



Agenda

Topic	Facilitator/Discussant	Time
Welcome & Overview	Andy Latham	5 min
What Are Some of the Shifts in Testing That Will Impact Scores?	Sujie Shin	25 min
Learning from Early Implementers: Maryland	Rolf Grafwallner, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Early Childhood Development	20 min
Learning from Early Implementers: Kentucky	Rhonda Sims, Associate Commissioner, Office of Assessment and Accountability	20 min
Next Steps as a CC Network	All	20 min

THE CENTER ON STANDARDS & ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION
WestEd CRESST

2

Andy Latham:

We can anticipate that scores are going to go down in tests, in the newest tests. By newest tests, that certainly includes the Smarter Balanced and PARCC Consortia assessments, but we certainly don't want to limit ourselves to that. We're talking about the whole next generation of assessments.

The point that we want to emphasize is that it's not as simplistic as, "the standards are more rigorous, therefore we're expecting scores to go down." That's certainly a big part of it, but we think it's a much more nuanced issue than that. We want to discuss with you some of the reasons you can expect this to happen, so that these would be talking points for you to have when you're talking with states, and trying to anticipate what kind of score changes to expect.

We're really pleased and grateful for our two state assistant superintendents who have agreed to join and share some of their experiences. Rolf Grafwallner from Maryland is going to talk about the early childhood assessment, and how they've already experienced a major drop in proficiency levels, as they've adopted a new system.

This is very timely and I'm appreciative of Rolf. I saw, in the *Baltimore Sun*, two days ago, there was an article in the *Baltimore Sun*, a major article, talking about how the proficiency rates had gone way down, or the ready-for-kindergarten rates. Rolf was quoted extensively. This is certainly a very hot issue in Maryland. We'll be sharing that article with you in some of the materials we send out at the end.

Rhonda I'm really pleased about, because of her experience—Kentucky started very early with adoption of the Common Core standards and assessments, so they've really been through this. I think she has some interesting highlights to share from her own experience.

Then, at the end, what we really wanted to focus in on the last piece was just getting your feedback on how we, in the Center, can be most helpful for you in reaching out to states. We've got some ideas for things that we think might be helpful, but we'd love to hear from you whether, in fact, it would be helpful, and also, if you have any other ideas for things that we can do to really help get in front of this issue and make sure that the states are able to communicate effectively.

Just in terms of some housekeeping things, as we go through the agenda today. I think we've got people on mute right now, as they come in. The best way to communicate, just because there's too much noise if everyone's off mute, is there's a chat box on the right. You should have a tab called chat on the right-hand side of your screen. If you send a chat response to the CSAI moderator,

we will see that, and we'll be able to respond to those questions as we go, if you have them.

Also, you saw that first poll that Sujie alluded to. They're going to pop up occasionally. It'll really help us if you respond as we go along. It'll give us a good sense of where people are on the issue.

Already, I've learned something that I wasn't expecting. We've had seven people respond to the first poll. I thought that this was a really hot issue for states right now, and nobody has clicked on the 100 degrees, it's really hot. We've had four of the seven of you click on the 85 degrees, so it's definitely an issue for you. This is very interesting for us to hear where this is in your states right now.

Okay, so with that, I'd like to turn it over to Sujie, so she can talk through some of the reasons why we're going to expect scores to go down on some of the assessments.

Overview of Shifts

Results from pilot/field tests and early implementers have shown significant decreases in student scores across all grade levels and subjects. What are some of the reasons why we are seeing these drops in scores?

- Shift in items from primarily DOK 1/2 to DOK 3/4
- Emphasis on academic language across all subject areas
- Shifts away from the 2% assessments
- Shift to online administration
- Use of computer-adaptive assessments
- Expanded opt-out movement

3

INTEGRATED STANDARDS & ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE CHECK

Sujie Shin:

All right. Thanks, Andy. This is going to be a high-level overview of where our states are right now, so not getting into the technical nitty-gritty of these score shifts, and some of the scaling issues, but in thinking about the high bucket of concerns that we've been hearing from states.

As you know, 46 states have had significant changes to their assessment systems over the past year. That might be in the type of assessment, the way that they're administrating them, or new grades and subjects. Results from the pilot and field tests and early implementers across some of our new assessments are showing some real decreases in student scores. This is happening at all grade levels and subject areas. It's not something that's affecting just our early or upper grades, but really across the board. We want to get into some of the reasons that we are seeing these drops.

One of the biggest issues is that our new College and Career Readiness assessments see a really strong shift from the primarily DOK 1/2 from our previous assessments to a 3/4. We're seeing a greater emphasis on the academic language across all of our subjects. We see a shift away from the two percent assessments, the shift to moving our assessments onto online administration, moving to computer-adaptive testing, and the politically motivated opt-out movement that we're also seeing gain a lot of traction across a certain segment of our states. I wanted to dive in a little bit deeper into some of those.

Shifts in Rigor

- Shift from focus on DOK 1/2 to DOK 3/4

FROM: Teresa went to the store and bought one bunch of bananas, two cartons of eggs, and three cans of soup. How much did she spend in total?

TO: Teresa spent exactly \$18.75 at the grocery store today. She bought at least one of each item on the right. How many of each item did she purchase?



Milk	\$2.75	Dish Soap	\$1.75
Eggs	\$2.25	Paper Towels	\$3.25
Bananas	\$1.50	Soup	\$1.00

THE CENTER FOR STANDARDS & ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

4

In the shifts in rigor, this is, I think, the one that we have heard the most about, and probably the place where states have really focused the bulk of their communication—that is, really moving away from that 1 to 2 to 3 and 4. If we look at the scans of assessments that have been conducted over the past several years,

prior state assessments really focused on that DOK 1/2 level alignment to standards.

Something like 60 to 75 in some state assessments focused, or had items—60 to 75 percent of state assessment items were aimed at that lower rigor level in the DOK 1/2, and now there is a huge emphasis in shifting a greater percentage of those into the 3/4. We're now seeing some of these assessment items range from 50 to 65 percent of these items moving into the higher DOK level.

An example of—a simple example that we pulled is something like a word problem, an early elementary word problem, that might have a graphic like this. You've got Teresa went to the store, bought a bunch of bananas, two cartons of eggs, three cans of soup. This is a word problem that does include language, but you can see here that the mathematics skills and the standard that you're focusing on is a fairly simple alignment to that standard of adding numbers and decimals to the two places using dollars.

Now, what we're seeing is a shift in the same kind of problem. Again, same standard, but at a higher level, where you've got some things switched over into Teresa spending exactly 18.75 at the grocery store. She bought at least one of each item on the right. How many of each item did she purchase? Which, again, uses the same core concepts and skills, but requires a student to really apply them in a very different way.

Emphasis on Academic Language

- Impact of increased Academic Language focus on diverse student learner population:

English Language Learners

Struggling readers

Students previously tested on Alt assessments

Academic

Key Concept/Skill

Language

MINNESOTA STANDARDS & ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION LEARNING CREDIT

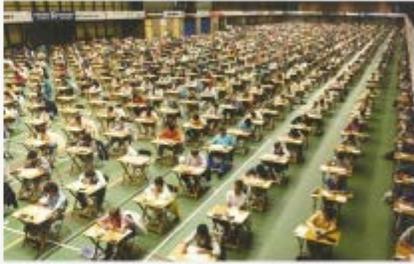
5

The second huge, or key shift is this move to academic language. We have the impact of increased academic language focus on our diverse student learner population. You see here, again—I think the example that we shared previously had a little bit of this in there—in that you’ve got the key or the core concept and skill that the item is measuring. But then you have that wrapped within the context or within a layer of academic language, in order to get to the measurement of that key concept or skill.

You see a lot more emphasis on this use of academic language in measuring that, which means that our tests are longer, that there’s more actual language and content language within the assessment items themselves. As you can imagine, it really impacts our ability of English language learners, our struggling readers, our students who were previously tested on all assessments that are being affected by this switch, now, to this focus on academic language.

Shift Away from the AA-MAS

- Phasing out the alternate assessments based on modified academic standards (AA-MAS) or “2%” assessments :
 - New student population being tested
 - Additional 150-200k students included
 - Changes in the modifications/ accommodations allowed



6

MINNESOTA STANDARDS & ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION LEARNING CREDIT

The third really huge key shift that I don’t feel like we’ve spent as much time talking about is the phasing out of the alternative assessments that we saw in the past year, based on the modified academic standards, or the two percent assessment, which we used to call them in our schools.

