



## **SECTION B**

### **Standards and Assessments (70 total points)**

## STATE REFORM CONDITIONS CRITERIA

### **(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards (40 points)**

The extent to which the State has demonstrated its commitment to adopting a common set of high-quality standards, evidenced by (as set forth in Appendix B)—

#### (i) The State's participation in a consortium of States that— (20 points)

- (a) Is working toward jointly developing and adopting a common set of K-12 standards (as defined in this notice) that are supported by evidence that they are internationally benchmarked and build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation; and
- (b) Includes a significant number of States; and

#### (ii) — (20 points)

- (a) For Phase 1 applications, the State's high-quality plan demonstrating its commitment to and progress toward adopting a common set of K-12 standards (as defined in this notice) by August 2, 2010, or, at a minimum, by a later date in 2010 specified by the State, and to implementing the standards thereafter in a well-planned way; or
- (b) For Phase 2 applications, the State's adoption of a common set of K-12 standards (as defined in this notice) by August 2, 2010, or, at a minimum, by a later date in 2010 specified by the State in a high-quality plan toward which the State has made significant progress, and its commitment to implementing the standards thereafter in a well-planned way.<sup>1</sup>

*In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.*

Evidence for (B)(1)(i):

- A copy of the Memorandum of Agreement, executed by the State, showing that it is part of a standards consortium.
- A copy of the final standards or, if the standards are not yet final, a copy of the draft standards and anticipated date for completing the standards.
- Documentation that the standards are or will be internationally benchmarked and that, when well-implemented, will help to ensure that students are prepared for college and careers.
- The number of States participating in the standards consortium and the list of these States.

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<sup>1</sup> Phase 2 applicants addressing selection criterion (B)(1)(ii) may amend their June 1, 2010 application submission through August 2, 2010 by submitting evidence of adopting common standards after June 1, 2010.



## STATE STANDARDS CONSORTIUM

- Active in the Common Core State Standards Initiative
- Clear pathways for stakeholder-engagement to develop higher, clearer, and fewer academic standards



### (i) DEVELOPING AND ADOPTING COMMON STANDARDS

New Jersey has a comprehensive and deep commitment to the development of evidence-based standards, international benchmarking, and college- and career-readiness. The roots of this work are evidenced in the spectrum of state efforts, ranging from high-quality early-childhood programs to recent and ongoing efforts to transform secondary education and ensure the success of all P-16 students. New Jersey was one of the first states to implement core-curriculum-content standards that specify uniform and challenging educational expectations for all students in the state. The original set of standards was adopted in 1996. In 2008, the New Jersey Department of Education engaged in the third revision of these standards with goals that are congruent with the principles, rigor, and expectations of both the Race to the Top guidelines and the Common Core Standards Initiative. In June 2009, the New Jersey State Board adopted core-curriculum content standards in seven of nine areas. Although significant energy was committed to the review and development of revised language-arts literacy and mathematics standards, these areas were put on hold as the state signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Common Core Standards Initiative -- a consortium of 48 states, including New Jersey (all participating states are listed in the Appendix I). The process and organizational infrastructure that resulted from the revision of the standards in the other content areas will be extremely valuable in the transition to the common standards in language-arts literacy and mathematics.



## **(ii) STANDARDS ADOPTION PLAN**

The State Board has authority to adopt all standards for New Jersey under NJSA 18A:7F-46. Since the initial announcement of the Common Core Standards Initiative, members of the NJDOE have been working with members of the State Board and educators in the field to build awareness and support for the Standards. New Jersey has developed a plan to recommend adoption of standards by the State Board in a way that incorporates the feedback received from all stakeholders throughout the adoption process.

**October 2009**—Upon release of the Common Core College and Career Expectations, the NJDOE issued a press release, posted the standards on its website, and opened a special email box to take comments from the public.

**December 16, 2009**—The State Board reviewed all comments and affirmed its members’ support of the Common Core Career and College Expectations.

**January 20, 2010**—The full plan for review of the grade-level standards was set forth at the State Board meeting.

**March 10, 2010**—NJDOE again issued a press release and an invitation to comment on the K-12 Common Core Standards, either through the NJDOE website and/or directly to the Common Core Standards mailbox. The invitation went to stakeholders via NJDOE-issued press release and the listserv. An invitation to comment, both to the NJDOE website and/or directly to the Common Core Standards site, went to educators via the NJDOE email listserv.

**March 17, 2010**—The State Board held public hearings for testimony regarding the content of the K-12 Common Core Standards.

