

Common Core Standards: What They Mean for States and Schools

BILL EAST: Hello, I'm Bill East, executive director of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education or NASDSE. I want to welcome you to NASDSE's 2010-2011 Professional Development Series. Speaking for Bambi Lockman, our president, and the board of directors, we want to thank the many states that are participating in our series this year. I also want to thank the Pennsylvania state director of special education, John Tommasini and James Palmiro, director of the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network for making it possible for NASDSE to bring this conference to you from WQED in Pittsburgh.

The coordinator for our series is Christine Cashman. The topic for this conference is Common Core Standards: What They Mean for States and Schools. The Council for the Chief State School Officers and the National Governor's Association have a partnership that has resulted in the development of volunteer common core standards for English language arts and mathematics.

The standards were released in June of 2010, and a lot has happened before they were released and since their release. That is what we want to address with you today. Since many of you in the audience work with or on behalf of students with disabilities, we want to also talk about the standards and what they mean for teachers and students in special education.

I am please to introduce the presenters for the conference. Both have been key leaders in the process that has led to the National Voluntary Core Standards. First to my left, Dane Linn. Dane is the director of the education division for the National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices. At the center, he oversees the education-related policy research analysis and resource development. Dane has authored numerous policy reports on issues ranging from school finance to teacher quality.

Some of you may remember the National Governors' Association national initiative recently on redesigning the American high school. Dane was instrumental in spearheading that effort. I got to know Dane from his work with the West Virginia Department of Education, where he worked with the special education program on the state level. I guess one of the most important things I can say about Dane though is his professional experience also includes work as an elementary school teacher, which is very important.

And then to Dane's left is Gene Wilhoit. Gene is the executive director of the Council for the Chief State School Officers. Each state has a superintendent or a chief state school officer, so that's who we're talking about. Gene has worked in education at the local, state, and national levels. Now his local and state level experiences came in Ohio, Indiana, West Virginia. He also began his work as a teacher in social studies. He's been a local district administrator. He's been a program director at the state level.

He's also been a special assistant at the U.S. Department of Education. For a number of years, he was the executive director of the National Association of State Boards of Education. I first heard of Gene when he was a . . . school officer in Arkansas and Kentucky. Gene, welcome to our conference. We're looking forward to your comments today as well.

Now our format today will follow like this. We have a number of questions we want to address about the common core standards, what they mean for special education, what does the assessment mean, and so forth. So I will direct the questions to our presenters, and then we'll go from there. So the first question, what are the common core standards? Let's get grounded before we begin our discussion. Dane, will you start us off with that?

DANE LINN: Happy to, Bill, and thank you for the opportunity. Both Gene and I really want to extend a sincere thank you for the opportunity to talk with you about the implementation of the Common Core State Standards for students with disabilities. We oftentimes talk about standards in education reform applying to all students. And we've made a concerted effort throughout this process, and you'll hear more about this throughout our comments on the exchange that we're going to have this afternoon about the ways in which we've attended to include students with disabilities.

But it's going to be even more important as we move from development to the implementation of the standards to ensure the continued involvement of the teachers and parents and many others who touch the lives of students with disabilities. But to answer your question, Bill, I specifically want to begin by being very clear about what these standards are and what they're not. It's important to focus as a first step on the subject areas in which we develop standards for.

Rather than attempting to develop standards for all of the subjects, we've really focused on the bedrock standards, the standards that are the foundation for student success in all of the other content areas. And for those reasons, we have focused on the development of standards in English language arts and mathematics. Now to be clear, the standards in English language arts focus on four key areas, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. And those standards, which we'll discuss in greater detail throughout the remainder of this presentation, again are the foundation for student success in history, science, and other subject areas.

The second important piece that is critical for you to know about the standards development process is that the standards we focused on really hone in on what students should be able to, should know and be able to do at each grade level by the time they leave the K-12 system. So we've tried to, and I think quite honestly been rather successful in articulating for each of those subject areas the expectations in mathematics in grades kindergarten, one, two, and throughout the system.

And lastly, it's important to know and particularly for the educators who are watching us today that the standards are just the beginning point. We know that the standards are not the end all be all, but yet, they define what students should know and be able to do. And from there, we decide the issues around assessment, the issues around the qualifications of teachers to teach these standards, the importance of higher ed in preparing students to teach these standards, knowing that we're going to have a significant turnover in the workforce, the teaching force, over the next several years.

The second area that I want to focus on are what the common features are of the assessment system. And I want to begin, out of order from the slide presentation you're seeing, with the third from the bottom bullet, based on evidence and research. And why am I starting there? I'm starting there because the standards that many states, and the processes that many states have used over the past years have really taken an

approach to involve many individuals in the education community to inform the development of their standards.

But oftentimes, those standards have been developed separate from any of the research or any of the evidence that we have out in states, nationally, or internationally. And I say with great confidence, both Gene and I say with great confidence, that these standards were clearly informed by the best available research to inform the development of these standards.

Now did we have the absolute perfect research to inform these standards? No. But we know that it was important enough to develop a set of standards based on what we do have, that using the best available research would allow us to end up with a set of standards that would ultimately inform future research. But we shouldn't let the perfect get in the way of developing these standards.

The second key feature of these standards is that they were internationally benchmarked. Many of you hear about the importance of our children being competitive with the students in Canada, a country whose students perform quite well on international assessments as well as countries such as Singapore, China, and others. And if we're going to be internationally competitive, then we have to base our standards on what we know from the work and the performance of those students.

Thirdly, going to the top of our list, students should all be prepared for both college, for college and/or work. And we really aligned these standards to those expectations trying to answer the question, what will it take for my child, for your child, for all of our children to be able to be successful with the expectations of the post-secondary system or the expectations of the employers in our state or the employers around this country?

Next, we focused on, we focused on developing a set of focused and coherent standards. Having come from the classroom myself, many of our state standards include very long lists of what students are expected to know and what teachers are expected to teach throughout the course of the year. And what we've learned is that oftentimes those are unrealistic lists. They're far too long a set of expectations of what students should know and be able to do, and they're often not coherent.

And you'll hear us, as we talk about the specifics of the English language arts and mathematics standards that we've really attempted to develop a set of standards that are coherent, and coherent from grade to grade and lay out a set of learning progressions for students from first to second, third, and so on throughout the system.

Next, we focused the standards on rigorous content, an application of knowledge through higher-order skills. That's important because not only is it critical to define rigorous content, but it's equally important to focus the attention on the application of knowledge, that a student's demonstration of his or her understanding of the standards is not simply about the regurgitation of the content, but being able to apply that knowledge in real-world settings.

Next, we focused on the strengths and lessons of current state standards. It was important for us and important for our membership, both governors and chiefs in the respective states to not reinvent the wheel. We do have examples from states like Minnesota and Massachusetts with very high standards, states that perform quite well on international assessments. And it was important for us to engage those states throughout the development of those, development of these standards.

And for that reason, we intimately engaged with not only Minnesota and Massachusetts, but states like Colorado, who spent the past two years going through a process of their own to develop more rigorous and internationally benchmarked standards, to work with states like Georgia, who have also been going through a concerted effort to improve the rigor of their standards.

And lastly, the standards had to be able to be read by the widest possible range of students to participate fully. I know that as a parent of a daughter who's now in college, it's important for me as a parent. It's important for my nephew's parents to understand, what are we trying to have students accomplish in these standards? We didn't want the standards to simply resonate with educators, but we wanted them to be understandable, if you will, by the employers, by parents, and by communities at large so that we all have a clear understanding of what students are expected to know and be able to do.

I want to spend a couple of minutes talking a little bit about the development of the process and begin by debunking the myth that these standards were developed by a group of national researchers brought in by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. We involved a number of individuals and organizations from around the country. There was wide representation, for example, from the disability community.

Many of the national organizations from those at the Council of Exceptional Children to NASDSE and many others were included in the development of the process and offered opportunities to provide feedback to the draft standards. We also involved many other national groups, including the American Federation of Teachers, The National Education Association, associations affiliated with the mathematics and English language arts community. And so many of those organizations that were involved were in turn asked to invite their respective members.