That means, now, in our new assessments, we have a new student population being tested, and being tested in a way that they had not been before. As you look across our states, we’re talking about an

additional 150 to 200,000 students who are being included in our new general assessments.

This means that there are now changes in the modifications and the accommodations allowed during the testing window. It also means that we're including a population of students in our test scores who previously have not been our highest scorers. That does have an impact on, then, the final scores that our states are receiving.

Other Reasons for the Score Shifts

- Shift to online administration
- Use of computer-adaptive assessments
- Expanded opt-out movement

INTEGRATION OF STANDARDS & ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION
UPDATED CREDIT

7

Then, the three additional shifts that I wanted to highlight here are that, one, moving to online administration, much like the language issues, where we're wrapping around the measurement of the key concept or skill around language—we have the same with our online administration, that you tell whether the types of devices that are being used, the effect of moving things onto computers, does have an effect on the final scores, and we're still seeing research coming in into the comparability of some of the shifts that we're seeing onto a straight online administration platform.

Then, you have an additional complication of the use of computer-adaptive assessments and, again, the comparability of scores there, but especially for our younger grades, where the new utilities that we're seeing, the new platforms that we're seeing, have a huge impact on certain access issues to core constant skills throughout the standards.

Then, the last that we wanted to highlight here is this issue of the opt-out movement. This, unlike the others, is less generalized, in that we are seeing these in very specific pockets of the United States, and also very specific pockets of testing populations. Where we see this the most is actually in our schools, in our higher resource and higher SES schools, which often translate into our higher-scoring schools.

We have seen some of our highest SES districts throughout the, especially in the northeast, in the Mid Atlantic area, see up to 65 percent of some of their high school testing populations choose to opt out. That, of course, has a significant impact, not just on the final scores for that school and district, but ultimately on accountability, as well.

Of course, there are different—there are other reasons that we’re seeing these scores shift, but I wanted to highlight these six as a starting place for our conversation. But I’m also hoping, as we discuss this farther, that we hear from you about what may be some other issues that are bubbling up in your states or regions that you work with, around the concerns that SEAs and their stakeholders have for communicating around the shift that they’re anticipating in the fall.

Lessons Learned from Early Implementers

What can we learn from states who successfully navigated communication challenges, even in light of significant score shifts?

- Developing the communication plan—**who is involved?**
- Differentiating key messages for different stakeholders—**what do you focus on for parents vs. community members vs. IHEs vs. teachers?**
- Deciding timing of key messages—**what do you say when?**
- Evaluating success—**how do you know if the message was heard?**

NEIGHBORHOOD STANDARDS & ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION URBAN CORE

8

With that, I think what we wanted to do was take a moment to really think about what we could learn from states who have

successfully navigated some of these communication challenges, given the reasons that we just very briefly touched upon in the past few minutes, and others, in light of the significant score shifts that they did see after their first administration, or for a couple, after the administrations of their new assessments.

I want to, as we shift over into our state presenters, I'd like all of you to think about, as you work with your states in developing a communication plan, who is involved, and how have these two key states that we've invited today to discuss, developed their communication plan, who they've involved and how they involved them; how we're differentiating key messages for different stakeholders, what do we focus on for parents, versus community members, versus IHEs, versus teachers, versus others, while still focusing on a very consistent and very specific message; what is our timing of some of these key messages, what do you say and whom do you say it to at what point; and then, really think about how we evaluate the success of these messages and plans. I think we see a lot of work in spurts at times, in states, around developing key initiatives, especially on communication, involving stakeholder teams to get out there. But then, maybe not a lot is done, and going back behind to know or to gauge whether or not that message was heard by the right folks, whether it's being implemented in the way that they had initially expected.

Andy Latham:

Thanks, Sujie. What we'd like to do is be very flexible, as we go along, if questions arise. I would say, if there was anything that you had questions about, based on what Sujie said about why we're expecting that scores will go down, and the different elements of rigor, please send those into the chat function. We'll be happy to try to respond to those or integrate responses along the way.

Similarly, on the slide that's showing now, about the lessons learned from early implementers that we're going to hear about from Rolf and Rhonda, if you have other questions or other things you'd like us to consider, please send us a chat message at any point, and we'll try to get to them as we go.

Lessons Learned from Maryland KEA



- Rolf Grafwallner, PhD
- Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Early Childhood Development
- Maryland State Department of Education
- Assistant State Superintendent Grafwallner will walk us through the decisions the Maryland Department of Education made around communicating the transitions and results of their new Kindergarten Readiness Assessment system to their key stakeholders.



9

With this, I'd like to turn things over to Rolf and introduce him and what they've been doing in Maryland. Rolf is the Assistant State Superintendent in the Division of Early Childhood Education. He's been working very closely—we've been working with him, in fact—on the kindergarten readiness assessments in Maryland.

I think they've had a really interesting experience, where their proficiency rates have fallen fairly dramatically with the implementation of the new assessment, for many of the reasons that we talked about. But the state's really done an admirable job in preparing for this and then communicating about this.

So I think that certainly, if this *Baltimore Sun* article that I referred to from two days ago is any indication, despite this dramatic drop, that they're getting the message out, and people are understanding why there's been this dramatic drop. So it's been a relatively smooth transition.

With that, I'd like to turn it over to you, Rolf. Please, take it away.

Case Study: Maryland

MARYLAND'S NEW KINDERGARTEN READINESS ASSESSMENT (KRA)

Rolf Grafwallner: All right, thank you very much. Good afternoon. First of all, I wanted to just give you a context of what we have done in the shifting into a new kindergarten readiness assessment, and then talk about some of the specifics in how we went about this.

Background

Legacy System: Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) Kindergarten Assessment (2001-2013)

New System: Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) – component of Ready for Kindergarten (R4K); Maryland's Comprehensive Early Childhood Assessment System (2014-15)

For about 12 years, we had a legacy system in place to assess young kindergarteners coming in to our kindergarten programs. We have about 90 percent of our five-year-olds in our kindergarten program. That is a fairly high number of children that end up in our programs. A lot of it has to do with the fact that they're all full-day kindergarten programs.

Differences between 2 Systems

Types of assessment

1. MMSR is formative with summative information (Fall of K Year)
2. KRA is hybrid of three assessment formats (selective response, performance tasks, observational rubrics)

Scoring and Standard Setting

1. MMSR – raw scoring
2. KRA – scale scoring and more sensitive

Standards Alignment

1. MMSR – Maryland State Curriculum
2. KRA – Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards (Common Core)

When we started out in 2001, with an assessment system which was, at that time, state of the art, in terms of early childhood assessment, we had some of these results on children after the first quarter of the year, and reported out the percentages of children who had great, high skill levels, and were considered to be fully ready. Then, we sorted children with different skill levels, and determined whether there is a need for early interventions.

When we started the MMSR, which is formative in nature, but has some different information, we started out with 49 percent of the children being considered fully ready. That was in 2001. The trend lines, over the years, until 2013, indicated that we had 83 percent of our children coming in fully ready.

So now, we were shifting into a different format, which is a hybrid of a standardized assessment, with indirect measures, using observational rubrics. And we basically had a number of years in place to work with our partners—it was WestEd and then Johns Hopkins University—to work on the assessment, which was issued

this past year, as a census administration across the state. Ohio was also a partner; and they did the same thing.

We used a different scoring and standard-setting process, compared to the legacy system. In MMSR, we had raw scoring, and in the KRA, scale scoring and more sensitive scoring techniques that will give us information on the students. We also, in the standard-setting process, which involved a great number of kindergarten teachers, we were really settling on having a high bar, in terms of the expectations of children coming into kindergarten, based on the curricular expectations that had been established by the 24 local school systems in our state.

The standards alignment was, of course, a big aspect of moving into a new assessment system. We have, in Maryland, the College and Career Ready Standards, based on Common Core. With the old legacy system, we had a Maryland state curriculum that was very broad, and mostly reinforcing foundational skills.

In the new standards, we of course see a whole lot more of the higher-order thinking skills being applied, as we saw in the example that we heard about earlier, on the particular items from the older system, and then the newer assessment system. We had a similar process in place, of course, with the development of our KRA, to look for more application skills than foundational skills, although those were covered, as well. Now, next slide.

