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Year 1 State Report: California

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Year 1 State Report: California

Abstract

This report examines how the state of California approached college- and career-ready standards implementation during a time of transition. For the purposes of this report and in keeping with C-SAIL's focus, the authors concentrate on implementation of California's English language arts (ELA) and math standards.

Keywords

college and career-ready standards, implementation, curriculum, professional development, assessment, students with disabilities, english learners

Disciplines

Education | Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research

Comments

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YEAR 1 STATE REPORT: **CALIFORNIA**



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About the Center on Standards, Alignment, Instruction, and Learning (C-SAIL)

The Center on Standards, Alignment, Instruction, and Learning (C-SAIL) examines how college- and career-ready standards are implemented, if they improve student learning, and what instructional tools measure and support their implementation. C-SAIL is led by Andy Porter, with a team of researchers from the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, University of Southern California Rossier School of Education, American Institutes for Research, and Vanderbilt Peabody College. The Center is funded through a grant from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education.

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Introduction

The Center on Standards, Alignment, Instruction, and Learning (**C-SAIL**) examines how college- and career-readiness (CCR) standards are implemented, whether they improve student learning, and what instructional tools measure and support their implementation. Established in July 2015 and funded by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education, C-SAIL has worked closely with its five partner states—California, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Texas—to explore their experiences with CCR standards-based reform, particularly regarding students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs).

This report examines how the state of California is continuing CCR standards implementation during a time of transition. For the purposes of this report and in keeping with C-SAIL’s focus, we concentrate on implementation of California’s English language arts (ELA) and math standards.

California Academic Standards Timeline | At-A-Glance

The adoption, implementation, and revision of California’s CCR standards and assessments is an ongoing process spanning several years. Below is an overview of California’s timeline for this process, beginning with the year that CCR standards were first adopted:

Year CCR standards were adopted	California adopted the ELA and math Common Core State Standards (CCSS) verbatim in 2010, allowing for a maximum 15% of additional standards added by the state. This set of standards was slightly modified/enhanced through a multi-stakeholder process during a 2013–2014 revision.
Year(s) the CCR standards were fully implemented (all schools in the state were required to use the CCR standards)	The Common Core Standards in ELA and math were to be fully implemented in the 2014–2015 school year.
Year(s) CCR standards were/will be revised	The most recent revisions occurred during the 2013–2014 school year. The Common Core Standards have been kept verbatim with additions noted in bold throughout.
Year(s) CCR-aligned assessments were fully administered across the state	The Smarter Balanced test was fully administered during the 2014–2015 school year after being piloted in Spring 2014.
Year(s) CCR-aligned assessments were/will be revised	California has remained in the Smarter Balanced (SBAC) consortium and adopted all of its related assessments, both formative and summative.

Major policy developments relevant to standards-based reform in the state

Senate Bill X51 amends California *Education Code* Section 60605.8 to provide for adoption of the CCSS, including formation of an Academic Content Standards Commission (ACSC) responsible for making a recommendation to the SBE regarding adoption of CCSS. The CCSS cannot be changed, but supplemental standards can be added (15%).

Data Analysis | Our Framework

Drawing on interviews with four key state officials across various offices in the California Department of Education (CDE), this report synthesizes and analyzes those responses using the *policy attributes theory* (Porter, Floden, Freeman, Schmidt, & Schwille, 1988), a theoretical framework positing five attributes related to successful policy implementation. The following descriptions of each policy attribute guided this analysis:

- **SPECIFICITY** describes how extensive, detailed, and/or prescriptive a policy is. The explicitness of the goals, guidelines, and resources may help schools implement policies with a greater degree of fidelity.
- **AUTHORITY** describes how policies gain legitimacy and status and through that become persuasive (e.g., rules or law, historical practice, or charismatic leaders). Policies have authority when state and district leaders, parents, community members, and other stakeholders devote time and resources to the reform initiative, which sends the clear signal that the endeavor is an institutional priority. Policies are also deemed authoritative when stakeholders participate in the decision-making processes or when they demonstrate their investment in the reform.
- **CONSISTENCY** describes the extent to which various policies are aligned to one another and how policies relate to each other (or support each other).
- **POWER** describes how policies are reinforced and enacted through systems of rewards/sanctions.
- **STABILITY** describes the extent to which policies change or remain constant over time.

