strategies (ERS) has produced useful tools to help states and districts assess current spending on professional learning and make effective investments in such learning. In particular, ERS' paper _A New Vision for Teacher Professional Growth and Support_, explores ways to organize and invest in professional development that can strengthen teacher capacity and effectiveness. ERS has also developed tools such as a professional growth and support system self-assessment, a professional growth and support spending calculator, and a set of case studies that profile highly successful approaches to investing in high quality professional development.[vi]

WHAT STATE AND DISTRICT LEADERS SHOULD DO

Given the increased need for a very targeted type of professional development, now is the time for state and district leaders to make smart choices about how to direct limited funds to support teachers in implementing the standards—and there are lots of resources to support smarter decision-making (see sidebar). We recommend these **state actions** to support funding for high-quality, Common Core-aligned professional development:

→ Focus existing resources on professional learning that supports Common Core standards and new assessments.

→ Provide guidance to districts and schools on how to review and make smart investments in resources and services from third-party professional development providers.

→ Use federal grant money tied to initiatives such as Reading First, IDEA and Titles I and II to bolster the sort of professional development that's needed to support teachers and the Common Core (as described in these briefs).[vii]

→ Develop online training programs to support (but not completely replace) in-person training.[viii]

→ Take advantage of high-quality open-source tools and resources, including those developed by other states and districts and not just your own.[1]

→ Examine federal and state policies and regulations and clarify where resources can be redistributed to districts and schools with most significant student learning needs.

We recommend these **district and school actions** to support funding for high-quality, Common Core-aligned professional development:

→ Require both internal and external professional development providers to show evidence of how their programs or offerings support implementation of the Common Core and include elements of high-quality professional learning.

→ Use differentiated staffing — including teacher leaders, hybrid teaching roles, instructional coaches, principals and mentors — to facilitate individual, team and schoolwide professional learning.

→ Collaborate with community partners who could provide financial or other support for teacher collaborative planning, study and problem solving.

→ Develop partnerships with national or local organizations and professional associations to expand funding possibilities and draw in expert resources to provide support and innovation.[ix]

→ Work with the local teachers association to prioritize expenditures on implementing the Common Core and new assessments in contract language.

2 — FIND — OR CREATE — THE TIME NEEDED FOR HIGH-QUALITY, COMMON CORE-ALIGNED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Many districts direct some professional development resources to underwrite coaches who can work one-on-one with teachers. But the real cost of high-quality professional development comes from making time in the school day for teachers to study, improve their lessons plans and get feedback and support from peers. Interviews and research indicate that giving teachers time to understand the standards and practice new teaching approaches is crucial.

SOME DISTRICTS ARE PRIORITIZING AND MAKING NEW TIME FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Altering the school day or teaching schedule can have implications for busing, union contracts, facilities maintenance, state regulations and budgets. It can also require careful communication with parents and other external stakeholders. Nonetheless, adjusting existing resources is a smart way to find time for regular adult learning.

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[1] EdSurge has produced a very useful resource that maps available tools on the market used for professional development and classifies them according to a cycle of learning framework. The tool can be found at: https://www.edsurge.com/guide/how-teachers-are-learning-professional-development-remix.

Districts in our three vignettes in [Brief #2](#) were able to leverage some outside funding to support collaborative planning during the school day. Washoe County, the creative implementer with no new dollars to spend, strategically repurposed professional development time that had been allocated. Most of the districts in our examples already had instructional coaches in place but refocused the coaching to support specific Common Core content.

To further address the issue of providing high-quality support to teachers that can help them succeed with the new standards within a resource-tight system, in 2013 the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation challenged districts to reimagine professional development. Its [Innovative Professional Development (iPD)](#) Challenge has engaged 14 districts and charter management organizations around the country in developing and redesigning their professional development systems to boost teacher engagement, provide on-demand access to high-quality content, develop leadership capacity and optimize resources for professional learning.[x] As this work continues, several promising models are emerging that provide more time for teachers to study and learn.