Communication

Audience:

1. Early childhood stakeholders
2. Local school system stakeholders
3. Business and philanthropy
4. Legislature
5. General public and families (?)

Each group requires different communication strategies after the official release.

Let's talk a little bit about the communication strategies that were put in place. We started early. That means our assessment system was started in August of 2014, and we finished out in November of 2014. It was not only a long assessment window that we had, but we had to get ready for that assessment in the spring of last year, if not sooner. We had the first discussions about how to communicate the anticipated drop, and the purposes of the new assessment, with a number of stakeholders.

First of all, we had the internal stakeholders here at the Department of Education. We wanted to make sure that the communication that we had for the KRA, which was a first early implementer, vis-à-vis the PARCC assessment, which just finished here in Maryland—that we would have a coherent and a consistent message going out to our stakeholder groups. That would include the parents, and of course our teachers and school administrators, as well as business community, foundations, and others interested in public education.

We started in the late spring of last year to put out advance materials that were disseminated to our stakeholder groups, by the thousands. That was facilitated through a Maryland business roundtable. They have an organization that works on early childhood. Ready at Five is the name of the organization. With the dissemination of the results from our legacy system, we shifted gears and had information available of what the new system will look like, what we anticipate seeing, in terms of the results, and then what kind of purpose that particular assessment has for our early childhood education community.

Then, of course, we established state advisory groups as part of the development of the KRA. In those groups, we already discussed extensively as to how we can communicate to the provider communities and to the schools how we would interpret the results, which I'm talking about in a few minutes, and then how we would make sure that the message is consistent across the board for the various audiences that we have been targeting.

During the administration of the KRA, we had a huge communication need to work with the teachers and the administrators, in terms of the purposes, and just the aspect of administering the assessment. There was a big shift that occurred, by the fact that the assessment took longer than expected. We had to communicate to a number of school systems as to how they can assess the KRA more efficiently and more effectively. At the same time, we had to really counter the pushback that we received

among some of the teachers that felt that that assessment was taking away from instruction.

So the communication about the drop in scores, during the administration, became more of a communication piece about the purposes of the assessment, and the need to consult with administrators responsible for implementing it at the local school district as to how they can improve the burden or the workload situation that teachers perceived as being too onerous.

After the results came in, in the winter of 2014-15, we issued the report in May to our state board. The state board received the fact that the results have dropped with absolutely no comment. The main reason why they didn't address the issue during the presentations, and then, of course, in front of the media, was headed off by an explanation and a discussion about that particular issue in the executive team meeting, with the board, between the state superintendent and the leadership within the department, discussing that particular presentation item with the state board.

That issue could then be addressed by us. Therefore, we had a control over how we would provide the message to the board and to the public, since these are open meetings. That has really worked well. We gave three reasons why we felt there was a huge shift. Those were mentioned before.

It was a shift in the rigor of the standards, from the old curriculum standards that we had to the new Common Core standards. We had actually done some research, two years ago, that it would indicate that it was about a one-grade difference, in terms of what the expectations were in 2001, as opposed to 2014. Or, at that time, it was 2012.

The other piece that was very important to note was that it was a very different assessment. The assessment had an emphasis on application skills, which was not the case in the previous assessment that we used. It was mostly based on items that were observational rubrics that were used on foundation skills.

The third piece that was important was just the standard-setting process. We would have had different results, if the standard setting had turned out to be different, with teachers determining that there should be a lower bar, as opposed to the higher bar they chose.

The reason they did that is they wanted to make sure that the

children would be prepared, in terms of the early childhood experiences they have, on standards-based expectations and benchmarks at the end of pre-kindergarten that would reflect a relatively seamless transition into the curriculum that they will be engaging in in kindergarten. Teachers were very much interested in not setting a bar that would then require them to do a lot of remediation in kindergarten, or a lot of intervention, which is not necessarily part of their responsibilities in the teaching curriculum.

That meant that the communication on these results was really a huge message for our early childhood community. Now, since we have a consolidated governance structure in Maryland, we were able to work with the early childhood community, since we have oversight of all programs—childcare, Head Start, preschool, nurseries, pre-kindergarten programs, public pre-kindergarten programs and the like, and therefore have control of what kind of supports we can give those programs.

The various audiences that we dealt with were, of course, the early childhood stakeholders. The big message was there that we need to bring up the support and early learning opportunities for young children, for the domains that we need to focus on, in terms of school readiness. Those were social foundation, language/literacy, math, and the physical motor development.

The second message was that we are starting to work more deliberately about reducing the emerging achievement gap. The results have indicated that the achievement gap at that level, in kindergarten, was bigger than the one that we had before with the legacy system. So there were huge challenges that were part of the message in those results that we wanted to get across to the early childhood stakeholders.

The local school system stakeholders were shocked, simply by the mere fact that the results have really dropped significantly, and indicated a probably more realistic view as to what needs to be done in order to prepare the children within the programs that are under the control of the local school system—mostly, our pre-kindergarten programs or Head Start programs. Within days, we found a lot of our assistant superintendents starting the communication with their staff about what kind of curriculum would best serve those pre-kindergarten kids before they come into kindergarten.

The other group that is very interested, has always been very interested in Maryland, is the business community. We have a

number of philanthropic organizations and corporations that are investing in early childhood education. They are always looking at those figures. That discussion was, of course, again—there was an urgent matter to support early childhood programs and turn the curve on those results over the next few years.

The legislature is coming up. We have a meeting in July presenting to several committees. I cannot speak about their reaction yet, but so far, we have not heard from them about the changes in results. I expect that they will have a number of questions about it.

Then, the general public and families, that's mostly facilitated through individual student records and reports that are sent out, and that teachers communicate the information on the children with the families. They, of course, can then weave in the fact that the children have really—are starting with these new benchmarks, and then really stress the need for families to become engaged.

Communication Strategies

Hierarchy of main points:

Headline results ("What are the most pertinent results?")

Results that spur action ("What does the data show us regarding gaps that require action?")

Difference of results (use analogy such as high jump or reset)

Explain differences of standards and assessment tools (Internationally compatible standards and assessing higher order skills)

Explain dynamic of curricular mapping for rigor (Improvements under NCLB call for more rigorous local/state curriculum)

Important to deal with it upfront. Offer genuine surprises found in the results.

I think I'm toward the end of this. The strategies we use are the ones we have used over the years. We use with headline results: what are the most pertinent results, and what needs to be done, in order to spur action? We also use the difference of results. We use analogies in the way we communicate to the public, especially to our early childhood stakeholder group. We explain the differences—we have to—as to why we have different standards, a

different assessment instrument. Then, of course, a different standard-setting process.

What I think was very interesting, when we talked to the early childhood community and as well to the school administrators, was this whole notion of curriculum mapping for rigor, the notion that you have, over time, when you have a whole lot more children coming into school being ready, as we've seen over the last 12 years, you have a readjustment at the local school system level. So they are basically reintroducing concepts that the kids are already familiar with in kindergarten. That is a process that we've already seen in 2009, 2010, which really triggered the shift over to developing a new assessment, or to identify a new assessment that we will be using that was more rigorous in nature.

We also had to deal with some of the surprise information that we saw. For instance, a higher gap, and the relatively low results in mathematics, which is an indication that a lot of pre-kindergarten preschool programs were focusing on early literacy, and that we've seen now, in the data, that results on math were relatively low. That became an area that we needed to address in our presentations as a focal point.

With that, I'll hand it over to Andrew.

More Information:

Rolf Grafwallner, Ph.D.
Assistant State Superintendent
Maryland State Department of Education

rolf.grafwallner@Maryland.gov



Andy Latham:

Rolf, thank you very much for that. We've had a few questions come in for Rolf. What I'd like to do—so, thank you for sending those on the chat. If you have additional questions for Rolf, please keep sending them in. I don't want to short-change Rhonda on time, so what I would like to do is transition over to Rhonda. Then, at the end of her presentation, then we can—we'll have them both on the phone, and we can ask questions of them both.

I think, for me personally, among the many suggestions that Rolf had, I was really struck by—I think their kindergarten readiness percentages—Rolf, correct me if I'm wrong—went from somewhere around 80 percent, or in the 80s, down to the 40 percent. It was a cut in half. The fact that they had such a major drop, and yet were able to navigate it fairly smoothly, is really a testament to getting out in front of it, like you said, identifying all the stakeholders in advance, and really crafting the messages carefully.

