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Effective Implementation of the Common Core State Standards

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR
TEACHERS IS ESSENTIAL FOR SUCCESS

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EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS IS AN ONGOING SERIES OF *BRIEFINGS* FROM THE TAXWATCH CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY.

THE SERIES FOCUSES ON DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE STATE'S PATH TO FULL IMPLEMENTATION, HIGHLIGHTING ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO THE TAXPAYERS, AND IDENTIFYING STEPS THAT THE STATE CAN TAKE TO ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION.

BRIEFINGS IN THIS SERIES

- I. The Importance of Getting it Right, June 2013
- ▶ **II. Professional Development for Teachers is Essential for Success**

INTRODUCTION

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will be fully implemented in Florida's schools during the 2014-15 school year, increasing academic expectations for students and teachers, including the very methods and strategies used to teach students of every grade level.

Conceptually, the new standards demand a shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning, and teachers' ongoing professional development must mirror these expectations. Students will be expected to understand and apply rigorous English language arts and mathematics content at a much deeper level, to reflect on what they are learning, to defend or depart from conclusions, and to collaborate with other students in their learning process. For students to be successful, teachers must be afforded time with their colleagues to develop the same skills for their instructional practices.

Effective professional development must have direct, tangible connections to the classroom and instructional practices that enhance student learning; build upon previous professional development experiences; and support the diverse needs of teachers across a variety of disciplines.

Because the new standards have been adopted by a substantial number of states, an unprecedented opportunity exists for teachers across the nation to collaborate and share instructional successes.

RESOURCES IN THE FIELD

Two professional development practices, *Professional Learning Communities* and *Lesson Study*, are often cited in research studies as effective tools to enhance instruction through systematic examination of instructional practices.

Technology affords teachers the ability to be an active part of a professional learning community organized to share instructional strategies and successful practices, without borders or boundaries. These communities can help address challenges across the spectrum of teaching environments and the availability of resources, they provide access to new ideas and skill sets, and they have the potential to alleviate the pitfalls of teaching in isolation.

FLDOE Summer Institutes

Following adoption of the standards in 2010, the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) and local school districts began receiving funding through federal Race to the Top grants to support CCSS-specific professional development, a portion of which was used by FLDOE to create regional Summer Institutes. In 2012, nearly 20,000 teachers participated in the Institutes, and the programs continued this summer with close to 16,000 teachers.

Readiness Gauge

The FLDOE also documents the extensive, ongoing professional development activities provided by local districts as a component of the *Common Core Readiness Gauge*, which illustrates the status of six CCSS readiness indicators across Florida's grade levels.¹

CPALMS

The cornerstone of FLDOE's focus on Common Core professional development is a system called Collaborate, Plan, Align, Learn, Motivate, Share (CPALMS), which is designed to provide peer-reviewed resources specific to the CCSS standards, lesson plan development, and teacher support tools, all of which can be used in classrooms.

Every resource published on CPALMS must first go through a rigorous peer review wherein educators and subject matter experts (currently more than 600 are registered) provide reviews and constructive feedback. The peer-review process builds a community of educators working together, a basic tenet of what the CCSS expects from students. As of June 2013, more than 10,600 resources had been submitted to CPALMS, of which more than 4,150 completed the review process and were approved.

Thus far, lesson plans are the largest category of available resources, but CPALMS also includes instructional unit plans, virtual exercises and games, data sets, and more. One of the benefits of CPALMS is the breadth of submitting entities, which include more than just K-12 teachers. Faculty from universities across the country such as MIT, Purdue, and the FSU MagLab; projects and grantees utilizing CPALMS as their platform, such as Bioscopes, SUMMIT, and UF Teach; and nonprofit and for-profit organizations and have all contributed thus far.

¹ <http://www.flccss.org/gridview/>

One very promising component, *CPALMS Perspectives*, provides video resources highlighting experiences and sharing insights on teaching math and science from experts, teachers, and other professionals. These brief videos provide educators with a more complete understanding of technical content, highlight new and innovative approaches to teaching, and demonstrate the application of science and mathematics concepts in practical, real-world situations. Two hundred videos focused on CCSS for mathematics and the Next-Generation science standards are scheduled to be available by June 2014.

