Assessment of the Common Core State Standards: Lessons Learned and Promising Practices

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[Slide: Learning from the Past] . . . perspective, and an opportunity to learn from some of the lessons that have happened in the past with similar assessment efforts. Next from a systemic perspective, and really looking at what it means at a district level, and across a set of districts to build capacity on a large scale. And finally from a classroom perspective, to see what assessment actually looks like when we're talking about improving instruction and student learning in classrooms.

So I'll begin with sort of these three different lenses by offering a piece of the historical perspective, sharing lessons from one state's approach to student assessments in the early 1990s with the California Learning Assessment System, or CLAS. And my hope is by sharing some of these lessons, I can start to make the case for why some of the efforts already underway in schools and districts—which we'll hear about from Ben and a panel of California teachers—are so important.

[Slide: Introducing the Brief] The California Collaborative on District Reform, for those that aren't familiar, is a learning community of district leaders, researchers, policymakers, and funders that meet three times per year to engage in dialogue around specific problems of practice facing California's urban school systems. And the meetings range from a variety of topics, but they focused in the last few years in particular on adoption and implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

There was a meeting in particular in summer of 2011 that focused on assessment, both summative and formative, around the Common Core. And over the course of that two-day meeting, one of the comments that kept coming up over and over again is how similar the assessment efforts, as we're talking about them around the Common Core, are to efforts that happened in the early '90s in California around CLAS.

So given that high level of interest, we sort of took marching orders from the members of the California Collaborative to dig into the issue in a little bit more detail. So we reviewed the research that was conducted on the CLAS experience; we revisited media accounts of CLAS; and in spring of 2012, we interviewed a number of people who had been involved with CLAS implementation and development—from classroom teachers and district administrators, to state-level policymakers, to researchers who had studied the effort, to assessment experts—the psychometricians who really were involved with and deeply understood the technical issues surrounding the assessment.

And from all that work, we produced in September 2012 a brief that briefly retells the story of CLAS and also identifies some important lessons—not only of the success of the CLAS experience and some of the promising practices we might want to pick up on again, but also the failures that ultimately led to its demise. So with that, I just want to acknowledge the

coauthors on the brief, my colleagues Stephanie Hannan and Jennifer O'Day, who were also instrumental in collecting the data and putting together the brief that we released last fall.

[Slide: Introducing the Brief: What is Your Familiarity with CLAS?] I'm going to turn now and—forgive me as I walk through the technology if I don't quite grasp it here—and ask a question of the group that's on the line about the level of familiarity with CLAS. I think—Anu or Meg, I'm not sure if there is a multiple choice item that we were trying to put up on the right side, where you can choose A to indicate that you are actively involved in implementing CLAS either as a teacher or district administrator at the county or state level, B if you're familiar with CLAS but weren't actively involved, or C if you're not at all familiar with CLAS. So if you can, enter one of those choices and submit it now.

Okay, so I'm not seeing the results yet, but I think I can go ahead and move on, and we'll see if those pop up as I keep talking.

MEG LIVINGSTON ASENSIO

We're going to wait just another couple of seconds. If you have not yet answered you can just use your cursor and click right over A, B, or C, and your answer will be recorded.
[*Anu: I've just published the poll results.*]

JOEL KNUDSON

OK. So it looks like there's a range of familiarity. Many people may be vaguely or not that familiar with CLAS. If you're interested, I encourage you to read the brief, which includes a little bit more detail. I'll briefly go over the history now just to establish some context for where the lessons that come out of the brief are coming from.

[Slide: History of CLAS] CLAS was adopted through the California legislature through legislation in 1991 as a replacement of the existing state assessment program, which was called the California Assessment Program, or CAP. And that program faced criticism for a number of reasons from educators. One was a complete lack of alignment to what students were actually expected to know and be able to do, what they were being taught in classrooms. Another one that I think resonates with what we are experiencing now is an exclusive reliance on multiple choice items that educators believe didn't fully capture student cognitive performance. Another limitation of the CAP was a failure to produce individual student scores.

So CLAS was designed to remedy some of these issues. It was developed within the California Department of Education and administered for two years, in 1993 and 1994. The CLAS was explicitly designed to be aligned to the California frameworks, which spelled out the expectations for what students should know and be able to do and, much like the Common Core is trying to do now, really pushed for students to demonstrate deep levels of understanding to apply their learning.

The assessment itself also took on novel item formats. So not only did it include multiple choice items, but it also included constructed response items and performance tasks that were designed to capture deeper levels of student understanding and more authentic assessment of student learning—again, one of the areas where I think we see one of the strongest parallels between what happened with CLAS and what some of the promises are of the Smarter Balanced assessment system that's coming online shortly.