I think the message that I found most interesting from Rolf was that you focus on selling the assessment first, explaining why these new assessments are important, why they're valuable, why you're learning something new, as opposed to starting with the fact that the scores are going to drop. It's first helping the constituents and stakeholders understand why these new assessments are being adopted, and why it's important to go in this direction. Then, I think that helps, then, make the explanation of why the scores have gone down easier.

Lessons Learned from Kentucky's Transition



- Rhonda Sims
- Associate Commissioner, Office of Assessment and Accountability
- Kentucky Department of Education
- Associate Commissioner Sims will talk about Kentucky's communication strategy and the key resources/stakeholders/ decisions that resulted in a smooth transition even as the new assessments yielded significant drops in proficiency across all grade levels.

IMPLEMENTING STANDARDS & ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION URGENT! CREDIT

16

With that, I would like to turn it over to Rhonda Sims. Rhonda's the Associate Commissioner in the Office of Assessment and Accountability in Kentucky. They were very early adopters of the Common Core state standards. Part of the reason why we wanted Rhonda to come on the phone was not only were they an early adopter, so they've been through this all, but we thought it'd be a nice contrast that Rolf was talking about early childhood and kindergarten readiness, whereas I think Rhonda's talking about across subject areas, at multiple grade levels, a really comprehensive plan across much of the K-12 spectrum, starting in grade 3. With that, Rhonda, why don't I turn it over to you?



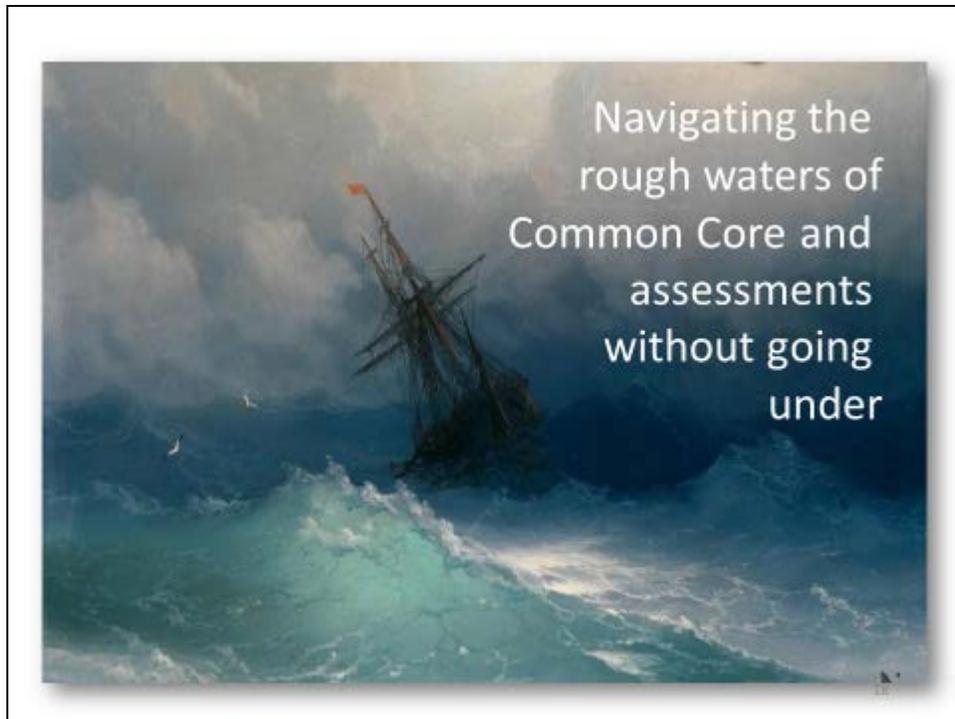
Rhonda Sims: Thank you, Andrew. Let me do a sound check first, because we had some audio [problems] earlier. Can everyone hear me?

Andy Latham: We can. Thank you, Rhonda.

Rhonda Sims: All right, great. I want to just chain on to something that Andrew already said, and Rolf. I think you're going to hear some commonalities about who to involve in your conversation. But I think it becomes very important to structure what you're talking about, and taking it away from not just the assessment. Our assessment is about measuring standards. Our standards are about what is good instruction, and what do students need to know and be able to do, and what do we want our students ready to do, as they move on to college and career.

I think we really, in Kentucky, tried to make the conversation much larger than the idea of just the assessment and the change of scores. In fact, that assessment conversation came along several years after we began the other conversations. I think that was helpful to Kentucky.

Really, it is about standards. It's about assessment. Then, ultimately, it gets to be about the score releases. I want to share with you just a little context, in a similar way that Rolf has for the early childhood in Maryland, of what has occurred in Kentucky. I'll have you move to the next slide.



Hopefully, you're thinking about this already. The fact that no one was at the 100 percent mark of heat yet means that you're going to avoid going under the water.

That's something we tried to do in Kentucky, is making sure that—there might be some rough waters, as we make these kind of significant changes in the assessment and accountability program. Kentucky has a long history of working with high-stakes assessment accountability, with most of our changes coming in initially in 1990, with the Kentucky Education Reform Act.

Let's talk very specifically about our experience with Common Core. In Kentucky, we refer to that as the Kentucky Core Academic Standards. I think we're beginning to take the word core out of that. They're going to be called Kentucky Academic Standards in the future.

First to:

- adopt and implement (2010)
- teach (2011-12)
- test (spring 2012)

the Common Core State Standards



For the state to compete in a global marketplace:

- boost workforce readiness
- attract good-paying jobs
- raise overall standard of living

19

Let's go to the next slide and talk a little bit about, I think, why I was asked to join this call a little bit today. Because Kentucky was the first state to adopt and implement the Common Core standards, even back to that first action of adoption—and, of course, we've obviously been involved with some of the creative look of the standards, and bringing teacher groups together to make comments on the standards when they were in draft form.

In our adoption, we did not do that alone, as the Kentucky Department of Education. There was a joint meeting with the Kentucky Board of Education; our higher education authority, which is the Council on Post-Secondary Education in the Commonwealth; and Teacher Certification, which is our education professional standards board. We do not normally have joint meetings, but there was a joint meeting of those three entities in 2010, that formally adopted and implemented.

So even from the beginning of just the look of the standards, we began to say, "Let's not be out there alone. Let's have a partnership of other high-interest education stakeholders," as well as expanding that out to public groups, as well.

2011–12 then became the first year of teaching the standards. Then, the first assessment of the standards began in spring of 2012. Kentucky, while we've monitored activities with Smarter Balanced and PARCC, and we had some early involvement in those groups,

we were on a faster timeline. We had legislation back to 2009, called Senate Bill 1 in Kentucky that really said we had to have a test in place in the 2011–12 school year. We really couldn't wait for the efforts of consortia to develop an assessment. We had to get out there, in advance, and get something in place.

Why did we want to go down this path? I think that becomes an important part of the message of why is it important for us to consider making changes. That is the second part of this slide. Kentucky, as a state, we're not a wealthy state. We are a state where we have a lot of ability to grow. We really wanted to emphasize being competitive in a global marketplace, preparing your children for all the possibilities that exist for them.

We really focused on this is an economic kind of plan. We had great support from our governor's office. Steve Beshear is ending his eighth year as governor of Kentucky, and we will have a new governor coming in in January. We had the support even from that level here, of saying it's important that we increase the rigor, we increase what students ought to know and are able to do. Let's do that through a number of things. Let's lay the foundation.

