

## Implementing Common Core Standards in NC

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Supported by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, CTQ launched an effort to connect, ready, and mobilize a cohort of 20 National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) from North Carolina to lead the successful implementation and execution of the Common Core among a community of practitioners. Capitalizing on their leadership and instructional expertise, this core team has created rich resources and provided colleagues within their schools with the tools they need to achieve the instructional shift. With the support of these foundations, teachers from North Carolina have deeply engaged in a virtual professional learning community in dynamic, interactive dialogue around the implementation of research-based, Common Core-aligned instruction.

### Project Background

We conducted outreach to school districts in the summer and fall of 2013 to secure MOUs cementing partnerships on this project. Work with our CTQ-NC cohort from three original districts - Mooresville Graded, Orange County, Union County - began by convening a cohort of teachers for deep study of the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) and Math Design Collaborative (MDC) tools and resources. The cohort included 20 NBCTs (8 high school, 12 middle school) from grades 6-12 (Math - 6; ELA - 5; Social Studies - 4; Science - 5) 7 teachers from Mooresville Graded, 5 teachers from Union County, 5 teachers from Orange County. Rowan-Salisbury teachers came into the project two months into the project, and 3 teachers from this district were trained in LDC and MDC tools online and face-to-face.

### Professional Learning: The Retreat Objective and Outcomes

Retreat Objectives:

- Retreat Objective #1: Connect (Build community, review objectives of CCSS project):
- Retreat Objective #2: Ready (Intensive LDC and MDC training):
- Retreat Objective #3: Mobilize (Communication and leadership training - blogging, outreach, connecting with colleagues within NC and beyond, engagement opportunities beyond the initiative)

CTQ surveyed the cohort concerning retreat outcomes:

- 100% strongly agreed or agreed with the following statements: I learned new knowledge and/or skills I can directly apply to my work; The retreated was well organized and expertly presented; The retreat matched or exceeded my expectations.
- 90% strongly agreed or agreed: The next steps for CTQ-NC were clearly understood.
- Cohort members listed two specific challenges for moving forward with this work: time for planning and development of modules and working with teachers to buy into the goals of CCSS.

- Cohort members suggested topics for monthly webinars topics: motivating teachers that do not want to change, support for writing and leadership development, and opportunities to share with others what is happening in their classroom. These topics and additional CCSS support were the focus of the monthly webinars in the winter and spring of 2014.

## Negotiated Project Outcomes

### Indicator: Impact of LDC framework on student learning

*Metric: Data from pre-and-post assessments by module task*

This project included 14 teachers who were trained using Literacy Design Collaborative tools and resources. Each of these teachers created a module using the LDC framework, implemented the module with their students, and reflected and shared the results with the cohort. Each of these science, social studies, and English teachers reported gains in student writing skills. Based on teacher-created pre-and-post tests, student gains were reported, ranging from 8% improvement to 33% improvement in the following skill areas: development and organization of ideas, supporting claims with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence, and drawing evidence from informational text to support analysis, reflection, and research.

### Indicator: Teachers collaborating around research and tools and applying their discourse to their instruction

*Metric: Teacher, administrator, and district leader surveys and interviews*

Based on surveys of teachers in this project, teachers reported experiencing enormous impact on their practice by this project. 100% responded that they had shared what they had learned with their colleagues and 88% became more focused on CCSS and its implementation. Over 90% responded they had grown as a teacher leader during the experience and 75% practiced new skills as a teacher leader as a result of new strategies and skills developed as a result of participation in this project. Over 95% express the desire to continue involvement in this work. One teacher stated, "There are so many inspired and knowledgeable teachers out there. Through this project, those teachers have influenced my practice and my students' learning this school year. Thanks, CTQ!"

Interviews with district administrators revealed similar results. One Union County district administrator expressed the intention for Union County teachers in this project to share their expertise with other Union County teachers during professional learning days before school begins in the fall. Another school administrator from Mooresville Graded School District shared a similar perspective: "I wish all of my teachers could be involved in such valuable work."

### Indicator: Expertise and experience spreading and scaling throughout a district and state

*Metric: Evidence of teacher-led professional development and the anticipated impact on participants' classroom practice*

Two Virtual Community Organizers (VCOs), who were well-versed in the Common Core with prior experience with the Implementing Common Core Standards (ICCS) team, were recruited to support this project early in the fall of 2013.

To support the implementation process of the teacher-created LDC and MDC modules and encourage development of expertise in CCSS implementation, a Teacher Leader in Residence and the two CTQ-NC VCOs conducted webinars each month and face-to-face meetings each quarter. Teachers shared modules with one another during all phases of the project - creation, revision, implementation, assessment, and reflection. Cemented in preparing and positioning expert teachers as thought leaders for their profession, the strategies for reaching our project goals have resulted in tremendous progress in our work to leverage teacher leadership for the Common Core standards in North Carolina.

