

Staying the Course: Maintaining Strong Accountability in the Transition to the Common Core

Of all the challenges presented by implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), the highest hurdle for charter school authorizers will be managing accountability for school performance during the transition to the new standards and assessments. Implementation will require many schools and authorizers to shift from their current means of measuring performance to a more complex and rigorous approach, and the transition will pose challenges for evaluating school performance over time. This will require smart policy, thoughtful problem-solving, and flexibility to ensure that schools are held accountable fairly and reasonably.

Authorizers do not have time to waste. In the spring of 2015 (and in some states sooner), charter schools and authorizers will begin receiving test results from Common Core-aligned assessments. Some states such as Massachusetts and Louisiana have decided to extend the roll-out of new tests over multiple years, but the vast majority of states that have adopted the Common Core are still planning to implement the new assessments after piloting them in the spring of 2014.

The transition to the Common Core will have significant implications for everyone in public education. For authorizers, the most pressing concern is maintaining strong accountability, especially for low-performing schools, those that have already consistently failed to meet existing standards and are on the brink of losing

their charter. Schools should never face closure based on a single year of academic performance, or in ways that ignore their cumulative record of performance. But schools that for years have failed to propel their students toward mastery of current standards, as measured by current assessments, should not escape accountability because the metrics change. Yet the scale of the Common Core transition will create great pressure on authorizers to avoid imposing consequences for persistent failure. Unless they are properly prepared for it, that pressure may be too much to resist.

Authorizers also need to prepare for fluctuations in assessment performance among schools that are doing relatively well on current tests. Evidence from states that are piloting their own new assessments indicates that proficiency scores are likely to drop significantly for all schools and that some schools will be able to adapt more quickly and effectively than others.

By acting now, authorizers, charter schools, education officials, and policymakers can develop practical strategies to maintain accountability in the near term and beyond. Authorizers should adopt strategies for reporting, evaluating, and acting on charter school performance results throughout the transition period. By doing so, they can make implementation of the Common Core an opportunity to raise expectations and strengthen performance, rather than suspend accountability.

About this Issue Brief

This Issue Brief is part of NACSA's new series, *Staying the Course*, which provides guidance to authorizers in navigating the challenges presented by implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). This brief provides strategies for managing accountability during the transition to the new standards and the assessments designed to align to them. Other briefs in this series include an introduction to the CCSS and the accompanying new assessments and an overview of the challenges presented by implementation; a guide to help authorizers understand the new assessments; and strategies for upholding autonomy for charter schools and enabling their success during the transition.



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Accountability Implications for Authorizers

In important ways, the work of authorizers will remain the same during and following the transition to the Common Core. Authorizers will continue to be responsible for upholding school autonomy, maintaining high standards, and promoting the interests of students and the public. Charter schools will continue to be subject to their contractual obligations and whatever learning standards and accountability systems their states adopt. Authorizers will continue to be responsible for evaluating school performance and for holding schools accountable for providing quality educational opportunities to their students.

But some of the tools will look different and the task will include grappling with whether and how new standards and assessments will affect charter accountability. Given the expected drop in proficiency rates (see inset), authorizers must have ways of discerning what is actually happening to school performance apart from changes in the test scales.

Authorizers should come to grips now with a variety of complex questions. Coming up fast is how to handle accountability decision making, including performance-based renewals and school closures, during the period just prior to and immediately following the first widespread use of the new assessments in the 2014-15 school year.

Preparing for Changes in Proficiency Rates

If the experience of early-adopter states is any indication, authorizers should be prepared for significant drops in proficiency as schools implement the new standards and assessments. Both are substantially different and more rigorous than those in use in the vast majority of states. The standards require students to demonstrate higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills and the tests require students to demonstrate mastery through complex tasks and exposition rather than only filling in bubbles on multiple choice questions.

In Kentucky, one of the first states to implement the CCSS, saw a 30 percent drop in proficiency rates after the first year of using the new tests in 2012. The 2013 results show only marginal improvement in some subjects and further declines in others. In New York, where new CCSS-aligned assessments were given for the first time in 2013, scores also dropped significantly. Only 31 percent of third through eighth graders scored proficient or higher on the language arts and math exams, a drop from 2012, when proficiency rates were above 50 percent.