Another point I want to make which speaks to the demise of CLAS is that it followed a matrix sampling approach, so that different students in the same classroom received different test forms, and so CDE was able to produce school-level scores but not individual-level student scores.

[Slide: The History of CLAS and Sources of Criticism] Shortly after CLAS was first administered in 1993, criticisms started to emerge. The first criticism came to the assessment content itself. There were critics who felt that the open-ended response items inappropriately delved into students' thoughts and beliefs. There were also criticisms of controversial texts that were used for reading passages that critics felt weren't appropriate for a public education system to be using.

In addition, shortly after scores were released, parents of students who had traditionally performed well on student assessments were alarmed when their schools performed at a lower level than they had traditionally, which was really due in part to the transition to a new assessment system and unfamiliarity of something new, but also a higher level of rigor with CLAS and higher levels of expectations for students to demonstrate their thinking than they had been traditionally asked to do with the multiple choice questions on the CAP. The parents of these teachers [students] thought any test that could produce these lower scores is unreliable and therefore deeply flawed.

Third, there were a host of technical problems with CLAS, perhaps the most notable of which is a sampling strategy that produced unacceptably large standard errors that led to unreliable school-level scores. There were also administrative challenges of mislabeled and lost test booklets, and resource limitations wherein the state wasn't able to score all the open-ended response items on the assessment.

So when CLAS came up for reauthorization in 1994, Governor Pete Wilson vetoed funding and vetoed the reauthorization that would have allowed CLAS to continue, in part because of the rising criticism and in particular because of its inability to produce student-level scores, which was one of his central motivations for supporting CLAS in the first place.

[Slide: Lessons from CLAS] So I want to turn now to some of the lessons that emerged from the CLAS experience, and I'll start with a few overarching messages before getting into four specific lessons that come out of the brief. The first point I want to make. . .I saw in some of the introductions that people had that a good portion of the audience for this webinar is from outside of the state of California. And I think that's not problematic in any way because the story of CLAS isn't really a story about California; it's a story that happened to take place in California. We could just as easily see a brief or a webinar on the story of New York and Common Core implementation. I think the lessons apply regardless of context, so I think that's important to note.

The other message that sort of flows through the entire brief, and one of the main messages I want to emphasize for the purpose of my portion of the presentation, is that assessment is an essential component of implementing the Common Core. We're really missing the boat if we think about Smarter Balanced assessments simply as a new test that's replacing the CST or any other state assessment for accountability purposes. Instead, we need to be thinking not only about Smarter Balanced, but about formative assessment and the ongoing effort to capture evidence of student learning and to use that information to improve instruction.

Here I'll draw on a quote that we have from one of the policymakers we talked to last spring, who said, "The lesson I would like people to concentrate on is that *instruction* should be the center of any effort to improve scores. The assessment becomes one of the tools by which you help this effort to continue to improve."

Another point I'd like to make before getting into the key lessons is one about timing. The ground in the assessment landscape, particularly with the development of Smarter Balanced, and PARCC assessments for that matter, is moving extremely quickly. So some of the observations we collected from people last spring and that were valid when we released the brief in fall of 2012 may not apply in the same way given where things have moved in the last

nine months. That said, I think there is a reason why the findings from the brief are still particularly relevant.

One is that some of the challenges emerging around assessment and the Common Core have started to crystallize, both from some of the opposition we are starting to see about the Common Core in general, as well as some of the lessons that have emerged from the pilot test that Smarter Balanced administered this spring. Also, 2014/15 is right around the corner, and as much as any of these lessons are relevant for educators working on Common Core implementation, I think they have become even more urgent given the rapidly moving timeline.

So with that said, I'd like to turn to the four key lessons that come out of the CLAS experience, and I'll address them all. The first two I'll just go over very briefly before focusing on the final two, which I think are particularly relevant to the information we're going to be hearing from Ben and his colleagues.

[Slide: Lesson 1] The first lesson is to anticipate and respond to potential controversy surrounding assessment content and format. And again, there is more information on this piece in the brief, but I think one of the lessons that comes out is that while people on this call are likely to be those most familiar with the Common Core State Standards as well as the assessments related to those standards, in reality, parents, the business community, the community at large isn't going to hear about or really understand what's involved until the tests come online. And so there is a real need to be proactive in anticipating, identifying, and responding to any confusion or potential criticism that emerges.