Two CTQ-NC teachers have completed the first phase of national juror certification with LDC in August 2014. While these teachers have shared the basics of jurying with the CTQ-NC cohort of teachers during monthly webinars throughout the winter and spring, they are currently designing additional curriculum and materials to share with additional NC teachers a deeper dive into evaluating quality and fidelity of CCSS-aligned lessons.

### Additional Indicators

- Number of teachers engaged in the virtual community.
  - As of August 2014, 319 North Carolina teachers are members of our virtual community.
- Number of teachers beyond the virtual community who participate in online or face-to-face delivery of professional learning opportunities.
  - Beyond our virtual community, an additional 173 teachers have participated in online or face-to-face learning opportunities. (Those opportunities include open-invitation webinars and online meetings, VOICE training, CTQ/Achieve/NCDPI convening, and CTQ Rising Leaders retreat)
- Number of professional learning opportunities provided, both virtually and face-to-face:
  - November 2013 Retreat (all teachers in original cohort attended)
  - Monthly webinars - January 2014 - May 2014 (90% attendance)
  - February face-to-face district meeting; April face-to-face district meeting (all teachers in original cohort attended)
  - EQUIP rubric and Student Work Protocol training event in partnership with Achieve and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (180 teachers in attendance)
  - Rising Leaders retreat in July 2014
- Number of districts in which teachers are engaged by the project:
  - Three districts signed MOUs in earliest stage of project. One additional district became involved in February 2014.
  - Teachers from 105 schools in at least 20 districts have been engaged in our online community or in face-to-face learning opportunities.

- Number of schools/classrooms in which teachers implement what they have learned in project-supported professional learning opportunities around the CCSS.
  - All teachers in the CTQ-NC cohort shared their learning with at least one colleague. Most teachers reported that colleagues implemented new strategies in their classrooms, as well. Therefore, at least 45 classrooms in at least 12 schools implemented new CCSS strategies directly derived from the professional learning in this project.
- Number of “toolkit” resources in which teachers develop as exemplars of CCSS-aligned instruction and assessment.
  - The cohort of teachers has created 20 LDC or MDC modules.
  - Two leaders of the CTQ-NC cohort have created an additional five LDC modules.

## Anticipated Short-Term Results

### Goal #1: To expand use of 21st century tools for teaching and learning, we

- launched a virtual community of 100 NC NBCTs in four focus districts to learn, use, and document effective use of tools for CCSS implementation.
  - Representing 22 unique school districts in the state, 319 North Carolina teachers are members of our Collaboratory. Of these teachers, 129 have National Board Certification.
  - As of August 2014, 44 North Carolina NBCTs have joined the CTQ-NC community around CCSS-aligned lesson, units, and assessments. Over 200 teachers belong to our Common Core lab, where teachers are bringing the standards to life.
  - Three CTQ-NC completed CTQ’s Virtual Organizers Inspiring Communities of Educators (VOICE) training. This eight-week curriculum provides teacher leaders a unique opportunity to develop essential communication and facilitation skills to create and sustain virtual learning communities (VLCs). As leaders among leaders, virtual community organizers (VCOs) are formally trained to facilitate webinars, lead a vibrant discussion platform, and assist in the collection and analysis of data extracted from community dialogue. These teachers are currently poised to lead efforts to connect other solutions-focused teacher leaders with our virtual community and mobilize them to share their expertise with others throughout North Carolina.
- developed a web-based curriculum for CCSS implementation that can for the basis for learning for wider audiences of teachers across North Carolina.
  - All teachers in this project contributed to a lesson library of 25 CCSS-aligned modules with over 40 lessons, units, and assessments, exceeding our goal by 50%. Developed using LDC and MDC format as a guide, all teachers have created modules, implemented them in their classrooms, and provided other teachers with reflections and perspective about their plans.

## Goal #2: To establish teaching as a professional career with high, teacher-led standards for teaching and learning, we