Considerations for authorizers include: (1) what body of evidence the authorizer currently uses to make accountability decisions and what adjustments may be needed; (2) how the authorizer's state intends to transition its school rating system during Common Core implementation; (3) whether any schools in the authorizer's portfolio are subject to state accountability sanctions based on a waiver the state may have been granted by the U.S. Department of Education; and (4) how charter contracts should reflect adjustments to existing expectations for school performance and how best to engage school leaders about modifications to performance frameworks and other contract amendments.

This brief explores the challenges ahead and provides strategies for effectively managing them. It emphasizes the need for authorizers to understand how their current evaluation systems will be impacted by the adoption of new standards and assessments and urges them to act now to strengthen their evaluation systems and maintain accountability for all schools.

Understanding and Adjusting Your Body of Evidence

The difficulty of maintaining accountability during the transition period depends heavily on what kind of evidence an authorizer—and its state education agency—currently use to evaluate school performance. Broadly speaking, there are three types of accountability systems currently in use. They are 1) Proficiency-Only Systems, 2) Proficiency + Growth Systems, and 3) Multi-Indicator Systems.

Proficiency-Only

Under a proficiency-only system, school ratings are determined by looking solely at the percentage of students who attain “proficiency” on state assessments. This is the primary approach required under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), whereby schools are evaluated on a yearly snapshot of student achievement against a fixed standard as determined by data from a single point in time. This approach may also include ratings based on changes in proficiency rates from year to year among different cohorts of students (e.g., the difference between the proficiency of last year's 6th graders and this year's 6th graders), a measurement sometimes mislabeled as “growth.”

Proficiency + Growth

Under a proficiency + growth system, school ratings are determined by looking at some combination of proficiency rates and individual student longitudinal growth (i.e., individual student progress over time). States using this approach use one of several types of growth models to measure the progress

Critical Concepts

In order to prepare effectively for the transition to new standards and assessments, authorizers need a clear understanding of the various methods for evaluating student and school performance.

Proficiency: Also called status or attainment, proficiency describes the status of a student or group of students as determined by data at a single point in time. A proficiency rate provides a snapshot of student achievement against a predetermined performance metric such as the number of correct answers on a standardized assessment.

Growth Model: A growth model measures the academic progress of individual students over time, based on standardized assessments. There are various types of growth models. *Student growth percentiles* (also called the Colorado Growth Model) compares individual students against all those with similar testing histories. *Value-added models* seek to attribute quantities of growth to specific classroom or school factors. *Trajectory models* measure whether students are meeting growth targets on a path toward proficiency within a certain period of time. *Projection models* measure whether students are “on-track” to proficiency by making predictions about future performance based on individual and cohort test histories. *Value-table models* measure growth to proficiency and maintenance of proficiency of individual students from one year to the next. These models differ in key respects, but all attempt to measure increases in individual student performance over time and each requires some form of standard-setting (i.e., the use of cut points) to differentiate among different growth levels and rates.

Norm-Referenced Growth: Norm-referenced growth models compare the progress made by individual students to the progress made by other students with a similar starting point or performance history. With this approach, a student would be assessed as making low, average, or high growth based on the growth of other students in the school, district, state, or nation.

Criterion-Referenced Growth: Also called target-based growth or growth to standard, criterion-referenced growth models measure the gains of individual students or groups against an intended trajectory toward a particular target in the future such as grade level proficiency or “college-ready” in order to determine whether the individual or group is “on track” to meet the standard within a defined time period.

of individual students from one year to the next and evaluate schools based on how well they help their students advance. Almost two dozen states currently use or are developing a growth model as part of their state-level accountability systems.

Multiple-Indicators

Under a multiple-indicator system, school ratings are determined by weighing multiple factors such as proficiency, longitudinal growth, closing achievement gaps, graduation rates, college and career readiness, and student engagement. These are also known as “index” systems and typically result in an overall rating (either letter grades or categories such as “improving” and “advanced”) for each school based on compiling these factors and assigning them each a weight in the final calculation.

These three types of systems have been approved by the U.S. Department of Education under its voluntary flexibility initiative, by which states have been granted waivers of certain provisions of NCLB in exchange for adopting standards for college and career readiness, teacher quality, and school accountability. As of this writing, 41 states and the District of Columbia have obtained such waivers, half of which include some kind of growth model.

