

Creating Coherence

Common Core State Standards, Teacher
Evaluation, and Professional Learning





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Special Issues Brief

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The Challenge	The Opportunity	The Lessons
<p>Common Core State Standards, teacher evaluation, and professional learning reforms are being implemented concurrently but often are disconnected from one another. This situation can lead to confusion, frustration, and overload among instructional leaders and teachers alike.</p>	<p>State education agency and regional staff can guide practitioners through a coherence-building process that begins with a close review of professional practice frameworks and professional learning plans to better understand and strengthen the connections between the Common Core, teacher evaluation, and professional learning.</p>	<p>Working in concert, these three reforms have the potential to transform instruction and ensure that all students are college-, career- and civic-ready when they graduate. Toward that end, beginning with the approach described here, district teams can identify the training and supports that instructional leaders need to integrate the Common Core into teacher evaluation and to effectively connect both evaluation and the Common Core with professional learning. This process must be collaborative and iterative, with teachers and leaders engaged along the way.</p>

This Special Issues Brief from the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center) introduces an approach to creating coherence among three potentially transformative instructional reforms: implementation of the Common Core State Standards for student learning, new standards-based teacher evaluation systems, and job-embedded professional learning designs. State, district, and school practitioners are requesting guidance on fitting these pieces together into a coherent plan for improving instruction. This brief aims to begin addressing this request by helping state education agency (SEA) staff guide practitioners through a coherence-building process.

This approach is based on a set of Core Instructional Practices that describe the kinds of instruction teachers need to be implementing in their classrooms to help their students meet the Common Core State Standards. It promises to help states do the following:

- Develop an understanding of the content-specific pedagogical skills and practices needed to teach to the Common Core State Standards. This understanding will be shared among policymakers as well as regional, district, and school instructional leaders and teachers.
- Verify that state and district professional practice frameworks, which form the basis of teacher evaluation systems, support—or at least do not conflict with or detract from—these Core Instructional Practices.
- Create meaningful and coherent opportunities for teachers to enhance their instruction in ways that will help each of their students meet the more rigorous learning expectations of the Common Core.

The brief is intended for use by regional centers, SEA policymakers and staff, and regional support providers who aid districts in their local implementation of the Common Core State Standards, teacher evaluation systems, and professional learning. We hope the approach described in this brief can be useful to guide the policies, processes, and supports to districts to help them build an understanding of the connections between the Common Core, teacher evaluation, and professional learning.

Introduction

In recent decades, American teachers have endured wave after wave of education reforms that were intended to bolster the quality of instruction in America's classrooms. The two latest reform surges have come in quick succession and loom large: teacher evaluation reform and the widespread adoption of the Common Core State Standards for student learning. A quieter, but no less important, swell of activity has been around the growing use of job-embedded professional development for teacher learning.

Implemented well and in concert, these three reforms promise to carry teachers and their students aloft to higher ground and help ensure that students graduate college-, career-, and civic-ready. The Common Core State Standards, for example, represent

a profound opportunity for teachers across the United States to focus their instruction on fewer, clearer, and higher standards as well as share resources and assessments to guide their students toward greater possibilities.

The Common Core State Standards also present an enormous opportunity for states and districts to finally and truly align their systems in pursuit of the same goals. For its part, teacher evaluation reform, implemented well and in careful alignment with the Common Core, can provide teachers with useful feedback on their practice to improve instruction toward the Common Core. This feedback is an invaluable source of information to create authentic, personalized professional learning for all teachers so they can continue to grow and improve.

THE SHARED JOURNEY

to create coherence among these three reforms matters as much as the destination: Learning takes place when stakeholders come together to translate the Common Core into instructional practices, identify the connections to teacher evaluation, and build meaningful professional learning plans to support teachers.

This Special Issues Brief aims to help state and regional staff engage districts to create coherence between the Common Core State Standards, teacher evaluation, and professional learning. The process of making meaning builds an understanding of the reforms and increases district capacity to support high-quality implementation.

The shared journey to create coherence among these three reforms matters as much as the destination: Learning takes place when stakeholders come together to translate the Common Core into instructional practices, identify the connections to teacher evaluation, and build meaningful professional learning plans to support teachers. Therefore, this brief offers a suggested approach for making meaning of the three reforms rather than providing a series of answers and next steps.

The brief begins with a broad overview of these reforms and their intersections. Next, it lays out a step-by-step approach to improve coherence that is centered on a review of the connections between the Common Core and professional practice frameworks. Then, this approach is illustrated with three nationally recognized professional practice frameworks used for teacher evaluation: Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument, Robert Marzano's Teacher Evaluation Model, and Robert Pianta's Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Rubric. Finally, the brief describes the implications of this work for professional learning.

KEY ACTION STEPS FOR STATE POLICYMAKERS

Although practitioners at the district, school, and classroom levels do much of the hard work on connecting the Common Core, teacher evaluation, and professional learning, state policymakers play a key role as well. They provide direction through regulatory guidance and requirements, shape and monitor district plans, and offer targeted assistance to districts to ensure high-quality implementation. Specifically, state policymakers can do the following:



Step 1. Make it a priority for educators to identify the disconnects between the state requirements for teacher evaluation and the instructional shifts demanded by the Common Core as well as encourage SEA and local education agency staff to enhance the state teacher-evaluation requirements, frameworks, and processes as needed.



Step 2. Review state and local professional development (e.g., Title II, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA]) plans with a focus on the extent to which they support both Common Core instructional shifts and teacher evaluation implementation.



Step 3. Provide districts (individually or in consortia) with access to technical assistance at the regional or state level to help them navigate how to integrate and implement the Common Core, teacher evaluation systems, and professional learning.

These recommendations build on those offered by the Aspen Institute and the Council of Chief State Schools Officers (CCSSO) in their 2013 report, *Teaching to the Core* (Wiener, 2013).