**March 2010**—NJDOE conducted a series of professional development sessions entitled, “How do fewer, clearer, higher standards affect my classroom?”. All relevant workshops and meetings convened by the NJDOE included a segment on the Core Curriculum Standards that was designed to increase awareness among educators, engage them in a

review of the Common Core Standards in both Math and English Language Arts (ELA), and elicit feedback regarding the Common Core Standards. These sessions focused on understanding the implications of learning progressions, teaching to mastery, and deep understanding of content. NJDOE invited writers of the common core standards to give direct testimony at these public meetings.

Additional meetings were held with two-year and four-year college and university faculty and admissions counselors regarding college-readiness and the impact of the Common Core Standards. Efforts will be made to ensure closer working relationships with colleges and high schools in preparing New Jersey students for postsecondary education and training through traditional or alternative routes.

**Early April 2010**—All comments about the grade-level Common Core Standards in English Language Arts and Math were forwarded to the developers of the standards.

**May 19, 2010** –The State Board discussed the resolution to adopt the final version of the standards and took public testimony regarding adoption of the standards.

**June 16, 2010** –The State Board is scheduled to vote on a resolution to adopt the Common Core Mathematics and English Language Arts Standards.

The New Jersey Parents and Teachers Association is one of the four State associations that received funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support the Common Core Standards. NJDOE is working closely with the organization in the implementation of their initiatives.

Once adopted, NJDOE is planning to bring LEAs together to collaborate regarding implementation strategies, including linking to curriculum and aligning with higher education. NJDOE’s full standards-implementation plan is included in Appendix I.

**(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments (10 points)**

The extent to which the State has demonstrated its commitment to improving the quality of its assessments, evidenced by (as set forth in Appendix B) the State's participation in a consortium of States that—

- (i) Is working toward jointly developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments (as defined in this notice) aligned with the consortium's common set of K-12 standards (as defined in this notice); and
- (ii) Includes a significant number of States.

*In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.*

Evidence for (B)(2):

- A copy of the Memorandum of Agreement, executed by the State, showing that it is part of a consortium that intends to develop high-quality assessments (as defined in this notice) aligned with the consortium's common set of K-12 standards; or documentation that the State's consortium has applied, or intends to apply, for a grant through the separate Race to the Top Assessment Program (to be described in a subsequent notice); or other evidence of the State's plan to develop and adopt common, high-quality assessments (as defined in this notice).
- The number of States participating in the assessment consortium and the list of these States.

*Recommended maximum response length: One page*

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## **DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING COMMON, HIGH-QUALITY ASSESSMENTS**

- Active participation in the design of the assessment consortium and deliberate, informed selection process of the most promising consortium
- Proven record of innovation in assessment systems

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### **(i) ASSESSMENT CONSORTIUM**

The NJDOE has signed MOUs with two consortia to engage in the system design, including the “Balanced Assessment Consortium,” led by Dr. Linda Darling Hammond and Sue Gendron; and the “Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC),” led by Achieve. The MOUs for the consortia are included as Appendix I. Twenty-six states are members of the Balanced Assessment Consortium, and 24 are members of the PARCC consortium. We believe we have the experience to importantly contribute to these efforts, and we know that we have much to gain from the collaborative-assessment efforts. Our work with the American Diploma Project is a good example of our experience in reviewing the scope of work from a consortium and aligning the consortium to our system. The work of the consortia is currently in development. As the consortia continue their work, we expect to examine the results and choose the most promising organizations. Important considerations for selection of the consortia will be the number of states participating, and the quality of the proposed end instruments compared to those of our current assessment system. In selecting the most promising consortium, New Jersey will bring its extensive experience to bear in developing the assessments, including its experience with field testing and using internationally-benchmarked materials; its experience with the development of multiple-choice items that focus on application and critical thinking; its use of Language Arts inquiry-based items; and its use of performance exams in biology. New Jersey will also consider the advice of its Assessment Technical Advisory Committee, under the

leadership of Ron Hambleton from the University of Massachusetts; the Committee’s members also include Suzanne Lane, from the University of Pittsburgh; Greg Camilli, from the University of Colorado; George Engelhard, from Emory University; Greg Cizek, from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and Stephen Koffler, former vice president of ETS.

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## **Approach to Assessment**

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Ever since the adoption of its Core Curriculum Content Standards in 1996, New Jersey’s summative assessments have been designed to include significant constructed-response or performance components at all grade-levels. These assessment designs reflected a conscious emphasis on critical thinking and higher-order problem-solving skills. New Jersey’s mathematics assessments contain both shorter and extended constructed-response items, accounting for approximately 30% of the total possible points, in addition to selected-response content. In Language Arts Literacy (LAL), which covers both writing and reading at all grade-levels, the proportion of constructed-response content typically ranges from 45% to 55% of the total points. These summative assessments include two writing prompts at each grade-level from 3 through 8, and at grade 11.