NCLB waivers will have a significant impact on the form and function of state accountability systems and on the kind of information that is available to authorizers for use in evaluation of school performance. Authorizers need to be on top of changes to their state’s system and understand how these changes may impact their own ability to hold schools accountable for their performance.

Adapting to the Challenges Ahead

The action required of authorizers depends to a great extent on what kind of evidence an authorizer is currently using to measure school performance.

Authorizers who rely heavily on a state system that uses only proficiency to produce school ratings should begin developing alternative evaluation frameworks that use other kinds of data. Proficiency-based evaluation systems typically use criterion-referenced metrics and then set targets for ratings: for example, “80 percent proficient” equals a good rating. If recent history is any indication, these systems will experience the most turbulence in their ratings. Systems that use norm-referenced proficiency ratings (e.g., comparative quartile rankings) may be impacted less, but evidence from pilot states indicates that there will be significant fluctuations from previous rating distributions as well, meaning that some schools that were doing well compared to others will suddenly find themselves doing badly and vice-versa.

Take It Offline?

What does it mean to take a performance indicator “offline”? Put simply, taking an indicator “offline” means removing it from the performance calculation. This will be necessary for some indicators such as criterion-referenced growth measures because they rely on targets based on multiple years of longitudinal data and specific proficiency cut points and so cannot be calculated during the transition from one test to another.

Authorizers that use only proficiency data to evaluate school performance or that rely on a state system that does so may find their accountability programs compromised if the transition period produces the expected swings in test scores.

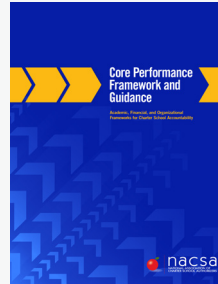
Authorizers that use a growth model in addition to proficiency will be in a better position, particularly if they use normative growth measures (i.e., those that compare an individual student’s growth to that of others) since comparison measurements will still be possible during the transition. But those whose systems track growth-to-standard (the percent of students on track to proficiency) may find their metrics interrupted for a year or more as new cut points are determined.

Authorizers not currently using a multiple-indicator accountability system to evaluate the performance of schools in their portfolio and to inform renewal and closure decisions should begin to develop such a system now.

Authorizers with multi-indicator systems are best positioned for managing the coming turbulence and for maintaining strong accountability during the transition period. Systems that consider a range of measures (such as proficiency, longitudinal growth, achievement gaps, graduation rates, college and career readiness, and student engagement) can adapt to account for changes in proficiency rates because their other indicators remain stable and can be weighted differently. They provide a balanced view of performance and can serve as shock absorbers for the rocky ride.

Authorizers using multiple-indicator systems will need to decide whether and how to include proficiency and growth rates in their frameworks during the transition. They will also need to determine whether other indicators should be reweighted to account for possibly dramatic changes in

What is a Performance Framework?



A school performance framework is a multiple-indicator accountability system that authorizers can use to evaluate the academic, financial, and organizational performance of schools in their portfolios and make high-stakes decisions regarding school intervention strategies, charter renewal, charter revocation, and expansion.

For more information about how authorizers can develop and use performance frameworks and how NACSA can help, visit www.qualitycharters.org.

proficiency and growth. An authorizer, for example, may decide to weight ACT or SAT scores more heavily while reducing the weighting of proficiency or removing criterion-referenced growth from the framework while targets are recalibrated. Authorizers may also consider allowing schools to provide other standardized assessment evidence previously used only for internal purposes. Whichever types of performance evaluation an authorizer currently uses, there’s no time to waste in retooling their accountability systems to prepare for the rough seas ahead. Changes in evaluation methods will have to be incorporated in contracts or charter agreements; there will need to be meaningful engagement with schools; and in many cases, the changes will require consultation with state policymakers and other stakeholders.

Strategies for Maintaining Strong Accountability

In addition to understanding and adapting how they currently evaluate school performance to meet the challenges presented by the Common Core transition, authorizers can begin preparing for the transition in other ways as well.