[Slide: Lesson 2] The second lesson is to address technical and administrative challenges around assessment development, administration, and scoring. I think the lessons here apply primarily to those who are involved directly in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. But the lesson overall is that any movement to a new large-scale assessment system is going to happen in fits and starts. There is going to be some problems. There is a need to anticipate and avoid when possible, but when those problems inevitably emerge, to respond proactively and immediately to make sure that they don't undermine the overall effort.

[Slide: Lesson 3] I will turn now to the third lesson, and I think this is where we really start to see a strong connection between the CLAS experience and what Ben and his colleagues are doing through CORE, and that's to implement immediate and sustained capacity-building strategies. One of the great strengths of the CLAS experience was the professional development opportunities it created for teachers, opportunities provided by the California Department of Education, by the state subject matter projects, and by other organizations, and some efforts on the local level that gave teachers an opportunity to develop assessment items, to score assessment responses, to really work deeply with student work. These are opportunities that teachers at the time described as the best professional development opportunities of their career.

Unfortunately, the scale was reasonably limited. Only about 10% of teachers participated in these efforts. So while they were incredibly powerful for a small subset of teachers, they failed to achieve impact on a broad scale. So I think one of the lessons for the Common Core, and assessment efforts related to the Common Core, is that capacity building is incredibly important and has incredible potential for instructional improvement.

Given the state of current educational resources, it's likely that most of those efforts are going to have to happen at the school and district level. And one way in which those can happen is to help teachers develop performance tasks and review student work, and I think there is a few reasons why this can be helpful. One is a very practical reason: in exposing students and teachers and preparing them for the kinds of items they are likely to see in the summative assessments that are going to be coming online in 2014/15.

I was at a meeting about a month ago where I heard from some of the people that were involved in the Smarter Balanced pilot, and one of the observations that a lot of people made were that the test was really hard for kids, and it was demanding in a way that they weren't used to and produced tears for some of the kids—for an assessment that was a test with no stakes attached to it at all. So the opportunity to expose teachers and students to those items early on can help prepare them for the summative assessments. But I think it goes beyond that. There is also an opportunity in building these assessments and using them for formative purposes to help teachers capture evidence of student learning throughout the year and use that to directly inform their instruction and their efforts to improve student learning.

One of the things that also came out of the CLAS experience is how important the assessments were to helping teachers understand the standards themselves. It was only when teachers saw what students were being asked to do with these more involved constructed response items, and what their response was to poor performance tasks, that they truly understood what the California frameworks at the time—the corollary being the Common Core standards now—were really demanding of students, and that helped them understand how they needed to adjust their instruction accordingly.

Another message with regard to capacity building is to capitalize on existing efforts. From the very outset of Common Core implementation, I think this was a strong selling point: was that we have the same standards guiding instruction and student learning, not only across districts within the same state, but also across states. So there is an incredible amount of work being done right now on Common Core implementation writ large, but particularly on the use of assessment in classrooms. There is an opportunity to use those assessment tools, but also to learn from the successes and failures of early adopters so that the promising practices can be adopted in other locales and the challenges can be avoided, so that educators aren't reinventing the wheel with their efforts.

Another lesson that comes out of CLAS is the need to demonstrate commitment. While many teachers saw the CLAS experience as being incredibly powerful for informing their instruction, just as many teachers ducked the effort, not believing that it had any sustainability and really adopting the "this too shall pass" mentality. Twenty years later, with two decades more of school reform under our belt, I think the notion of reform fatigue is perhaps even more powerful than it was then. So there is this need. . .if, as many educators believe, the Common Core standards really have the potential to transform teacher instruction and student learning, there needs to be a commitment at the school level, at the district level, at the state level to the implementation of the standards and to associated assessment efforts, so that teachers don't just duck the next wave of reform, but can engage with it in a way that can powerfully impact their instruction in positive ways.

Finally, there's a message to "begin now." The process of adult learning that's necessary in order to understand what the new standards require, in order to adopt those into classroom practice and to change classroom practice accordingly, it's a huge lift for teachers and it's going to take time to do effectively. One of the superintendents we talked to a year ago was perhaps most blunt in his assessment when he said, "If you're not already implementing the Common Core, you're too late." So there is a recognition, not only of the importance of capacity building but in starting now so that teachers and students have a time for the transition to be able to adjust and effectively adopt the new standards and related assessments.

[Slide: Lesson 4] The final lesson I want to cover is to build a constituency of support for new instructional and assessment efforts through a clear strategy of public engagement. And I think of all the lessons of CLAS, this is probably the most important and the clearest one that comes through. All the problems that ultimately undermined CLAS were solvable, but in the face of criticism, no constituency or support existed to keep it alive. In many ways, the death of CLAS was a death by a thousand paper cuts. And so we're hoping to avoid the same fate with the

Common Core State Standards and with their associated assessments. There's a need to educate the public.