For example, Bridgeport Public Schools in Connecticut redesigned the schedule in three traditional high schools to better serve students and embed professional learning time into the school day. Teachers are organized into interdisciplinary teams who teach together with flexible schedules during four regular school days. On the fifth school day, expert teachers from the school substitute for the team, who spend a full day on collaborative lesson study and development of personalized learning for students. This configuration adds 170 hours of professional development time per year (without reducing the amount of instruction students receive), more than double the amount of time teachers had before the redesign.

Bridgeport's strategy and many others around the country shows that districts can make more time for collaborative professional learning within existing budgets and school days.

EXPANDED LEARNING TIME OFFERS ADDITIONAL POSSIBILITIES FOR FREEING UP TIME FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION

A recent report by the National Center on Time and Learning and the Center for American Progress encourages policymakers to promote expanded learning time while implementing the Common Core. [xi] It identifies several policies that both support school redesign and empower schools to lengthen and redesign the school day and year — for example, policies that give principals flexibility to set their own schedules as well as providing additional funding through revisions in state funding formulas or access to federal or other grants (such as school improvement grants, ESEA flexibility waivers and 21st century community learning center grants) that require increased learning time.

WHAT STATE AND DISTRICT LEADERS SHOULD DO

We recommend these **state actions** to support expanded time for high-quality, Common Core-aligned professional development:

→ Support and encourage local policies that allow principals flexibility in setting their own school schedules.

→ Encourage school-level innovations by funding district- and school-based proposals for expanding time for collaboration and professional learning.

→ Audit existing federal and state resources to ensure that they are being used as effectively as possible to support expanded learning time options.

→ Develop partnerships with national organizations and advocacy groups to provide expertise to districts interested in expanding time for professional learning.

We recommend these **district and school actions** to support expanded time for high-quality, Common Core-aligned professional development:

→ Use existing meetings, staff development days and professional activities for focused planning and collaboration related to the Common Core.

→ Combine planning periods with other non-instructional time, or stagger teaching schedules.

→ Hire substitutes to provide time for teachers to reflect and plan together.

→ Use block scheduling to reduce teaching loads and increase planning and learning time.

→ "Bank" time by beginning school early or releasing school five to 10 minutes late each day to accumulate time for an early release or late start one day each week.

→ Schedule special programming (such as community-led art programs) and redesign student schedules to release teachers from direct student supervision and carve out time for professional development.

→ Work with the local teachers association to incorporate time for redesigned professional learning focused on the Common Core and new assessments into collective bargaining agreements.

FINDING MORE TIME FOR TEACHER LEARNING: RESOURCES FOR POLICYMAKERS

Learning Forward has produced Establishing Time for Professional Learning to guide district and school leaders as they develop, vet and implement recommendations for increasing educators' collaborative learning time and then evaluate the effectiveness of the change. This workbook outlines a process for identifying current allocations of time for professional learning, analyzing how that time is being used, assessing the results of professional learning and increasing the effectiveness of the existing time before seeking additional time.[xii]

In addition to its paper _A New Vision for Teacher Professional Growth and Support_,[xiii] Education Resource Strategies (ERS) has produced useful tools and case studies to help states and districts find ways to reorganize and invest in professional learning in ways that strengthen support for teaching capacity and effectiveness throughout the system. See tools on its website, http://www.erstrategies.org.

3 LOOK FOR PROOF THAT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MATERIALS AND PROGRAMS ARE HIGH-QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE

Evaluating the quality and impact of professional development is necessary to improve and channel investments into professional learning activities and supports that make a difference. However, states and district often have ignored systematic evaluations in favor of less expensive teacher satisfaction surveys after a particular training or experience.[xiv] In the last decade, states and districts have made some attempts to evaluate professional development programs, but accountability systems for professional learning and monitoring quality still vary widely.

With the advent of the Common Core and the challenge of providing effective, personalized support at scale — often with limited resources — leaders should be monitoring investments and their impact.