They selected, for example, the teachers, who spent several days with us during the multiple phases of this project to inform and provide feedback to the draft standards. Were they focused? Were they grounded in the evidence? And were they, were the mathematics standards, for example, clear progressions of learning from the different grades? And I have to say that we were not only glad to have their involvement, but the standards are better because of their involvement, much more informed, particularly by some of the excellent mathematics teachers and English language arts teachers from around the country.

The College and Career Readiness Standards were first developed in the summer of 2009, and we really started before going to the development of the standards grade by grade. We started with the end in mind, trying to figure out, based on the research and with our experts, what students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate from high school. And those first set of standards were known as the College and Career Readiness Standards.

And once those standards, with feedback from around the country, were improved, we then used those College and Career Readiness Standards to inform the development of the grade-by-grade standards. Again, we had multiple rounds of feedback in the development of those standards, and ultimately, we ended up, as Bill has already pointed out, releasing those standards on June 2nd, 2010. But prior to the release of those standards, they too went out on public comment.

And we went through, sifted through 10,000 comments that we received from around the country from parents, business leaders, teachers, state leaders, who provided feedback. And all of that feedback was included in the informing the development of the final version that was released in June 2010.

EAST: Well, Gene, I want you to respond to this question first. You know, often, I get the question from implementers out there, you know, why do we need a set of common core standards on the national level? We already have state standards. So would you address the question, why are national volunteer standards needed?

GENE WILHOIT: I'd be glad to, Bill. This is a subject that many people have asked us about. Why would you take on this sort of an effort that is unprecedented in scope and an effort that is focused on creating a lot of energy, engaging thousands of people in the process? So we had to have some good reasons for taking on the standards. And I'll just mention four of five of those very important reasons.

First, as Dane said earlier, one of the basic tenets around the standards was the development of college and career benchmarks and in addition to that, some career benchmarks. So the reason for that is that this shifting economy that we all live in and the globalization of the society and the movement toward new technologies is all causing, all those are causing us to think about what are we teaching our children, and are we challenging them effectively to be successful?

So we made a conscious decision that if we were going to redo the standards, we were not only going to share those standards across the state, but we were going to make them college and work ready. And in a moment, later in the presentation, we'll talk in more detail about what we mean by both college and career ready. But at least at this point, our assumption is that every youngster in our public school system graduating from public schools must be prepared to take on additional learning.

The days are gone when a youngster can leave high school and assume that there's no more formal learning or applied learning in their lives. And so we have assumed that these standards would be raising the bar for many of the students, for their parents, and for the education system. But we also felt in fairness to those students to do anything less than expect that they go on to education in some form would be a disservice to them. And by college, we didn't mean traditional four-year college. By work, we defined that explicitly, and we'll get more into that issue a little bit later.

Secondly, what we were witnessing across the country is that some students were getting a very good education, preparing themselves well, moving on to future success in college and careers. But sadly, we have great disparity in the United States in terms of students' success. Whether those students be individuals who live in poverty or deprived situations, whether they be students with disabilities, or even a student living in one state as opposed to another state, we began to notice patterns of very, very different expectations and very different outcomes based on those expectations.

And so one of, the second major reason we wanted to put these standards in place was to make sure that there's greater consistency of expectation across the country for students.

Third, there was this major issue of not knowing what to teach. I've heard a lot of teachers say to us very directly in this process, it is fair for society to say to the public education system what they expect the outcomes to be. We had not done this before. We had always talked within ourselves and among ourselves in public education, but we had not reached out and asked society, the consumers of our student educational process, what they thought the appropriate directions ought to be and what those outcomes ought to be.

So we felt it important that as we move forward, for everyone in the system, for the teachers and the administrators and for the parents and the students to be very clear about what would lead to success in society. And so we think that what we have provided here is a consistent definition of what learning should be regardless of where a child attends school.

We also were concerned about the increasing costs that were emerging in the states. We're spending more and more every year on assessment practices and on courses and efforts that are not as productive as they ought to be. And we thought by developing a common set of standards, it would give us a singular point of reference that we could begin to move toward. And we could see out of this effort for the first time states coalescing around a common approach, which means that in the long run, we probably will be able to save some resources.

That should allow us to divert our attention and our resources to some very important issues around the teaching and learning process. And then finally, I'll say that in this process we were very much aware of what is happening between K-12 and higher education, the sort of disconnect between the two primary delivery systems. What we were finding were too many students who, upon completing a K-12 program, graduated from high school feeling that they were successful because they had a diploma, that they were prepared to move into higher education.

And too many of them are running up against a brick wall when they get into higher education. And as a result, many of the first messages to these youngsters, who felt they were prepared, was that you're going to have to go back and be remediated. We're finding that mostly in mathematics courses, but we were also finding that in English language arts programs.

For these students, what we also saw was a disturbing pattern. That is if you take one remedial course, that's something you have to put your resources out for and go through schooling process without credit before you begin the formal crediting program. But what we found is that there were many students who were being remediated in more than one course. And the likelihood that they would complete the program of study gets much, much lower if they take several remediation courses.

They have incurred debt, they yet do not have credit, they become disheartened, and what we find is too many of them dropping out of the system. In this country, we're going to have to increase the numbers of students who transition from the K-12 experience successfully through credit-bearing courses to the college level and then move forward to graduation and college experience. So I hope that's helpful in giving you a sense of why we would take something like this on, why it was important for the country to take the steps, why the states stepped forward and took on this heavy-hit lift for the country.

EAST: And we appreciate you taking that challenge on. We've stated earlier that the standards are voluntary. So there was a state adoption process involved. States decided whether they wanted to use these or not. So what does it mean to be a state adoption state, how many are there, and I know with Dane, working with the Governors Association, I know they're, as we looked at the political landscape, we know there were a lot of changes recently. Has that had an impact on the states that are, have adopted the standards? Dane, start us off with that.

LINN: Thanks, Bill. That's a great question. And it's an important question based on the significant turnover that not only we have seen among the nation's governors, but also in the number of new state, chief state school officers that we have. And I believe Gene's association is up to 19 new chiefs as of today. The process for adopting has really varied differently from state to state. But if there is a common thread, it's that a majority of the states' state board of education are the body that is responsible for making the decision about whether or not to adopt the standards.

As of today, as of the taping of this show today, we now have 42 states that have adopted the standards. And the state of Maine is the new addition this afternoon. Maine is one of those states where it is the State Legislature who is the responsible body for making the decision about whether or not to adopt these standards. And we probably have a very small number of states where the legislative body is the responsible party. But in the majority of the states, it's the state boards who ultimately make the decision.

And it's important to note that many of those state board members were intimately involved in the development of their own state's standards. And as they went through their deliberations about whether or not to not only be a part of the process that NGA and CCSSO developed to embark on this voluntary set of state standards, but to understand that the standards that we've developed through the Common Core State Standards Initiative and the standards they have in place may have some common threads.

But this wasn't a process by which states looked at the extent to which the Common Core Standards aligned to their own standards. Now some did want to look at the commonality between the two, but ultimately, unlike many of the state standards, these were informed by evidence and research. And we'd like to think that, and research is, or the work of many associations, such as the American Federation of Teachers and the Fordham Foundation, have clearly indicated that in a majority of these states, the Common Core State Standards were much more rigorous.

Now it's not to say that states didn't have similar standards than those that were included in the Core State Standards that are to organizations developed, but they were, back to some of my earlier comments, they were much more coherent. And they were more, there are clearer progressions of learning in the Common Core State Standards. So we worked quite closely with the national associations of state boards of education and helping the state board members, the individuals who would make the decision about whether or not to adopt these states in the majority of the states were informed about the process that was used and its distinction from the processes that they've used in the past.

We, as I already have mentioned, we had a number of opportunities for public input, and those comments are available on Core Standards.org. You can look at the summaries from the 10,000 comments that we received on the K-12 standards. And again, those were very informative to the improvement of the standards that we developed.