New Jersey’s commitment to larger-scale, authentic performance-assessments extends back to 2003, when the state initiated six years of funding for a statewide consortium, the New Jersey Performance Assessment Alliance (NJ PAA). The NJ PAA was charged with developing and modeling performance assessments across multiple grades and subjects, and creating associated professional-development programs to promote the use of curriculum-embedded assessments throughout New Jersey. The NJ PAA trained hundreds of New Jersey teachers to develop, administer, score, and analyze results from performance assessments in language arts, mathematics, and science.

New Jersey is committed to the belief that decisions on student performance standards and cut scores should be the result of deliberate educational policy, not merely the consequence of psychometric processes. This commitment has been articulated explicitly in New Jersey’s contracts with testing vendors, and it has been expressed most recently in

two standard settings for the elementary- and middle-school assessments. New, higher achievement standards in grades 5-8 language arts and math were adopted by the State Board in July 2008; higher, more challenging performance standards in grades 3 and 4 were adopted in July 2009. In raising the bar at six grade levels, New Jersey has resisted the pressures that were felt both here and in other states to maintain or lower existing standards in the face of the accountability challenges of NCLB.

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### **American Diploma Project (ADP)**

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New Jersey was a founding member of the Achieve/ADP Algebra consortium in 2006 – indeed, we were the first participating state to sign the memorandum of agreement committing ourselves to this work. Among the ADP Algebra states, we have been the third-largest user of the Algebra II test, and the largest user of the ADP Algebra I test. As a result of our involvement in the ADP consortium, we have developed collegial relationships with standards and assessment leaders in many other states, and have direct experience in working with consortia in the development of assessments.

## REFORM PLAN CRITERIA

**(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments (20 points)**

The extent to which the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice), has a high-quality plan for supporting a statewide transition to and implementation of internationally benchmarked K-12 standards that build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation, and high-quality assessments (as defined in this notice) tied to these standards. State or LEA activities might, for example, include: developing a rollout plan for the standards together with all of their supporting components; in cooperation with the State’s institutions of higher education, aligning high school exit criteria and college entrance requirements with the new standards and assessments; developing or acquiring, disseminating, and implementing high-quality instructional materials and assessments (including, for example, formative and interim assessments (both as defined in this notice)); developing or acquiring and delivering high-quality professional development to support the transition to new standards and assessments; and engaging in other strategies that translate the standards and information from assessments into classroom practice for all students, including high-need students (as defined in this notice).

The State shall provide its plan for this criterion in the text box below. The plan should include, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties (see Reform Plan Criteria elements in Application Instructions or Section XII, Application Requirements (e), for further detail). Any supporting evidence the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers must be described and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Recommended maximum response length: Eight pages

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## **SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION TO ENHANCED STANDARDS AND HIGH-QUALITY ASSESSMENTS**

- Ensure that high-quality instruction, not test prep, is at the heart of the system.
- Create a P-12 “Curriculum and Assessment Spine” -- an aligned framework of evidence-based instructional tools coupled with integrated assessment practice, and professional development.
- Employ flexible approaches to assessment, embedded within the curriculum, to provide teachers with instructionally-relevant information about students focused on critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills.
- Enhance instructional tools by embedding cognitive research on learning progressions with a clear pathway toward college- and career-readiness.
- Engage with state consortium to redesign assessments and work collaboratively to develop new psychometrics and expand approaches to assessment in early grades and additional subjects.

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## **BUILDING ON NEW JERSEY’S HISTORY OF SUCCESS**

New Jersey has worked hard to build a coordinated set of high-quality standards, performance assessments and professional development. This history helps prepare us for a very significant change in our curriculum and assessment that will dramatically improve classroom instruction and student outcomes.

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### **Performance Assessments**

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The New Jersey Department of Education has worked collaboratively and contracted with the New Jersey Performance Assessment Alliance (NJ PAA) to both develop performance-assessment prompts for a performance assessment in biology, and train teachers from every high school in the state on the holistic scoring of the performance-

assessment prompts. Last year’s prompt, *Live and Let Live*, was a 90-minute prompt designed through the collaborative efforts of the NJ PAA, the New Jersey Department of Education, and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. It was administered to over 95,000 students and scored by New Jersey teachers and supervisors. In our third year of this initiative, we certainly have a significant number of educators who have the skills to both design quality performance-assessment tasks and score them.

