

2013 CEREMONY BREAK-OUT SESSION: ADDING YOUR VOICE TO THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION

COMMON CORE



DISCUSSION SUMMARY

About 90 people (approximately 2/3 of whom were teachers) attended the Roundtable Discussion on the Common Core as part of the National Blue Ribbon Schools 2013 Ceremony. Laurie Calvert, Teacher Liaison in the Office of Communication and Outreach, and Dennis Bega, Director, Regional Communications Offices, with the U.S. Department of Education, facilitated the discussion. Participants were asked to discuss issues related to implementing the Common Core in their schools, their goals for successful implementation, and how they are learning about the Common Core, and then write responses in terms of the following questions:

- What is going on now in your school that is working to develop teachers so that the aspirations of the CCSS will be fulfilled?
- What are your school's goals for the Common Core? What does success look like for this year and for the next year? What evidence will you use to evaluate your success toward achieving these goals?
- Where are you going to learn about the Common Core? How do you know that the materials and resources you are receiving are good?

Following a couple of rounds of table discussions, Laurie Calvert and Dennis Bega asked a representative from each table to distill ideas raised. Key themes that emerged regarding within participants' discussions centered around professional development and collaboration in order to develop robust and more real-world relevant lessons, the importance of using multiple sources for gathering information and comparing data to determine successes, and keeping focused on students, what they need to know and how best to reach them. Below are some details and key points raised from the discussions, as well as illustrative quotes.

What is going on now in your school that is working to develop teachers so that the aspirations of the CCSS will be fulfilled?

Professional Development.

"Schools have one coach (or more) who follows through assistance daily!"

"Superintendent visits teams of administrators and teachers weekly for collaboration."

- Districts are providing training on the Common Core in order to prepare teachers.
- Schools are making sure they have on-site staff to help, such as a school-based coach for daily assistance with aligning lessons or to answer questions.

- Teachers and administrators are working together to record good lessons that meet CC expectations and learn from each other.

Increased Collaboration.

“Training sessions require teachers to create units/lessons/technology links that are being compiled into a database.”

- Teachers are increasing their grade level and cross-grade-level planning and meetings to discuss issues and brainstorm ideas for implementing the CC.
- Sharing throughout districts has increased, such as teacher-created lessons meeting CCSS to build a common bank for district-wide use.
- Teachers are initiating book studies and study groups.
- Schools are educating parents so they will be prepared for what to expect regarding student work and assessments.
- Administrators are working with teachers to analyze data and focus on areas that need improvement in order to bring lessons and assessments into alignment with CCSS.

Curriculum and Assessment.

“[We’re] rewriting curriculum/units using anything we can find that addresses the standards.”

“We have developed common unit assessments for reading, writing, and math.”

- Teachers and administrators are working to align curriculum with new CCSS standards.
- Cross-grade meetings focus on understanding progression student learning.
- Schools are changing the format for lesson plans to include CCSS.
- Teachers are doing more to emphasize writing, responding, and engagement because of CCSS.
- Teachers are challenging students to support their claims with evidence.
- Schools and districts are designing common assessments, including formative assessments that are linked to CCSS in specific grade levels.

What are your school’s goals for the Common Core? What does success look like for this year and for the next year? What evidence will you use to evaluate your success toward achieving these goals?

Goal: Everyone Will Be Ready.

“To create rigorous, engaging lessons so we can launch our Common Core next year.”

“Next year all teachers need to be on board.”

- Schools and districts are working to make sure everyone understands the new learning goals.
- PLCs are being used to fine tune strategies.
- All curricula will be aligned by deadlines.
- Parent must be made aware of the coming changes.

Goal: CCSS Will Be Implemented As Intended.

“To raise academic rigor and successful instruction and learning for every student in every class by aligning to the CC Standards.”

- Emphasis is being placed on incorporating technology as a tool for learning.
- Schools intend to make heavy use of formative assessment.
- Administrators and teachers will fulfill all training requirements in time.
- Teachers are working on how to include more nonfiction and writing in lessons.
- Classrooms and schools will experience smooth transitions that don't disrupt the learning experience.

Success: Measured by Student Learning and Achievement.

“Success is defined by our new evaluation system. We use test scores as evidence.”

“Success would be maintaining our student achievement, continued growth, and successful implementation.”

- Success means maintaining or improving student achievement.
- Every student will continue to show growth in every class.
- Formative assessment data should correlate with standardized test results.
- Academic rigor will be raised.

Success: Measured by Teacher Preparedness.

“All teachers will be aware and immersed.”

- All teachers will become comfortable with the standards.
- CCSS will show up on all teacher lesson plans.
- Teachers will create lessons that require higher thinking skills.
- Teachers will be confident and use proper instructional techniques.
- Schools will strike an effective balance between teaching and learning.
- Student interaction in the classroom will increase.

Where are you going to learn about the Common Core? How do you know that the materials and resources you are receiving are good?

Schools are Learning from Multiple Resources.

“We share materials and websites. In our district trainings we've been given numerous rubrics to evaluate material.”

“Our Diocese Principals' Association meets monthly and CCSS topics are discussed.”

“We go to online workshops offered by the state.”

“[I go to] sessions I can find at professional conferences.”

- Districts and states are providing trainings and meetings.
- Schools are looking to see what other states have done and what they can learn from them.
- Schools are designating curriculum committees and/or experts and coaches to take the lead.

- Conferences are a trusted source for information: local or state, Department- or professional organization-sponsored.
- Administrators and teachers are turning to online research, seeking out teaching websites and blogs.
- Districts and schools are hiring outside consultants and experts.

Administrators and Teachers Still Have Concerns About Quality.

“This is a great question! I’m still not sure.”

“I use my judgment to evaluate the materials according to the CSS, but it is hard to know what is most valuable.”

- Testing companies and publishers are regarded skeptically.
- Schools want to know if the materials they think are good truly are, and don’t know where to turn for assurance.