There's another important point that I want to talk, spend a couple of minutes talking about, and that's what we call the 15% rule. Now when states made a decision to adopt, the adoption of the standards had to be word for word. In other words, states couldn't make a decision they were going to be a part of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, and then they could make revisions to the wording. If they liked the wording of their standard for the addition of fractions with unlike denominators, they could use that particular standard in lieu of the standard that was included in the Common Core.

We reached a decision in our work with the states that adoption meant adoption. And that meant you had to adopt the standards word for word as they were developed by the individuals who participated in the effort. This is important because we defined a clear set of expectations that are similar from state to state. And it becomes even more critical for the states that are participating in the development of the common assessments that we'll spend a little attention on later in these remarks.

At the same time, states indicated throughout this process that they wanted to have the opportunity to reach even higher than the standards as they are included in the common core. And for that reason, we came to a decision, again in partnership with the states, that they could exceed the Common Core by 15%. Neither NGA nor the Council of Chief State School Officers are defining what 15% means. For some states, 15% will be defined by each subject area.

For other states, it will be defined by grade levels. And for a number of states, it will be defined in totality, that some states are not going to, are going to add 15% more set of standards as a whole on top of the Common Core. That is emerging over time, but it's important to know that there is some latitude for each of the states in increasing the rigor of the standards should they have the desire to do so.

Now Bill mentioned the turnover in our membership, and we are at a point, I think, both NGA and the Council of Chief State School Officers in getting to know our new members and helping them understand the process that was used to develop these standards. And we are very interested and continue to work with our membership in not just helping them understand the process, but helping them understand the content that's in the standards.

And so as of today at least, we've not really seen much pushback from our respective governors and chiefs indicating that they want to renege on a decision that was made by their predecessor. We're seeing a number of states, a number of governors, and a number of chiefs indicating that they want to figure out how to implement the standards because our opportunity is at the implementation stage.

But it's more than, implementation is more than simply distributing the standards to teachers. Implementation is taking a hard look at what are the other policies around the standards, whether it be our policies on the quality of our teachers. What are the requirements for teachers who teach middle school and high school mathematics? How much attention and how much money are we spending on the professional development

opportunities so teachers know how to teach to the standards well? How are we working together as a set of states to develop the necessary tools that are going to help teachers around the country implement these standards well?

We can't simply rely on the textbooks, so how do we work together in developing or using the available technologies to help teachers teach to these standards? The map you see is just the graphic representation of the 42 states that have thus far adopted the standards with one correction. And that is Maine, again, who adopted the standards as of the taping of this show.

EAST: Okay. Thank you, Dane. I want to go back now to a very important question for the special ed community, and I want to address this to Gene first. And you mentioned earlier the terms college ready, career ready. How does college ready and career ready differ, and what does this mean for students with disabilities who may be in their transition programs, and how is this tied to the standards?

WILHOIT: Mm-hmm. Very good issues for all of us, and some people have questioned us about why we would attempt to align college and career in a set of expectations. But first, let me just clarify what we meant by the two areas. First, in terms of college ready, as I mentioned earlier, we were not simply interested in whether a student could get into college or not because in this country, there are all kinds of different criteria for doing so. We were mostly interested, and this issue of once a student enters college, we were defining success at that entry point.

And that entry point was a credit-bearing course, not a remedial course. So if a student could enter a college entry-level credit-bearing course and receive a success in that course, and we were defining success by C or better in the course, then we were assuming that that would mean they were college ready. We defined that same goal for two-year and four-year institutions.

In some cases, we had lively conversations about whether we should set different expectations for the type of post-secondary institutions. Ultimately, our goal was to make sure that all students could meet the standard. Again, this is not a standard that is beyond what I think any parent or any student would expect once they enter college, credit-bearing course and entry level, achieving a C or better.

On the career side, we were biased a bit in our definition because we didn't want students to enter careers that were not appropriate for an economic return, nor did we want those students to be caught in an entry-level career. So we defined career ready as being able to enter in a job that would pay a middle-class income return, and at the same time, provide some opportunity for advancement in the future.

I think again, no parent or student would want any definition less than that. We would all hope that we could, in our careers, earn enough resources to support yourselves and your families, and we would also expect that you would be able to be upwardly mobile as you move through your life experiences. Those are the two definitions. So you would think historically that they would not align. But what we found was that in fact, the definition of college ready and career ready are coming closer and closer. In fact, what we found in our analysis in English language arts, the genre are different.

The types of things that students read are different, but what we found was that the level of sophistication that one needs in both English language arts and in mathematics is just as high and in some cases higher in careers that would not be associated with a traditional liberal arts education. So what we have in, over the last few years, this sort of separation of where I go to college or go to work is beginning to disappear. All future opportunities in this society are going to require higher levels of knowledge and skill.

So we were able to merge both those concepts into a definition of college and career ready. Now for students with disabilities, I think there are two issues here. One, I think on the positive side, this is a wonderful opportunity to be a critical and engaged part of the expectations for students in this country. What we're saying basically is that all students can learn at high levels. All students with appropriate supports, with the appropriate accommodations, with the appropriate teaching methodologies, all those issues about how one engages in learning are going to be questioned and are going to have to change.

So in the short term, this whole issue, and we'll come back to this a little later, but we cannot assume that we would prepare our teachers the way we did in the past, nor would we expose students to the same kind of experiences we have in the past and expect them to reach these lofty goals. But we do think that special needs students, students with disabilities, are a very heterogeneous group. The commonality they have, and we state this in our document, is that they have some learning situation that requires some very special accommodation.

We should've been doing this all along with our students. I think what can happen out of the Common Core is that we get by this conversation and debate about whether these students who have, quote, labels around disabilities are a part of the responsibility of educators, and I think this answers that question very clearly. They are a part. We have common expectations of them. But in the same, at the same time, it's going to require some different thinking about how we educate students with disabilities and literally all students that are in the education pipeline today.

EAST: Thank you, Gene. My next question, the fifth question, we've got into it just a little bit with some of your response earlier, but I want to focus on it, and Dane, and go to you with it. How do the Common Core Standards differ from the current state standards that people should be familiar with, and how is the implementation process different?

LINN: Well, though there are some common features of both the English language arts standards and the mathematics standards that make them very different from the standards that I implemented as a classroom teacher several years ago. And I think beginning with the English language arts standards, I want to first focus on the balance between literature and informational texts.

And for those of you that have access to the documents, and if you don't, I encourage you to go to CoreStandards.org because in the body of the document, for English language arts, you'll not only see the standards, but you'll also see examples of the type of literature that we are suggesting students might read in order to meet some

of these standards. And by suggesting, we did not end up in a place where we have identified a reading list at each grade level that states should require students to read.

But rather, we have provided exemplars of pieces of literature and informational texts, articles from *The New York Times*, or other documents as well, that would serve as good examples for states and teachers to consider making a part of their curriculum. But again, they are only suggestions. And we really had to work through with our writing teams and, as Gene, I think, alluded to earlier, we had some tough love conversations with our writers and trying to find the right balance between the literature and informational text.

The second feature or advance, I think, is much improved to the current state of standards that exist or existed, knowing that a majority of the states have adopted the common core, are really around text complexity. And what's the complexity that we expect students to be able to read in grade three? And how is that different as they move through their school career?

And we're really hoping as the assessment consortia that we'll talk a little bit more about later in this presentation are also going to be able to use the standards and the focus around text complexity to really assess student performance, student knowledge, at a much deeper level than what we believe many of the state assessments currently do.

And next, we also focused on the inclusion of argument and informative or explanatory writing, that it's not suffice, not good enough for students in today's society to be able to simply recall the information that a teacher or anyone else has provided to them. It's important to know your multiplication tables and be able to recite them or go through them, in my case, quickly when I was in elementary school. But it's more important to understand how to apply those, that knowledge and skills.

And unfortunately, I'm using a math example for English language arts, but it's important for individuals to be able to read a complex text and being able to make an argument from that text to support any conclusion that they may have reached from that reading. We also made significant advances in both informal and informal talk as well as academic and domain-specific vocabulary, vocabulary that's very specific to, in English language arts.