SOME STATES ARE BEGINNING TO USE MULTIPLE MEASURES TO MONITOR AND EVALUATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS—FOCUSING ON OUTCOMES AS WELL AS TEACHER SATISFACTION

Learning Forward reports that some states are conducting studies that link professional development to changes in teacher practice and student learning as well as monitoring the quality of efforts through teacher satisfaction surveys and district participation data.[xv] But, short of conducting indepth evaluations at the end, state and district leaders can become more discriminating consumers at the beginning too. One education leader we interviewed noted the following "tells" that could signify unaligned professional development sessions:

- → Session titles that don't mention specific content (such as math or English language arts)
- → Session titles or descriptions that look like they predate the Common Core
- → Session descriptions that don't mention the instructional shifts

Most important is to know whether students are increasing their mastery of the standards' content and skills over time as a result of high-quality professional development for their teachers.

WHAT STATE AND DISTRICT LEADERS SHOULD DO

We recommend these **state actions** to evaluate professional development programs:

- → Publish and widely disseminate a research-based definition of high-quality professional development — and use it in decision making.
- → Develop, curate or certify models of high-quality professional development designed to support classroom teachers' success in implementing the Common Core.
- → Require districts to link professional development expenditures to evidence of teacher growth and student success in meeting the expectations of the Common Core and state standards.
- → Monitor outputs and results of professional development to identify and solve issues with delivery and quality.
- → Take steps to ensure that state education agency departments and divisions collaborate to accomplish a shared vision for aligned, high-quality professional development in subject-specific materials and resources.

We recommend these **district and school actions** to evaluate professional development programs[xvi]:

- → Require professional development providers to submit measures of efficacy for their programs.
- → Procure only professional development for Common Core that meets the three essential elements we propose in Brief #1.
- → Form local professional development committees to create district professional development plans that are aligned with the Common Core and state standards but based on local needs. These plans should include accountability measures for tracking participation and outcomes.
- → Support and actively require individual professional development plans for teachers that are linked to district and state goals and the standards. Review plans regularly.
- → Develop a mechanism (such as surveys, observations or data reviews including student work) to evaluate the quality of professional development programs and materials used in the district to ensure they are meeting district- and/or state-defined standards for professional learning.

JUDGING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT QUALITY: RESOURCES FOR POLICYMAKERS

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has developed progress and capacity rubrics for Common Core implementation at the state and district level. The rubrics address four key elements of implementation including systems alignment and system change, teacher supports, principal supports, student supports and communications and engagement. CCSSO also also initiated a new project, Improving Evaluation of Professional Development, to assist states in improving evaluations of the quality of professional development for teachers, and especially evaluations for programs and activities aimed toward improving teaching of K-12 mathematics and science.[xvii]

Achieve, Inc. and Education First created a rubric and self-assessment tool designed to support state leaders in assessing and continuously improving their efforts to implement the Common Core. The rubric and tool suggest the essential steps and strong actions states should consider and is intended to push states toward coherent strategies: carefully chosen activities that are attuned to real needs, properly sequenced to provide maximum support at the building level and crafted with a clear logic.[xviii]

4 SHIFT LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES TO EMPHASIZE SCHOOL-WIDE INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGE AND ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Committed leadership is crucial to effective and widespread implementation of the Common Core. As one district leader remarked, "Implementing the standards is all about leadership. The organization can't rise above the level of its leader. If implementation of the Common Core is not the clear expectation of the superintendent and leadership, it's not going to happen or it will happen in a satellite or individual way."

Teacher learning can't happen at scale without strong and effective leaders who understand the content and instructional shifts required by the Common Core, provide helpful feedback, allocate resources to support professional development and value high-quality professional learning.

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL LEADERS ALSO NEED SUPPORT AND A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMMON CORE TO BE EFFECTIVE LEADERS

Education administrators typically have skills and experience with building management and student discipline; less often do they have experience with instructional leadership and creating a culture of continuous learning. And even less often do they have experience with managing change and implementing widespread reforms. To effectively lead Common Core implementation, principals and district leaders need support for planning and capacity building, a deep understanding of the standards and instructional shifts, and practice in recognizing these in classrooms.