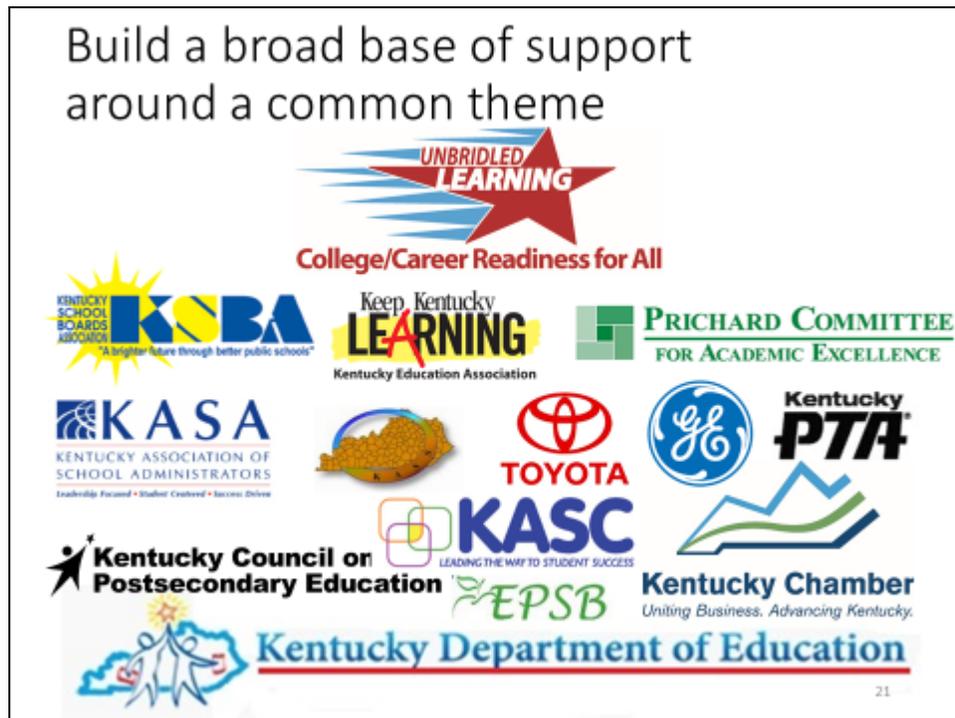


As we look at this next slide, here are some of the things we used to lay that foundation for Kentucky. Again, you'll see that the assessment is not the first thing on the bottom of that foundation. We first started with our legislation, which, again, was Senate

Bill 1. Now, Senate Bill 1 defined a lot of aspects of Kentucky's education and expectations. It does define a number of requirements around assessment. It leaves the accountability creation, really, to the Kentucky Board of Education. It was the basis of reform in Kentucky. We had other experiences, back to even 1990, to draw upon there, as well.

The kinds of things we were looking at were the standards, were the aligned assessments, and then, building a really multi-measure accountability system that looks at learners' results, but also at programs, such as arts and humanities, practical living/career studies, writing, K-3, and we will eventually have a world language program that comes into that component, as well as a professionals piece, in looking at the involvement of teacher evaluation in the system.

We also wanted to focus on 21st Century Skills, higher expectations, higher rigor. What really became our theme for all of this was College and Career Readiness for all. And then what can the test scores do to help us get there? How can we measure student success?



Let's move to the next slide and talk just a little bit about this idea of a common message. It was important to build this common theme as we got our partners to the table. I think we were fortunate in that Kentucky already had some really strong partnerships that

had been established back in 1990, and had been nurtured, over the years.

We had a core group of partners that we could go to on this message and this change and this improvement. Really, we saw unbridled learning, which is the term we use for our whole assessment and accountability system, as a continuation of our earlier assessment and accountability systems, that we build on what we've had, and let's keep moving forward.

What became our common theme is really that little logo in the center, "Unbridled Learning, College/Career Readiness for All." It wasn't just about the standards, just about the assessment, but about, how do we ensure that all of our students have met this degree of readiness? The way we're going to ensure that is through our standards and what that does for instructional change and classroom change; but then also, how are we going to measure that and report on it?

You can see here some common logos. You'll see some business logos. In Kentucky, we have several large corporations that have always been good supporters of education, such as Toyota, GE, UPS. We also have—Kentucky Chamber is obviously shown there, as well—but we also looked out to groups that were stakeholder groups. I thought Rolf did a nice job in explaining the stakeholder groups and the legislative groups that they work through in Maryland.

I think you do need to do that base, because this is a massive task, and you really cannot do it alone. A state education agency cannot do it alone. You cannot communicate everything that needs to be communicated to the variety of audiences, without these strong partnerships.

Now, some things that we—some basic partnerships that we used that are really not shown here in the logo, the Commissioner of Education in Kentucky has a series of advisory groups. They represent principals, teachers, superintendents, parents. We have a student council advisory group, where we bring high school students together remotely, usually online. I think they meet face to face once a year. We brought those folks to the table.

We have a couple of committees that are set up through the governor-appointment process. We have a group called the Guiding Coalition that represents a number of the logos that you see on this slide, that are our go-to groups that support school

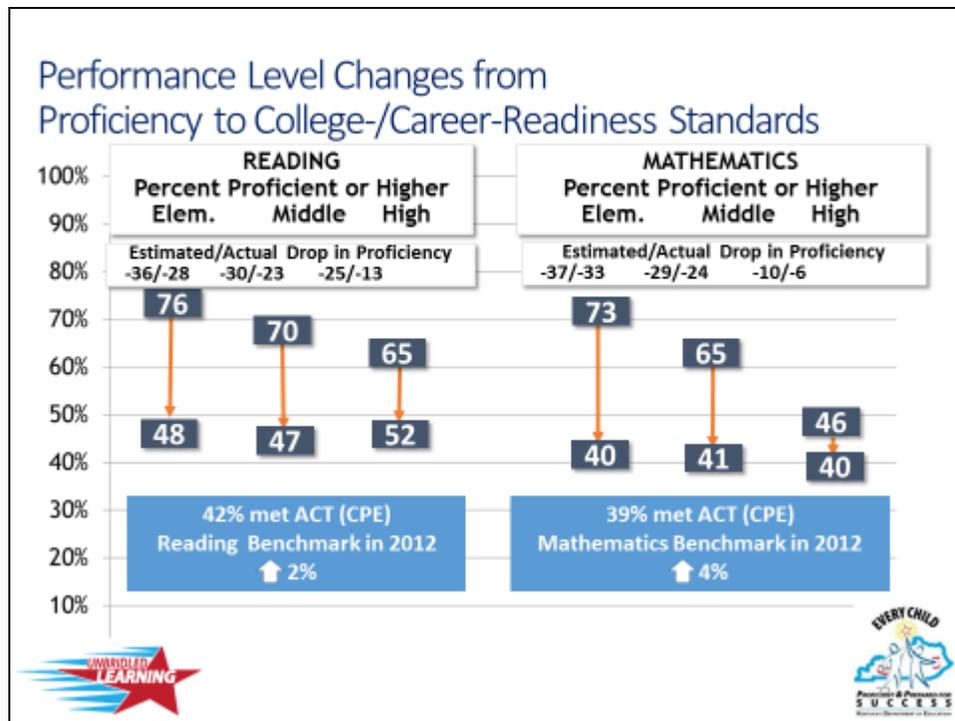
superintendents and district assessment coordinators. We made sure those folks were at the table periodically.

One of the things we do with mostly all of communication—whether it be this topic we’re talking about today—we will have particular topics that, in a time frame, will need to go through all of those advisory committees, for either information or feedback. That becomes a way that we can communicate out.

Now, in terms of how we went about that communication, we used everything available. We certainly communicated through email, through web postings, through video, through blogs. We used Twitter. If there was a way—I’m sure, if we could’ve managed smoke signaling, we would probably have done that, as well. We certainly were looking at all types of communication.

One thing that will be shared with you at the end of today’s session; we have a little eight-page paper where we give you a more complete, full history of how this developed for Kentucky; and some of our talking points we’ve used; as well as the type of methodology of communication we’ve used.

Our communications office here at KDE, we have one broadly for the agency, and then we have a communications group within the assessment office. We work very closely on all pieces of this, including the reporting through our school report card that’s an electronic application. We wanted to make sure that, as Rolf mentioned, we began first with the message internally, but then we start working out to these partner groups.



Let's look at the next slide and talk just a little bit of detail around the real focus on today's session, which is, how do you prepare—I like to think of it as, how do you prepare for less than good news? No one likes to see scores that go down. No teachers are going to be celebrating the fact scores have gone down. Certainly, no superintendents.

How do you get prepared for what you know is not going to be perceived as good news? I think you have to focus, then, on what is the message? The message is: We're going to have higher expectations. We're going to expect more from our students. We're going to have a close match with College Readiness and college entry.

Kentucky's Council on Post-Secondary Education uses the ACT as our college admissions measurement in Kentucky. We made sure that we linked our new K–8 assessment, as well as the high school end-of-course, to the benchmarks of the ACT, because we saw it being a problem in the past when our state results are saying, you're doing a fabulous job; you're ready, but when students are getting ready to go into college, they don't have the scores they need to go directly into credit-bearing courses.