The report is organized around six focal areas—standards and curriculum, assessment, professional development, students with disabilities (SWDs), English language learners (referred to in this report by the CDE term English learners, or ELs), and communication and outreach. We report on each focal area through the lens of the policy attributes to help readers see how state officials identified areas of strengths and challenges related to standards implementation in California. Given the limited nature of our data set, we do not purport to provide the full depth and breadth of the department’s work toward standards-based reform. This report is instead a snapshot of the state’s efforts in implementing the standards across the six focal areas.

We will integrate these findings with survey data from district leaders, principals and teachers in 2017, as well as interview data from three California districts, which we will conduct in the winter of 2017. Further, we plan to conduct state and district interviews for the next 3 years, ending in



the spring and summer of 2020; data from these interviews will be continually integrated into our analyses.

Executive Summary

SPECIFICITY

As a large, well-resourced state with a well-developed bureaucracy, California provides great specificity around the college- and career-readiness standards. A robust digital library provides instructional materials, and a curriculum committee uses this platform to share best practices. But according to state officials, there is less specificity concerning SWDs, a population they cited as an area of focus in the coming years. Teachers will need similarly specific materials describing how all students can access grade-level standards in order to see beyond the labeling of both English learners and SWDs.

AUTHORITY

California used 5 years of piloting and professional development to build authority around the standards before administering the associated assessment. Standards and curricula are available for public comment periods. Stakeholders also participate in one of three large bodies focused on standards and instruction: The Standards Implementation Steering Committee, the Common Core Collaborative, and specific Communities of Practice. Thus, there are multiple opportunities for stakeholder engagement and revision. The legislature, the CDE, and the governor have worked together effectively to build authority, allowing for strong, stable state-level leadership.

CONSISTENCY

Instead of picking and choosing select parts of an assessment system, California has invested entirely in Smarter Balanced, purchasing both summative and formative assessments, as well as incorporating Smarter Balanced materials into its digital library along with practitioner-developed resources. State officials point to these activities when describing their standards and assessments system as having a high level of alignment. Teacher PD is similarly thought to be well aligned, but officials report that principal PD seems to be less aligned with instructional shifts around the standards and was cited as an area for improvement. Curricular materials also pass through a rigorous review process to check for alignment, and the state may visit schools to see if approved curricula are being implemented or are out of alignment with the standards.

POWER

California has chosen not to adopt value-added teacher evaluations (i.e., using test scores to make hiring and firing decisions). Instead, they have advocated for the use of multiple measures and creating a new, non-summative dashboard. Academic Performance Indicator (API) reports have not been produced since 2013, as the state implements its new multiple measures. Thus, there have been no rewards or sanctions using student achievement to evaluate schools since 2013, when the multi-year Smarter Balanced assessment transition began. Power, however, may have increased recently; the new Local Control and Funding Formula (LCFF) has generated sweeping changes across the state. Districts now establish their own thresholds for sanctions through an Expected Annual Measurable Objective (EAMO). While districts set their own growth goals for student improvement and progress as opposed to using a single proficiency standard, districts must still meet EAMOs or face direct state intervention. This intervention remains undefined; the



state is no longer picking from a suite of corrective actions or systemic improvements. The newly created California Collaborative on Educational Excellence exists to design tailored, direct state intervention.

STABILITY

It is difficult to overstate the stability of the standards in California compared to national trends, with many other states backing out, offering major revisions, or removing themselves from multistate consortia. California is unique in having publicly reported results of the Smarter Balanced assessment as recently as 2015–2016, 5 years after standards adoption. This slow pace has fostered great stability and a perception that the standards cannot simply be thrown out altogether, only revised and improved.

Standards & Curriculum

SPECIFICITY

California adopted the Common Core standards without any changes, only additions. There is an adoption process for curriculum where publishers create materials and submit them to the California Department of Education. Through robust multi-stakeholder committees, these textbooks and curricula are then adopted or rejected. Districts are not required to use state-approved materials, but the vast majority do, according to state officials, who were able to cite only a handful of exceptional thematic or alternative programs. Districts or schools that use their own materials are required to show the state that these are still aligned with the standards through a review process and that they have obtained their own local board approval. The state houses all of these materials, with open access for all employees through its digital library.

AUTHORITY

One official attributed the success and acceptance of the California Common Core standards to a “very deliberate slow, careful approach that has kept California out of trouble.” Another official noted that losing out on Race to the Top (RTTT), the Obama administration’s grant initiative for quick rollout of the standards, was a “blessing” as it allowed the state to move at its own slower pace. The failure to secure this federal funding is often ascribed to a refusal on the part of California to incorporate test scores in teacher evaluations. Standards were not rolled out “as quickly as possible.” State officials suggest this slower implementation may have fostered increased support and buy-in from educators and parents, as they perceived the reforms as coming from the state rather than the federal government.