Effective principals look for signs of where teachers need help, find ways to support them and celebrate their progress. They differentiate support based on observation and enable a "cycle of inquiry" by prioritizing the Common Core as the basis of instruction and allocating time in the school day for collaboration and planning. They identify concrete evidence that teachers are teaching to the standards every day; they de-emphasize compliance and play up continuous improvement.

Sacramento City Unified School District engaged principals in the same Common Core training as teachers to provide them with a foundation in the standards and instructional shifts and the kinds of changes teachers will need to make in their practice. The district also provided change-management training for principals, offering support on managing to higher and different expectations, setting clear expectations for professional development, proactive messaging, allocating resources and promoting personal engagement in the process.

In Kentucky's Kenton County School District, principals participate in collaborative teams within their schools and attend monthly principals' meetings and curriculum, instruction and assessment (CIA) meetings. In CIA meetings led by district curriculum consultants, principals engage with artifacts of teacher and student work, calibrate toward accurately identifying effective instruction, and provide feedback to improve teaching and learning.[xix] This collaborative work consumes about 60 percent of principals' time.

In the Monticello School District in New York, principals (and those who manage principals) participate in roughly half of the training that teachers receive; they also receive concrete training on what Common Core-aligned teaching looks like. They learn to become informed observers.

In some cases, forward-looking principals have generated the impetus for change among their colleagues. As a district leader in New York said: "For us it was a matter of getting our principals to understand the importance of instructional change. We had one very dynamic principal who would talk about what she read online about the units. Other principals were like, 'Where are you getting that from?' And she said, 'You have to go read.' The principals were used to being spoon-fed; we challenged them to go out and look for themselves. Once they found out how much they still needed to learn in this area, they stepped up to know more about it and learning with the coaches and teachers. Not 100 percent of principals, but the majority."

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These expectations represent a major change in the traditional role of the principal and have required rethinking how principals and leaders are trained and supported in their work. Given that principals account for 25 percent of a school's total impact on student achievement and that the difference between an average and an above-average principal can affect student achievement by as much as 20 percentage points, supporting principals must be part of any strategy for supporting teachers and the Common Core.[xx]

WHAT STATE AND DISTRICT LEADERS SHOULD DO

We recommend these **state actions** to address principal effectiveness:

→ Create or update leadership standards to redefine the role of principals as instructional leaders.

→ Create systems to effectively manage and support principals to be reform leaders — including a clear definition of the role and responsibilities of the principal, a formal evidence-based evaluation system for principals, support for continuous learning and improvement and coaching.

→ Provide principals with some measure of autonomy and the ability to work with the central office to adapt professional development programs as needed.

→ Convene networks or communities or practice across districts for principals to learn from each other.

→ Require robust plans from districts and build district capacity to provide job-embedded professional development for principals.

→ Create model training modules and videos describing the most important practices in school leadership and support for standards implementation.

→ Remove duplicative reporting, deadlines or other unnecessary compliance responsibilities.

We recommend these **district and school actions** to address principal effectiveness:

→ Use leadership teams (including teachers) to support instructional leadership and talent management work of principals.

→ Include school and district leaders in professional development opportunities for teachers, particularly in trainings around Common Core implementation.

→ Create leadership professional learning communities focused on Common Core challenges and opportunities to encourage building and district leaders to develop networks of support.

→ Work with unions to develop requirements for increasing non-evaluative classroom visits and observations for administrators, to help them understand and support teachers in creating lessons and classrooms that successfully use the standards.

REFOCUSING SCHOOL LEADERS TO SUPPORT STANDARDS: RESOURCES FOR POLICYMAKERS

Increased attention to building school and district leader capacity has resulted in strong recommendations for creating conditions that enable principals and leaders to be effective. A 2014 report by the George W. Bush Institute, the Alliance to Reform Education Leadership and New Leaders, Great Principals at Scale: Creating District Conditions that Enable All Principals to Be Effective, includes a comprehensive framework of conditions that districts should create to scale principal effectiveness across the district and improve outcomes for students.[xxi]

Achieve, Inc., College Summit, the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Elementary School Principals also have developed guides for elementary school leaders and secondary school leaders to assist them in implementing the Common Core in their schools. The guides outline a set of professional standards for leaders and offer examples of how a leader can support the standards' specific instructional shifts.[xxii]

ENSURE THAT ALL TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS RECEIVE SUSTAINED, HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Done well, professional development grows in scale through collaboration and shared knowledge that builds over time. Even so, prioritizing scale is an ongoing tension that all states, districts and professional development providers face. To deliver high-quality professional development requires depth — but depth often is sacrificed for breadth when programs scale up.