The Challenge: In Search of Coherence

Adoption and implementation of the Common Core State Standards in English language arts (ELA)/literacy (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010a) and mathematics (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010b) are under way around the country. As of August 2013, 46 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the standards; eight states and the District of Columbia already have implemented some or all of the standards, and another 20 states are preparing to implement them for the first time in the 2013–14 school year (Lu, 2013; Rotmil & Lu, 2013). Nearly all of the rest (with the exception of four states), plan to implement some or all of the standards in the 2014–15 or 2015–16 school years. If done well, these standards have the potential to reshape how teachers deliver instruction and increase the rigor and depth of knowledge that students will gain.

TEACHER EVALUATION
reforms are happening
in parallel with, but often
disconnected from, Common
Core implementation.

If implemented poorly, however, the Common Core State Standards will become another disruptive reform that creates an additional burden for educators with no benefit for students.

Teacher evaluation reforms are happening in parallel with, but often disconnected from, Common Core implementation. Of the 46 states and the District of Columbia that adopted and are implementing the Common Core, at least 36 states and the District of Columbia also now require the use of multiple measures in their teacher evaluation systems (Center on Great

Teachers and Leaders, 2013). This number is growing as more states apply and are approved for ESEA flexibility, which requires the use of multiple measures. As such, these teacher evaluation systems tend to be built on teaching performance standards that are further broken down into measureable behaviors and actions. Teacher performance is measured against these standards using a professional practice framework—a rubric that describes a continuum of performance for each behavioral indicator.

In terms of content taught, these teaching performance standards are *agnostic*—applicable to all teachers regardless of subject area, grade level, or specialty. If the Common Core State Standards describe the learning destination—what *students* should know and be able to do in core academic subjects—these teaching performance standards offer a series of guideposts for what *teachers* should know and be able to do to facilitate this learning. Teacher evaluation systems must provide enough guidance and detailed feedback to teachers to support the instructional shifts

necessary for successful Common Core implementation. Therefore, there is an urgent need for the professional practice framework used for teacher evaluation to prioritize the critical skills and concepts demanded by the Common Core State Standards.

Concurrent with this work on standards, professional learning for teachers is moving out of the professional development workshop approach and into more authentic settings—including in-school professional learning communities, such as teacher lesson-study groups and just-in-time coaching support in classrooms. This transition from undifferentiated and decontextualized professional development to job-embedded professional learning could not come at a more opportune time as teachers work to understand and integrate the types of instruction demanded by the Common Core State Standards (Coggshall, 2012). This approach to professional learning provides an opportunity for teachers to experience the Common Core principles of rigor and to focus in on their own learning, responsive to their needs as identified through the teacher evaluation process. In contrast, professional learning focused solely on curriculum implementation of the Common Core standards and disconnected from teachers' individual needs will only add to the confusion about instructional priorities.

Aligning the Reforms

Figure 1 (page 6) provides a graphic to help us think about how these efforts at instructional improvement might work together to drive instruction toward the goal of reaching the standards. The Common Core State Standards for student learning set the destination, and teachers' instruction is the chief means of getting students from here to there. Teacher performance standards for evaluation offer guideposts to teachers to reach that destination, providing direction along the way. The performance feedback during evaluation ideally helps teachers know whether they are on the right track—and if they are not, how to get back on track. Meanwhile, professional learning supports can help teachers enhance their instruction so that they become faster and smarter about how to get their students where they need to go.

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Figure 1. Aligning Systems to Drive Instruction Forward to the Common Core State Standards



Without common connections between these instructional drivers, teachers may become disoriented, headed down blind alleys, slowed down, or forced off the road altogether. Or they may simply revert to how they always have done things, leading to the mixed results that schools have always gotten. The approach of the GTL Center, described in the next section, seeks to ensure that state and district teacher evaluation and professional learning offer teachers coherent opportunities to enhance their instruction so students can meet the expectations of the Common Core.

The Opportunity: A Collaborative Approach to Create Coherence

The GTL Center’s approach to creating coherence among these three different efforts to support and improve teaching and learning consists broadly of four steps, the first of which we have tackled for you. First, through a thoughtful review of the Common Core State Standards and building on years of evidence-based best practices and research, participants (state, regional, or district leadership teams) identify those aspects of teaching practice that their teachers should be enacting to successfully teach to the Common Core. Second, teams conduct a comprehensive review of the professional practice framework used to evaluate their teachers in order to see the connections between the framework and those identified teaching practices. Third, state and district leaders review their professional learning plans and processes to ensure that teachers have coherent opportunities to learn those core instructional practices and to strengthen the connections between their evaluation framework and the identified practices. Finally, teams engage in action planning to determine next and future steps to take, based on their findings from the review.

This approach is based on our experience as technical assistance providers. We refined the process after piloting the approach with state-level teams; we will continue to pilot in states across the country and will make adjustments as needed. The recommended steps are described in more detail on the following pages, but it should be noted that states do not have to take these steps alone or without additional guidance. The GTL Center is creating tools and materials to support regional centers and states interested in applying this approach to create greater coherence.

For More Information

The GTL Center has developed additional tools and materials to help states or districts create greater coherence among the Common Core State Standards, teacher evaluation, and professional learning. The following resources are available:

- *Creating Coherence Facilitator’s Guide*
- *Creating Coherence Workbook*
- *Creating Coherence Handouts*
- Sample agenda
- Slide presentation (Parts 1 and 2)

These online resources are available for download on the *Professional Learning Modules* webpage of the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders website. Please visit the webpage at <http://www.gtlcenter.org/technical-assistance/professional-learning-modules/>.

