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California State Board of Education

State Board Commends Higher Education's Endorsement of Common Core and Comprehensive, Coordinated Approach for Implementation

In an unprecedented action, the four systems of higher education announced their endorsement of Common Core standards and have engaged in a comprehensive, coordinated approach for implementation that links the K-12 system with higher education on standards, assessments and teacher training.

The leaders of the University of California, California State University, California Community Colleges, and Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities outlined their endorsement of Common Core standards in a letter to the State Board of Education. The announcement is part of the California State Board of Education's National Governors Association grant for K-12/higher education collaboration.

"This endorsement reinforces other significant actions by higher education to align standards and assessments with Common Core including major revisions to the PSAT and SAT, updates to the a-g requirements for the University of California and California State University, improvements to teacher preparation, and collaboration on the Early Assessment Program and Smarter Balanced assessments for 11th grade," explained California State Board of Education president Mike Kirst.

"The implementation of the Common Core standards and aligned assessments has the potential to dramatically improve college readiness and help close the preparation gap that exists for California students," wrote Janet Napolitano, Timothy White, Brice Harris and Kristen Soares. The system leaders note the "transforming promise of these new standards" as more students master them and more teachers, students and parents are given clear and consistent messages about college and career readiness.

The letter states that "Common Core standards provide teachers and districts a roadmap to developing courses that cultivate the deep understandings required for college preparation. In concert with this transition, the a-g requirements for CSU and UC admission, specifically areas 'b' (English) and 'c' (Mathematics), have been updated to align with the Common Core standards and the message is being transmitted to schools, parents and students."

The system leaders also highlight the Early Assessment Program and higher education's participation in teams working on the performance standards for the Smarter Balanced 11th grade assessments. The "partnership California has built over the last 10 years to implement the Early Assessment Program has helped to define the national effort to measure college and career readiness in the 11th grade, and it places California in an optimal position to successfully transition to the new system of standards and assessments."

"Collaborative efforts will help ensure that the tests measure standards that our K-12 and higher education systems all agree address appropriate expectations for the preparation of high school graduates who are ready to succeed.... These assessments align with our commitment to new learning outcomes to ensure our graduates are ready to succeed in an increasingly complex global environment," the letter notes.

The link between K-12 and higher education starts with teacher preparation, according to Napolitano, White, Harris and Soares. Accordingly, “higher education systems are aligning teacher preparation programs and content with the Common Core standards.

More information about California’s implementation of Common Core standards can be found at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/index.asp>.

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