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

A Pioneer Institute and American Principles Project White Paper

by AccountabilityWorks

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 (see Figure 1). 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 (see Figure 2A).

- $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. (See Figure 2B)

- 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.
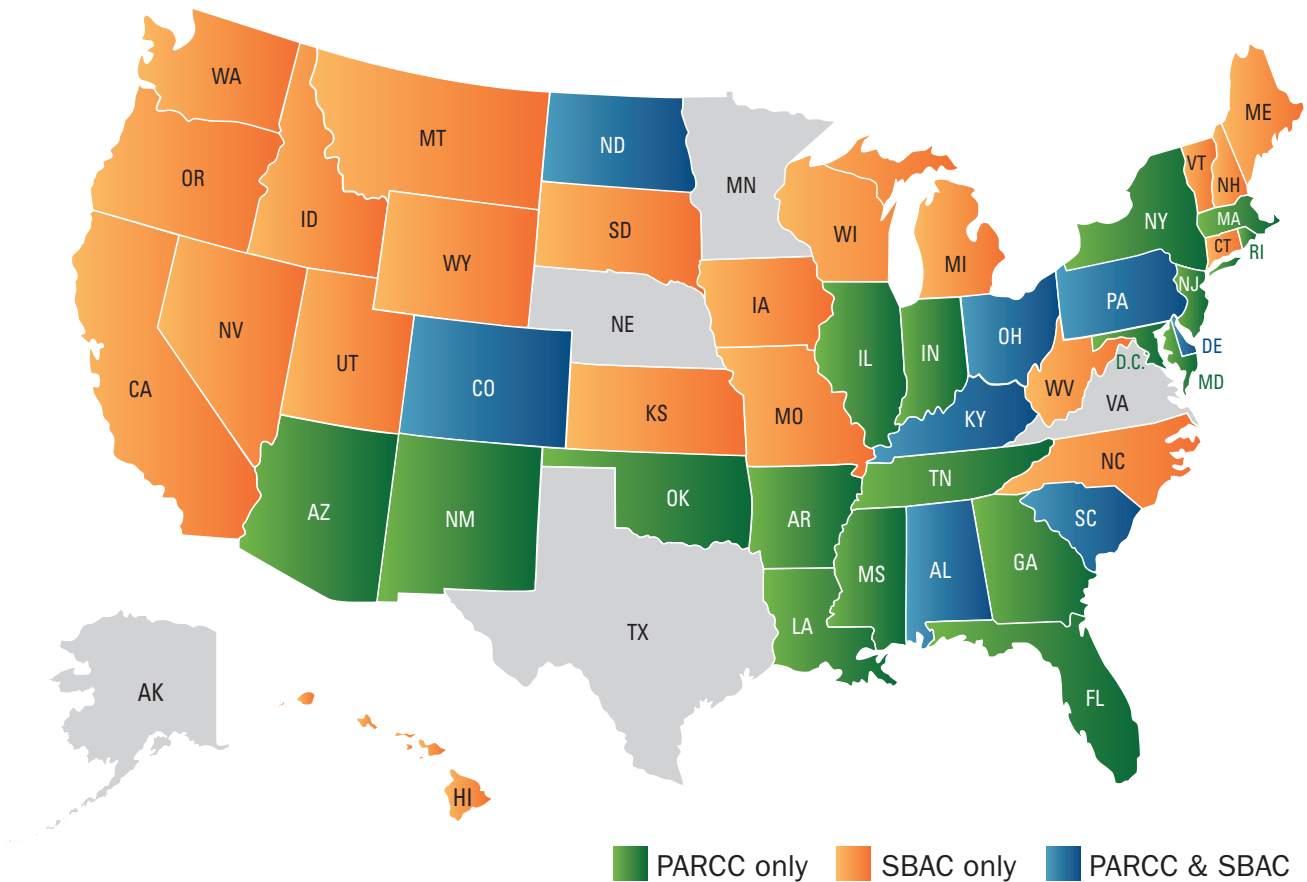
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Figure 1. Common Core States Participating in PARCC only, SBAC only, or both PARCC & SBAC

- PARCC only
- SBAC only
- PARCC & SBAC

- 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.

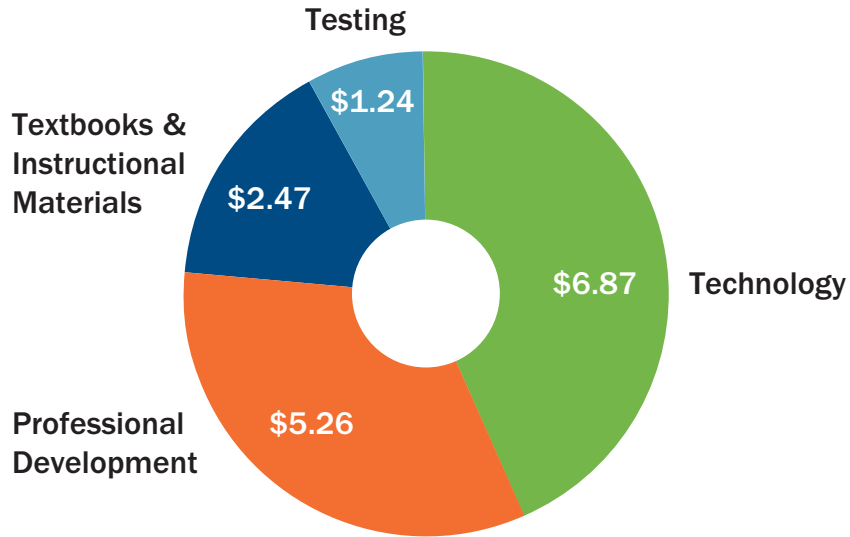## Figure 2A. Total Projected Costs to Implement Common Core Standards (Billions)

Testing

Textbooks & Instructional Materials

$2.47

$1.24

$6.87 Technology

Professional Development

$5.26

Figure 2B. Overview of Projected Costs to Implement Common Core

	One Time	Year 1 Operations	Years 2-7 Ongoing Operations (Annual)	Total of One Time & 7 Operational Years
Testing Costs	$0	$177,234,471	$177,234,471	$1,240,641,297
Professional Development	$5,257,492,417	$0	$0	$5,257,492,417
Textbooks & Instructional Materials	$2,469,098,464	$0	$0	$2,469,098,464
Technology	$2,796,294,147	$326,042,312	$624,258,785	$6,867,889,169
TOTAL	$10,522,885,028	$503,276,783	$801,493,256	$15,835,121,347

About the Authors

AccountabilityWorks

AccountabilityWorks (AW) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the dual goals of research that supports sound education policy and assisting states and schools in implementing high quality assessment and accountability systems. AW works on such initiatives on behalf of states, schools, other reform-minded organizations, and parents.

Lead Contributor

Theodor Rebarber is the founder and chief executive officer of AccountabilityWorks (AW). At AW, his work relevant to this study has included overseeing the development of both paper and online assessments, some of which involved managing the work of a consortium of states. He has also been a contributor to a number of national and state analyses of the costs of implementation of previous federal education initiatives (NCLB). Before that, he was chief education officer for a system of charter schools, with responsibility for curriculum and textbooks, professional development, assessment, and school academic operations. He has worked on education legislation as a legislative director in Congress, standards and testing at the U.S. Department of Education, and education policy and research at the Vanderbilt Institute for Public Policy Studies (VIPPS).

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