CPALMS also includes Model Eliciting Activities (MEAs), which are open-ended, engineering-based interdisciplinary problems that require students to create solutions in the form of mathematical and scientific models that reveal their thinking about concepts embedded in the problem. The students work in teams to develop, test, and revise their models to provide a solution for a fictitious client. The MEAs encourage students to use a variety of CCSS-related skills, including critically reading texts, applying problem-solving strategies, working mathematically, and communicating effectively with teammates to arrive at a solution.

OTHER STATES & NGOs

Achieve

One of the leading organizations in the development of the CCSS, *Achieve* is a nonprofit organization that assembles educators and researchers to design instructional activities that can substantially improve student achievement, based on their collective experience. These include ready-to-use modules complete with slide presentations, videos, facilitator's instructions, and hands-on activities.

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

The CCSSO has led efforts to support state collaboration and has built a national repository of instructional tools, resources, and practices to support CCSS implementation, developed by CCSSO and the lead writers of the CCSS.²

² http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Publications/Common_Core_State_Standards_Implementation_Tools_and_Resources.html#sthash.QXJE2NU0.dpuf

Engage New York

Adding to their Regents Reform Agenda, the state of New York made a bold decision to move expeditiously toward implementation of the CCSS and designed a comprehensive statewide professional development initiative known as Engage New York.

Engage includes teams of 3-15 people, known as Network Teams and Network Team Equivalents (NTEs), located throughout the state to work in close partnership with districts and schools to help implement the State's education reforms.

Kentucky and Tennessee

Kentucky and Tennessee have adopted a more aggressive implementation schedule than other states, thus providing valuable resources to support the professional development of Florida's teachers. Kentucky has developed extensive Curriculum Maps and teaching tools specific to CCSS, and Tennessee has provided professional development content designed to help teachers bring more creativity and flexibility to their teaching.

CONCLUSION

To ensure a successful transition to the CCSS, Florida must make a concerted effort to provide educators the most effective professional development practices and opportunities available.

Evidence from other states that have made the same transition shows that the positive impact of collaborative learning environments such as CPALMS, Lesson Study, and Learning Communities can make a dramatic difference in the success of CCSS implementation, and Florida has taken the preliminary steps to replicate this success.

The CPALMS system and related resources currently being developed by the FLDOE will help ensure that our teachers and our students will be able to achieve the goals set before them by the new standards.

ABOUT FLORIDA TAXWATCH

As an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit taxpayer research institute and government watchdog, it is the mission of Florida TaxWatch to provide the citizens of Florida and public officials with high quality, independent research and analysis of issues related to state and local government taxation, expenditures, policies, and programs. Florida TaxWatch works to improve the productivity and accountability of Florida government. Its research recommends productivity enhancements and explains the statewide impact of fiscal and economic policies and practices on citizens and businesses.

Florida TaxWatch is supported by voluntary, tax-deductible memberships and private grants, and does not accept government funding. Memberships provide a solid, lasting foundation that has enabled Florida TaxWatch to bring about a more effective, responsive government that is accountable to the citizens it serves for the last 33 years.

THE FLORIDA TAXWATCH CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

The Florida TaxWatch Center for Educational Performance and Accountability (CEPA) was established to address the profound fiscal and economic impact that PreK-20 education has on Florida's competitiveness. CEPA works directly with Florida's business community and educational research organizations to advocate sound education policy to promote high academic achievement, develop and deploy reliable assessment tools, maximize the return on taxpayer investment, and help foster a more competitive Florida.

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The findings in this *Briefing* are based on the data and sources referenced. Florida TaxWatch research is conducted with every reasonable attempt to verify the accuracy and reliability of the data, and the calculations and assumptions made herein. Please feel free to contact us if you feel that this paper is factually inaccurate.

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