And then you'll also notice in the back of the standards that we attempted to embed the literacy standards in two other subject areas, social studies and science. Those, the appendix that we have there are simply an illustration of how the standards apply in those subject areas. You should not be confused in thinking that those appendices are science and social studies standards. They are simply our attempt to show how literacy should be emphasized in very clear and concrete ways across the curriculum.

As far as the advancement in mathematics, I want to focus on the first bullet because one of the most significant advances that we've made is really showing how the progressions should be laid out from grade to grade in a student's elementary and secondary career. For any of you that have taught mathematics, you often know that you end up spending the first month, sometimes more depending on where and who you're teaching, reteaching what was learned in the previous grade.

And we also know that many of the standards are not laid out in a very coherent way, and so we oftentimes end up repeating some of the same subject matter from one

grade to the, not only one grade to the next, but also even within grades. And we've attempted to hone in and identify the most critical standards for students to learn in mathematics in a natural, progressive manner. That's important because if you look, any of you who have had access to a math book from Singapore will see that it's much thinner than a textbook from any state or school district in this country.

And that's in large part because they have honed in on what's most critical for students to know from grade to grade and built on prior knowledge as they move through their school career, unlike the American system, where we teach and reteach and reteach and reteach some of the same knowledge and skills that they're supposed to be learning. And we've ended up, quite honestly, with too many standards as well. So we've narrowed, we've reduced the number of standards that our students are expected to know.

And we've also focused on both conceptual understanding and procedural fluency. Again, it's not good enough. It's, students aren't going to be able to compete if all they can do is recall. And how do you think about reaching or helping students have a better and deeper understanding of the concepts that you're trying to teach? And most importantly, how do you help students apply that knowledge in real-world settings?

And I think that's where it's going to be critical as we move to implementation to help to providing the types of instructional tools, whether they be through sample lessons learned or, and this is not just true for mathematics, but also English language arts, but the types of instructional tools that are going to show educators around the country what it looks like to teach to the fourth grade math standards and providing those, not just opportunities, but using the available technologies, ways in which we can build a network of teachers from around the country who can share their successes in teaching to different sets of standards.

And lastly, we've made, I think, significant advances in the inclusion of Habits of Mind for the standards.

EAST: Thank you so much. I want to go from the general now to focusing on students with special needs. How do the Common Core Standards affect students with disabilities, students with English language learning? What are the key issues for these populations? I believe we're going back to Dane to start this one off too.

LINN: Yeah, thanks, Bill. I used to be, before I came to NGA, I used to work, as Bill pointed out, in the Office of Special Education and the West Virginia Department of Education. And prior to that, I started my career out as a teacher of students with behavior disabilities and specific learning disabilities as well. And having been a teacher of students with disabilities, I always felt like everyone talked about, the next initiative was about all of our students.

But when it came time to implementing the standards, we really didn't mean all. And a demonstration of that was in the articulation of what supports the teacher in, the fourth grade teacher would need as opposed to the teacher who was in the resource room teaching students with specific learning disabilities, all with different levels of performance, achievement levels and different needs. And how do we provide those supports? Now these standards don't define what the supports are.

But we have to have more than a serious conversation. This is a discussion among administrators at the building level and teachers, all teachers. This is a discussion at the central office and the director of special education, with the director of curriculum, or in some of your districts, it's probably the same person that performs both of those functions. I hope not, but in some cases, it may be. But we have to not just articulate what the supports are that are needed for both teachers and children, but we're also going to have to think about what opportunities we're going to have to create.

And some of you who are watching this webcast may remember the Opportunity to Learn Standards from way back. And essentially, that's what this is about. We're going to have to figure out, how do we create those equal opportunities not just for access to the curriculum in the, quote, unquote, regular classroom, but how are we going to think about using our resources, our money differently so that we can ensure that those opportunities are equal, that they're equal opportunities for student with disabilities?

We should also, you should also know that the standards are also, the standards that we developed were developed so that they allowed for the widest possible range of students to participate, now the widest possible range of students to participate understanding that each student may require a different set of accommodations. So we have to think about not just the obvious.

The student who's visually impaired may need the Braille texts or other Braille instructional materials in Braille. We have to think about all of those other supports for the student with behavior disorders, the student with specific learning disabilities, and even our students with severe and profound mental impairments as well. I think most important to me, and most frustrated, most frustrating area when I was a teacher is that oftentimes, the development of the IEP, the individualized education plan, was done separate from any standards effort in the states.

We have a lot of educating to do, not just of the students in the regular education classrooms, but all of our teachers have to be well versed on the importance of developing IEPs that bear direct relationship to the standards that we're talking about today. And I've already talked about the resources. If we ultimately don't change, our behavior doesn't change, and the way we dedicate our resources to supporting teachers, students, and parents and the implementation of the standards, then we will have done nothing better than previous efforts.

And that's why it's going to be important for all of you who are watching us today to really push your district administrators, to push your state leaders, in helping make sure that we do more than say the Common Core State Standards are for all students, but that our, not only our behavior, but our policies at the district, the state, and the school level change to reflect that desire to have these standards apply to all children.

And lastly, we have to recognize that the transition from the standards that are currently in place to the standards that many of these states have adopted is not going to happen overnight. We're going to have to really spend time to think about how we're going to transition students with disabilities and all students to the Common Core Standards and the expectations, which are much higher than many of the standards that we currently have in place. And, yes, that means an examination of the policies that we currently have in place.

We have to not simply add more standards on top of, more policies on top of the policies that we have now. But we have to reexamine the efficacy of the policy that we currently have in place. How do we know that the \$2 million we're spending in state X is achieving the desired outcomes? And if we think it's meeting the intended outcomes we had when we first invested the money, what's the evidence?

And if we don't have the evidence, then we should be questioning whether or not those resources should be dedicated to other areas based on some of the data, whether that be student performance data or otherwise that we have in place.

EAST: Thank you so much. I want to go to our seventh question, and I know both of you have a national view of what's going on out there. So that makes me want to ask this. What are the most important state implementation issues that you see? Gene, would you start us off there?

WILHOIT: We have a couple pieces of information about what's going on in the states now that adoption has occurred, one being we've done a direct survey of the states to determine where they're spending their energies at the moment and how they're beginning to realign. And then the Committee for Economic Development, Jack Jennings and his team, have also done a state survey. It was released recently. What we're finding is first that there was this flurry of activity within states around adoption.

And although we still have a few more states who will go through that adoption process, there was a very quick shift from this conversation of adoption to considering what the next steps would be. And by adoption, as Dane said earlier, state boards of education usually have been the bodies that make the ultimate decision about adoption. What all that meant was that they put the state on a course of implementation to put in place the common core.

It set a process. It gave them an agenda to work on in the next few years. So what we found out of our interaction with the states at this point is that they are very quickly trying to figure out what it will take to implement the Common Core in good faith. And the first issue that is on the table, obviously, is are we prepared to teach to the Common Core? And it's interesting that state policymakers are talking about ways that they can improve the competency skills and teaching strategies of the teachers and of the administrators in the public education system.

But we're also hearing from teachers that they want more assistance with this work. So first of all, we're beginning to think about, where are the teachers today? Have they been teaching in an environment that is based on standards-based learning? What would it take for them to truly understand the Common Core? And what would it take to translate? And so the activities underway under professional development are, first of all, what we're calling unpacking the Common Core. That means taking those broad standard statements and translating them into specific language.

And, of course, we're talking about understanding what each of those progressions are in the Common Core, how they are broken down by each of those grade levels, and what it means in each of those classrooms to teach to the Common Core. It is based on mastery. And so what we are seeing occur is that this is not professional development in an isolated context, but it's going to have to be brought about in teaming environments, teams of teachers in content area and teams of

teachers across grade levels understanding what that means and then translating that into a series of learning opportunities for teachers, direct experiences around understanding the Common Core and how it is taught.

In addition, what we're finding is that there are several questions coming from teachers and administrators about the lack of resources to teach to the Common Core, whether they're aligned or not. And to the credit of some of the private providers, many of them are redirecting their work so that the materials that they have had historically are being reviewed to see if in effect they are aligned with the sequence of learning in the Common Core and if those materials truly do teach to the kinds of levels of not only content but also learning that our students are going to have to master.