The Four Steps



Step 1: Identify the Instructional Practices That Support Common Core Implementation

The Common Core State Standards establish goals for student learning. They neither contain a curriculum nor dictate how teachers should teach to reach those goals. The developers of the Common Core believe that decisions about curriculum and instruction should be made locally, in context with local needs, capacity, and priorities. These decisions and their implementation are critical. To help support and inform decisions about instruction, working with collaborators from all areas of educational practice, the GTL Center compiled a working set of **Core Instructional Practices** that teachers of ELA/literacy and mathematics will need to enact in order for their students to meet the content, skill, and practice expectations of the Common Core. Ten Core Instructional Practices support the Common Core ELA/literacy anchor and content standards, and 10 Core Instructional Practices support the Common Core mathematical content and practice standards. The full list of working Core Instructional Practices can be found on pages 9–11 of this document. A summary of their development appears in Appendix A, and a glossary of key terms appears in Appendix B.

Instructional Practices Aligned With the Common Core

The Core Instructional Practices compiled by the GTL Center are just one starting point for the process of creating coherence. States may choose to convene stakeholders to determine their own set of Common Core-aligned instructional practices, or they may use a similar set of aligned practices from another organization such as Student Achievement Partners or CCSSO's Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium.

CORE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

for English Language Arts/Literacy

- L-CIP1.** Identify the learning goals for each lesson, align these goals to the Common Core ELA/literacy anchor standards for the grade and content areas, and identify the preceding and succeeding skills and concepts within the appropriate learning progression.
- L-CIP2.** Create literacy-rich classroom environments to support language and literacy learning for diverse student populations, including English language learners, students with disabilities, gifted students, and others—as identified by teachers or schools—who need additional scaffolding, monitoring, or support, including access for all students to grade-appropriate texts and tasks. This practice includes regularly leading whole-class and small-group discussions in which students practice speaking, listening, and building on one another's thinking.
- L-CIP3.** Implement integrated, text-based instruction by doing all of the following:
- Assigning increasingly complex reading, listening, speaking, language, and writing tasks that engage students with increasingly complex literary and informational texts.
 - Demonstrating close and critical reading strategies.
 - Providing opportunities for scaffolded practice in analyses of text content, craft, and structure.
 - Asking higher-order, text-dependent questions that require students to respond with precision and by using evidence from the text for increasingly complex text and cross-text analyses.
- L-CIP4.** Implement explicit writing instruction, focusing on writing to and from sources, by doing all of the following:
- Assigning grade-appropriate writing tasks (including opinion, narrative, argument, and research).
 - Demonstrating writing processes such as prewriting, drafting, and revising, including elaborated examples of these processes by type, audience, and purpose.
 - Facilitating student discussion and peer review.
 - Providing continuous, specific feedback on individual student writing projects.
- L-CIP5. (K–5 Teachers Only).** Within reading lessons, provide explicit, integrated, systematic instruction in Common Core State Standards grade-level print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency.
- L-CIP6.** Implement integrated, explicit language instruction by doing all of the following:
- Emphasizing conventions of standard English grammar and usage for the purpose of meaningful communication.
 - Demonstrating and explicitly explaining examples of standard English grammar and usage, explaining and giving examples of figurative language, and describing word patterns and relationships.

- Providing multiple opportunities for language practice in small- and large-group discussions.
- Making connections between students' informal and home language usage and standard English.

L-CIP7. Teach vocabulary by doing all of the following:

- Regularly embedding grade-appropriate academic vocabulary and domain-specific vocabulary in tasks and assignments.
- Questioning and leading discussions with individuals and groups of students.
- Encouraging the accurate use of terminology through guidance and feedback.
- Demonstrating how to acquire new vocabulary through reading.
- Providing definitions and examples of academic and domain-specific vocabulary as well as providing access to multiple print and digital sources of definitions.

L-CIP8. Demonstrate and guide students in the appropriate and strategic use of technology (e.g., computer software and hardware, the Internet, social media networks) as a set of tools for research, learning, and communication.

L-CIP9 (Teachers of Grades 6–12 History, Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects).

Implement text-based instruction specific to their subject areas by doing all of the following:

- Assigning tasks that require and guide students to identify, use, and analyze discipline-specific resources and texts, such as elaborate diagrams and data sets in complex informational texts that illustrate scientific or technical concepts and primary and secondary sources in history.
- Providing multiple examples of and scaffolded practice for citing specific textual evidence to support analyses of historical, scientific, and technical texts.
- Explicitly explaining and modeling discipline-specific argument writing by providing scaffolded practice in using precise and knowledgeable claims as well as logically sequenced supporting reasons and evidence.
- Integrating a variety of media resources as well as providing opportunities for students to analyze and compare a variety of information sources, including data, multimedia, texts, and experiments.

L-CIP10. Use questioning and formative assessments to gather evidence of learning throughout every lesson to monitor student learning and assess the degree to which each student has met the learning goals.

CORE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

for Mathematics

- M-CIP1.** Identify learning goals for each lesson, relate these goals to the Common Core State Standards for mathematical practice and content, and identify the preceding and succeeding skills and concepts within the appropriate learning progression.
- M-CIP2.** Select, modify, sequence, and assign tasks, activities, and problems that are aligned with the lesson's learning goals and that promote the development of student understanding of the learning goals.
- M-CIP3.** Use rich, problem-based tasks; encourage students to persevere in reaching solutions and to grapple with the tasks.
- M-CIP4.** Embed the mathematical content being taught in contexts that connect mathematics to the real world, as appropriate, and emphasize the use of mathematics in modeling real-world phenomena, where appropriate.
- M-CIP5.** Promote reasoning and sense-making through consistent use of questions such as “Why?” “How do you know?” and “Can you explain your thinking?” Use the answers to these questions to orchestrate classroom discussions in which students explain and defend their thinking and critique the reasoning of others.
- M-CIP6.** Use and elicit multiple representations to support the visualization of mathematical skills and concepts, and make explicit the connections between and among these representations.
- M-CIP7.** Elicit and value multiple approaches to solving mathematical problems, and use these different approaches to facilitate discussions in which the connections between and among these approaches are made explicit.
- M-CIP8.** Emphasize the importance of precise mathematical communication, and connect students' informal language to precise mathematical terminology and notation appropriate to their mathematical development.
- M-CIP9.** Guide students to select and use appropriate tools and technology to complete mathematical tasks.
- M-CIP10.** Use formative assessments to gather evidence of learning during and at the end of every lesson to monitor student learning and assess the degree to which each student met the learning goals.