Simulating the Future

One way authorizers can prepare is by modeling or simulating how changes in proficiency and growth rates will impact the performance of their portfolios and seeing how adjustments to the weighting of particular indicators might affect the bottom line. An authorizer can run a simulation by conducting a trial run of performance calculations using different variations on performance levels and using different combinations of

Benefits of Simulation

Whether an authorizer has an existing performance framework or is developing one now, conducting a simulation can help:

- **Confirm the availability of necessary data elements for measures across the framework.**

An authorizer may find that special data requests must be submitted to state data systems or may find that certain metrics cannot be constructed using available data, especially during the Common Core transition when some states will be reporting only limited data or may not be calculating school performance ratings.

- **Test measures and targets.**

During the transition from one set of standards and tests to another, it may be necessary to take some measures offline while new targets are calculated. Through a trial run, an authorizer can simulate how different combinations of results would impact the performance distribution of schools. Combined with knowledge of individual charter schools gained through previous analyses, authorizers may gauge whether measures and targets are accurately assessing quality. Likewise, the trial run may reveal strengths or weaknesses in charter performance that warrant additional analysis or modifications to the framework.

- **Review weighting decisions and overall weighting schemes.**

When adopting a multiple-indicator performance framework, authorizers need to make decisions about how to weight individual measures. The trial run allows for a review of the weighting system. An authorizer may see in a trial run, for example, how the temporary removal of particular indicators during the transition period requires reweighting of the remaining indicators.

- **Provide insight into how changes to the performance framework will affect ranking of individual schools and of the overall portfolio.**

One test of fairness is whether the overall distribution of school rankings within the portfolio remains similar, absent other factors affecting performance.

indicators. Authorizers need to understand, for example, how their current ratings might be impacted by a 30 to 40 percent drop in proficiency. Are schools distributed approximately the same as before or does the proficiency drop result in an unwarranted skewing of overall results?

Authorizers using a longitudinal growth model may also want to run some simulations without criterion-referenced growth calculations, since these will be unavailable while growth targets are recalibrated. Running these kinds of simulations will give authorizers insight into how sensitive their frameworks are to fluctuations in various inputs. This understanding will allow them to begin engaging stakeholders to create a reasonable and credible approach to performance reporting and accountability.

Evaluating Comparative Performance

Of course, school performance is not constant even when tests remain the same. So in addition to steering away from unwarranted conclusions based on a change in tests, authorizers also need a way to give credit (or impose sanctions) where due. One way to do this is through the use of comparative performance measures that enable performance evaluation across groups of schools, even in the presence of significant year-to-year performance fluctuation. The DC Public Charter School Board, for example, which uses a multi-measure performance framework resulting in three “tiers” of ratings, is setting comparative school performance goals during the transition period so that however the scores fluctuate, individual schools will still be expected to do better, comparatively, than their peers. Some authorizers regularly compare performance of schools against those within their portfolio, the local district, or the state as a whole. Authorizers may want to consider whether it makes sense to emphasize comparative performance more heavily, either during the transition or over the long term.

Considering Qualitative Measures

Authorizers may also consider developing a rigorous qualitative component to supplement quantitative measures for which data are unavailable. Although qualitative information gathered through site visits, interviews, and surveys is not sufficient by itself for high-stakes decisions, it will not be impacted by new standards, new test content, or new cut scores. This kind of information can be helpful in confirming what limited quantitative data seems to indicate about a school’s performance over time.

Because of their inherent subjectivity, the use of qualitative measures of school effectiveness should be considered carefully. But during this transition they may prove useful where more objective data are unavailable.

Transition Timeline and State and Authorizer Accommodations

As Common Core implementation moves forward at the state level, authorizers will need to pay close attention to how their state department of education plans to manage testing, data reporting, and accountability decision making as the new standards and assessments are rolled out. Authorizers need to know, for example, whether their state is applying for a double-testing accommodation, which would freeze their state's accountability ratings and sanctions for some percentage of students for at least a year while the new tests are piloted and could potentially impact an authorizer's ability to make accountability decisions during this period.