The state also purposefully engaged unions in order to build authority for the reforms. For example, in the case of the **CCSS Systems Implementation Guides** that the state produced, one official said, “We had multiple meetings with our California Teachers Association about those guides so that when those guides came out, they had the full support of CTA, rather than have CTA point out after we publish it what are the things they didn’t like about it.” Multiple groups were engaged in these discussions, including the Association of California School Administrators and a large group of representatives called the Common Core Collaborative.

The state also made use of a Standards Implementation Steering Committee, consisting of 125 officials and practitioners from across the state. Local practitioners were also described as having “data that the state doesn’t have.” Such statements show deference to expertise held by practitioners. All of these different bodies were said to increase authority around the standards and foster a slow, deliberate process. In short, one official felt that CDE had “done the groundwork” of bringing in parent–teacher associations and other critical groups, which increased the authority of the standards and related interventions.

“We didn’t try to push the system beyond its readiness.”

–Participant 4

The state includes teachers and content experts in a “very rigorous” curriculum review process controlled by an official commission. There is also a public comment and review period before any adoption for the standards themselves, as well as for any revisions and any curricula. Collaboration committees act as “think tanks” for each subject, bringing together the “best teachers, county officials, curriculum coaches, district folks . . . the most well-respected people in each of those subject areas across the state.” There also exist communities of practice, providing three official bodies for building authority across a large, diverse state.

STABILITY

The standards themselves have been remarkably stable, with the Common Core still in place verbatim. California has only added to those standards without removing any. The latest revision was completed in 2014. A new model of continuous improvement was cited as a rationale for greater stability of the standards in the future. *Continuous improvement* for CDE means tinkering around the edges—clarifying and revising—not starting over. Officials felt that this implementation strategy fostered greater stability and diminished backlash, which also fostered higher authority. One official felt that the standards would last as long as the previous standards—20 years—suggesting a sense of continuity and a longstanding policy system that makes incremental rather than radical changes.

Assessment

California is unique among C-SAIL partner states by remaining in a cross-state standards consortium, Smarter Balanced (SBAC), and by adopting all of the SBAC summative and interim assessments. The state ties for the longest assessment implementation timeline nationally with a Spring 2013 pilot, followed by a Spring 2014 field test, followed by an official SBAC rollout during the 2014–2015 school year.

AUTHORITY

One official stated, “We got a hard-fought waiver with the federal government to not double-test kids, and the entire state took a field test of Smarter Balanced that first year [2013], knowing that the results were not going to be public for any public purpose.” This waiver may have increased the authority of the assessments, as one year of field-testing allowed educators not to worry



about public perceptions on the first test administration. These initial public results have often been disappointing in other states and generated bad publicity. CDE has also worked to alter the perception of high-stakes testing that decides students', teachers', and schools' futures. For example, multiple tests throughout the year take the pressure off the end-of-year test. Purchasing and investing in the interim Smarter Balanced system is “a statement about the primary purpose of assessments” instead of “a postmortem at the end of the year just to make a judgment on.” CDE’s multiple-measures evaluation rubric also makes the test only one of ten indicators.

One official stated, “We got buy-in from, from teachers, from higher education, from our business community, from our State Board, from our governor, from the legislature” by explaining that assessments were to “improve teaching and learning,” not simply for evaluation and grading of teachers and schools. Parents also receive guides related to the test scores instead of a single score or a single sheet of paper, and teachers receive similar guides to help them interpret the scores on new assessments. State officials agreed that these strategies may have increased authority and decreased pushback.

CONSISTENCY

Considering that the state has not deleted any of the Common Core standards or changed the SBAC assessments, officials felt that the assessments are well aligned. Because SBAC aligned the assessments with the Common Core and tested across multiple states, state officials did not have to invest as many resources in alignment. “California uses the entire Smarter Balanced assessment system, not only the summative tests at the end of the year, but the interim tests throughout the year, and a digital library that helps them with formative tools.” State officials expressed no concerns about alignment.