Table 1 describes the Core Instructional Practices—what they are and are not. As noted in Table 1, these Core Instructional Practices describe integrated instructional approaches to teaching academic content; they do not detail specific instructional strategies or curricula, nor are they a replacement for teaching performance standards. Besides describing the shifts in instruction that need to occur for many teachers with the implementation of the Common Core, they are intended to clearly articulate what all teachers need to do well to teach ELA/literacy and mathematics effectively.

Table 1. GTL Center’s Core Instructional Practices

What the Core Instructional Practices Are (and Are Not)	
ARE	ARE NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Are based on research and practice. ■ Are developed in collaboration with teachers, curriculum experts, teacher educators, assessment developers, and other experts. ■ Are a working set of content-specific teaching practices that, if enacted by teachers or teams of teachers, should help all students attain mastery of the Common Core State Standards by the end of Grade 12. ■ Are meant for use in systems-alignment work. ■ Are subject to revision based on new evidence of utility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Are not the one best way to teach. ■ Are not a comprehensive set of teaching performance standards. ■ Are not the specific learner “mathematical practices” or ELA/literacy “anchor standards” detailed in the Common Core. ■ Are not meant to be a checklist or one-size-fits-all or prescribed approach to pedagogy. ■ Are not inclusive of all important teaching practices, competencies, skills, performances, and dispositions—such as organizing and managing classrooms, reflecting on or analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it, building relationships with students, or collaborating with colleagues.



Step 2: Determine How Well the Professional Practice Framework Supports the Core Instructional Practices

After states and districts have developed a working knowledge of the Core Instructional Practices (or a similar set of Common Core–aligned instructional practices), they can start creating greater coherence between the Common Core and their teacher evaluation system. This step is critical because the professional practice framework is used to measure and rate teacher performance as well as provide feedback to teachers with the goal of improving teaching and increasing student learning.

Teacher evaluation ratings and feedback can strengthen implementation of Common Core–aligned instructional practices by prioritizing these practices, reinforcing messages about how to teach, and focusing professional learning in these areas. If poorly aligned with the priority instructional practices, the teacher evaluation process can undermine implementation of the Common Core State Standards by creating confusion about areas of instructional focus. At worst, as Wiener (2013) forcefully points out, “It would be foolhardy and unfair to expect teachers to strive for instruction that is different from that which they are measured on and held accountable for” (p. 8). So the need for meaningful alignment is real, and—to the extent that teacher evaluation is used for compensation and contract renewal decisions—teachers’ livelihoods may depend on it.

At the same time, it also would be foolhardy and unfair to students to evaluate teachers solely on their demonstrated ability to teach to the Common Core State Standards. Currently, the Common Core provide standards for student learning only in ELA/literacy and mathematics. Student learning in other key domains (such as science, social studies, the arts, and physical education) are left out. Also left out are the social-emotional competencies that teachers need to cultivate in their students, although these competencies are inextricably intertwined with academic learning (see Yoder, 2013). Moreover, professional practice frameworks also help define the important expectations of teachers as professionals—such as collaborating with colleagues, regularly analyzing their practice for the purpose of improving it, and supporting school initiatives.

The section on “Application: Review of Professional Practice Framework Examples” (page 18) illustrates this review process, examining three nationally recognized professional practice frameworks used in teacher evaluation to demonstrate what participants can learn from this review.



Step 3: Review and Refine Professional Learning Supports

Although state and district leaders recognize that educators will need high-quality professional development opportunities that move beyond “sit-n’-get” or “one-size-fits-all” offerings to understand and successfully teach to the Common Core State Standards, two other factors are less well understood: (1) how to leverage teacher evaluation to further teachers’ instructional practice for the Common Core by providing evidence-based feedback on teachers’ ability to implement the standards, and (2) how to design and deploy differentiated and job-embedded professional learning that is coherent and effective in supporting changes in practice.

Just as teacher practice must change to implement the rigors of the Common Core State Standards, states and districts will need to rethink their approach to professional learning so it is coherent, systematic, and authentic and models the kinds of instruction that teachers need to implement.

Therefore, as state, regional, or district leadership teams conduct the critical review of their professional practice framework, it is essential that they also revisit their existing professional learning initiatives, programs, and offerings throughout this process. In this step, teams reflect on their available (or planned) professional learning activities, asking themselves the following questions:

- Do our professional learning opportunities support teachers’ continuous improvement in implementing the content-specific Core Instructional Practices in a coherent way?
- Do our professional learning opportunities address the disconnects identified in the previous step between the practices needed for the Common Core and the practices promoted in the professional practice framework?
- Should our professional learning focus specifically on supporting improvements in particular practice areas?
- What opportunities exist for teachers to receive expert mentoring or coaching as they attempt to improve on their ability to implement the Core Instructional Practices? Are mentors or coaches able to effectively model the Core Instructional Practices and lead professional conversations about them?
- Are activities undertaken by professional learning communities supporting the instruction that supports the Common Core?

Professional learning that focuses on strengthening the existing connections between the Core Instructional Practices and priority areas of the professional practice framework builds teachers' understanding in key areas and reinforces messages about integrating critical Common Core–aligned approaches into teachers' instruction.



Step 4: Based on the Review, Decide on Next Steps for Revising, Enhancing, or Staying the Course on the Teacher Evaluation and Professional Learning Reforms

Teacher Evaluation. Possible strategies to create more coherence between the Common Core State Standards and the professional practice framework include creating supplemental guidance to make more explicit the connections between the Common Core and teacher evaluation, adding clarifying language or “look-fors” to the framework for some or all teachers, and modifying the framework language.

