

The Influence of the Common Core State Standards Reform
on Teacher Education and Professional Development
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The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a U.S. education reform policy announced in 2010 (Rothman, 2011). For over 25 years, education policy in the United States has been dominated by “standards-based reform.” However, until the Common Core, individual states in the U.S. produced their own content standards for mathematics, English-language arts and other school subjects. Individual states typically also relied on tests that were “aligned” to measure their own state standards. Because different states produced different academic content standards and relied on different tests, and because teachers-in-training might not get jobs in the state where they obtained their teaching degree, teacher education programs did not prepare future teachers to acquire knowledge or instructional skills related to *any* set of academic standards. In addition, because different states had different standards, professional development related to academic content did not necessarily transfer across states.

With the Common Core reform, 45 of the 50 states in the U.S. have agreed to adopt the same, Common Standards for precollegiate students (i.e., from Kindergarten through Grade 12, c. ages 5-18) in mathematics and English language arts. These 45 states have also largely agreed to use one of two different testing systems, each of which is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. As a result, the leaders of Common Core believe the reform will promote more “aligned” preservice teacher education. That is to say, teacher education programs will start to provide coursework that prepares future teachers to offer instruction in line with the Common Core standards. In addition, the reform’s leaders expect that professional development for practicing teachers will include greater collaboration by teachers across different states and will become more uniform or similar across states. The reform leaders also expect that the reform will allow teachers to have more equal access (through digital means) to professional development aligned to the Common Core standards (personal interviews, 2011; Kornhaber, Griffith, & Tyler, 2014).

The proposed paper will draw on three sources of data to examine whether teacher education and professional development are being influenced in the way that the reform’s leaders expect. We will use documentary evidence from a sample of leading state universities’ colleges of education for evidence that curricular offerings are preparing pre-service teachers to provide instruction aligned to the Common Core. In these same states, we will also look for policy documents to see if they are incorporating changes to teacher education programs and professional development. Third, we will also use data from a survey we plan to conduct this spring from several school districts to see if practicing teachers are collaborating across state lines and securing professional development on the Common Core through digital resources.

The Common Core may potentially bring greater coherence to preservice teacher education and teacher professional development. To do so, it will have to overcome the challenge of vast decentralization of U.S. education. Our paper will shed light on whether the reform is beginning to hurdle this challenge.

References

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Rothman, R. (2011). *Something in common: The Common Core standards and the next chapter in American education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.