The Department’s commitment to performance-assessment has influenced critical thinking and the application of knowledge in high-school science classrooms, for students at all academic levels, throughout the state. New Jersey’s experience with performance assessment positions the state well to include similar types of testing in its through course and summative-assessment programs.

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## **Formative-Assessment Practices**

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New Jersey is already well along its way in deploying a high-quality, standards-based, system of formative assessment throughout the state. New Jersey introduced web-based formative- and benchmark-assessment resources as a part of the statewide assessment system starting in 2007-2008 with the *Learnia* program for mathematics and English language arts. *Learnia* is a vendor-based, multi-tiered online resource for locally-administered benchmark and formative assessments that is used in approximately 200 LEAs. It includes considerable data-reporting and data-analysis features, as well as an item-authoring capacity that allows LEAs to create their own assessment content. The *Learnia* program has emphasized an ongoing professional-development-and-training program as an essential complement to the web-based formative- and benchmark-assessment resources. The evidence to date shows promising results. A recent study by Pearson of the 22-26% of New Jersey students in grades 3-8 who participated in the *Learnia* formative-assessment program showed that in LEAs that fully implemented the system, students improved over the course of the school year, with the most dramatic results in grade 3. Furthermore, preliminary results suggest that LEAs that fully

implemented the formative-assessment system scored higher on the statewide assessment, NJ ASK, in comparison to other LEAs. Race to the Top presents an opportunity to deepen this formative-assessment practice and create innovation for aligning curriculum and assessment.

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## **Twenty-First Century Standards to Transform Classroom Practice**

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In recognition of the need to align students’ educational experiences with the demands of a rapidly-changing world economy, New Jersey adopted a series of rigorous graduation requirements and revised standards in 7 of 9 content areas: Visual and Performing Arts, Comprehensive Health and Physical Education, Science, Social Studies, World Languages, Technology, and 21st Century Life and Careers. The redesigned standards require a deeper understanding of academic content, at much higher levels, facilitated by the integration of 21st-Century knowledge, skills, and themes. Implementation of the new standards is supported by Core Curriculum Content Standards interactive website features that enable educators to easily access supports for curriculum development, curriculum mapping, instructional planning, and curriculum-embedded assessments. Coupled with these resources is the Statewide Systemic Professional Development and Growth Initiative of onsite and online learning opportunities. The professional development offered through this plan provides the context for the rich discussions, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing that support the work of onsite and virtual professional-learning communities.

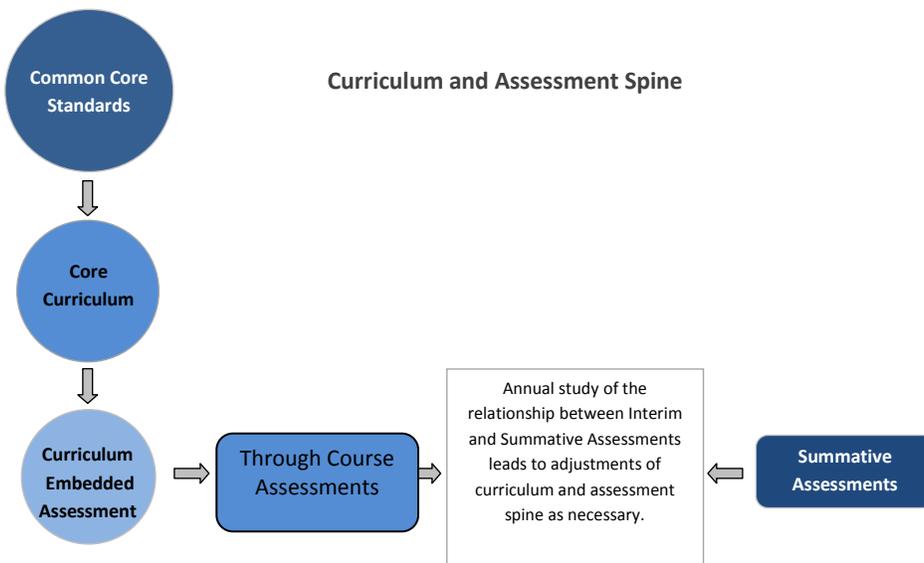
## TRANSITIONING TO COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Once adopted by the State Board, the K-12 English language arts and mathematics standards will be built on a set of learning trajectories that are grounded in research and practice and that provide an order and sequence for instruction. With this instructionally-relevant structure acting as the backbone of our core content standards in all nine areas, we can actualize a system of content standards, curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional development that will transform our educational system.