We actually started communicating out, because we're setting this benchmark at the ACT, and here's where our numbers are with the ACT. You're going to see a drop in scores. This chart, I think,

gives you a good example of how close our estimates were to what we actually saw. This is based on—the benchmarks were based on 2012 ACT results, but you can see when we started reporting in the first year, and now, this fall, we'll be in our fourth year of reporting for this system. Obviously, those numbers have stabilized and began to go up. We wanted people to see the estimate.

I think one thing we did that was very proactive is, as we worked with particular groups, like our superintendents group, we encouraged superintendents to begin communicating to parents during that initial school year, that when they saw the test results come back the first time, that if their child had been at the highest level of distinguished or proficient, they might not see that result moving forward because we were raising the bar. We were expecting more. Teachers were going to need time to get those expectations in place, and students were going to need time to make sure they could achieve those expectations.

A number of our superintendents actually sent parent communications out—most are using electronic processes now, but—actually sent out letters, explaining what the system was about. Of course, we gave talking points from the department. I don't think we went as far as giving an exact sample letter. I probably can find that, if anyone is interested in that, from one of our superintendents.

We had a number of them reach out, certainly to their boards of education, but also to their parents, with the expectation that you might not see the result that you've seen for your child. That doesn't mean things are getting worse. I think that's an important piece of the information. It means we're expecting more. And when we expect more, we're not going to immediately be at that high end of the expectation.

Consistent messaging



- Testing results cannot be compared to previous results, since we are assessing students on a different standard -- college and career readiness.
- The college/career-readiness standard is aligned with postsecondary expectations.
- The results of the Kentucky assessments are more closely align to results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Those results report proficiency at a much higher level than most state tests.
- With the new tests and accountability system, parents should be able to tell as early as 3rd grade if their student is on track for college/career-readiness.



Let's go to the next slide and talk a little bit about what that means—putting together a consistent message. We did work very collaboratively with the groups that were involved. We've had a group called the Prichard Committee in Kentucky for many years. That's a grassroots parent organization that really does a lot of promotion of education. They were involved with us.

I can't tell you how many times, in my previous position as the communication person for assessment before entering this role, that I sat down with a representative from a particular group and reviewed their materials with them, and suggested edits. We had this open-door policy. If you're getting ready to go out and train school board members, and you want to train them on the new system and what the expectation is, let us be a resource for you. We will look, with you, at your materials. We'll make suggestions. We'll give you everything we've already developed. And that helped to build a consistent message.

Some of the key points of that message are on this slide. You really can't compare to what we've done in the past. We're in a new day. We're moving forward with this new focus. We want to make sure you understand this is aligned to the post-secondary world, and what we expect Kentucky students to be, as they're entering college, or entering entry-level career opportunities.

We also used the National Assessment of Educational Progress to

link our data. We talked about wanting to make sure our proficiency on our state systems stayed fairly consistent with what NAEP is doing. We continue to go back and look at that data, to monitor that, to see if we need to revisit standards at any particular point.

We wanted to say to parents, we hope to eventually get to the point of being able to tell you, is your child on track, early on? Not to say that—so you can do those early interventions. We began testing with this system in the third grade. That's why the third-grade reference.

Consistent messaging

- It will take time for teachers and students to get used to the more rigorous standards and the kind of teaching and learning they demand. We should see scores increase as time goes by.
- Stay the course and don't get discouraged. This is the right thing for kids. We aren't doing them any favors to give them good grades in school if they aren't prepared with the learning they need when they graduate.
- Our intent in raising the bar was to help more students be better prepared for college and the workplace in the 21st century. We cannot dwell on trying to compare previous years' data with the new results. We should focus on what we need to do to help more students be competitive, which means Kentucky will be more competitive.



Let's go to the next slide, with a few more messaging points that I wanted to share. Again, there are more of these in the paper that we'll share with you later that you can pull from, if it's helpful to you.

Teachers and students, it's time for the rigorous standards. It's the kind of teaching and learning that they need. We need to—we'll see that scores will increase, as we stay the course on this. I think that's a critical message, too, that you not get discouraged, that it won't look very good the first year, but here's why. That it's important, it's the right thing to do. We need to stay the course. We need all of our support agencies saying, stay the course.

When we let students leave our schools not prepared, that's not helpful for anyone—for us, as a larger society, and our state. It's not helpful to the student and their future, either. So a lot of emphasis on those kinds of points.

Don't implement and forget



Plan
Do
Study
Act

The next slide, I want to just remind you that, once you start this process—you know, Kentucky, now, is kind of in an interesting position. We're in our fourth year of reporting the results. I will tell you, at the beginning of this process, there was not the backlash against Common Core that you're beginning to hear nationally. There was not much in the way of an opt-out kind of experience. Kentucky did have some opt-out conversations this year. We had a few parents, but it was very, very small scale in the state.

But I think, still, with that in mind, that we were out upfront, before some of these other conversations started happening nationally. It's important that you continue to study what you're doing, look at revisions, move forward with those revisions, to keep the system moving forward.

A couple things I want to point out to you. We have recently gone through a slight modification to our accountability system. We've just finished the regulatory process for that. So beginning in the 2015–16 school year, we will have a few new calculations in the accountability system. We're adding more focus on novice learners and the reduction of novice learners. That is our lowest

performance level in Kentucky. We're also doing more focus on individual student groups.

As we move forward with that, we've had, then, a process, really starting after the third year of reporting, of, what should we be looking at to tweak; what changes need to be made to improve the system? Again, we're going back to all of our stakeholder groups to collect that information.

Another thing we've done because, again, there has been a lot of conversation nationally about the Common Core, we issued something called a Kentucky Core Academic Standards Challenge. Basically, from August of 2014 through around April of 2015, we had an open forum available online for teachers, parents, the public, all groups that are interested, to be able to comment very specifically on standards.

Obviously, we can't make improvements to what our Kentucky version of standards might be, unless we have some detail. The idea of, "I just don't like Common Core," is unhelpful. But explaining what you dislike about a particular standard of reading or math could potentially be helpful, either in communicating better about that standard, helping teachers teach that standard better, or maybe even making a change to language.

That process has just now concluded. We expect a report to be released—I think it's scheduled to go out later today from our main communications office—about what we heard in that challenge. We'll be looking to see how that impacts future item development, future changes in the system, as we evolve it, as we move forward. I think, once you get it in place, it's a constant nurturing to keep it moving forward successfully and growing.

Kentucky's results

- College/career-readiness up from 34 percent in 2010 to 62.5 percent in 2014
- Graduation rate at 87.5 percent
- Percentage of students performing at the proficient or distinguished levels in reading and math up on state assessments from 3.2 percent to 8.8 percent with largest gains coming at the elementary level and the smallest gains at the high school level.



The final thing I want to share with you is just a little snapshot of our most recent data. Again, we're in the process of working with our vendors for our 2015 reporting. We do our reporting through our Kentucky School Report Card application. That's out on our KDE website. You're very welcome to go out and look at how we report, and the electronic system that we use for that. We've found it to be very helpful.

I will say, another thing we do out of this office that I think is important to keep everything moving forward and getting people to work in partnership, we do a lot of effort, long before public reporting, on the cleanup of data, beginning with our rostering phase, as we start to administer assessments. We will have a day where Kentucky's district assessment coordinators will work with us.

For the second year this year, we'll be doing that in an online environment, to actually check their data before it is released even in embargo stage, and make corrections. Obviously, the kind of corrections you see are, as a student, is in the wrong accountability, something is incorrect about the student's demographic information or biographic information. I think all of those ongoing processes are helpful to us, as well.

Kentucky's results—we've had a major change in College and Career Readiness. We do have more opportunities for students to show evidence that they're College and Career Ready. That has increased over the last few years, as well. You can see the change there, up to 62 percent. Still not where we want to be, by any means, but still a significant difference from where we were.

Graduation rate in Kentucky, we're using the cohort process, 87.5 in the last reporting of 2014. And then, our proficient distinguished levels in reading and math are continuing to show increase. Small gains in high school, larger gains at our elementary level.

That's Kentucky's picture and where we've been. Again, there is so much detail we could share with you, but we think the white paper we've provided that my colleagues in the communications office have put together—and it's really a paper around communication and collaboration—will help you see, very specifically, some of the groups we worked with, some of the common messaging, some of the talking points.

But you really do need to get this moving forward in conversation, as quickly as you can, because we really—when we had our first reporting and the scores were lower—and, of course, everyone is impacted equally across the state—we had very little pushback and very little issue, because I think people really accepted what we were trying to do, on a broader scale, of getting our students to College and Career ready.