When determining a course of action for addressing each gap in alignment, consider whether the Core Instructional Practice pertains to teachers of specific grade levels and/or subjects, or whether it is a critical practice for all teachers to incorporate into their approach. Second, consider how any change might impact the reliability and validity of the framework; any significant change to framework language will require that the tool be revalidated. Finally, consider all potential changes from a usability standpoint: Does adding language to the framework make it more complicated and harder to use? For specific suggestions, see “Guiding Principles for Modifying Professional Practice Frameworks” (page 17).

Professional Learning. Areas of alignment between the Core Instructional Practice and the professional practice framework can offer a good starting place for districts to plan meaningful, coordinated professional learning such as focused instructional coaching, reflection, and peer discussion. Professional learning that builds on the connection points between teacher evaluation and the Common Core also can reduce the perception that both initiatives are stand-alone, add-on reforms that are “completed” in a year or two.

Areas in which the professional practice framework fully addresses the Core Instructional Practice provide an excellent starting point for teachers to learn more about the Common Core. By focusing initially on these instructional strategies, teachers will be introduced to the Core Instructional Practice in the context of their evaluation system. As Weiner (2013) suggests, “Establishing

the Common Core instructional shifts as priorities for observing and developing teachers can make the transition more manageable and build confidence in these policies” (p. 6). Teachers, coaches, and principals can easily monitor progress on implementation of the Core Instructional Practice and related strategies using the professional practice framework.

In cases where the Core Instructional Practice is more specific and detailed than the professional practice framework, professional learning on these Core Instructional Practices may focus on making these connections more explicit. More explicit guidance, feedback, and coaching may be required to create coherence between these Core Instructional Practices and the professional practice framework.

Finally, when a Core Instructional Practice is not embedded anywhere in the professional practice framework for evaluation, professional learning can

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Common Core instructional shifts as priorities for observing and developing teachers can make the transition more manageable and build confidence in these policies.

begin with conversations about these differences. Teachers can work with peers, coaches, and evaluators to find connection points between the that Core Instructional Practice and the professional practice framework and identify the appropriate methods and evidence sources for evaluating the Core Instructional Practice.

For example, implementation of a specific Core Instructional Practice in ELA/literacy may be incorporated into the evaluations of ELA teachers, with evidence of its use gathered through classroom observations. Also, teachers may decide that a second Core Instructional Practice is a critical area of focus for the school and that it should be included as part of all teachers’ evaluation, with evidence gathered through a review of lesson

plans. In addition, teachers may decide that implementation of a third Core Instructional Practice may be better assessed outside of the formal teacher evaluation process, with schoolwide conversation and reflection about how this instructional shift impacts instruction. In all cases, evaluators should understand the Core Instructional Practices and their connection to the professional practice framework in order to provide meaningful feedback on the implementation of each Core Instructional Practice.

Guiding Principles for Modifying Professional Practice Frameworks

The following principles can guide discussion about the appropriate course of action for addressing points of nonalignment between the Core Instructional Practices and the particular professional practice framework. These principles draw upon sound methods of performance rubric design and field experiences in making these frameworks usable for teachers and their evaluators:

- If starting with a validated framework, aim to make minimal changes to the language and structure of the framework itself.
- Use supplemental guidance documents to clarify the framework's meaning for some or all teachers before revising the framework itself.
- If a revision is required, start by adding clarifying language. If that approach is insufficient, revise the existing framework language to the smallest extent possible.
- When editing language within the framework, be mindful of preserving *horizontal alignment*—that is, ensuring the same ideas are reflected at each performance level for a single indicator.
- When editing language within the framework, be mindful of preserving *vertical alignment*—that is, ensuring an edit to one indicator does not make this indicator more (or less) challenging to achieve than other indicators.
- Adjust the framework in response to the data, such as user confusion, lack of reliability, and evidence of poor alignment with student outcomes.

Application: Review of Three Professional Practice Framework Examples

As discussed previously, this approach to creating coherence is best applied by regional, state, or district teams. However, to demonstrate what teams can learn from a review of their teacher evaluation framework, the GTL Center reviewed the alignment between two Core Instructional Practices (one in ELA/literacy and one in mathematics) and three nationally recognized professional practice frameworks. We stopped short of conducting the review across all 20 Core Instructional Practices for any one of the frameworks because we believe that the value of the process comes not from a “thumbs up/thumbs down” determination of how well the frameworks support teaching to the Common Core but from the learning that comes from making sense of the connections and the discussions with colleagues about the local implications of their conclusions.

That said, as the GTL Center applies this approach in collaboration with states and districts across the country, we plan to share our learnings with our regional center and state clients.

Sample Frameworks and Core Instructional Practices

The three professional practice frameworks selected for this review are some of the most commonly used frameworks in teacher evaluation systems around the country, as follows:

- Charlotte Danielson’s (2013) Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument¹
- Robert Marzano’s (2013) Teacher Evaluation Model²
- The Classroom Assessment Scoring System Observation Protocol for Grades K–3 (CLASS K–3)³

All three are based on research on effective teaching, and two of the three have been independently shown to be correlated with student achievement (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012). All three often are included in state lists of approved evaluation frameworks. As with the Core Instructional Practices, each framework takes a different approach to categorizing and measuring teacher practices. Danielson’s Framework for

¹ The 2013 edition of the Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument can be found online (<http://www.danielsongroup.org/userfiles/files/downloads/2013EvaluationInstrument.pdf>).

² The full Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model can be found online (http://tpep-wa.org/wp-content/uploads/Marzano_Teacher_Evaluation_Model.pdf).

³ The CLASS Rubric for Grades K–3 may be requested from <http://www.teachstone.com/about-the-class/>.