## A CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT SPINE

New Jersey’s contention is that student achievement will not rise sufficiently with standards and assessment alone. A *curriculum spine* needs to be at the heart of the system, and it must be one that is directly tied to the new standards, and that will bring them to life in classrooms. The current process to review and update the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards will serve as the catalyst for the alignment of the curriculum,

instruction, professional development, and assessment systems across the state that students experience from early childhood through high school. Building on the work already underway in New Jersey to assist



with all aspects of standards-implementation, with Race to the Top funding New Jersey will work with local content-area leaders from the LEAs and national experts to create a Curriculum and Assessment Spine – an integrated set of formative-assessment tools,

learning trajectories and curricular exemplars. The spine will provide clear and consistent guidance to teachers about pedagogy and expectations for all children for college entrance or 21<sup>st</sup> Century work. We will surround the Curriculum and Assessment Spine with a comprehensive program of in-person and on-line professional development, leverage a unifying technology platform, and provide collaborative time for teachers and school leaders to review and plan instruction based on real-time student data, and to collectively review student work.

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## **Balanced Assessment System to Improve Teaching and Learning**

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A balanced assessment system includes a combination of assessment *for*, and assessment *of*, learning. These summative, through-course and curriculum-embedded formative assessments serve separate, but complementary purposes in the process of learning and teaching, and will be an integral part of every instructional program. All three approaches to assessment must, and will, be aligned – e.g., the formative assessments must align with the through-course assessment, while at the same time reflecting the local enacted P-12 core-curriculum sequence. Our work with the assessment consortium mirrors this philosophy and approach to student assessment, in which a series of through-course assessments work in concert with the summative assessment to provide rich performance-based tasks that contribute to a summative score. The end product of this work will be assessments that are worthy of instructional imitation.

Evidence-based instructional tools and formative assessments will surround a core-curriculum sequence to provide teachers with the instructionally-relevant information that is necessary to adapt instruction based on students’ academic needs. We will closely monitor the alignment of the entire system by annually analyzing the capability of through-course assessments to contribute to a summative score; inform pacing and intervention strategies, by evaluating the responsiveness of through course assessments to teacher and student use of instructional units; and make adjustments as necessary to exemplar curriculum materials and assessments. Evaluation and continuous improvement

will be a critical component to ensure the high-quality implementation of this innovative system. New Jersey has already identified a research partner to evaluate this work to ensure that it is of the highest caliber.

### **Through-Course Assessment**

“Through-course” assessments will serve as a critical link between formative-assessment practices that are tied to the curriculum and summative assessments that are based on content standards. Our perspective is that these assessments work best when they are linked to gateway instructional units – e.g., when they are evaluating whether a child is “at benchmark” on specific skills and content, closely following instruction. At the same time, these performance-based assessments will allow for classroom-, school-, and LEA-level aggregation, analysis, and reporting, in order to support instructional leadership and management.

We propose to design and administer through-course assessments that will be linked to the gateway concepts and important-to-master aspects of the grade-level core curriculum sequence that are typically hard to measure through extended or open response items -- such as writing and research and extended mathematics problems. By focusing on these gateway aspects of the grade-level curriculum, we will ensure that teachers have the critical information they need to measure students’ mastery of academically-rigorous content, and we will provide the tools that teachers need to adapt their instruction so that it is most effective. These critical areas present the most challenging concepts to teach, with the biggest impact for students’ long-term understanding of complex material.

To identify the gateway aspects of the grade-level curriculum that are typically hard to measure in subjects other than math and literacy,<sup>2</sup> New Jersey will conduct a survey across a sample of teachers in each content area, with particular attention to the representation of the various LEA urban, rural, high-performing and low-performing contexts across the state. An expert panel will select the four areas for which New Jersey will develop through-course assessments by exploring the latest research on learning

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<sup>2</sup> Assessment consortia will be developing through-course assessments in literacy and mathematics.

progressions in all content areas, examining the depth of knowledge related to each teacher-identified area, and studying the summative-assessment results.

We recognize that local ownership is essential if new standards and aligned assessments are to truly improve student outcomes, as they are designed to do. While the assessment consortium moves forward with the development of through-course assessments in literacy and mathematics, New Jersey will provide a series of challenge grants for LEAs working in collaboration to design innovative, open-source methods of assessing the remaining core-content subject-areas and grade-levels. Our balanced system will include literacy and mathematics assessments designed by the consortium, coupled with peer-reviewed assessments developed by educators in the field for the remaining subject areas and grade levels. NJDOE will announce the assessment- development competitive-grant process in November 2010. Working in collaboration with our county offices, NDJOE will convene a series of peer-review teams to review grant applications. The peer-review teams will include teachers, school leaders, curriculum specialists, higher-education faculty, and other community members and content experts. In order to maintain the high standards in the peer-review process, NJDOE will drive a process that sets clear standards and guidelines. The detailed schedule for development and review of assessments is found in the timeline for this section.