We are open to both supporting others who are attempting to provide greater resources, whether they be traditional resources or technology based, which are emerging very, very rapidly ways and also ways that teachers can have access to more resources than they have right now. Toward that end, if we're working toward competency-based learning or proficiency-based learning against a set of designated learning outcomes, it means that teachers are going to have to have more diagnostic tools than they have right now to get more precise about the learning needs of the students.

And it means that they're going to have to be more materials and support for classroom instruction for small group learning and for individual tutoring or individual learning opportunities that students are going to need. And frankly, at the moment, there is both this issue of aligning resources and also developing new resources that can support the learning process.

Third area is a concern about the assessments that are in place and whether those assessments are aligned with the content of the Common Core and if those current assessments are asking students to truly reach the kinds of expectations that are expressed in the Common Core. And this gets to the issue of whether we're asking students to simply understand basic knowledge and be able to state that or if we're, if those assessments are asking students to express themselves in much more sophisticated ways than we've had to . . . later on, we'll talk a little bit more about assessment designs.

But assessment can, is the way in which the standards come alive. Assessments are a way that teachers can begin to understand what's expected of students. And we are in a rush to put in front of teachers good formative assessments that can help them better understand the standards. And then finally, there is a broader set of issues that are underway in the conversation at the state level. And that is how do we move from the system we have right now to this standards-based system driven by the Common Core?

And under that, within that conversation, there are a number of concerns. One being how aligned or misaligned is current state policy and policies from the federal government? How can we move toward this standards-based system when our accountability structure at the state level is holding us to a different set of expectations and a different set of outcomes than what we want them to transition to?

There are concerns about how we can move between now and 2014 and 2015 by taking the logical steps of 2011-12, '13-'14 and '14-'15 as we move towards this, how do we take advantage of this transition time to put in place higher quality teaching to the

standards so that when we get to higher stakes accountability under the Common Core, the students and the teachers will be prepared to be successful?

EAST: Dane, do you have anything to add to that, or?

LINN: Well, I think we are, you know, around the implementation, NGA and CCSSO are really focused on not only helping our respective members, but helping states implement these standards well. And we've talked about a couple of the points listed on the current slide, but I want to go through them again because they're really critical for the successful implementation of the standards.

And many of you know that the current budget situation in the states presents a significant challenge for the work that we're trying to do, not just on the standards, but for ensuring our youngest children and who receive early childhood services as well as the students who are in the K-12 system and all of the students who are currently in college or university.

But these standards provide an opportunity for us to across states, not just within states, but think about the ways in which we can create not only greater efficiencies but more effective practices. And there are a number of opportunities beginning with the common assessment consortia, the two consortia that are working to develop not only common assessments but much better assessments.

But we hope that from the initiative and developing these standards, we also see a number of states come together around the development of instructional tools that they put in the hands of teachers. We're all spending an inordinate amount of money on not only developing standards. Some states have spent historically millions of dollars every year reviewing or revising standards, reviewing and revising their assessments.

How can we leverage our current investments in those two areas but other areas as well and create greater efficiencies, and ultimately and most importantly, help improve student achievement? I think the, part of that is also figuring out how we not only collaborate on the implementation of effective practice. But those practices are informed by what we know from the research, that we're not implementing best practices based on what we think works well or what feels good.

But we're implementing best practices as evidenced by some of the data in the research that we're collecting. And that ultimately, I mean, that's the type of date, and that's the type of justification that we're going to have to be able to make for the expenditure of any funds that states are investing in the educational system.

We also think that there's an opportunity to, for our two organizations to bring together governors and the chief state school officer to work together as a team to implement this agenda across the states so that we don't have an agenda coming from the governor or the separate agenda coming from the chief state school officer and a separate agenda coming out of the legislative body, but that we're all working together toward not just the commitment toward the standards, but the way in which we're going to go about the implementation of this.

And it's important for us to, you know, many of the states entered this process together, committed to work together and to figure out a way in which we could build on all of the experience that we each have around the standards-based reform efforts in our respective states. And we have to continue to learn from each other through not

just our meetings that are convened through each year, but through all the activities that we're going to embark on over the next couple of years.

EAST: Okay. Thank you. I want to go to question eight and focus in on teaching. And how will the Common Core Standards impact teaching? And since this is, we have many special educators in the audience today, specifically, what should special ed teachers be expected to know and teach? And let's, Dane, are we coming back to you for this one start us?

LINN: Yeah, you are. And, Bill, if I could just jump back for a minute and talk about one or two things . . .

EAST: Oh, okay.

LINN: . . . around implementation. Many of you watching this afternoon's video may also be wondering how such an effort will be sustained as we move forward. And it's been very important to both NGA and CCSSO to figure out the governance structure for this work. And how do we ensure that an effort that was started by the states continues to be led by the states?

And we continue to work together and will work with our, not our, the governors and the chiefs who've been in office, but our new members as well to help to solicit their input into what the design of the governance structure should look like. This again, started out as a state, not a federal effort, and it is our intent to devise a structure that will ensure states remain in control of the process that was started.

So that, for example, when the standards are revised and on a time line that will be set at a later date, we ensure that it is a revision process that continues to operate through the structure that we have set up. We're also both working with our respective membership to develop publications that will help them understand the complexities around the implementation of the standards.

So again, it's not simply distributing the standards to teachers around the state and saying that here are the new set of standards, go forth and implement. But it's helping our membership understand all of the policies that are essential for effective implementation. And we've talked about some of those, whether they be around the curricular tools and the decisions or the ways in which you make decisions, on the adoption of instructional materials. In many states, that's simply defined as textbooks.

Or it's the licensure and certification requirements. Or it's the accreditation processes by which preparation programs for future teachers are determined. All of those are implementation issues, and we are trying to capture those in a document that we will lay out and work with our respective members to help them understand that it's about a close examination of a wide array of policies.

And both of our organizations, particularly the Council of Chief State School Officers are working with an organization known as SHEEO who represent the chancellors of higher education. And an association that represents the state colleges and universities and helping them working with the Council of Chief State School Officers and figuring out the ways in which higher ed plays a direct role in implementing

the standards. So those are a couple of additional efforts that are underway around standards.

EAST: Okay. Gene.

WILHOIT: Well, we're in this for the long run. And we know that by adoption, the standards were just beginning a really important implementation phase. And so both of us are working together to develop tools that help our individual states and our members be more successful.

We are connecting others to this work, and we would encourage every organization to contact us and begin serious conversations about how we could work together because we know the expertise and implementation rests in many other organizations, not in the two that sponsor the development of the Common Core. Dane mentioned the work that we're doing with higher education. We have another project underway with the Council of Great City Schools and the AFT to help them begin an implementation process for teachers in five urban areas in five states, to work collaboratively about, through the implementation process.

And we're also at this, in this process, trying to bring our states together into state collaboratives around assessment design and around standards implementation. At this point, we have mid-30's in number of states that have joined into that collaborative to move the work forward. So there, the need for collaboration, the need for other organizations to jump into the space that's now available for them to bring forward implementation is really critical.

EAST: All right. Those are some very important thoughts to add. Are we ready to go and talk about teaching now?

LINN: And now to the teaching.

EAST: Okay. Well, let's go back and address the question again, and as we look at the Common Core Standards, how do they impact teaching? And specifically, what do special education teachers need to know and be able to teach? And I'll go to Dane with that question, and then we'll follow it with a question for Gene about some important work that the chiefs are doing. Dane?

LINN: This is by far the most important question as it relates to implementation because without quality teachers and without teachers understanding how to teach to the standards that have been adopted by many of the states, we will not be successful. And we are talking about those current teachers and all of those individuals that are currently in a teacher preparation program.

If we don't provide them the tools and the opportunities to understand not only the power of the standards, but what's going to be expected of students to be able to demonstrate their knowledge of the standards, again, we're going for what we often call deeper learning, not simply direct recall or regurgitation of facts. We want students to be able to demonstrate their knowledge of the standards and be able to apply these standards in real-world settings. And we're going to have to be able, we're going to

have to provide not just tools, but clear examples of what it looks like to master these standards.