POWER

California is piloting a multiple-measures evaluation tool that allows for schools and teachers to be graded on 10 different factors, of which test scores are only one. These measures will be used to pair districts and schools with others who have similar or different strengths and weaknesses. For example, a school that has successfully tackled chronic absenteeism (one of the measures) will be partnered with a school that has not yet successfully addressed this problem as part of a philosophy of continuous improvement and cross-school collaboration.

One official also highlighted the abandonment of the “compliance hammer approach” and a philosophical shift toward tiers of supports for schools. Another interviewee, however, noted that other stakeholders wanted there to be “more of a hammer,” suggesting tensions among different groups. In place of sanctions, the new Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) framework gives districts greater funding freedom as long as they continue to meet their growth objectives. New sanctions exist through these newly approved funding models. Such sanctions begin with collaborative interventions designed with the state and pairing stronger and weaker schools on one of the multiple measures. However, the state can still intervene directly after many years of a district failing to improve on their Priority Measures, though the exact implementation of such an intervention remains unclear. Once the Local Control and Funding Formula (LCFF) is fully implemented by 2020–2021, the state can target money through the formula toward certain **priorities**. Progress is measured through the LCFF rubric.

STABILITY

Considering that the state rolled out SBAC assessments during the 2014–2015 school year, the stability of the assessment is unclear. Discussing the stability of the assessment only two years after full implementation may be premature. However, California has invested significant resources into purchasing the full suite of SBAC assessments and integrating it into an online reporting system, so the stability of the assessments could be high. As one official said, “I think they will have more longevity than what we’ve had before. And the reason for that is this continuous improvement framework that we’re working from.”

Professional Development

SPECIFICITY

Officials saw great specificity around the standards in their professional development offerings for teachers. But they saw a need for improvement in their support of principals, with prior stated efforts focused on teachers and instruction. One official described the state’s approach as “very classroom-level focused and in many cases the principals were skipped over in that . . . training. And so that’s what we’re circling back around right now and looking for systematic approaches, it makes sure that our principals are informed and can walk into classrooms and be an expert in the ways that they need to be to be an instructional leader.” Such statements acknowledge the historic shift that principals have had to make from managerial roles to instructional leaders.

The state is aware of the need to show principals specific ways to evaluate teachers in areas outside of their own subject expertise. Another described the professional development for principals around data as lacking, and another described needed outreach for “how the data should be used.” A third official was unable to cite any evidence of principal professional development provided by the state but was able to cite numerous examples of PD designed for teachers, suggesting again that the state has prioritized specific teacher PD in an attempt to ensure that the standards impact everyday instruction. PD opportunities for all groups center specifically on the standards and the frameworks and how different groups can successfully implement them. None of these opportunities are mandatory, and they occur annually.

AUTHORITY

State officials perceived strong authority around their professional development offerings for teachers and attribute the success of the new standards to collaborative PD conferences, where teachers can present to their peers, officials, and researchers. State officials do not believe in lecturing to large crowds of teachers. They believe, however, that the focus on instruction has lessened the authority of the standards among principals, who need better coaching on how to be instructional leaders. The state is prioritizing these areas for improvement in its future offerings; officials believed that they had built instructional capacity and buy-in among teachers through district representatives but said that they needed to invest more time in school leadership.



CONSISTENCY

State officials believe that their PD for teachers has been well aligned with the standards but that principal PD has not sufficiently focused on the instructional shift required by the standards. The state monitors PD opportunities for consistency to see what is provided at the local level and whether there is evidence of meeting the standards. This data is not collected systematically, but local administrators are subject to periodic alignment-related site visits. This locally designed PD is expected to mesh with the state curricula frameworks, which are seen as a more detailed explanation of the standards and are developed in collaboration with WestEd, a research and technical assistance organization. Though these frameworks are “a thousand pages” according to one official, the executive summaries are well liked and often used by practitioners, they report. The primary state-level PD opportunities focus on understanding both the standards and the frameworks, particularly when new versions are released.

Assessment Fellows, often retired district officials, provided PD on how to use the digital library, how to use the interim assessments, and how to use the summative tests “all for the purposes of improving teaching and learning.” These regionally based contractors build consistency around the standards, using multiple modalities and fostering institutional memory. However, this program has been discontinued as of 2016, suggesting that the state no longer feels this type of investment is necessary after multiple years of standards and practices alignment to build capacity at the district level. Or, the state may no longer have sufficient funding to fund these fellows.