### **Curriculum-Embedded Assessments**

Our Curriculum-Embedded Assessments will reflect a carefully-designed sequence of tasks, based on learning progressions that have been tested in classrooms. Building on the existing lesson-study-and-development process in New Jersey, teachers and supervisors will work together to thread embedded assessment opportunities throughout the local curriculum. Each curricular unit in the curriculum-and-assessment spine will include assessment of knowledge of facts and skills, and of the conceptual frameworks that connect them. Collected evidence will include monitoring questions and a series of performance-based tasks and extended-response items that are designed to inform the pedagogical routines in the classroom, such as student tasks that include extended analysis, research, and communication. With these tools, educators will be able to differentiate instruction based upon students' academic needs.

The curriculum-embedded performance tasks and constructed-response items will be delivered through a “classroom assessment engine” that allows teachers to create assessments tied to curriculum, with careful attention paid to the technical quality of such measures. Teachers will develop new items to collect evidence that supports understanding of how students are thinking and progressing. When appropriate, these items will be validated by instructional coaches and LEA curriculum experts, and will include scoring rubrics to evaluate student work. Each item will be aligned to a specific content-standard and instructional tool, to allow teachers to select multiple measures of the content that is assessed, and to ensure that the formative assessments will occur during the natural course of instruction. These items will be available in English and Spanish, to support New Jersey’s significant Spanish-speaking ELL population, and accommodations will be available to adapt these items for use with special-needs students.

Our system will capture the items assessed; student work developed in response to the items; and teacher observations of the student work. The quality of student responses and teacher feedback can then be monitored by skilled instructional coaches and school leaders. Within each LEA, the central office will serve as a collection-point for a cyclical review of student work, with the review intended to enable both monitoring and sharing of the results of lesson study. Teachers will use student work samples that are aligned with state content standards, including the new common core standards, and will evaluate these artifacts using rubrics while working in their grade-level and content-level teams. This process supports the core work of the professional-learning community, which is to focus on the relationship between instruction and student outcomes.

### **Effective Practice: Using Formative Data to Inform Instruction**

Certificated supervisors will support the collaborative use and analysis of student data. These interactions among teachers and supervisors will span across grade-levels to include teachers in other grades, in order to build knowledge and sequential alignment. School leaders and individuals beyond the school may also be involved, so that they may learn from successful implementers in other schools, and in order to build equality of opportunity and inter-school coherence.

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## **Curriculum and Instructional Tools in the Curriculum-and-Assessment Spine to Transform Classroom Practice**

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To support adaptive instruction based on formative-assessment practices, teachers will need instructional tools that are sophisticated, nuanced, and adaptable. To meet this need, New Jersey will provide a set of exemplar units from the Curriculum and Assessment Spine that illustrate specific, research-based content and pedagogical routines and provide jumping-off points to generalize the approach and practices. These exemplar units will suggest teaching progressions and routines that assure a focus on specific, relevant content and best practices for teaching and learning. Exemplar units will include suggested materials, tasks, and teaching routines, and will provide opportunities for extensions and guidance for teachers, as well as supports for gifted students, English-language learners, and students with disabilities. Curriculum experts, instructional coaches, school leaders, and teachers will also receive training and support to adapt existing curriculum and instructional resources to support these evidence-based strategies. For most LEAs, these units will provide a template to guide the revision of local curriculum and, in the case of chronically-low-performing schools, these units will provide an alternative curriculum. As a result, students will benefit because the best-available evidence about what works will guide teachers' decisions.

### **Content and Pedagogical Routines Embedded in Exemplar Lessons and Units**

Exemplar lessons and units will be developed by a national expert contractor. These lessons and units will contain the pedagogical and content routines needed to produce customized instruction, and will be based on research findings that show that these aspects of instruction have large effects on student achievement,<sup>3</sup> including:

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<sup>3</sup> Corcoran, Mosher, Rogat, 2009

- Connecting the lesson to important concepts or skills (standards), selecting appropriate tasks, re-accessing and reviewing prior knowledge, engaging students, making learning goals explicit, providing time for students to explore the content and apply it, and closing the lesson with a review and summary.
- Teaching students to perform academically-focused and rigorous tasks with a high cognitive demand, such as lessons asking them to generalize, analyze, make conjectures, offer alternative explanations, solve unfamiliar problems, or create new questions.
- Using adaptive-instruction routines that help teachers to modify instruction as necessary to address students' particular needs and difficulties, as identified through formative-assessment strategies that are rooted in coherent conceptions of students' progress and likely problems.
- Enhancing team or group learning, in part by paying particular attention to how class-size, group-composition and roles, seating arrangements, group stability, the number of groups, and other factors influence the effectiveness of this approach.
- Incorporating student-centered discussions that support open discourse and thus both help teachers understand their students' academic thinking, and give students opportunities to express their ideas in order to develop greater understanding of the subject matter.

