

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS STANDARDS*

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The purpose of this memorandum is to make recommendations on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Specifically, the memorandum focuses on teacher preparedness to instruct students using the College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards, particularly preparedness to support English learners (ELs) in accessing the challenging CCR standards. The memorandum also discusses adjustments to the Higher Education Act (HEA) to allow for continued funding and support for teacher education students in university preparation programs.

For the past decade, I have worked for Youth Policy Institute Charter Schools, located in Pacoima, California. Our student population is predominantly Latino, and the community has a high poverty rate (about 87%). Many of our families are recent immigrants and a large percentage of our students are second language learners (about 70% are still classified as ELs and approximately 9% are long-term English learners). The families are dedicated and interested in their children's education, but frequently do not know who to effectively support their kids academically.

Our schools require much of our students as we constantly push them to be college- and career-ready. With this push, our teachers must also be dedicated and passionate to support our students, who frequently come to us with academic deficits. Many times, our teachers are determined but need continued support to adequately instruct and guide our students. Parents also want what is best



for their children but sometimes do not know how to help their kids; this is particularly true as they face a new set of standards and expectations. Learning to navigate the American educational system can be daunting, especially for parents and students who don't speak English as their first language or for families from low socioeconomic backgrounds. As we continue to fully implement the more strenuous CCR standards, it is imperative that we continue to support our teachers professionally and that we continue to work with our parents.

Overview

Since the inception of No Child Left Behind there have been ongoing concerns about funding, accountability, and overall student performance. With the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act currently being discussed in Congress, we have new opportunity to ensure all stakeholders are

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prepared and ready to take on the challenges of the College and Career Readiness standards. Teachers need to be effectively supported by intentional, meaningful professional development so they are able to reach the needs of all students in their classrooms. Within the rigorous requirements of the College and Career Readiness standards, teachers of English learners will need extra professional development opportunities in order to provide quality instruction to these very deserving students. Educators will need to understand the shifts required in curriculum, instruction, and assessment for implementation of the new standards, and then they will need to have hands-on opportunities to acquire teaching strategies that respond to these shifts. Parents also need to be supported and trained on the rigors of the new national expectations for students. Ongoing engagement and participation from parents has a huge impact on student success, so ensuring schools implement strong parent education and participation will be key to student success in the College and Career Readiness standards.

Legislative and Political Landscape

In moving ahead with the implementation of the CCR standards, policymakers must consider teacher capacity to address the needs of ELs. The newly Senate-approved Every Child Achieves Act (ECAA) and the House's Student Success Act both outline requirements for schools and educational agencies to track and monitor English learner progress to ensure they achieve at high levels in the core academic subjects. All children need to be supported meet the same challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards and the accountability for ELs is a step in the right direction; in addition to the actions outlined in this new legislation, we also need to ensure that all of our teachers and parents are informed and ready to support our kids as they prepare for college

and career. According to a recent survey conducted by the Education Week Research Center, fewer than 25% of teachers feel that they are adequately prepared to support their ELs in the rigors of the College and Career Readiness Standards.¹ Furthermore, a Fordham Institute study conducted on four different school districts found that professional development in this area was "patchy" and that schools were scrambling to find professional development that was meaningful and supportive of teachers in implementation of the CCR standards.²

Statistics from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education indicate that out of the 3.2 million teachers nationwide, 146,500 of them are new to the profession, embarking on the journey of teaching for the first time. "Nationally, the average turnover for all teachers is 17%, and in urban school districts, the number jumps to 20%.³ The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future provides even starker numbers: they estimate that one-third of all new teachers leave the profession after their first year and 46% are gone within five years."⁴ With these staggering numbers working against us, it's important that policy be created to put systems in place that will provide ongoing support to education professionals.

The education system in our country is rapidly changing; the addition of the College and Career Readiness standards and the call for more rigorous instruction is forcing a shift in the way teachers need to teach. Differentiation has always been a necessary practice, and even more so now with the CCR standards directing the path for instruction in our schools. Kids are required to think deeply and critically, and without proper support and scaffolding, those with only a tenuous grasp on the English language could fall victim to insufficient—however valiant—instructional efforts. Teachers themselves have reported feeling unprepared to work with ELs. General education teachers report a lack of skills and a lack of professional development opportunities as challenges in working with ELs.⁵ Teachers know there is a pressing need

to provide a quality education to their EL students. As the number of ELs continues to increase, more and more teachers will face the challenge of providing effective instruction.⁶

In moving ahead with the implementation of the CCR standards, policymakers must consider their capacity to address the needs of ELs and the teachers who serve them. Readiness must improve, and in order to bring change, we must provide our students with a solid, well-rounded education that prepares them for the next step in life—whether that is college or a career.