POWER

There are no compulsory PD opportunities in California, which is to be expected in a state with more than 300,000 teachers. The state does not explicitly reward educators for participating, though it does cover the cost of state-sponsored PD for attendees (i.e., there are no registration fees). One official cited a collaborative approach to developing PD symposia, which are offered both regionally and in Sacramento. The collaborative structure of these yearly symposia is thought to have increased participation. In 2016, CDE offered two major events: a combined English Learner & Special Education symposium and an Educator Excellence Summit. Rewards for participating in the symposia include professional recognition, as colleagues are able to see teachers presenting to large audiences, including “high profile” researchers from California’s top universities. The higher education community attends these sessions as well; all California universities require standards to be covered in their teacher credentialing programs.

Students with Disabilities (SWDs)

SPECIFICITY

The state is worried about providing more specific guidance around standards instruction for SWDs. One official said, “there needs to be support, there needs to be scaffolds . . . [SWDs] shouldn’t be solely tagged as being with a Special Ed teacher all of the day, all day.” State officials report that schools have not settled on a single model, and the state does not provide concrete examples of multi-tiered systems of support nor require a specific model. The alternative assessment is still being pilot tested, but there are Core Connectors to connect the alternative

assessment with SBAC. Specific technologies allow SWDs to meet grade-level standards, but state officials acknowledge that there is a need for more examples and curricula that better demonstrate universal design.

AUTHORITY

All representative bodies around standards implementation (i.e., the Steering Committee, National Center for State Collaboratives) included experts and representatives of both the SWD and EL communities. SWD- and EL-specific events are often combined in collaborative symposia focused on issues pertaining to these communities, though they are also included in more generalized sessions. However, one official remarked that standards were only appropriate for the “general population,” suggesting not only the need for an alternate assessment but also one that’s more individualized to the student-aligned standards that reflect SWDs’ own learning strengths and goals. Most officials, however, believed that the standards were appropriate for SWDs.

Two officials cited the adaptive, computer-based nature of the SBAC assessment as a positive development for both SWDs and ELs. One official indicated a belief that the adaptive nature of the test increased the appropriateness of the assessments for SWDs and thus increased educators’ beliefs in the test’s usefulness and thus their buy-in. “There are plenty of people out there who have other problems, besides English learners and special ed students. You know, people that have a hard time communicating with each other, have a hard time speaking publicly, or even speaking with a small group. And so, everyone has issues that need to be overcome in order to be able to do the things that we’re asking them to do.” SWDs are thus not seen as a uniquely disadvantaged group that should be excluded from the standards or as being targeted by an unfair assessment. State officials believe in the appropriateness of the assessment laws concerning SWDs. More than one state official felt that pedagogies pertaining to SWDs should be applied to all students to improve differentiation and to help them reach more rigorous standards. In other words, officials thought general educators should adopt more differentiation practices from SWD classrooms.

English Learners (ELs)

AUTHORITY

The state promotes specific procedures and materials, such as the English Learner Self-Assessment Tool, in order to build authority around the state framework for ELs, which is integrated into the ELA framework and the ELA standards. For the first time in state history, the two frameworks are not separate documents. Symposia allow for the distribution of these inclusive materials, with researchers and practitioners, not just the CDE, presenting. State officials believe that the inclusion of all voices, and the provision of a space and time for collaboration rather than CDE officials simply lecturing, increased authority around the EL framework, which was introduced in 2012. Among state officials, there was some hesitation that the rigor of the standards was appropriate for the “general population” but not necessarily for beginning ELs. However, the EL standards are purposefully woven into the ELA framework. Thus, students who reach the highest level of EL proficiency should be ready to meet ELA standards. CDE builds authority around EL standards through biannual and quarterly meetings; all counties receiving Title III money are invited and encouraged to attend.



CONSISTENCY & SPECIFICITY

California builds alignment among EL materials, standards and assessments through a publication called *Improving Education for English Learners*. The most recent version was published in 2010, the first revision in 25 years. Thus, this document should be seen as consistent with broader standards implementation efforts. This state-approved work also builds specificity, describing to practitioners exactly what instruction for ELs looks like in the classroom. Updates to the framework now occur more frequently. Officials cited California as the only state to completely integrate the ELA and EL standards. Specific tools have been developed (the EL Self-Assessment), which the same official cited as “more helpful to administrators to kind of look at data, analyze it, and see what’s working, what’s not working.”

The new framework for ELs arrived in 2012, two years after the adoption of Common Core, so that they could be better aligned. This strong consistency and specificity speaks to California having decades of experience in educating non-English speaking populations, as opposed to states with more recent demographic changes.