I'll pause at that point, Andy, and turn it back to you, and then see what you'd like to do from here.

Questions for our Panelists?



- What parallels do you see for the states you work with?
- What key message(s) are your states focused on?
- Who leads the communication plan in your states?
- What are the key message(s) in your state?

Please enter your questions in the chat box to the right of the WebEx screen →

INTEGRATING STANDARDS & ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION URBANEDU CREDIT

27

Andy Latham:

Well, terrific. Thank you so much, Rhonda. That was great. As you were talking, we saw—I think we heard some similar themes that we heard from Rolf in Maryland, as well. Clearly, you dealt with significant drops in scores, and you anticipated them. But I was interested in a number of measures. You also involved the business community very heavily, too, which is a group, I think, some states might not have thought of to involve. That seems like one theme I heard from both of you, is get the business community involved.

The other themes were: communicate early, have it well-planned and thought out, continue communicating—so, making it ongoing—and use every different resource available to you possible, or every different mode of communication possible. You both had a great outcome from it.

Now, with that, we've had—and I did want to emphasize that the materials that Rolf and Rhonda referred to that they've had, we will be posting all those materials on the site afterwards, as well as the slides that were used today. For anyone that needs these materials, we will have them up on the Center's website for you.

With that, we've had some questions come in over the chat. I would encourage other people, if you have questions, to please send those in. Sujie's going to walk you through the questions now. They're mostly for you, Rolf and Rhonda.

Sujie Shin:

Great. Thanks, Andy. I tried to group some of the questions that looked most similar together. A lot of them, I think, are appropriate for both of you. This first question, Rolf and Rhonda, I think gets to that both of you deeply engage your business community as part of this work. Where did you start? Did you start with one company, or with an existing forum? Then, very specifically for Rolf, can you talk more about the Maryland Business Roundtable [for Education] that you referenced in the beginning, and how the relationships came about regarding the communication work and decision-making that happened? With that, maybe Rolf, if you could start, and then we'll go to Rhonda on that question.

Rolf Grafwallner:

The Maryland Business Roundtable has been engaged in education for more than 15 years or so. They're getting involved in particular areas. Right now, STEM is their big issue. They look at K–12 STEM issues, working with the Department of Education on a number of projects. The extension downward to early childhood is facilitated through their affiliate organization, called Ready at Five. They are part of the roundtable. Education is being promoted through their publications.

They have been a wonderful partner because, on the board, they are exclusively business members. Especially in Baltimore, we have the investment community. T. Rowe Price is represented. We have [audio cuts out 01:02:50] Bank, Northrop Grumman, and a number of other members that are more affiliated with foundations of corporations.

They are very much engaged in this discussion because I think they get it, in terms of the importance of early childhood education, and supporting the K–12 agenda and College Readiness, Career Readiness. The discussion that we have with gaps, in other words, is of course of importance, when you talk to foundations, because they are looking for ways now they can invest into something that addresses these urgent needs.

We've been very happy with them. They turn out beautiful publications. If you just Google "school readiness Maryland," you can look at those. It's really been a great partnership.

We also work with the regional business groups, rotary clubs and the like, in communicating the results. It's been really an ongoing effort. In fact, many of our superintendents, local superintendents, participate in that effort because they don't have anything like that at their local level. That has worked very well for us.

Rhonda Sims:

In Kentucky, we did not go to a single business entity as a partner. Certainly, I think, if you have key partners in your area—some of our superintendents probably did that a little bit. But one of the things we worked through was through our Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. Our Commissioner, Terry Holiday, worked directly with the president of the chamber. Early on, as we started talking about the importance of College and Career Ready, they did a number of presentations, sessions, roundtable discussions together, through the structure of the chamber, some of the chamber's meetings.

Also, we have the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence that also has a number of business members, as well, that support the Prichard Committee. The chamber worked with Prichard to have an initiative called Business Leader Champions for Education. We worked through that entity, as well, to get some common messages out. If we're expecting students to do more, to know more, to be prepared, then why is that important to our economy and to the business community in Kentucky? Is this really the skills that I need to see, if I'm a business owner?

They can structure that end-message. As Rolf said, very nice production, geared very much toward the business community. They have done a couple of things for us—again, it's part of that work, either out of our office here in assessment accountability or our communications group more broadly—they did a very nice brochure called *New Standards, New Tests and New Scores*, and what does that mean.

Before we released the first set of data in 2012, they released the messages, explaining the emphasis on College and Career Readiness, and why this was different. They also did some video presentations for us, as well.

Again, getting them on as a partner for: why is it important that students have these skill sets, why is it important to our future as a state, I think was a critical piece, to get that message out. And then again, as Rolf said, they're very helpful, many times, in that they're already out promoting the chamber as business, and they're really taking on education as another one of their topics for promotion.

Most of our work went through the chamber. The chamber then tied in to a number of these key corporations. We didn't really work directly just with Toyota or just with GE, in most cases.

There might've been a few events or conversations, but mainly through the structure of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce.

Sujie Shin:

Great. Thank you, both of you. I think this next question is also for the both of you. The question or questions are, were there any challenges to the accuracy of the kindergarten readiness [*word inaudible*]*—*in your case, Rolf*—*and for you, Rhonda, it'd be great to hear whether or not there were any challenges to the validity of these new assessments themselves. Rolf, maybe back to you, again.

Rolf Grafwallner:

I can speak to the KRA. There have been challenges. There have been challenges within the context of the whole assessment debate, the encroachment of assessment, and the imbalance of assessment and instruction time. That's a big discussion here. There's legislation that deals with those issues. There are things that we are engaged in, here at the department, to report back to the legislature, as to how much time is being used in assessment.

That pushback is really a pushback about a larger issue, but it also impacted us because we were shifting from one measure that has become routine in our kindergarten classrooms to something new that, when you roll it out the first year, always requires more time and more glitches that you deal with, especially since it was an online system. So there was some of that that we had to deal with during the administration.

But it's also opened up the discussion about, why did we set the standards so high? Are we not creating a tool that is no longer valid for that age group? I considered it to be a very healthy discussion because, when we are moving into this new curricula, new standards, and then the curricular frameworks that we have in our 24 school systems, we really do believe that the so-called developmentally appropriate concept is really being pushed to a level where you have to take into account some of the expectations the kids need to be able to engage with, the new curriculum that they're facing in the schools. The best folks that could give us those feedbacks are the principals and the teachers. They were very much involved in that discussion.

The pushback is more about the debate of, yes, if you raise the rigor, are you still having, or, are you extending your definition of the valid and reliable tool, to the point where you're measuring things that kids at that particular age may or may not be able to do? I think this is a healthy discussion, but it is one that I think is going to play out as we go into our next administration this fall. We are

now communicating to them, as to how we considered the benchmarks, how important it is that they are high standards. I believe that this is healthy. It's not necessarily a negative thing.

Sujie Shin: Great. Thanks, Rolf. Rhonda?

Rhonda Sims: I would agree. I think the questions really help you think more deeply about what you're doing, and help construct almost an opportunity for teaching and learning. There's an opportunity to explain, here's why we did this, here's how this works, and maybe we didn't do that explanation well enough to begin with.

Again, I think we were in a unique position, in that in the first year we were reporting, there wasn't this national conversation going on about: Is the Common Core a bad thing? We really were able to get several years out there, before that really became a really strong national conversation, at least among a vocal group of individuals.

I do think that we never really had any kind of challenge around the validity of the assessment measure, or of our accuracy of reporting those results, within our accountability system. I think some things we did get questions on are the same things Rolf mentioned. There's always: Are we emphasizing this testing too much? Is there too much a focus on this? Is it taking attention away from other things that schools should be focused on? What's the time involved?

Now, one of Kentucky's changes, over the last few years, is we had a lot of conversation that, once the assessment is over, the summative test at the end of the year, then school's over, in essence. We had a move, several years ago, back with Senate Bill 1 in 2009, to move our testing to be within the last 14 days of instruction. That was our legislature's response. They also gave us a five-day testing limit. That forced us to make sure we could trim the size of the assessments down, and make them doable in the time frame that we had. So we've become much more focused on multiple choice than historically Kentucky had been, because of those constraints.