Teaching Evaluation Instrument breaks down teaching into 22 behavior-based components; each component is multifaceted and reflects the complex nature of teaching. Marzano's Teacher Evaluation Model takes a skills- and strategy-focused approach to instruction, breaking down teaching into 60 discrete elements with a detailed description of evidence for each practice. The CLASS K–3 protocol, created by Robert Pianta and his colleagues, assesses the effectiveness of classroom interactions between a teacher and students; these classroom interactions are organized into three overarching domains (emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support) that are further subdivided into observable dimensions. (Note: There are different developmentally appropriate versions of the CLASS tool for different grade bands, including toddler, prekindergarten, lower elementary, upper elementary, and secondary.)

Framework Review Exercise

The GTL Center compared one ELA/literacy Core Instructional Practice (L-CIP7) and one mathematics Core Instructional Practice (M-CIP5) against the three professional practice frameworks to determine the extent to which the framework language, intent, and structure support each Core Instructional Practice.

For this review, we began with the two Core Instructional Practices and looked for points of significant alignment with each professional practice framework. First, we identified parallel language or concepts within each Core Instructional Practice and each of the three frameworks; such parallelism provides the clearest evidence that the framework supports Common Core implementation. Next, we identified aspects of the each framework that describe more general or content-agnostic practices than the Core Instructional Practice, which suggests that the framework is implicitly supportive of the Core Instructional Practice but more detailed guidance for ELA or mathematics teachers and their evaluators might be helpful in bringing more coherence to the two models. Finally, we looked for gaps in alignment, identifying concepts from the Core Instructional Practice that were missing in the framework. Based on the results of the review, we recommended next steps to create greater coherence between the Core Instructional Practice and each framework. Following are the details of each review: one Core Instructional practice in ELA/literacy and one in mathematics

ELA/Literacy Core Instructional Practice 7

ELA/Literacy Core Instructional Practice 7 (L-CIP7) describes instructional practices related to teaching vocabulary. Although content-specific vocabulary instruction can and should be incorporated across subjects, many of the practices detailed in Table 2 pertain specifically to teachers of ELA. Therefore, it is not expected that the level of detail in the Core Instructional Practice would be found in a professional practice framework used to evaluate all teachers.

Table 2. Comparison of L-CIP7 With Three Professional Practice Frameworks

Professional Practice Framework	Points of Significant Alignment With L-CIP7	Next Steps to Create Coherence Between L-CIP7 and the Particular Framework
Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument (2013 edition)	<p>L-CIP7. Teach vocabulary by doing all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Regularly embedding grade-appropriate academic vocabulary and domain-specific vocabulary in tasks and assignments. ■ Questioning and leading discussions with individuals and groups of students. ■ Encouraging the accurate use of terminology through guidance and feedback. ■ Demonstrating how to acquire new vocabulary through reading. ■ Providing definitions and examples of academic and domain-specific vocabulary as well as providing access to multiple print and digital sources of definitions. <p>Component 2b. Establishing a culture for learning: “insistence on the use of precise language by students”</p> <p>Component 3a. Communicating with students: “use precise, academic vocabulary and ... explain their use of it”</p> <p>Component 3b. Using questioning and discussion techniques: “enabling students to engage in discussion directly with one another”</p>	Danielson's framework does not address the connections between vocabulary and reading and feedback to students; supplemental guidance with “look-fors” around the teaching and use of vocabulary may be helpful.
Marzano's Teacher Evaluation Model, published May 2013	<p>Domain 1, Element 8. Previewing new content: “connect vocabulary to upcoming content”</p> <p>Domain 1, Element 10. Helping students process new information: “groups are actively asking and answering questions about the information”</p> <p>Domain 1, Element 11. Helping students elaborate on new information: “asks students to explain and defend their inferences”</p>	Marzano's framework does not address the teacher's use of domain-specific, academic language or instruction around vocabulary; therefore, supplemental guidance for all teachers around this key idea may be needed, with additional support for teachers of ELA.

The CLASS Rubric, Grades K-3	<p>Concept development: “analysis and reasoning”</p> <p>Language modeling: “advanced language, frequent conversations, repetitions and extension”</p>	The CLASS framework does not address connections between vocabulary and reading and feedback to students; supplemental guidance with “look-fors” on the teaching and use of vocabulary may be helpful.
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Mathematics Core Instructional Practice 5

Mathematics Core Instructional Practice 5 (M-CIP5) describes a practice that all effective teachers engage in, but it may represent a shift for many mathematics teachers. The Common Core State Standards emphasize that students need to be taught that mathematics is a sense-making process for understanding why, rather than a technique for memorizing the right procedure or answer. The practices detailed in Table 3 pertain specifically to teachers of mathematics. Therefore, it is not expected that the level of detail in the Core Instructional Practice would be found in a professional practice framework used to evaluate all teachers.

Table 3. Comparison of M-CIP5 With Three Professional Practice Frameworks

<p>M-CIP5. Promote reasoning and sense-making through consistent use of questions such as “Why?” “How do you know?” and “Can you explain your thinking?” Use the answers to these questions to orchestrate classroom discussions in which students explain and defend their thinking and critique the reasoning of others.</p>		
Professional Practice Framework	Points of Significant Alignment With M-CIP5	Next Steps to Create Coherence Between M-CIP5 and the Particular Framework
Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument, 2013 edition	<p>Component 3b. Questioning and discussion techniques: “questions of high cognitive challenge,” “challenge students to examine their premises, to build a logical argument, and to critique the arguments of others,” “build further questions on student responses”</p> <p>Component 3c. Engaging students in learning: “activities and assignments that ... encourage students to explain their thinking”</p>	Although there is strong alignment between the Core Instructional Practice and Danielson’s framework, additional support for mathematics teachers and their evaluators on how to implement these questioning techniques in a mathematics setting may be helpful.

