

National Cost of Aligning States and Localities to the Common Core Standards

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**Center for
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Executive Summary

- All but five (5) states have committed to adopting the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts and mathematics and are participating in one of the federally-sponsored consortia developing aligned assessments. Few of the participants, however, have carefully analyzed the costs involved.
- Significant new costs are projected in three key areas of standards-based reform: assessment, professional development, and textbooks and instructional materials. In addition, states and local communities are expected to face substantial new expenditures for technology infrastructure and support.
- Over a typical standards time horizon of seven (7) years, we project Common Core implementation costs will total approximately \$15.8 billion across participating states. This constitutes a “mid-range” estimate that only addresses the basic expenditures required for implementation of the new standards. It does not include the cost of additional expensive or controversial reforms that are sometimes recommended to help students meet high standards, such as performance-based compensation or reduced class sizes.
 - Total, seven-year costs include the following additional expenses: \$1.2 billion for the new assessments, \$5.3 billion for professional development, \$2.5 billion for textbooks and instructional materials, and \$6.9 billion for technology infrastructure and support.
 - \$10.5 billion of the projected amount is for “one-time” costs that include familiarizing educators with the new standards, obtaining aligned textbooks and instructional materials, and sufficiently enhancing technology infrastructure to implement the Common Core online assessments for all students.
 - First year operational costs are projected to be approximately \$503 million higher, including increased assessment expense for some states as well as technology training and support.
 - In years two and beyond, annual operational costs are projected to be \$801 million higher, including increased assessment expense for some states and the ongoing cost of supporting the enhanced technology infrastructure required for online assessment.
- There is considerable uncertainty regarding future student testing costs. The two testing consortia, especially the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), also face considerable technical challenges to accomplish their goals.
- California, a state with highly rated academic standards and a challenging fiscal climate, illustrates some tough tradeoffs. The state, a member of the SBAC, is projected to incur significantly higher state assessment costs of approximately \$35 million each year.
- States and communities should avoid trying to implement the Common Core, or any set of new standards, “on the cheap.” Inadequate training, instructional materials, or necessary infrastructure can lead to teachers and administrators disclaiming responsibility for failure because they did not receive adequate support.
- Massachusetts is participating in the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC).



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