Again, absent any other intervention, the first step most of the public is going to hear about the Common Core standards and about the related assessments is when the assessments come online in 2014/15. When that happens, the education community has really lost control over the narrative about the standards. There is a real opportunity and an important window right now to educate parents and the business community and the broader community about why the Common Core State Standards are important, what they can do in order to promote/improve student learning, and what the assessments can do to capture more authentic demonstrations of student learning and to encourage and facilitate improved instruction in the classroom.

At the same time, I think there is an accompanying message of managed expectations. So again, with the transition to any new large-scale assessment system, there are going to be hiccups. So there needs to be a message to expect imperfection and improvement. There's a lot of great things that are being promised by the Smarter Balanced assessments, including computer adaptive testing and performance tasks that potentially capture student learning in more authentic ways. And it's easy to get lost in overpromising in talking about those benefits to the point that when something goes wrong, critics might seize on problems that were inevitable with any transition period, as fundamental failures of an approach they believe is misguided. So it's important to manage expectations, to make sure that people understand that there is going to be a transition, there is going to be a baseline that all educators and teachers and students are really building from as the Common Core standards get rolled out and as associated assessment efforts go along with those.

There is also an opportunity to leverage teachers and leaders. One of the things that happened with CLAS is that when parents and other community members had questions or concerns about the assessment, they found that when they went to teachers and principals with their questions, those teachers and principals weren't able to articulate why the state had gone to the CLAS, what benefits it could offer. And so in addition to being unable to answer those questions, it also became an opportunity for that criticism to mount because there was nobody to stand up for the benefits that CLAS brought to the education system. So, just as there is an important opportunity to bring teachers in now and on a deep level in building their capacity to improve student instruction and student learning, there's also an importance of bringing in teachers and principals for this element of building the constituency of support.

And, finally, I will just return to the first lesson, which again connects in many ways to this building of support for the Common Core and its associated assessments—to anticipate, identify, and respond to criticism as it emerges.

[Slide: Contact Information] So those are the main lessons. If you're interested in more information, I would encourage you to read the full brief, which is available at the Collaborative's website at cacollaborative.org.

And at this point, I think we have about four minutes for questions before we turn to Ben Sanders and his portion of the presentation. So if you have any questions, I'd welcome them, and I'll address them as best that I can.

MEG LIVINGSTON ASENSIO

And again, if you do have a question, please type it into the chat area.

JOEL KNUDSON

Meg, I see a question a couple lines up about whether this PowerPoint is made available. Will that be available to participants in the webinar?

MEG LIVINGSTON ASENSIO

Yes. Both PowerPoint presentations are already up on the REL West website, and I have typed the link into the chat. I'll repost that in a couple of minutes, but they are available on our website now. And seeing no other questions, I think, Ben, I'll pass it over to you.

BEN SANDERS

Okay, thank you.

[*Ben: Meg, I should be able to advance the PowerPoint at this point? Anu: What you should do, Ben, is click on the gray tab above that says "Sanders PowerPoint." Ben: Got it. Anu: There you go. Ben: Thank you.*]

[Slide: CORE Performance Assessment] Well, thank you, Joel, and welcome everybody again from me. I appreciate everybody taking some time this afternoon to join us. And let's see, before I jump in, Joel, did we see one question here from Felipe? Do you see that?

JOEL KNUDSON

Sorry, somehow my window got shrunk. I'm trying to look at this. [*various people talking*] . . .question: "Are the key persons in our education institutions, schools, districts, counties, teacher education programs, any more ready to explain Common Core today as they were for CLAS in the 1990s?" I think the answer is yes and no. I think there is a much broader awareness in general in the education community to standards-based reform, whether for better or for worse, through what's happened to No Child Left Behind. And I think the motivation for moving to the Common Core is better understood among educators than the transition to the CLAS was.

That said, I think there is a really concerted effort that's needed to message at all levels—from the state level to county levels to districts and within schools—so that everybody really understands what the motivation is behind the Common Core and why many educators feel this is a promising direction to take. So, yes, I think people are better prepared than they were, but I think there is a tremendous set of work that's still necessary and probably more than a lot of us anticipate.

BEN SANDERS

OK. Well, if there are any other questions for Joel, don't hesitate to go ahead and jot them down. I think I will go ahead and begin, and we can perhaps pick up any additional questions. We'll have a little time at the end so we can definitely do that.

Again, my name is Ben Sanders, and I direct the Standards, Assessment, and Instruction Initiative, which is a part of the CORE program. **[Slide: What is CORE?]** And speaking of CORE, I'll just give folks who are not familiar with the collaborative a quick background on this before I jump into our work around assessment this year.