<p>Marzano's Teacher Evaluation Model, published May 2013</p>	<p>Domain 1, Element 11. Helping students elaborate on new information: “asks explicit questions that require students to make elaborative inferences,” “asks students to explain and defend their inferences”</p> <p>Domain 1, Element 18. Helping students examine errors in reasoning: “students can explain the overall structure of an argument presented to support a claim ... [and] describe common statistical errors”</p> <p>Domain 1, Element 30. Using friendly controversy: “mini-debates about the content,” “has students examine multiple perspectives and opinions about the content”</p> <p>Domain 1, Element 40. Asking questions of low-expectancy students: “makes sure low-expectancy students are asked challenging questions at the same rate as high-expectancy students”</p>	<p>Marzano's framework supports the big ideas underlying the Core Instructional Practice; however, as the evaluated behaviors are spread across four elements, additional stand-alone guidance making these connections more explicit might be warranted.</p>
<p>The CLASS Rubric, Grades K-3</p>	<p>Quality of feedback: “prompting thought processes”</p> <p>Language modeling: “open-ended questions, frequent conversations”</p> <p>Concept development: “analysis and reasoning”</p> <p>Regard for student perspectives: “student expression”</p>	<p>The CLASS framework supports the big ideas underlying the Core Instructional Practice; however, as the evaluated behaviors are spread across four dimensions, additional stand-alone guidance making these connections more explicit might be warranted.</p>

Key Application Take-Aways and Potential Implications for Professional Learning

Two key themes emerged from the sample professional practice framework review that may be helpful to states and districts as they engage in this exercise with their own frameworks.

Theme 1: Supports and Training for Evaluators

First, as expected, the Core Instructional Practices are—for the most part—content specific. The professional practice frameworks, however, tend to identify broader dimensions of teaching that apply to all content areas and grade levels. Thus, evaluators may need additional training and support to appropriately identify evidence of the Core Instructional Practices and provide meaningful, actionable feedback to teachers of ELA and mathematics. Supplemental guidance documents that highlight “look-fors” for evaluators can be a useful strategy. Another strategy to strengthen these connection points is to ensure that the pool of evaluators includes a number of people with the appropriate content expertise, such as literacy and mathematics coaches.

Theme 2: Professional Learning to Help Teachers Fill in the Gaps

Second, none of frameworks exhibited a one-to-one correspondence between a Core Instructional Practice and a single framework component or element for the two Core Instructional Practices examined. This lack of direct correspondence could be due in part to the fact that Core Instructional Practices often are deliberately composed of multiple, integrated teacher actions that articulate a whole practice, while the professional practice frameworks tend to divide teaching into a series of discrete behaviors for the purposes of measurement and evaluation. Professional learning that helps teachers make sense of the connections between the two and enables them to fill in the gaps where the connections are weak or nonexistent will help ensure that teacher evaluation is indeed helping drive instruction toward the Common Core State Standards.

Conclusion: Moving Forward

In the era of the federal Race to the Top grant competition, federal ESEA waivers, and other initiatives to reform educator policies and practices, state-level changes have been occurring at a record pace. In this context, it is more important than ever to create coherence between these interrelated efforts. States and districts have an opportunity to strengthen teaching and learning to ensure that students graduate college-, career-, and civic-ready, with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, using teacher evaluation reform efforts and professional learning supports to sustain this shift.

This brief provides district and state leaders with one approach to creating better coherence among the Common Core State Standards, teacher evaluation, and professional learning reforms. The approach should help states and districts begin to find answers to the following critical questions:

- To what extent does our teacher evaluation system support the implementation of the Common Core State Standards?
- To what extent do our investments in teacher professional learning support the successful implementation of the Common Core while also supporting teachers' successful implementation of the professional practice standards measured in teacher evaluation?
- How can we strengthen the extent to which our teacher evaluation systems and professional learning support effective teaching to the Common Core?
- How can we ensure that our teacher evaluation systems, professional learning, and Common Core implementation efforts are all driving instruction in the same direction—and not giving teachers inconsistent messages about the best ways to teach?

Lessons Learned

From our sample review of three professional practice frameworks used for teacher evaluation, we learned that there are significant areas of alignment between the Core Instructional Practices and any research-based professional practice framework. These professional practice frameworks describe teacher practice in more general terms than the Core Instructional Practices, but we did not find any language that was incompatible with a Common Core–aligned instructional approach. We also identified opportunities to create better coherence between the frameworks and Core Instructional Practices, making some connections more explicit or supplementing

the teacher evaluation model with guidance for evaluators of ELA/literacy and mathematics teachers. Most important, we learned that the process itself—engaging as a team in the framework review using the Core Instructional Practices and discussing our thinking and learning—was the cornerstone to creating coherence with an actionable plan for implementation.

Next Steps

A next step in this work will be to think about how principal evaluation and principal professional learning as well as educator preparation, certification, and licensure also can be aligned and rallied in support of the necessary enhancements to instruction for the Common Core. Creating coherence among these initiatives to ensure that all students experience great teaching will be no simple task, but it is a necessary one. The approach offered in this brief is just one that states and districts could take; but in any effort to bridge these efforts, the process must be collaborative and iterative, with teachers and principals engaged along the way. The ultimate measure of success will be when the Common Core State Standards, supported by teacher evaluation and professional learning activities, are fully integrated into teachers' instruction and students are achieving to these standards.

MOST IMPORTANT, WE learned that the process itself—engaging as a team in the framework review using the Core Instructional Practices and discussing our thinking and learning—was the cornerstone to creating coherence with an actionable plan for implementation.

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Appendix A. Creating the Core Instructional Practices

To create the lists of Core Instructional Practices, GTL Center staff identified highly qualified content and curriculum experts at American Institutes for Research to develop an initial list of Common Core State Standards–aligned instructional practices, using Common Core documents as well as their knowledge of the content and field. In this process, staff reviewed resources developed by Student Achievement Partners, CCSSO, EngageNY, TeachingWorks, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the International Reading Association.

