



National Center and State Collaborative

## NATIONAL CENTER AND STATE COLLABORATIVE PROJECT SUMMARY

### KEY POINTS

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) describe the skills and knowledge that students are expected to learn in most states.

CCSS prepare students to be ready for college and careers.

There are CCSS in Math and English.

States that use the CCSS must have assessments (tests) based on these standards by the 2014-15 school year.

This requirement also applies to alternate assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Twenty-four states and 5 organizations are working together as the National Center and State Collaboration (NCSC).

In 2010, the National Governor's Association and the Council for Chief State School Officers introduced the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. Almost every state is using them. The CCSS focus on the knowledge and skills students need to be ready for college and/or careers after high school.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires states to measure student academic performance with assessments. They are allowed to develop an alternate assessment on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAS) for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. States that are using the CCSS must have assessments based on those standards by the 2014-15 school year. This rule also applies to the AA-AAS.

The U.S. Department of Education awarded the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) a grant to develop a new AA-AAS for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. This assessment will be based on the CCSS. NCSC is made up of 24 states and five national organizations. See <http://www.ncscpartners.org/about> for information about the state and organization partners.

There will be an AA-AAS for English Language Arts, as well as one for mathematics, in grades 3-8 and 11. The NCSC has developed Core Content Connectors (CCCs), linked to the CCSS, which will be used to plan instruction and assessment for students who will take the AA-AAS.

NCSC is developing new math and English alternate assessments based on the CCSS.

NCSC has identified the “big ideas” in the CCSS. These are the main skills and knowledge that prepare students for later grades.

The instruction and assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities will be based on these “big ideas.”

The assessments will each have about 30 questions and take 1.5-2 hours to complete. The length of the assessment and the type of questions will be determined for each student.

NCSC has developed materials to help teachers with instruction for students who will take these alternate assessments.

Some materials are to support lessons in general education classrooms.

Some materials are designed for small group and one-to-one lessons.

NCSC will also help teachers find a way for each student to communicate effectively.

The CCCs will provide the strong core content these students need to move through the grades toward graduation. The CCCs are less complex than the CCSS, focusing on the “big ideas” in each subject and grade.

First, participation in the AA-AAS is determined by the IEP team. Later, the level of complexity and the length of the assessment will be determined for individual students using prescreening tools provided by NCSC. There will be about 30 test items for mathematics and 30 items for ELA. Each test is expected to take about 1.5-2 hours. However, it can be completed in multiple smaller time slots that meet the student’s needs.

The NCSC has also developed a collection of resources to assist teachers in both understanding the academic content and planning instruction for students who will take the AA-AAS. One resource is a set of sample units to support teaching the CCSS through use of the CCCs in general education lessons. These units are based on Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is an educational framework with principles and guidelines. It gives all students a better chance to learn. The UDL principles require that students be provided with multiple ways to get information and multiple ways to show teachers their knowledge and skills. Students must also be given multiple ways to be engaged in learning. For more information see [www.udlcenter.org](http://www.udlcenter.org).

Some students will need one-to-one or small group instruction to get certain important skills or knowledge. NCSC has developed materials that provide teachers with structured support for these lessons. The lessons have different levels of difficulty. They can even be used for students who have never been taught the content of the lesson before.

NCSC is also committed to helping educators ensure that students have an effective way to communicate their knowledge and skills. Some students do not speak, but can communicate using sign language, other movements or technology.

The goal of NCSC is to help students with significant cognitive disabilities continue to learn after they leave high school and be prepared for a job.

Hopefully, many of these students will take classes on a college campus and get long-term paid employment.

For others “college and career readiness” will mean learning important knowledge and skills that everyone needs for a life in the community.

Educators and/or other service providers must determine the best methods for each student.

The goal of the NCSC is to ensure that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities achieve higher academic outcomes. All students should aim to leave high school ready for college and/or careers. Increasing numbers of students are going to college programs for students with intellectual disabilities; taking both credit and non-credit courses. See <http://www.thinkcollege.net>. Also, many are getting long-term paid employment.

Some students with significant cognitive disabilities, just like some students without disabilities, may not achieve these goals. However, every student should have the opportunity to work towards them. Academic instruction designed for college and career readiness has value for every student. This instruction promotes improvements in knowledge and skills that students need in order to be part of their community, such as:

- communication;
- math and reading;
- independent and team work skills;
- age appropriate social skills; and
- skills for identifying and requesting supports

### Key Terms

CCSS= Common Core State Standards. Describe what students are expected to learn and do in math and English for each grade.

AA-AAS=Alternate Assessment on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards. An AA-AAS is for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

CCC= Core Content Connectors. Knowledge and skills linked to the CCSS, which these students need to prepare for later grades.

UDL=Universal Design for Learning. A way to design instruction so that all students are interested, can learn, and can show what they know (multiples means of engagement, representation and expression)