POWER

Administrator and teacher observation protocols include whether EL and SWD needs are being addressed. The new SBAC assessments are “beyond just a one-time, sit-down at the end-of-the-year kind of a test” for ELs and are not meant to punish. Instead, there are “vastly different . . . tools and resources and accommodations for, especially for, English learners, for all kids.” The assessment also is only one of four factors involved in the grade promotion or exiting of ELs, and thus there are no rewards or sanctions built into the system around tests in isolation. Schools receive “a color rating” that shows improvement or a lack of improvement among subgroups, including ELs and SWDs. With the Every Student Succeeds Act, however, this system may have to change to a single exit criteria; the state is awaiting guidance from the federal Department of Education. One official stated that the SBAC tests are more appropriate for ELs than prior ones, providing a better measure to determine rewards and sanctions.

In November 2016, after these interviews were conducted, voters overwhelmingly approved the California Non-English Languages Allowed in Public Education Act (Proposition 58). As a result, bilingual programs once again will be permitted in California. This is occurring at the same time that the state is instituting a new EL assessment. New bilingual programs may create another source of state/federal conflict over power. The new assessment, with a 2017 pilot, will not be reflected in the Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAP) until 2018. It remains to be seen how these conflicts over both timelines and exit criteria will be resolved as the state negotiates with the federal department of education. California’s ESSA plan has yet to be approved at the federal level.

Communication & Outreach

SPECIFICITY & AUTHORITY

Officials mentioned executive summaries of the standards as a critical communication tool along with quarterly meetings held with county-based leadership and district assessment coordinators. Attendance is never mandatory. The state is adding more academic stakeholders as attendees (i.e., content experts) to these administrative meetings over time. State officials believed that meeting quarterly (as opposed to less frequently) was key to the success of the new standards and assessments. Communication also occurred through many modes (newsletters, the CDE website, fliers, town meetings, videos) designed to explain the standards to parents. CDE conducted 10 specific Common Core presentations across the state, and these were all videotaped, uploaded, and disseminated. This communication came directly from the state, with officials explaining what the new standards were and why they were important. All materials were and continue to be uploaded to a digital chalkboard for public consumption.

CONSISTENCY

The state is developing a monitoring system, or online reporting system, for messaging and evaluation that will measure whether all students have access to grade-level instruction. Teachers will input interim assessments on a regular basis, either ones provided by SBAC or self-designed alternatives, and receive assessment results within three weeks. Through this system, the state will be able to assess more quickly which groups of students are not reaching goals. Coupled with the SBAC computer-administered formative assessments, these judgments can be made throughout the school year rather than only at the end.

Communication infrastructure is critical to the state goal of a systems improvement model and allows for the alignment of all the frameworks, standards, curricula, instruction, and stakeholders. One official explained, “Collaborations in Common includes an online resource exchange and professional learning community platform that district schools can use free of charge, teachers, everyone across the system, to be able to function in professional learning communities and also have a bank of trusted resources.” These curricular platforms are stable and have been developed over the past several years, but the evaluation communication systems are very much in the design phase.

Conclusion

The California standards implementation success story, according to state officials, is one of stability resulting from gradual change. The policy system appears to exhibit strength along many levels. While officials identified the need for improvement for standards implementation related to SWDs, especially around authority and specificity, the opposite is true for ELs; California already has a long history of educating English learners, leading to a perception of strong consistency and specificity among EL policies. For all students, teachers, and families, CDE has used a broad, consistent, and inclusive communication strategy to achieve well-defined objectives. The California system emphasizes a tiered system of support rather than explicit rewards and



sanctions. By asserting state prerogatives and timelines, CDE officials believe that California has distinguished itself from other states and shown a willingness to challenge the federal government's priorities under the past two administrations.

Constant leadership and consensus among the CDE, the legislature, and the governor's office have maintained the California policy system. Remaining in one of the two assessment consortia provided California with access to resources that boosted levels of specificity and consistency around standards, curricula and assessments, resources that did not have to be developed individually or locally. Professional development is provided somewhat on a state level, but most is developed locally, while still subject to state review. During the Obama administration, California did not exhibit particularly high levels of power; it actively resisted incentives by the federal government to impose stricter sanctions. However, power levels may change dramatically with the Local Control and Funding Formulas. In the eyes of state officials, a willingness to challenge Washington has boosted their own authority. Future interviews and surveys will provide the perspective of district officials on these issues.

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