The initial list was then reviewed by a committee composed of practitioner-experts across the field, including classroom K–12 teachers, teacher educators, assessment and curriculum developers, and other experts. (The reviewers are listed below.) These individuals helped craft the Core Instructional Practices, but the GTL Center did not ask them to officially endorse the final set of practices.

ELA/Literacy Reviewers

Peter Afflerbach, Professor of Reading, University of Maryland

Mark Baumgartner, Middle School English Language Art Teacher, Cleveland Teachers Union

Ruth Isaia, Senior Researcher, American Institutes for Research

David Liben, Senior Content Specialist, Student Achievement Partners

Angie Miller, English Language Arts Teacher, New Hampshire State Teacher of the Year

Justin Minkel, Elementary School Teacher, Arizona State Teacher of the Year

Kavatus Newell, Senior Technical Assistance Consultant, American Institutes for Research

Deborah A. Paden, Teacher on Assignment, American Federation of Teachers/Cleveland Teachers Union Innovation Fund

Beth Ratway, Senior Technical Assistance Consultant, American Institutes for Research

Chris Rauscher, Senior Technical Assistance Consultant, American Institutes for Research

Jennifer Walker, Secondary English Language Arts and Advanced Placement Literature and Composition Teacher, Ohio State Teacher of the Year

Lynn Shafer Willner, Senior Research Associate, Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation

Karen Wixson, Dean, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Mathematics Reviewers

Beth Cacuzza, Mathematics Education Consultant, Student Achievement Partners

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Francis (Skip) Fennell, Professor of Education and Graduate and Professional Studies, McDaniel College

Barbara LaSaracina, Middle School Mathematics Instructor, New Jersey State Teacher of the Year

Steve Leinwand, Principal Researcher, American Institutes for Research

Lauren Matlach, Research Associate, American Institutes for Research

Toni Smith, Senior Researcher, American Institutes for Research

Lynn Shafer Willner, Senior Research Associate, Center on Standards and Assessments Implementation

Appendix B. Glossary of Key Terms

Academic vocabulary—includes those words that readers will find in all types of complex texts from different disciplines; described in more detail as Tier 2 words, to which the Common Core State Standards refer as *general academic words*; words that are more likely to appear in written texts than in speech, appear in all types of texts, and often represent subtle or precise ways to say relatively simple things (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012a; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010c).

Common Core State Standards grade-level print concepts—appropriate grade-level understanding of the organization and features of print (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010f).

Close and critical reading strategies—close, attentive, and analytical reading necessary to carefully sift through information and to demonstrate cogent reasoning and use of evidence; requires actively seeking the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens world views; can include activating prior knowledge, predicting, questioning, visualization, monitoring, rereading, retelling, inference, and evaluating and other metalinguistic skills and metacognitive strategies (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010e).

Complex literary and informational texts—a broad range of high-quality, increasingly challenging texts; best found in whole texts rather than passages from such texts (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010d).

Domain-specific vocabulary—vocabulary specific to a domain or field of study and key to understanding a new concept within a text; far more common in informational texts than in literature; recognized as new and “hard” words for most readers; often explicitly defined by the author of a text, repeatedly used, and heavily scaffolded; vocabulary also referred to as Tier 3 words (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010c).

Fluency—the ability to read a text accurately and quickly, and with expression, recognizing words automatically; important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Because fluent readers do not have to concentrate on decoding the words, they can focus their attention on what the text means. They can make connections among the ideas in the text and between the text and their background knowledge (Arbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, n.d.).

Higher-order questions—questions that require thinking and reflection rather than single-solution responses (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002; Schiller, 2010).

Literacy-rich classroom environment—more than just the physical environment of having appropriate texts and writing materials available; environment in which students are immersed daily in a variety of language experiences including speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Guo, Justice, Kaderavek, & McGinty, 2010; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010a).

Multiple Representations—more than one representation of a mathematical concept. For example, a graph, a table, and an equation are different representations for a linear relationship.

Phonics—the correspondences between phonemes (individual sounds) and graphemes (common spellings) (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012b; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010a, 2010b).

Phonological awareness—the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyze the individual sounds in spoken words, syllables, and sound units (phonemes) (Anthony & Francis, 2005).

Professional practice framework—a standards-based teacher evaluation tool that describes teaching performance for a series of behavioral indicators. The framework is organized into a rubric (table) format that describes teaching performance across a continuum of proficiency for each indicator. Teachers and their evaluators use the framework to anchor their understanding of what “good” teaching practice looks like, gather evidence of performance, and rate or reflect on performance and next steps toward improvement.

Problem-based task—a problem for which the solution method is not immediately known. To complete these problems, students must draw on their knowledge and, in so doing, will often develop new mathematical understandings (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2000).

Scaffold, scaffolding—temporary guidance or assistance provided to a student by a teacher, another adult, or a more capable peer, enabling the student to perform a task he or she otherwise would not be able to do alone, with the goal of fostering the student’s capacity to perform the task independently (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010a, 2010c).

Text and cross-text analyses—the many ways of looking at text content, craft, structure, or language (or comparing these features across multiple texts) in order to build knowledge or express ideas about the text(s), and the ability to do so clearly; may include having built literary, historical, scientific, or cultural contexts of the text(s).

Text-dependent questions—questions that are based on the text under consideration; require students to demonstrate that they not only can follow the details of what is explicitly stated but also are able to make valid claims that align with evidence in the text (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012a).

Writing processes—the full range of the production of writing, including the development of ideas, planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach to produce clear and coherent writing that is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Writing task—a piece of writing or writing project intended to improve the development, clarity, organization, conciseness, or correctness of writing; includes a specific purpose, audience, and type, such as argument, narrative, explanatory, or research.

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