Recommendations

As we look at national implementation of the College and Career Readiness standards, it is important that school leaders are adequately prepared to support teachers, students, and parents in rigorous instructional practices and meeting the needs of all students.

1. Require higher education institutions to use a portion of their HEA Title II funding to provide continued support for teachers in their first year. There is a significant gap between the theory that is taught during university teacher prep programs and putting that theory into practice at the school sites. Teachers need extensive support in their first year to be successful in general and to help kids be successful with the CCR standards. To help kids achieve the high levels of academic rigor required in the CCR standards, teachers have to be trained on the most successful strategies. More collaboration between university programs and school districts would help teachers transition from the role of student to the role of teacher. Requiring universities to use a portion of the HEA Title II to provide teachers with continued support from a university professional would allow for a smoother transition between college and career for our teachers. With added guidance for new teachers in difficult areas like unit planning, data analysis, student needs assessments, and ongoing monitoring of subgroups (like ELs), we could ensure that first-year

teachers acquire the skills and practices necessary to be an effective teacher.

- 2. Require both K–12 and higher education institutions to use a portion of Title II (HEA and ESEA) funding in support of teacher professional development and effectiveness in the College and Career Readiness standards.** Our teachers and administrators are not adequately prepared to teach the CCR standards. All teachers need support to analyze student data; plan effective, engaging, and rigorous lessons; and make informed decisions about student need. Learning how to teach using a new set of standards that is being assessed with a new tool is challenging for teachers and it is difficult for school leaders to become experts so they can lead new efforts with CCR standards in their schools. By using funding earmarked for professional development (Title II) to focus on supporting teachers to instruct using the CCR standards, we will ensure that all of our students are in classrooms with effective, prepared teachers. If university programs are aligned with professional development requirements of the state, we would institute continuity between teacher preparation programs and the ongoing development teachers receive when they begin their careers. This would, over time, develop a force of highly prepared and effective teachers who would be able to meet the needs of all students.
- 3. Provide support for families to understand and be prepared to work on College and Career Ready standards with their students through parent and family engagement programs.** A lot of families are still very confused about what is going on with the new Common Core State Standards and with testing. I have seen a few videos out there for parents, but there could be better programs and trainings in place to bring parents along as partners. Increasing minimum funding for parent involvement from Title I, Part A from 1% to 3% would allow schools to plan trainings and support, and to provide resources to parents so they can adequately support their kids during their preparation for college and a career. We know parents and teachers are

the two groups of people that have the greatest impact on student achievement. By increasing the funding provided to schools to provide training, voice, and information to parents, we are ensuring our kids can be supported both at school and at home.

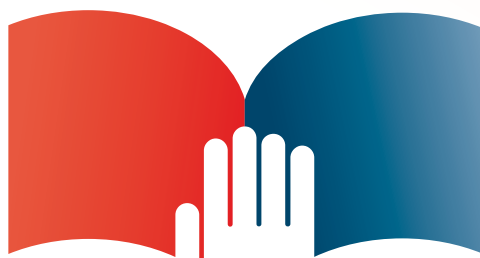
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Conclusion

Educators and policymakers nationwide all agree that we need to challenge our students academically to prepare them for success in college and in their careers. The current initiative with the College and Career Readiness standards will help to better prepare our students to think at the critical and creative levels necessary for future success. However, as many states across our country work diligently to implement the new College and Career Readiness standards, confusion and wariness remain about how to implement the standards and how to best support our most struggling students as they engage deeply and rigorously in their learning. Teachers need to be adequately supported in the CCR standards implementation; if they are supported, they will be able to reciprocate that support to their students, resulting in success for all students. The CCR standards will be successful, but only if all stakeholders come together to support our teachers in properly working with our students.

Endnotes

- 1 Lesli A. Maxwell. *Teachers of English-Learners Feel Least prepared for Common Core, Survey Finds* (Bethesda, MD: Education Week, 2014).
- 2 Katie Cristol and Brinton Ramsey, *Common Core in the Districts: An Early Look at Early Implementers* (Washington, DC: Thomas Fordham Institute, 2014).
- 3 National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, *Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Schools, Colleges, and Departments of Education* (Washington, DC: NCATE, 2006).
- 4 Cynthia Kopkowski. *Why They Leave* (Washington, DC: National Education Association, 2008).
- 5 Patricia Gandara, Julie Maxwell-Jolly, and Anne Driscoll, *Listening to Teachers of English Language Learners: A Survey of California Teachers' Challenges, Experiences, and Professional Development Needs* (Santa Cruz, CA: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, and UC Linguistic Minority Research Center, 2005).
- 6 Keira Gebbie Ballantyne, Alicia R. Sanderman, and Jack Levy, *Educating English Language Learners: Building Teacher Capacity* (Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2008).



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