Really, I would not say we had much of a challenge at all, or really, not a lot of question on the validity piece. I think it's been more the kinds of things Rolf brought up, around time, measurement. We really got out ahead, as well, of: What's this test look like; why is it a single form versus matrix forms; what are the—the rules of administration stayed consistent from our old

assessment, in many respects. So we tried to get ahead on that kind of communication, as well.

I would say very little on validity. Some, occasionally, about accountability, because we do, in Kentucky, now use a system where we rank schools in order to determine where the proficiency mark is for the school. It's a continuous improvement model. We had historically not compared schools to each other in the state, but rather a school was compared to its own prior performance. So that's also been a change, as well. I think we had questions around that part of the system, which really had nothing to do with the assessment, in general, or the standards, in general.

Sujie Shin:

Great. Thank you, Rhonda. I think there are—it seems that there are two more sets of questions, and these might have to be very short. I did want to get them out because I think they are things that are important to discuss. The first one—and maybe Rhonda, this one, you can start on this, and maybe limit your responses to a minute-and-a-half.

Rhonda Sims:

Sure, absolutely.

Sujie Shin:

Messages about preparing students to be College and Career Ready makes sense in the aggregate, but at the individual student, it's another story. Could you both talk about your strategies in supporting teachers when they speak to parents—for example, at parent conferences—about individual student score drops?

Rhonda Sims:

Okay, very good. I wouldn't say that we—I think our messages were still much more general in nature. We did say that, to parents, expect there could be changes. We did say, in our teacher advisory committees—and we got out some messaging through *Kentucky Teacher*, which is our online magazine for Kentucky educators, that they would need to help students understand that the standard was different, and their score would be different. We did have some talking points that went out to teachers. We especially went through our district assessment coordinators that tend to message that.

Now, also, one thing we did in our score report itself, we actually added some language into the report that the student would see, then the parent would see, about the change in the system, and the more rigorous standards. We did put something actually in that piece of communication, where you're seeing your result, as well.

We tried to hit it on multiple fronts, from the district to the teacher

level, and then also putting something in the student report. Again, if someone's interested in that specifically, we can get you a copy of that report from the early days.

Sujie Shin: That'd be great, Rhonda. We could go ahead and post that up afterwards, as well. Rolf?

Rhonda Sims: I'll find that.

Rolf Grafwallner: I can speak to that issue. Of course, at that stage in a young learner's life, it's very important to detect anything that needs to be addressed early on. So we see the KRA and the other component, which is a formative assessment, as real tools for teachers to identify the strengths and needs of those individual students.

What we have planned is, aside from an individual student report, add to it two pages that are geared toward families and how they can support their individual students, based on the results that they see on that student. What we have is a comprehensive, or a composite result, and then we have, on the four domains, information that would place the students' skill levels against the cut score.

That will start the conversation with the family. Then, the teacher can inform the parent about certain strategies that will be listed on that individual student record that's handed out to the families, as to what they can do at home, and to support the children, and other website resources that are available for them.

We also want the principals to take that information, and we can help them break it down by student. That means they can identify the student that has significant deficiencies as they come in, and then they can take that information and develop plans, individual learner plans, for those [audio cuts out 01:17:50] in their particular school. We develop school reports, and those reports are being communicated to the schools. We work with the assistant superintendents of the school districts to work with their principals to identify these kids very early, and then start to track them, as they go into first and second grade.

Sujie Shin: Great, thank you. Final question. Again, I'm going to ask both of you to keep it short. Looking back, what is the one thing you would do differently in your communication-strategy planning or implementation? Rhonda, if you want to go ahead and start this one again.

Rhonda Sims: Sure. Well, I'll say this, as a little bit of a joke. If you've ever been to Kentucky, you know we are absolutely basketball crazy in the state of Kentucky. If we could've managed to get John Calipari of University of Kentucky and Rick Pitino at the University of Louisville to do a message on College and Career Ready, that would've probably been of interest to more of the general population in the state of Kentucky than all of our other methods combined.

I would say, in general, the thing that probably we would've done a little better job with is just keeping up with—we had a consistent message, but we saw so many groups that we probably would've done a better job with a really clean tracking record of that. We went, many times, to our regional cooperatives, many times to a variety of groups. And we probably would have controlled how many times we were going out, and maybe gone to using a little bit more electronic communication through our webcast process, just, again, in trying to manage that.

Again, the face-to-face allowed us to get a lot more feedback and support and deal with questions. Probably we would've been a little more structured in just managing how many various groups a core of us were going out to see and work with. But I think the major parts of our message, we probably would not have changed how we did that.

Sujie Shin: Thank you, Rhonda. Rolf?

Rolf Grafwallner: The big change is we communicated to public schools in the preparation of the KRA. Of course, the issue about the results, as well, and how it would be reported. We informed all the principals. What we missed is, we didn't find a forum where we could get to teachers early. Of course, they were involved in the field tests and the pilots, and they were involved in the training and all of that, but if we had a better way to get to teachers, clarifying the purposes of this, individually for them and, of course, in the way we report out on groups of kids, then I think we would have had less of a surprise on teachers' part when they were implementing it. We would have saved ourselves a lot of headache during the administration of it.

Helping States Prepare for the Fall



- Where are states in rolling out their communication plans?
- How can CSAI best support RCCs and SEAs in understanding, explaining, and preparing for these changes?

Quick Poll: For the SEAs you currently work with, what do you think would most immediately fill a need?

- Sharing of communication materials from other states
- Webinars or virtual meetings to share lessons learned from early implementers
- In-person or virtual communication strategy planning with CSAI team
- Support developing materials
- Other (please write in)

28

REVISIONS
STANDARDS &
ASSESSMENT
IMPLEMENTATION
UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND

Andy Latham:

Thank you both very much for everything. We really appreciate Rolf and Rhonda for their time. We changed the agenda a little bit on the fly because we had enough questions. We wanted to make sure we hit all the major questions. We're going to have a final survey come up, because we really just want to make sure that we, at the Center, are being as helpful to you in the regional comprehensive centers as possible.

We had some ideas. What we did is we'd like to share them with you, and actually ask a poll of you now, about how we can be most helpful to you. I don't think we'll have time for a discussion about them now, but what Sujie and I will do is take the poll results, and then I think we can follow up with the RCCs individually on more on what you would need from us, or how we could be most helpful to you and your work. Of course, please don't hesitate to contact either Sujie or me directly, if you have any further feedback.

If you see in the poll, the big question we're asking is, how can we be most helpful? One idea we had is similar to what we're talking about now, the sharing of communication materials from other states. In the past, when we've talked to RCCs, they've said, a lot of times their states want to know, what are other states doing? How have other people dealt with these issues? This is really that approach. Would that be helpful, having things like the materials from Maryland and from Kentucky? Is that the most helpful?

Or, is holding the webinar, somewhat like this, but with your individual states and you on the phone, would that be helpful to them, to share these lessons learned, and possibly involving other state representatives, too, to share their lessons?

A third would be to have a communication planning meeting with your states, where Sujie and I from the Center, as well as you, could then sit down with the states to figure out, who are your stakeholders, what are the messages that the SEA needs to get out there?

The fourth one we had was support actually developing materials, whether they're templates; or here's some sample communication materials that we draft for them; or else that we help them edit them and polish them.

Really, the most important category for us was Other. What else, from your perspective, would be helpful? I realize we don't have much time now. Again, I encourage you, over the next couple of days, if there are things that Sujie and I could do for the Center to help you all as you work with the states, please let us know what those specific things are. We'd be happy to explore them further.

You'll be interested, in the early results, every single respondent said that the sharing of communication materials from other states was very important to them. I think that's clearly one thing we'll continue to do. I think it's great that we have the examples from Rolf and Rhonda, and we'll involve other states, as well, in that.

Sujie Shin:

I just wanted to interject. That is part of the work that we have currently—we have been looking at it for the past couple of months, and taking a look at communication materials across the nation, and looking at materials aimed at different stakeholders. We are hoping to get that up soon on the website, so that you can actually look through state examples of resources and communication materials aimed at very specific audiences.

Andy Latham:

Then, the other thing is several of you also said that you're interested in webinars or in-person meetings involving the Center staff. Please just don't hesitate to ask. We'd be happy to help in any way we can.

That's it for time. Once again, I really can't thank Rolf and Rhonda enough for their help. We really appreciate them taking the time to share their own lessons learned; appreciate all of you who have

participated in the webinar; and look forward to talking to you more. Goodbye, everybody.

Sujie Shin: Thank you.