- developed and spread jurying processes for LDC and MDC modules, in collaboration with partners.
  - In February, two CTQ-NC teachers participated in a three-day juror training with our partner, Literacy Design Collaborative. These teachers shared information and resources from this training with the CTQ-NC in monthly webinars and through our online discussion forum online.
  - Achieve, NC Department of Public Instruction, and CTQ facilitated a convening of 200 teacher leaders in Charlotte, North Carolina on June 23-24<sup>th</sup>. Teachers from NC, FL, and KY applied the widely used EQUIP (Evaluating Quality Instructional Products) rubrics to develop more precise skills in Common Core implementation. Teachers also applied Achieve's Student Work Protocol to determine the degree to which lessons are aligned with the Common Core's rigorous standards. Continuing with related work with these partners is very promising.
  - Two CTQ-NC teachers participated in the SREB convening around CCSS standards and assessments in Nashville in July 2014. These teachers have shared valuable takeaways from this professional learning experience with other cohort members in our CTQ-NC lab space.
  - The Teacher Leader in Residence and a CTQ-NC teacher participated in an Accelerating the Common Core convening in Seattle in early July. These two teachers made valuable connections with several organizations where our continued Common Core work intersects. Examples include the Center for Applied Linguistics, New Teacher Center, and Facing History and Ourselves.
  - The Literacy Design Collaborative has partnered with us to field a cohort of online jurors who evaluate and provide feedback for a library of more than 1,000 CCSS units of study. Two CTQ-NC teacher leaders took part in this initiative in a four day training in early August 2014. Moreover, additional conversations continue with LDC on how CTQ's rich experience in virtual communities might inform their efforts to expand LDC training to include online learning, mentoring, and support.
- published a multimedia series consisting of blog posts, commentaries, and an infographic detailing the team's hybrid approach to professional learning and collaboration.
  - The January 2, 2014 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan* included "[The Common Core is a change for the better.](#)" coauthored by Collaboratory members Nancy Gardner and Rod Powell. Through the lens of more than fifty years of combined teaching experience, Gardner and Powell dispelled Common Core myths and gave a ringing endorsement of the new standards. They discussed the importance of innovation and collaboration in helping teachers and students alike meet the new standards' challenges. Gardner and Powell explore the promise of the Common Core, noting that the new standards provide shared language to teachers across grade levels and across states. This, they argued, will help teachers share ideas and collaborate on innovative ways to help students succeed.

- Wendi Pillars, an ESL expert in a rural elementary school in North Carolina, NCBT, and CTQ-NC member, apologizes for the academic pressures placed on her eight and nine year old students for quantifying them with a number. Her powerful commentary appeared on February 18, 2014 in [The Answer Sheet blog](#) of The Washington Post.
- Cristie Watson, a CTQ-NC middle school ELA teacher, wrote a guest CTQ blog post, [Five Expressions of What #TeachingIs.](#)” which appeared in May 2014. Her reflections were part of Teacher Appreciation Week and [#TeachingIs](#), a social media movement seeking to elevate public perception of the teaching profession.
- Ten teachers wrote 20 additional pieces in the following publications: Carolina Parent, CTQ blogs, Education Week Teacher (CTQ Collaboratory column), Education Week Teacher (Teaching Ahead: A Roundtable, Mooresville Tribune, and Go Teach magazine.

### Goal #3: To model and spread teacherpreneurism, we

- supported a NC-based Teacher Leader in Residence, who will be released from teaching to spend a portion of her time leading this project during 2012-13.
  - A Teacher Leader in Residence brought a valuable perspective to the leadership of this project. With 22 years experience as a classroom teacher, CTQ-NC’s Teacher Leader in Residence identified with the challenges and opportunities this cohort faced throughout this project. Whether preparing for monthly meetings, facilitating online discussions, encouraging participants to write and speak about the CCSS, or providing support during module creation and implementation, this cohort knew their project leader had walked in their shoes. With a classroom teacher as the leader of this project, powerful connections were made to advance its purpose, process, and impact.
- provided stipends to up to ten additional teacher leaders to serve as bloggers, “virtual community organizers” who facilitate the teacher team’s work, or in other leadership roles to advance this project. Highlights include:
  - Two Virtual Community Organizers (VCOs) were recruited to support this project early in the fall of 2013. Eight additional teachers were recruited to write about CCSS or professional learning and collaboration. All of these teacher leaders were compensated with stipends for their work. These teacher leaders contributed to a more engaged CTQ-NC team by modeling stellar leadership in classroom practice, collaborative leadership, and effective communication with stakeholders.
  - On March 21, 2014, Nancy Gardner and Rod Powell spoke at a legislative convening in Raleigh in support of the Common Core State Standards. Both [WUNC North Carolina Public Radio](#) and [Raleigh CBS station WRAL](#) quoted Nancy in their news coverage of the hearing. The teachers were tapped to speak as a result of their recent *Phi Delta Kappan* article ["The Common Core is a change for the better."](#) Nancy Gardner via WUNC: “Problem-solving, critical reading and writing, and perseverance... My students can Google facts and figures all day but if they haven't mastered literacy skills, they won't be ready for the future.” Outcomes from the work of these classroom teachers drew our attention to a pressing need for strategic work in professional advocacy and communications on

standards and assessments, given the shift away from CCSS by the North Carolina legislature. Thanks to their participation in this project, 20 teachers are currently prepared to engage in public conversations about advancing teacher leadership and student learning.

- On June 13, 2014, Barnett Berry and five teachers were invited to speak at the [National Conference of State Legislatures \(NCSL\) Education Program](#). They hosted an intimate two-day strategy session with 30 state House and Senate Education Committee chairs from around the country for focused discussion on college- and career-ready standards and professional learning systems. Rod Powell, a CTQ-NC leader, spoke at the convening lending his on-the-ground perspectives and practical expertise to the discussions.