Authorizers also need to know whether and how their state might adjust its statewide school accountability system, through state law or administrative policy, during implementation. The Florida State Board of Education, for example, has adopted a "transition safety net" which modifies the state's school rating system so that no individual school's grade can drop by more than one letter in one year, for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years. The New York State Education Department, which is already implementing the new standards and assessments, has said that it plans to release Common Core proficiency rates publicly (statewide results, by student subgroup, and by school/district), but is "also seeking approval from the United States Education Department to make statistical adjustments that approximate the previous definition of 'proficiency' when making Adequate Yearly Progress determinations and other accountability decisions, such as the identification of Local Assistance Plan and Reward Schools." It also announced that no new schools would be identified as "Priority Schools" for at least the 2012-13 school year. Louisiana has decided to evaluate schools on a curve so that the number of schools at each performance level will remain the same during the transition period. At least one state, California, has decided to stop issuing state-level school performance ratings for at least a year while new assessments are piloted. Authorizers need to consider how similar accommodations, if adopted in their state, might impact accountability decision making and adjust their own evaluation systems accordingly.

Focus On What You Can Control

As states and the federal government continue to wade through the thicket of challenges ahead and seek to balance a variety of conflicting policy and political interests, authorizers may feel overwhelmed by the velocity of change. But no matter what the U.S. Department of Education and the state education departments decide about testing flexibility, data reporting,

The Double-Testing Conundrum

A number of states are considering how to field-test new CCSS-aligned assessments while avoiding double-testing students by making them also take their current state tests. In September 2013, [the U.S. Department of Education issued guidance to states](#) allowing them to forgo administration of their current tests in spring 2014—for some, but not all students—so long as students who do not take the current test take a complete field test of one of the new assessments. Fourteen states have applied for double-testing flexibility: California, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Vermont, and Washington.

If allowed, this flexibility may have significant implications for accountability since states that take advantage of it will not be required to report the results of field tests and may maintain the same federally-required school ratings for two years in a row.

The remaining 30 Common Core member states that missed the deadline for requesting a waiver also face a challenge since they will be required to administer their existing state assessments and assign accountability ratings while field-testing new tests at the same time.

Authorizers should play close attention to how their state approaches this issue in the months ahead and prepare for the possibility that some schools in their portfolio may participate in field testing of the new assessments and so will not take the current state test in spring 2014 and will not have reported test data. Authorizers will need to decide how to handle evaluation of schools where a significant number of students have no reported scores. Authorizers should engage schools in the decision-making process before schools choose if and how they will participate in field testing since participation may impact what data is available for accountability ratings.

and state accountability systems, responsibility for the charter portfolio rests primarily with the authorizer.

Authorizers need to understand the implications of any state and federal decisions regarding accountability, but also need to make their own decisions based on the terms of their charter contracts and the performance of the schools they authorize. They may need to keep a core set of data for purposes of federal and state reporting, but to amplify that data with additional factors that inform high-stakes decisions such as charter renewals. Once authorizers have decided how they will make renewal determinations during the transition, they should engage now with schools that are coming up for renewal so that there are no surprises down the road.

Phase In and Roll Out Considerations

Though there is an urgent need to act now to prepare for the challenges ahead, authorizers should not be making these decisions alone. They need to communicate with their school leaders and communities when considering any possible transition accommodations and in determining how to forge ahead. Changing the rules on accountability midstream will be difficult and disruptive for schools. Schools need to be part of these discussions, well in advance of test administration and before decisions are made.

Remember that the Common Core Standards have been publicly available since 2010. By now, every charter school should have read them, digested them, debated them, and consulted the growing literature on avenues to strong implementation. Both the PARCC and Smarter Balanced consortia have released test items on their respective websites so that educators can get a sense of how the new tests will differ from prior state assessments. Authorizers should make clear to their schools that they are expected to be on top of this challenge.

But the transition period also provides an opportunity to engage schools in critical conversations about performance evidence and evaluation, and about how to develop the strongest possible framework. If the authorizer has not yet developed a multi-measure framework for school oversight purposes, now is the right time to begin the process and to do so in collaboration with schools so they develop ownership and understand its purpose. Authorizers needing to revise a current framework should also take advantage of this window for collaboration. Chances are that some of these changes will require contract amendments, and they will go more smoothly if schools fully grasp the need and play a part in shaping the new language.

Staying the Course: Act Now to Maintain Strong Accountability

Transition to the Common Core has caused some palpable anxiety among educators, parents, and public officials, and it's likely to get worse before it gets better. State policymakers are clearly struggling to assuage the concerns of both critics

and supporters and some may end up deciding that it is easier and more politically expedient to abandon accountability rather than maintain it. This would be a mistake and is one that authorizers can and should avoid.