What does it look like for a student who's been identified as having a behavior disorder or a specific learning disability or otherwise, what does it look for that young boy or girl to demonstrate his knowledge against a set of standards in an area where he's currently functioning potentially below level? What does it look like for him or her to master that particular standard?

And if you think about Bloom's Taxonomy, I mean, what I hope emerges, one of the things that I hope emerges from this work is that we're able to end up at some point in time with a set of resources online for teachers to see what it looks like to master, again, thinking of Bloom's Taxonomy, what it looks like to master a particular standard at its most basic level? What does it look like to master the standard at its most analytical level, at its highest level?

So that way, we show the teacher based on what he or she knows about the performance of any student, a student with a disability or otherwise, Bill, that they can see concretely what that mastery looks like, and mastery not defined in the way in which we currently do under No Child Left Behind. But mastery defined as it relates directly to the standard. And it's those types of tools that we have to put in the hands of teachers and parents sooner rather than later.

I mean, the assessments that are currently under development are going to start to be, will be implemented beginning 2014. That's not as far away as we think. And many of the states have already begun to develop plans for the implementation of the standards for their transition to the implementation of the standards beginning next school year. We can't wait to help current and future teachers understand what it looks like for students to meet these standards and for them to teach to these standards.

So there's a lot of work that is going to be not only done by NGA and the Council of Chief State School Officers, but by many other experts and associations from around the country. This issue is also important for another issue, another issue that's quite sensitive, to be honest. And that is the discussion that's going on across many of your states around the relationship between quality teaching and student performance on assessments.

Any discussion around tying teacher compensation to teacher performance and/or student performance will continue in the states. But the only way we're going to be able to truly improve quality teaching is by providing the support, whether it be through better, not just more, but better professional development, whether that be through improved collaborations between the individuals, the professors who teach, future teachers and the K-12 system, we're going to have to find ways to provide much better supports, more than the three or four days that our educators currently have at the beginning of the school year. And that includes teachers, individuals who teach our students with disabilities.

EAST: Thank you so much. Several years ago, really, back in the early '90s, the Council of Chief State School Officers began a very important initiative. It was called the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium or INTASC. And I know just recently some of those standards have been revised, and I don't know if our audience, if everyone has seen the new standards. But I want to ask Gene this

question. What are the INTASC teacher standards, and what is the relationship between these standards and the Common Core Standards?

WILHOIT: Well, back, as you said, Bill, in the early '90s, several states were developing standards around what beginning teachers should know and be able to do to enter the classroom. They were basically, they're voluntary. They still are. And they are efforts to help states come together, feeling that collectively, they could benefit from the interaction. And as we began to look at the Common Core State Standards for student performance, it made sense to us to ask a very serious question.

If these are the standards that we're expecting our students, we ought to be also bringing forward some voluntary standards for what teachers should know and be able to do to teach to the Common Core Standards. And that's really the process that we've engaged in at this point. What we have in place now are draft standards that are under review. But there are a couple of differences in the revision over what we've had in the past.

These standards now do lay out a series of domains of practice that teachers should master. They put them in these expectation statements and then we make a basic decision that it's not simply what a beginning teacher should know and be able to do, but these domains should be reflected and practiced throughout the career of a teacher and that there are ways of determining what is appropriate for a teacher entering the classroom, not at the fully proficient level, but at a level that would satisfy state policymakers that truly this teacher is ready to enter the classroom and be successful.

And then we hopefully are beginning to shift the conversation about how one progresses through a teaching career so that you can reach that high level of competency as we move forward. And this is something that we think will align very directly with the expectations in the Common Core and also be closely aligned with the needs and circumstances that students are bringing to school today.

So it's a new tool. It's a second piece that follows the Common Core Standards. It is an important document we think to begin to align the system in ways that are most successful. Now this has implications across the whole continuum of work that needs to be done in the states to make sure that we have people in the classroom who feel comfortable that they can teach to the Common Core. It has implications for institutions of higher education in terms of preparation programs.

We're asking very serious questions of those institutions today about how aligned are their preparation programs with both the Common Core State Standards outcomes that students are going to have to achieve, and also how aligned are they with these in-task standards that are coming forward? We expect that there will be a change in direction in many preparation programs.

We also believe that as we move forward in the next few years that we're going to see a sort of shift in the delivery system of preparation programs, more openness in the number of programs that are offered, a wider array of entry pathways into the teaching profession with mastery being demonstrated by all of those. It is still a state responsibility to ensure that anyone entering the classroom can, is qualified to enter that classroom. So we expect that the states, and many of them are already begun the

process of shifting toward the demonstrated competencies for individuals going into the classroom regardless of the pathway coming in.

And then if we would expect states to set trajectories for professional development over the career of a teacher, that will, in essence, be followed by serious discussions about roles and responsibilities of teachers, differentiated roles and responsibilities around different kinds of practices that would be carried out by teams of professionals and support that would be wrapped around those professionals, a very different look at the career pathway of a teacher.

All of this is setting a new process underway of rethinking the entire system of preparation, induction, working conditions, professional advancement, recognition and reward around competencies and performances, actual demonstrated performance in the job as a basis for making decisions about career advancement, and ultimately, we think, beginning to change the career. And changing the very support structure around those teachers, around something we've called professional development in the past, but really doesn't mirror the kinds of professional opportunities that exist in other careers.

And by that, I mean we will look for these standards, both for Common Core Standards and model teacher standards to become the drivers of what the new professional development would look like. And we think it will be more site based. It will be more dependent on the work within schools.

It will be fed by information about where students are against the learning goals and what needs to be done to advance, what kinds of direct experiences teachers could have in the school building or in the district, but also in connecting with other teachers across the state and the nation and the world in terms of professional development and a much more aligned system of practical research feeding back into richer data information systems.

So basically, this is a major shift in the way we've looked at the profession of teaching around competency, around the rewards and support structures that teachers need to be successful, and around the kinds of systems that would wrap around the career pathway of a teacher.

EAST: Thank you. My next question is around a concern I have that as I work with my members, the state directors of special education as we look at the Common Core Standards around states, it's just obvious to us that for this to work the way we all want it to work, it's got to be, it's got to gain attention from the highest levels of state government all the way down to families and even students.

And so I want you both to think about this question. What are the key steps that you see the state should take to make sure that when they roll out this Common Core work, that it gets down to everybody that needs to get it, even the families and students? Dane, do you want to start us off with that one?

LINN: Well, I want to start by talking briefly about the work that not only states are going to have to do, but the role that national organizations can play.

EAST: Okay.

LINN: And particularly, Bill, the work of organizations that touch parents because parents are going to be critical to helping not just implement the standards for their child, but in some ways, help push the system. Push the system defined as either their school, their state, or their district. And but there's a lot of work that has to be done to educate parents that these standards even exist.

And there is a national association, the National PTA, Parent-Teacher Association, who have recently released a set of tools, informational tools for parents, so that they understand what these standards are, what they're not, and what role they could play in implementing these standards as they unfold across the country. I also think there's a lot of work that our respective states have to do. We both, Gene and I, have commented on the importance, the important role that teacher play in the implementation of these standards.

And to simply send these e-mails, an e-mail out or hard copies of the standards is doing a huge disservice to the individuals who are expected students to meet these standards. And so both at the state and even in those states that have regional structures, whether they be intermediate units or regional education service agencies, those organizations have to work with the state to think about the ways in which professional development is going to look different from the ways in which it's looked in the past.

That the professional development has to be grounded in the data that we have that tells us how students are performing in the respective district, that the professional development has to be more systematic, that it cannot be simply the three days before school or a day after school. The professional development doesn't merely, is not merely made up of how to use the new instructional materials. It really has to be a strategy that's directly tied to the data.

And states play an important role in partnership with districts and schools as we move to the implementation of these standards. So there's a lot of educating, but there's a lot of support, two themes that we've already hit on throughout these remarks. But again, I want to go back to the other, one of the most important roles that states will play. And that is a close examination, a hard look at the policies that are currently in place. And there are some policies, I can speak to my own experiences.