First, exemplar units developed by a contractor and New Jersey teachers will be available in the areas of mathematics, science, and language arts literacy. Then, as resources expand, we will look to include additional content areas. Exemplar units are typically comprised of a series of lessons, depending on the subject matter and grade-level. Lessons will be academically-rigorous, engaging, and accessible to students. These exemplar units include clearly-linked formative assessment on content and disciplinary skills and practices, and the conceptual frameworks that connect them, to support adaptive instruction. Importantly, the exemplar lessons apply the instructional practices shown above to increase student achievement in the specific content area. We will incrementally build resources for teachers to draw upon.

All units will be designed to provide a coherent arc of lessons within each topic, to develop disciplinary thinking and practices, and to hone reasoning and inquiry skills. The units will be aligned across grade levels so that they build on each other to progressively deepen students' understanding of concepts. For example, middle-school units develop foundational concepts, skills, and routines that support students' later success with the high-school college-readiness units.

Each unit will follow a thoughtfully-designed scope and sequence, reflecting the new common core standards and the latest research on learning progressions across early learning and up through the high-school grades. They will also align with most curricula used in the LEAs. To embed the content and pedagogical routines modeled in the exemplar units in the LEA curriculum, we will convene workshops in which the participating LEAs will refine or adapt units that they now use to deliver this evidence-based approach within their own curriculum. If LEAs so choose, the exemplar units may be used to supplement or supplant existing instructional materials, in order to improve or guide alignment with state content standards, or new Common Core standards. The units will be used in chronically-underperforming schools.

### **Aligning Instructional Strategies to New State Content Standards**

To ensure that the exemplar units and lessons are closely aligned with the new Common Core Content Standards, we will also undertake a review of the units, and, where necessary, revise or develop new units in conjunction with New Jersey teachers and instructional coaches, in order to fill any critical gaps. This alignment process will identify both the horizontal and vertical alignment of the exemplar units and lessons with respect to the new state content standards. Units and lessons will be tied to specific standards, allowing teachers to select from a set of exemplar lessons that fit within the state's content-standards framework, which includes the Common Core standards.

This alignment process will also serve as a professional-development tool for teachers and LEA leaders to identify overlaps and gaps in the curricular units that are tied to the new standards. Furthermore, the exemplar units and lessons will assist teachers in rapidly

understanding how the change in academic-content standards, with respect to both the content and the skills taught, affects instruction within the classroom.

### **Process to Refine and Build an Exemplar-Lesson Bank**

The bank of exemplar units will be seeded with a core set of aligned units from the Curriculum and Assessment Spine. Teachers, instructional coaches, and LEA teams can adjust, edit, and improve elements of every lesson to meet their own classroom needs. Teachers can submit these changes, or submit entirely new lessons, to a subject-area review committee for approval. Once approved, these new lessons would be made available to all users in the LEA and state. The state and LEA leaders in curriculum and instruction will govern the process of refining, adapting, developing, and approving new lessons. Over time, the bank of exemplar units and lessons will expand, as new and refined exemplar lessons are developed within the state by teachers, instructional coaches, and LEA curriculum specialists.

New Jersey will leverage its experience with the Progressive Math and Science Initiative, as described in the Appendix II, to convene a review committee, composed of teachers and content-area experts, to review exemplar units and suggest improvements. The content-area experts will lead this review to a consensus, and then implement the suggested changes. The unit will then be posted on the Instructional Improvement System (IIS) in order that all the schools in the LEA may use it, and in order to encourage further comments and improvements. A key value of this approach, in addition to creating these course materials, is that the members work as multi-grade teams developing and reviewing lessons – so that the teachers are forced to confront differences in curricular approaches that detract from coherence between, and even within, courses. Terms, approaches and methods are discussed in the context of creating exemplar lessons that will be used by all. New Jersey will design subject-area review teams to mirror the successful strategies used by the Progressive Math and Science Initiative (see D(3)).