Except for a lack of political will or a failure to plan ahead and act thoughtfully, there is no legitimate reason not to hold schools accountable for their performance during and following the transition to the Common Core.

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Except for a lack of political will or a failure to plan ahead and act thoughtfully, there is no legitimate reason not to hold schools accountable for their performance during and following

the transition to the Common Core. This is especially true for an authorizer's lowest performing schools. Schools that were consistently low-performing under the old assessments and that remain low-performing on the new assessments are persistently low-performing schools and should be face revocation or non-renewal. The Common Core must be an opportunity to strengthen performance and accountability, not suspend it.

Just because it is possible to hold schools accountable for their performance during the transition does not mean that it will be easy. Authorizers can expect pushback from schools and they may not get the guidance or the support they need from their state education departments. They cannot let challenges paralyze them. Authorizers must act now to prepare for the transition and protect their ability to maintain strong accountability.

Whether you need to develop a new accountability system or modify your existing one, failure to act now will endanger your ability to hold schools accountable for their performance in the short term and beyond. The challenges presented by the transition to new standards and assessments are substantial but with thoughtful planning, outreach and engagement, and decisive action they can be overcome.

Whether you need to develop a new accountability system or modify your existing one, failure to act now will endanger your ability to hold schools accountable for their performance in the short term and beyond.

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National Association of Charter School Authorizers, January 2014

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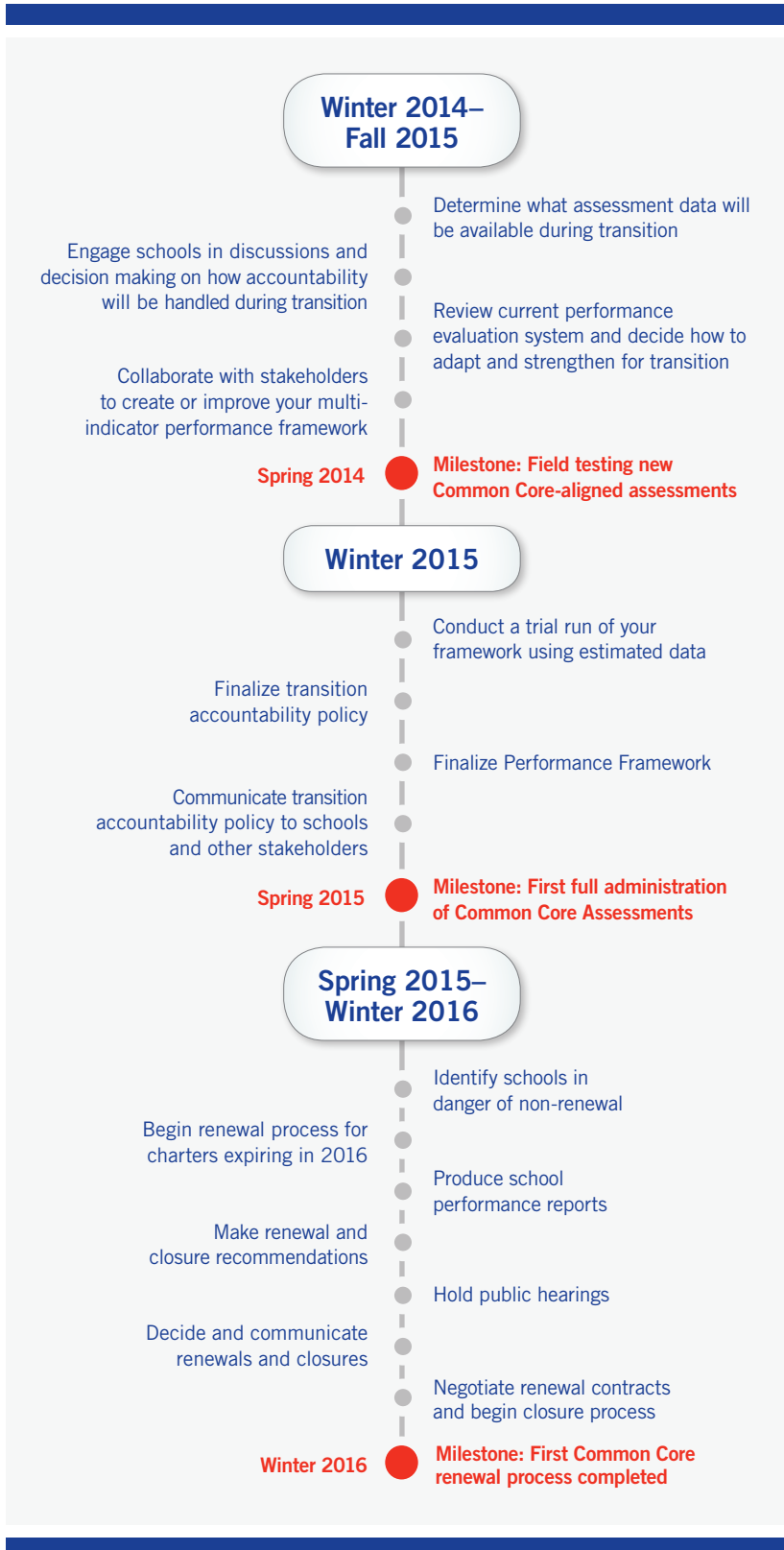
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Common Core Timetable for Action: Staying the Course on Accountability During the Transition