There are some policies in my home state that should be gone, done away with. And we should not be expecting teachers to implement policies that aren't making a difference, and we shouldn't be dedicating resources in areas that aren't having the impact, which ultimately is in improving student performance. One of those policies is the ways in which states make a determination about what's an approved set of instructional materials?

And for those states that are textbook adoption states, you invest, your districts are investing an incredible amount of money on resources to help students meet the standards, to help teachers teach to the standards. We need to make sure that the policies and the processes that we have in place for adopting these instructional materials ultimately ensure that those materials are aligned to the Common Core Standards. It's critical. Otherwise, we're teaching from instructional materials that bears little if no relationship to the standards.

So those are a couple of my ideas, Bill, for how we might move to, the work that states have to do to implement the standards. I don't know, Gene, if you have anything to add to that.

WILHOIT: Well, I think basically, I would agree with you that the whole issue of doing this alone is one that we want to challenge. It is, you don't bring the kind of sufficient resources to the task that you can do when you come together with others. You don't have within a state right now, just mention this issue of state education agency capacity, at a time when budgets have been cut and individuals are very quick to cut state agencies before they would cut resources to schools.

So states have limited capacity. You can build on that capacity. And there's no way that a state alone can carry this kind of work out with the resource limitations. So this is a critical, critical phase for states to come together.

EAST: Thank you so much. All right. We're moving along in our time for our conference here. And we've been dancing around probably one of the more important questions all day long. And that's all those questions around assessment. And that's what our, many people in our states are asking, what is being done to allow the assessments for the Common Core Standards? What needs to happen between now and 2014-15 that we talked about earlier?

How will the states transition from their current assessment practices to new assessments? All those issues are so important and on the minds of our states. So let's address that for a while. Who wants to start this? Is this, Dane, are you starting for us again?

LINN: I'll start this. And we should probably, Bill, begin on what these assessment consortia are. And for those of you that remember the U.S. Department of Education's competition back in September of 2010, for what it was, is called, Race to the Top, many of the states competed for a significant amount of resources that the secretary, Secretary Duncan, put on the table for states to implement some innovative practices that would lead to improved student achievement.

And what the secretary did was take \$350 million out of the stimulus funds that were dedicated to Race to the Top and held a separate competition for the creation of not just common assessments, but better assessments, assessments that really measured students' learning at its deepest level. And there were, from that competition, there were two consortia that were funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

One known as PARCC, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, in which 26 states are participating, and the other, best said as the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortia, where there are 31 states participating. Now some of those states made a decision, a definitive choice, that they wanted to be a founding partner of one or the other consortia. And for those states that, like Florida is a founding partner of the PARCC consortia, they have only signed up for one of the consortia.

Other states have decided they wanted to be a part of both consortia and be part of the process, the work that was under development in developing the assessments that were framed and funded in the proposals supported by the U.S. Department of

Education. For those states that are, have made the decision to be a part of both consortia, they are going to make their decision about which state, which consortia, or which assessments they'll ultimately implement at the end of the process. So we have 44 states that are participating in one or both of these consortia, and these consortia are really led by the states.

We continue, we being NGA and the Council, continue to be involved insofar as educating our members and making sure, I think most important to us is making sure that the assessments that emerge from these two consortia lead to not only better measures of student performance, but that we can ultimately also have comparable results, that there's some level of comparability from a state that uses SMARTER Balanced to a state that is participating in PARCC.

And both Gene and I will be very candid in saying that is a challenge because the design of these assessments, as we'll go through in a couple of minutes, are very different from one another. But I know from my membership, comparability is of the utmost importance. And we should be honest and acknowledge that any new measures of student performance are ultimately part of the equation for any new accountability system that emerges over time, whether it's through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or some interim should ESEA not be reauthorized, and there's some minor revisions that are made by the U.S. Department of Education and ultimately Congress.

But we need to have better measures, again, for better capture of student performance and understand its relationship to the new accountability systems. And again, three years is not too far away, and many states are at the, I would describe it as the infancy stage of how they're going to transition from the current system of standards and assessments to the new system of standards and assessments. And this is an area where states are going to need flexibility from the U.S. Department of Education, particularly around the accountability provisions.

And as Gene has pointed out previously, the adequate yearly progress measures, which is the primary driver to measuring whether or not you're meeting the performance targets that each of your states have set in place. And you can see on the next slide for the PARCC assessment, which Gene will talk about in a minute, which states are participating in that consortia.

WILHOIT: And it might be good, Bill, to pick up on this and describe very briefly the two consortia. And as you can see, PARCC is made up of a group of states designated on this map that is on the screen of states in a dark blue, which are the governing states, and the light blue states are the participating states. Interesting set of clusters, and you look at the next one, that Dane will describe, around SMARTER Balanced, see similar patterns across the country.

A lot of large states in this consortium and a number of states that are either border states or East Coast states, their goals were to, one, develop the best and most solid assessment structure that they could to measure the Common Core and to make sure that those assessments were faithful to the Common Core design.

Secondly, there was a major effort in their work to begin to think about how they could influence classroom results in a very positive way. There was a major concern by PARCC states that the current assessments that are underway, given at the end of the

year, after the fact of teaching were not driving in a positive direction the classroom instruction learning process in teaching. And so they wanted to build something that would provide quicker feedback just-in-time kinds of results back to the teachers, and at the same time, that they could make sure that there are supports around the assessment that assist teachers.

And then the third major goal of PARCC was to do all of this in a very efficient and cost-saving sort of way because they know the increased demands that are on states for competition of state resources and also the growing cost of assessments. And so they're going to try to deliver all of this within a way that states can afford and can move ahead collectively. The overall design of this assessment is to provide assessments in three through eight and then at the high school level.

And the basic design is one where they're looking at incremental judgments made against student progress throughout a school year. And by that, I mean generally, the design is to provide four assessments during a school year, the one at one-fourth the way through, halfway through, and three-fourths of the way, and then the end-of-year assessment and following of that design.

Those first three at one-fourth of the way through, halfway through, and three-fourths of the way would not be a comprehensive exam against all that was going on, but would be feedback on student learning using multiple forms of assessment and doing this in a way that doesn't overly interrupt the classroom experience, but provides some immediate feedback for accountability purposes and also for teaching experience.

End of year experience would be a comprehensive exam. All four of those assessments would be pooled together into a judgment about whether a student is prepared, ready to move on, has mastered the curriculum ready to move to the next level of experience. So a final point I would make on it is this consortium is looking at new and more expressive ways for students to demonstrate what they know and are able to do, so we expect that there would be greater dependence on technology.

We know there will be. In fact, the goal is to administer these through technology-based learning programs and also to have students express themselves in more rigorous ways and more meaningful ways than they have through the multiple choice kinds of exams that we have in place right now.

EAST: Okay. Dane, you're going to talk about just briefly the SMARTER Balanced consortium, right?

LINN: One, that's right, Bill, and one additional feature I would point to in PARCC that is distinct from the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortia is some initial exploration into the development of assessments for an early childhood, and that's an area that they will do some initial work and knowing the sensitivities around assessing our youngest children, and by youngest children, I mean, preschool as opposed to K through three. And that is not work that SMARTER Balanced will take on.

But the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortia, the fundamental feature or the, yeah, the fundamental feature of that consortia is really around the development of online exams and using the available technologies to assess student performance. And they plan to use, as the slide indicates, open-source technology and being able to

provide, use this technology to provide information to teachers on how students are progressing.

I think another key feature that's not really highlighted on this slide but will be on a subsequent one and is really important to mention is the role of teachers. Teachers through the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortia will play a role in the evaluation of student performance against those assessments. And that is an area where the U.S. has not done much work. Our neighbors to the north in Canada spend particularly in some of the western provinces over in Victoria, also spend an incredible amount and have a long history of teacher involvement in the evaluation of those exams.

But these are exams that will be offered through SMARTER Balanced, will be administered twice a year. There will be some optional or what we call benchmark exams that districts, states could participate in, and then they are in the process of developing a whole array of tools and effective practices that teachers could use in helping inform performance on those exams, but will also inform some of the work they do through informal assessment as all classroom teachers do.