As states adopt and implement the Common Core Standards, teachers and LEA leaders will also be able to leverage the open educational resources across states to develop, adapt, and refine exemplar lessons that are publicly-available in other states. In return, the

activities within the state will contribute to this open resource, as their exemplar lessons will be publicly available – thus allowing educators from other states to access, adapt, and redistribute the materials that have been reviewed by a team of instructional coaches, and by LEA and state curriculum specialists.

### **Aligning High-School-Exit Criteria with College-Entry Requirements**

The consortium will be creating high-school-exit criteria, based on the Common Core standards. Once that occurs, we will establish a committee with the IHE's to align that set of criteria with college admission and learning requirements. Our goal is to make very clear what students need to know, so that they do not need remedial courses during college.



### **TIMELINE**

New Jersey is proposing an ambitious timeline to design, develop, and implement a strong system of the curriculum-and-assessment spine that adheres to New Jersey's history of maintaining the highest-quality education and professional development. Exemplar lessons, coupled with formative assessments, will be aligned to New Jersey's content standards and the new common core standards and will be rolled out beginning in 2011-12. The following year, through-course assessments will be available for all students in participating LEAs, and exemplar lessons and units in the remaining content areas will also begin to be made available to teachers. In the 2012-13 school year, teachers will have access to the full range of the Curriculum and Assessment Spine for literacy and mathematics.

## Section B Action Plan: Timeline and Responsible Parties

Action Steps	Timeline	Responsible Parties
Participate in Design Committee of PARCC assessment consortium, active participation in SMARTER/Balanced	January 2010-	Office of Student Learning Assessments
Launch of NJ Standards Website	February 2010	Office of Academic Standards
State Board review of K-12 Common Core Standards	May 17, 2010	Deputy Commissioner, State Board
Select Assessment Consortium	June 2010	Commissioner
Adopt Common Core standards in English language arts and mathematics	June 17, 2010	State Board
Align exemplar lessons to Common Core Standards and identify gaps	September – October 2010	NJDOE, selected contractor
Develop teacher survey of gateway content and meet with Technical Advisory Committee to refine and improve survey and design	September 2010	Office of Student Learning Assessments
Administer teacher survey, collect and analyze teacher survey responses	October 2010	County Offices
Convene content and assessment experts to select 4 areas per grade level for assessment development in non-tested grades and subjects	October 2010	Office of Student Learning Assessments
Exemplar lessons aligned to core content made widely available	October 2010	Assistant Commissioner of Academic Standards, Curriculum, and Assessments
Content-focused training for teacher leaders and supervisors on pedagogical routines associated with exemplar lessons	October 2010-ongoing	Office of Curriculum Development, selected contractor
Ongoing work to build and refine exemplar lessons	October 2010 – ongoing	Teachers, instructional coaches
Engage Technical Advisory Committee in design of clear guidelines for local development of through-course assessments in remaining core content areas	October – November 2010	Office of Student Learning Assessments
Open competition for challenge grants for LEAs working in partnerships to develop through-course assessments in remaining content areas and flexible approaches to K-12 assessment	November 2010	Assistant Commissioner of Academic Standards, Curriculum and Assessments
Select multidisciplinary peer-review panels for LEA through-course assessments	December 2010	NJDOE Office of Student Learning Assessments, County Office,

Launch exemplar lessons and curriculum-embedded assessments through Instructional Improvement System (IIS)	January 2011	Office of Curriculum Development, selected contractor
Ongoing work to develop and refine curriculum-embedded assessments	January 2011 - ongoing	Teachers, School Leaders
Announce challenge-grant winners selected from multi-disciplinary committee	January 2011	Commissioner
Commence item development, field test, and bias review for second-semester through-course assessment	January – June 2011	Selected LEAs
Continue to scale and expand access to high-quality instructional tools in STEM subjects	January 2011-ongoing	Office of Curriculum Development
Launch open-source “quiz engine” for curriculum-embedded assessments	January 2011	Office of Education Technology, Office of Student Learning Assessments
Ongoing through-course assessment development work	January 2011-ongoing	Selected LEAs
Begin training on new through-course assessments	July 2011 - ongoing	Selected LEA, County Offices
Field-test new through-course assessments	August 2011-June 2012	Selected LEAs
Preliminary standards-setting on first semester through-course assessments; ongoing field test	May –June 2012	Selected LEAs
Preliminary standards-setting on second semester through-course assessments	June -July 2012	Selected LEA
Reconvene Challenge-grant peer-review panels to review field-test results and scoring procedures	July 2012	Office of Student Learning Assessments
Full implementation of through-course assessments in all core - content subject areas	September 2012	Office of Student Learning Assessments