REACHING SCALE REQUIRES COMMON GOALS AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

While all teachers and school leaders need hands-on experience with the content and delivery of the Common Core, not all teachers have the same levels of experience and skill — and so professional learning must be differentiated. And to complicate matters more, teachers' professional learning needs continually change based on the needs of their students as well. Reaching scale, as our vignettes in Brief #2 show, requires multiple methods and flexibility supported by common goals. This is not an easy process to manage and is one of the greatest challenges states and districts face in implementing the new standards and assessments.

Train-the-trainer models can be a stepping stone to scale. As one school leader in New York explained, "Our approach includes a train-the-trainer model. We directly support 70 teachers who then go back into their schools. That's our capacity-building model; we support them as they're back in their schools leading professional learning communities, demonstrating, sharing the resources with their colleagues."

However, train-the-trainer models have lost cache because too often the quality of the redelivered training is inconsistent. The key is to ensure that the trainers are the very best educators, with deep content and instructional expertise, who also are skilled at leading adult learning and enthusiastic about coaching colleagues.

One of Sacramento's school coaches explained, "For the central professional development opportunities we offer at the district, we spend a lot of time working with teams to have them reflect on next steps: What are you taking back to your sites? What specifically are you doing? Who is going to talk about what, from what we've learned and done today? We make next steps conscious and deliberate. We ask them to figure out what are the most important things to help their school site understand. Also, they are expected to have regular meetings with their peers about implementing the Common Core — not just an agenda item at school staff meetings."

Online professional development also may offer opportunities to reach more educators less expensively (see sidebar in Brief #1). Still, some organizations are finding the ability to personalize and to provide teachers near and far with content straight from the sources via video or conferencing to be a very effective complement to traditional modes of professional development delivery.

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WHAT STATE AND DISTRICTS LEADERS SHOULD DO

We recommend these **state actions** to ensure all teachers and administrators receive sustained, high-quality professional development:

→ Set statewide standards for high-quality, Common Core-aligned professional development to provide a common focus for district and local providers.

→ Facilitate regional and consortium approaches to professional learning to take advantage of economies of scale and encourage networking and learning communities.

→ Create a set of resources (such as training materials on the standards, resource lists, links to approved professional development providers and video libraries) that building leaders can use immediately with their educators.

→ Develop partnerships with national or local organizations and professional associations to expand funding possibilities and draw in expert resources to provide support and innovation.

→ Develop partnerships with regional fee-for-service professional delivery organizations to expand learning opportunities to more educators, but maintain focus on state and district goals.

We recommend these **district and school actions** to ensure all teachers and administrators receive sustained, high-quality professional development:

→ Build district-wide professional development modules on Common Core fundamentals that can be delivered at district meetings but that school leaders and teachers can customize for their own learning needs.

→ Leverage large-scale training experiences (such as the New York Network Team Institutes) to build capacity in staff who can then offer training in the district or schools.

CONCLUSION

"The Common Core has revitalized the conversation about professional development in this country," one of Expeditionary Learning's leaders noted. *"It has been the ugly stepchild for the past 10 years. People said it wasn't an adequately effective intervention. With the Common Core, professional development has become the fulcrum again. It has reinvigorated in a fundamental way the conversation about effective professional learning, asking for more data-driven decisions, suggesting that professional development should be personal and meet teachers where they are and provide them with just-in-time resources for their own learning. The old models of professional development are being challenged."*

While we know what the research says, we also know there is no silver bullet. Collaborative teams are essential, but it's important how they are organized. Technology can be a powerful delivery mechanism but is most effective when coupled with in-person, hands-on experience. Conferences can inspire positive change but reach only a few. Using videos to "go straight to the source" can be an effective approach but only if the videos are provocative, interesting and well-matched to the Common Core.

