



NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BLACK SCHOOL EDUCATORS

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September 15, 2014

Dear NABSE Members:

We are providing a report summarizing our Membership's response to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Survey. The report was developed and implemented by our Legislative and Advocacy Committee in collaboration with the Moody Research Institute.

Beginning with NABSE's annual conference in New Orleans in 2010 the organization has consistently provided information to its members and conducted workshops on the origin and process of the development of Common Core by the states' Governors and Legislatures. Both the national organization and its state and local affiliates have provided symposia, workshops, and professional development opportunities on the practice and implementation of CCSS.

Prior to the intense political scrutiny that is now taking place, NABSE chose to get its membership to respond to the implementation of CCSS in their own districts. We used a certified and reputable communications organization (*K-12 Insight*) to do this work. They completed their work last fall and provided the results. The results were the subject of a symposia at our Annual Conference in Detroit 2013.

As the CCSS "wars" heated up, it seemed important to take another look at the memberships' continued interest and response. The report combines these findings by focus group meetings in the spring with the original findings done by *K12 Insight*. One of the recommendations requested by the membership is more professional development and training on the "Standards" themselves. Immediately after the conference in Kansas City, the Executive Committee of the NABSE Board and I will work with the Affiliate Presidents to find the funding to develop a robust training program for those interested affiliates.

Black Educators historically have cared about standards for children of African descent. We have not always been happy as we have seen curriculum and standards "dumbed down" for our children, usually couched in the term "low income", for the media, other educators and educational organizations. Most often, the reference of "low income" was pointing toward our Black children.

The political wars on the "Standards" will subside at some point, but I encourage our membership to keep your eyes focused on opportunity, equity, and robust academic standards for our children, whether they are headed to careers or college.

Thanks to all of you who participated in the NABSE Common Core (CCSS) Survey.

Sincerely,
Bernard Hamilton, Jr. Ed.D.
President & Acting Executive Director

"EDUCATION IS A CIVIL RIGHT"

A Report to the Membership

In the fall of 2013, the National Alliance of Black School Educators collaborated with K12 *Insight*, a research and communications firm located in Herndon, Virginia, to ascertain the implementation level within school districts of the adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS) by our members and their district membership.

Survey topics included:

- General awareness of and readiness with the CCSS
- Experience with CCSS Assessments Consortia (PARCC and Smarter Balanced)
- Implementation of English and mathematics standards
- Resource needs and support
- Information needs
- Impact of CCSS on teaching and learning
- Use of assessment results

A third of our membership, representing 34 states, responded to the survey.

Three out of four respondents are involved in the school district as an administrator or teacher. The majority of survey respondents represented larger urban school districts.

About two-thirds of respondents have read some or all of the CCSS – [60 (60%) percent - English and 65 (65%) percent – mathematics].

Nine out of 10 respondents from states that adopted the CCSS are in school districts implementing them.

Almost half responded that their district has been preparing for implementation from 1 to 2 years.

About one-quarter described their overall readiness as well prepared. Less than one in five described assessment readiness as well prepared.

More than 80 (80%) percent indicate their district has been implementing the CCSS for two years or less.

Slightly more than half of the respondents - 54 (54%) percent have participated in developing one of the assessment consortia.

Approximately three out of four respondents believe the assessments are well aligned or somewhat aligned with the CCSS.

As the Common Core wars heated up, the leadership of NABSE directed its legislative/advocacy committee to conduct focus groups in those regions where the organization's largest number of affiliates are located the Midwest, the Southeast, the South Atlantic Sea Coast and the South. The West Coast was not included.

Those results continued to demonstrate that a significant number of NABSE members support the construct of Common Core Standards, but did indeed have problems with both the way they were rolled out in many states and the intended use by some State-Education departments and Legislative bodies.

Ninety-five (95%) percent of the focus group respondents reported an awareness of Core State Standards.

Eighty-five (85%) percent of the school districts have been preparing common core rollout from 1 to 3 years.

Fifty-three (53%) percent of the focus group respondents described school districts as ready for implementation.

Fifty (50%) percent described their district's implementation efforts ranging from 1 to 3 years.

Fifty-five (55%) percent of the focus group respondents described the assessments as well aligned. However, forty-eight (48%) percent described the assessments as somewhat aligned.

Fifty-seven (57%) percent of the focus groups respondents indicated that they had participated in meetings, workshops and seminars related to CCSS implementation.

Support to teachers for successful implementation of the CCSS was noted by 35 (35%) percent of the respondents. Seventy-five (75%) percent still needed training for curriculum development and 10 (10%) percent for professional development for school leaders.

Eighty (80%) percent of the respondents were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with information provided in the district.

Eighty (80%) percent of the focus group respondents felt that the CCSS would result in higher student achievement.

Sample Commentary

Sample Commentary from respondents of the survey suggests the Common Core State Standards are professional and a positive move for the education of America's students and in particular black students. However, the comments indicate there is misalignment between what is intended and the clarity as to what that intent is.

"I think Common Core is fine. We need better ways to implement it. The assessments need to challenge students but we need to have reasonable expectations."

"Common Core allows teachers to choose the best methods (in math). The Common Core is an improvement over the state standards. If we fail to utilize this resource, we will be wasting our students' time and education."

"Common Core results in a deeper understanding for students, especially in math. I feel like it gives my students more freedom in their learning. Students understand what they are doing and they understand why they are doing it. It allows students to find strategies that make sense to them. Common Core demands higher thinking from students to justify their answers with detailed reasons and examples."

"I appreciate the fact that there are not so many standards to teach per level. This allows us to delve deeper into the standard. My concern is for first graders."

"Common Core has allowed my students to think deeper and critically. In addition, Common Core has assisted my students in justifying their answers in all subject areas. Common Core has the potential to develop my students to become 21st century learners."

Next Steps

An overwhelming majority of survey and focus group respondents requested that NABSE:

- A) Offer professional development and training for principals and teachers in implementing CCSS in school districts and classrooms.
- B) Identify resources and technology for school districts to use for lessons, practice assessments, and teacher collaboration.
- C) Provide outreach strategies and materials to inform parents and community members of curriculum changes resulting from CCSS and new assessments.

The organization's research arm (Charles D. Moody Research Institute) under the leadership of Dr. Lloyd Sain will develop a white paper in collaboration with the organization's Legislative/Advocacy Committee to address the membership's request.