And the next slide simply identifies the number of states that are participating or identifies the states that are participating in the consortia with the blue states, much like the PARCC being the founding members. And just as a reminder, the founding members are the ones who have signed up for one and only one consortia.

There are also a couple real quickly, a couple similarities between the two assessment consortia, and as we've alluded to in the entire presentation, we're trying to go beyond the what we often call, some would call the norm-referenced test. Others would call them color in the bubble tests or short answer tests. We're really trying to see how students not only understand the content, but they can apply the knowledge and skills.

And there's a focus on much higher-order thinking skills as opposed to the direct recall. While it's different, each of the consortia will use the technology to figure out how they can score more efficiently, and more importantly, how they can get the results back to teachers much more quickly than they currently do. An assessment in this day that's administered in March or April should not, it should not take until the next school year, until October, for teachers to get those results.

And lastly, they're both very interested with some of the additional resources from the U.S. Department of Education in developing an array of resources including released items, like many states already do, release test items from previous years. And there'll be an array of professional development opportunities that will be offered to states and others through these consortia in addition to what states and districts will also do.

WILHOIT: So I think there are some questions and concerns about the implications of all this to students with disabilities.

EAST: Absolutely.

WILHOIT: And so it is important to address that very directly. There is a vocabulary common within the disabilities community today about the 1% of the 2% students. And

they're really a way that the states and the federal government compensated for their lack of ability to assess students as we implement No Child Left Behind. I think two things are important to note as we begin, the consortia begin to do the work. First of all, both of them are going to be funded to look at ways of better assessing what we call the students with the most severe and profound conditions, those 1% students that are in the system today.

And both are charged with coming up with ways to assess the learning outcomes. They will still be performance based. They will still drive those students toward success after the K-12 experience. They will still hold onto high levels of expectations and supports for those students. But we hope out of this process that we are, these assessments will be much better than what we've had historically.

They'll be able to identify learning differences, first of all, around the learning progressions so that we would be able, if you take those steps from kindergarten through the high school, we are now able to assess learning at each of those progression points and provide feedback. But in order to do that, we're going to have to have much better ways of determining where students are, much better assessment items, much better assessment designs than we have right now.

And it seems to me this holds great promise, that regardless of where a student is on a learning continuum, we should be able to identify where that student is. We should be able then to place that student on a learning progression. Now it may mean, and there are serious conversations about adequate yearly progress, whether you should be able to reach a certain level of progression within a very short time frame, or will there be some latitude for students to progress at a prolonged pace but still reaching the goal.

It is clear now that almost everyone in public policy today, education policy, agrees that we ought to move to a model that holds students to high outcomes, but also has a growth component, that is how much progress can a student make in a time frame, all students being expected to achieve at very high levels, all students being expected to grow within the time frame of measurement? It may be that it takes some students longer to get to this, but the ultimate goal is to get them through the experience having achieved the kinds of expectations that we hold for those students.

EAST: Okay. Thank you very much. We're about to run out, we're running out of time quickly, but we have enough time to address one more question, and then we'll go wrap up. And this is an important one, I think, for our special education people that are watching this conference.

What should the special ed community be doing to get ready for this implementation? That's a loaded question. But do either one of you have any thoughts on that? And I'll go to, I see the wheels spinning here with Dane, so do you have any comments you'd like to make about what should the special ed community be doing?

LINN: We should've spent the entire webcast on this topic. But since we're not, let me just share a couple of thoughts, one of which is I encourage all of you to continue to be the advocates for ensuring, to ensuring that students with disabilities are a part of this effort. And I know that can be frustrating, particularly for those of you who have been in

this field for a long time. And having been there, I know that it can be an uphill battle because you feel like you're always trying to get in the door, and you don't have the key.

But I can tell you that our two organizations, and not just our two organizations, but we continue to push many other organizations to making sure that students with disabilities, and we know this isn't going to be easy, but that students with disabilities are an integral part of the implementation of these standards. And so sit in those faculty meetings, or sit in those meetings if you're a state education agency director of special education, or working in the office of special education, and continue to ask why are we not thinking about a strategy for implementation that includes students with disabilities?

Why are we not rethinking the policies that we currently have in place? But more importantly, about asking the questions, you have so much to offer. This community, in a way, has been the leader around the accommodations for students of varying levels of achievement. And you have solutions to put on the table.

So for every question you ask, for every opportunity you have to push against the system, I ask you to put some of the solutions, whether it be the work that you're doing around response to intervention, whether it be some of the research, the good research that we have around how students with disabilities learn and how that could inform how all students learn, whether that be some of the work that you've done around assessment, or whether there be exemplars around the country, districts that have some evidence to put on the table on how we can really ensure students with disabilities are part of a standards-based system.

This is really about not just pushing, but sharing those best practices. You have a long and rich history in some regards. The special education community has a richer history than the rest of the system that they're a part of. Let's make sure we prevent the rest of the system from reinventing the wheel by sharing what we already know and continue to communicate, lastly, continue to, continue as part of your advocacy efforts, continue to advocate that all means all, that these standards weren't created for the student in the normal bell who's right in the middle of the bell curve.

These standards were developed for all students. It's just the way in which we're going to go about delivering them might vary from student to student. And that includes a student with the disability and a student without a disability. Gene.

WILHOIT: When I first, and I am old enough to remember when 94142 came into existence. And I thought at that time, inside that law is the hope for education in the future. I think along the way, we were diverted. In some ways, it became too routine. It became too much of a legal conversation about rights, and we lost sight of what it's going to take to truly support children labeled with disabilities. I think the Common Core Standards effort, this movement towards standards-based learning, is an opportunity for us to really fulfill what we were attempting to do back in 94-142.

It is an opportunity only if, as Dane said, you continue to advocate for these children. Don't let others push them aside in this conversation. It would be too easy for them to do so. And for you then to demand and contribute to the development of the kinds of supports that students are going to need to reach these goals, but think about the excitement that can be created if we can truly do this right, and these students have truly identified needs that are translated to an instructional process with the kinds of supports they need to be successful.

We can have some excited students, parents, and educators feeling like what they're doing is a worthy business and producing the results that they had hoped they would do. That's why you went into the business of education. That's why you chose to work with students with disabilities. I think we have an opportunity here to be greater than we have been in the past.

EAST: And, Dane, you had one last comment.

LINN: One last comment, yes, I also want to encourage you to challenge your own thinking because it's going to require each of us to act differently. And some of the practices that we may, you may have been implementing in your own classrooms or your own districts may not be working. And you can play an important leadership role by admitting that some of those policies and practices may not be as effective as you think they are, and that you may have to change your own behavior. And so while you're pushing the system, also reflect on your own practice because that's equally important.

EAST: I believe, Gene, you have a couple of quick resource slides . . .

WILHOIT: Yeah, I . . .

EAST: . . . move on over to those.

WILHOIT: Some of you may not have gotten into the Common Core at the depth that you will need to in the future. On the screen is this Core Standards.org website, and you can go to that site and find the standards themselves. You can find supporting documents that we have put onboard. You can find the research behind the development of those standards. And you will find over time additional resources being added to this website that will provide guidance to you.

An example of that would be a development of some model teaching lessons, some areas where assessments would be tied to those standards to give you a better understanding. So we'll be adding to this site as we move forward. And then if you need to get to either one of us, very directly, we can put on the screen a reference point here for both of us.

We are accustomed to interacting with people around the standards, and both Dane and I are available. But also, you can see the names of some individuals on our staff who have direct responsibility for implementation of the Common Core. Please feel comfortable reaching out to any one of us as you move forward. We look forward to working with you.

EAST: Thank you. And I want to thank you for your interest in the Common Core Standards and for viewing this conference. And a special word of thanks to both Dane Linn and Gene Wilhoit for leading the conference and sharing with us today. We hope the conference will inspire you to work with other stakeholders in your state, school district, or school and community to promote public education through the National

Voluntary Core Standards. On behalf of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, NASDSE, we thank you for joining us.