Individually, the policies suggested in this paper may not exert much leverage, but taken together, we believe these interdependent elements create a uniquely powerful opportunity and paradigm shift for educators — but success will require hard work, commitment and persistence.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

To gather data for this series, we interviewed a diverse mix of educators, service providers and professional development experts around the country. They are listed below.

In fall 2013, to develop our initial ideas, we conducted informational interviews with these leaders and practitioners:

Sandra Alberti*	*Director of State and District Partnerships and Professional Development*	Student Achievement Partners
Lisa Dickinson	*Assistant Director, Educational Issues*	American Federation of Teachers
Maddie Fennell	*Chair, Commission on Effective Teachers and Teaching*	National Education Association; *Nebraska State Teacher of the Year 1989*
Andrea Foggy-Paxton	*Executive Vice President*	Reasoning Mind
Alice Gill	*Senior Associate Director, Educational Issues*	American Federation of Teachers
Darion Griffin	*Senior Associate Director, Educational Issues*	American Federation of Teachers
Aaron Grossman*	*K–8 Specialist, Department of Curriculum and Instruction*	Washoe County School District (Nevada)
Gary McCormick*	*Secondary Literacy and Curriculum Consultant*	Kenton County School District (Kentucky)
Linda Plattner	*Executive Director*	Illustrative Mathematics
Ellen Whitesides	*Consultant*	Illustrative Mathematics

Next, in spring 2014, we began to delve more deeply into professional development delivery and design and to determine whether there are differing perspectives on CCSS-aligned professional development. Based on recommendations and analysis from our earlier interviews and our own research, we set up a second round of interviews with leaders and partners at the following types of organizations:

A nonprofit professional development provider network: This group involved Expeditionary Learning and its partners in New York state — two New York school districts and the KIPP Foundation. Interviewees included the following individuals:

Victor Aluise	*Chief Teaching and Learning Labs Officer*	KIPP Foundation
Ron Berger*	*Chief Program Officer*	Expeditionary Learning
Kate Gerson*	*Senior Fellow Regents Research Fund*	New York State Department of Education
Scott Hartl*	*Chief Executive Officer*	Expeditionary Learning
Tammy Mangus	*Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction*	Monticello Central School District (New York)
Shaun Nelms	*Deputy Superintendent*	Greece Central School District (New York)

APPENDIX A (CONTINUED)

A multi-district network: This group included the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) consortium in California and was complemented with a deeper look at Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD). Interviewees included the following individuals:

Marinda Burton	*English/Language Arts Coach*	SCUSD
Charlotte Chadwick	*Principal*	SCUSD
Mikila Fetzer	*Math Coach*	SCUSD
Rick Miller	*Executive Director*	CORE
Olivine Roberts*	*Chief Academic Officer*	SCUSD
Michelle Steagall*	*Chief Academic Officer*	CORE

A charter management organization that uses online professional development as a regular part of its teacher development program: This group focused on Aspire Public Schools, a charter management organization that uses BloomBoard, an online professional development provider. Interviewees included the following individuals:

James Gallagher	*Director of Instruction*	Aspire Public Schools (CA)
Nate Monley	*Instructional Coach*	Aspire Public Schools (CA)

We also took a fresh look at data we had collected on four "early implementing" school districts for a report with the Thomas B. Fordham Institute in early 2014, *Common Core in the Districts: An Early Look at Early Implementers.* We focused particularly on the efforts of Washoe County School District in Reno, Nevada, a single district with a grassroots district-level professional development model.

Finally, in assembling all of this material, sifting through the key findings and recommendations, and drafting the briefs, we also relied on the help and guidance of these individuals—plus those above with an asterisk (*****) next to their name—to read early drafts and provide feedback on our findings and recommendations:

Tracey Crow	*Director of Publications*	Learning Forward
Stephanie Hirsch	*Executive Director*	Learning Forward
Katya Levitan-Reiner	*Senior Associate*	Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation

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