The transition to the Common Core presents significant challenges for authorizers when it comes to evaluating school performance. Here is a suggested timetable to help you maintain strong accountability during and following the transition.

Be Prepared – Act Now.



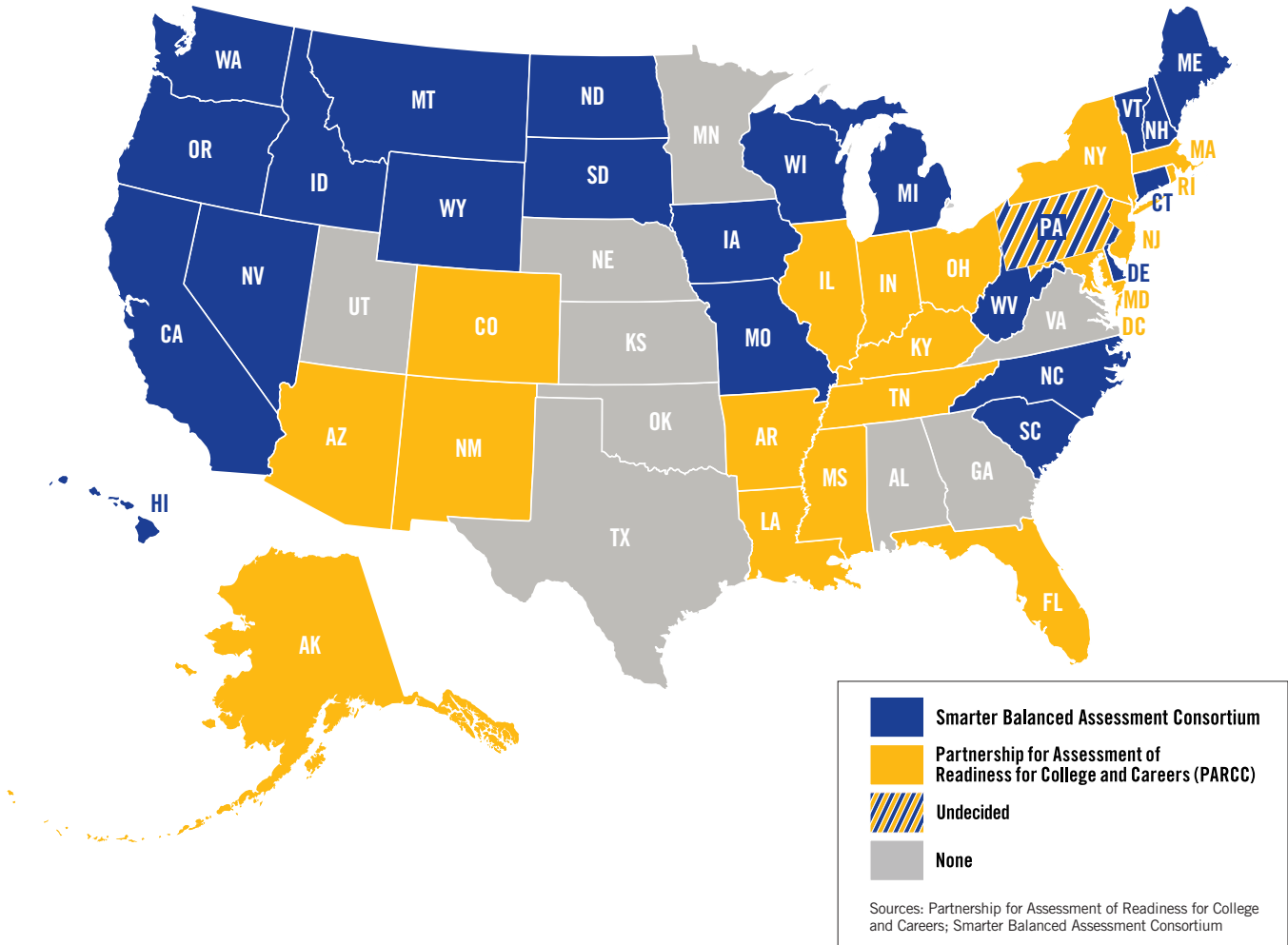
YOU ALREADY NEED TO KNOW:

- ✓ Whether your state has adopted the Common Core
- ✓ Which testing consortium your state has joined
- ✓ Your state's timeline for standards and assessments implementation
- ✓ How your state plans to field test its new assessments
- ✓ How your accountability system works and the data it uses
- ✓ How your system interacts with your state system

Assessing the Common Core: A Quick Reference for Authorizers

New Common Core-aligned state assessments are scheduled for official rollout within the next two years. Do you know what you need to know? Are the schools you authorize ready to administer the new assessments?

Which Assessment is Your State Using?



Assessments: By the Numbers (as of January 2014)

46 states & the District of Columbia have adopted the Common Core

SPRING 2014 new assessments scheduled for field testing

SPRING 2015 new assessments ready for official use

24 states belong to Smarter Balanced

\$22.50 - \$29.95 cost range of new assessments per student

23 months until first renewal process with new assessment results

18 states are part of PARCC **1** state is undecided

100 kbps recommended minimal external bandwidth per student for test administration

Assessment Implementation Timeline

2013-2014:

... will be the last school year that most states administer their own state assessments in language arts and math.

... PARCC and Smarter Balanced will both be field-tested in place of or alongside of state assessments.

Do you know how your state plans to handle double testing and how it plans to use results from state tests?

2014-2015:

... will be the first school year of full implementation of the new assessments.

Technology Readiness

Do the schools you authorize have the technology needed to participate in Common Core assessments?

[PARCC](#) and [Smarter Balanced](#) have released similar minimum technology specifications that include:

-  **Operating system compatibility**
-  **Minimum bandwidth**
-  **Required memory**
-  **Monitor screen size**
-  **Browser security**

Authorizers should make sure schools are ready to take the new assessments.

Next Generation Assessments



Partnership for Assessment of
Readiness for College and Careers



PARCC and Smarter Balanced are both described as “next generation” assessments because they aspire to be performance-based and to assess understanding and higher-order thinking, thorough problem solving and demonstration of mastery rather than multiple-choice bubbles or fill-in-the-blanks.

Key Similarities:

- Assessments will be computer-based for grades 3-8.
- There will be a variety of assessment types, including selected-response, constructed response, and complex performance tasks.
- Both assessments will be given annually in the spring and currently will cover language arts and math.
- Results will be available within weeks of administration.
- Each consortium will make available optional interim assessments, professional development materials, formative items, model curriculum units, and online libraries of aligned-content resources.

Key Differences:

- PARCC summative assessments will be fixed-form—each student in a cohort will take the same test.
- Smarter Balanced will be adaptive—each student will take an individually tailored set of items that will change in difficulty as students progress through the test.
- PARCC will have one optional diagnostic and one optional midyear assessment.
- Smarter Balanced will have optional interim assessments for grades 3-12.

Source: Nancy A. Doorey, “Coming Soon: A New Generation of Assessments,” *Educational Leadership*.

About this Resource

This Quick Reference for Authorizers is part of NACSA's series, *Staying the Course*, which provides guidance to authorizers in navigating the challenges presented by implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Other resources in the series include an introduction to the Common Core and the accompanying new assessments and an overview of the challenges presented by implementation, a brief on promoting equity and autonomy for charter schools during implementation, and a brief on strategies for managing accountability during the transition.



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