So CORE is a collaborative of 10 school districts in California, and basically committed to all the things that I think most districts are focused on in terms of reform and improvement—some things like increasing overall student achievement, eliminating disproportionality among different subgroups, closing achievement gaps—which again has been a pressing issue here in California as elsewhere: ensuring high-quality overall instruction.

The final point here I want to emphasize, because in some ways, this has really shaped our efforts over the last two years (and I should note that CORE has been in operation for just over two years now, so we're pretty new to this whole effort)—but that is, increasing college and career readiness. And, obviously, that's reflective of all the earlier points as well, so in some

ways that's served as a good focal point for us. And you can see, all together, these points represent a modest agenda (he says with all facetiousness intended). So, needless to say, these are ambitious goals, but that was sort of the motivation for CORE coming together in the first place.

[Slide: CORE Districts] And I'll just note very quickly that it isn't. . .that there are 10 districts included in the partnership at this time, and let you just go ahead and glance over these districts, some of which, as you can see, are rather large in scope. The grand total of students that are served by these 10 districts, as you can see, is just over 1.1 million students all together. So one characteristic of CORE is that it is a rather significant scale of districts participating, and the overall potential impact is rather large. As we have often noted, it's larger than probably whole states in its overall student enrollment.

[Slide: CORE Standards, Assessment, and Instruction Initiative] Within the CORE partnership and focus on innovation and improvement, we created the so-called Standards, Assessment, and Instruction initiative, and that's really one of the key focus areas for the partnership for the last two years and going forward. I should note, some of you may be familiar with CORE's efforts to submit an ESEA waiver on behalf of the 10 districts and others that are interested in joining. And so that has been a very active initiative as well. So these are sort of operating in parallel and, frankly, there will be connections, assuming the waiver is approved, and we will be waiting to hear the final word from the federal Department of Education shortly about that. But certainly, there'll be some connections between what is called for in the waiver and the work of the Standards, Assessment, and Instruction initiative.

But in the meantime, we've kept very busy. There are 50 members or so of the Standards, Assessment, and Instruction; I will be referring to it as SAI going forward just as an acronym. The leadership team is compromised of instructional leaders—senior leaders in most cases— from each of the 10 CORE districts, and its initial charge, as I mentioned earlier, was really to focus on this college and career readiness objective. And it seems obvious that the best way to do that, given our growing urgency to implement the Common Core standards, was to think about exactly that. That is, how could we support each of the 10 districts, as a collective, by focusing on building capacity for implementation of the Common Core?

The question was how—how were we going to do this when, in fact, there were probably multiple entry points to that effort? And so we gave a good amount of thought to that, and had some significant direction from the CORE board, which is comprised of the superintendents of the 10 districts and some additional folks. And the direction from them was really to think about this notion of formative assessment as an entry point. **[Slide: Why Focus on Formative Assessment?]** And so we sort of thought about, "Well, what exactly does that mean, and why would we start there?" and began exploring the implications of this idea and began thinking a little bit about the rationale for why we might start with assessment, and this idea of formative assessment in particular.

So, again, as Joel noted and as you all know, California did adopt the Common Core in August of 2010, so we knew that was a factor. We also knew that the Smarter Balanced assessment was scheduled to come online in '14/'15, and so that was sort of looming on the horizon. And the rationale really starts with this idea that by doing so, we are starting with the end in mind. And by that I simply mean that this effort would go a long way to helping establish what exactly are the student learning expectations that are associated with the Common Core, and what is it that kids are actually going to be expected to do, and how are they going to be able to or be asked to demonstrate their learning and their achievement.

In fact, in addition to that, the notion of formative assessment. . .of course, which is not by any means a new idea, but that as a part of the implementation strategy, building the capacity for teachers to regularly—and district staff for that matter, principals and another administrators—to regularly examine and look at student work and various types of student

data for the purpose of instructional improvement and adjusting strategies, was also an essential premise behind this work. So this was the rationale for why focus on assessment early on.

[Slide: CORE Summer Design Institute] So we actually spent quite a bit of time engaging in our own professional learning. I should say one of the objectives of the Standards, Assessment, and Instruction team is to engage in its own professional learning. So members of the SAI team have participated in multiple daylong professional learning activities focused on various elements of the Common Core, the math standards, the ELA standards. We then dug into this idea of formative assessment and what we really meant by that. And again, obviously, this is not a new term, but we just wanted to calibrate our understanding and try to get sort of a shared understanding of what we mean by these various terms, and then move forward in that way.

I should say that, in addition, we were given a charge by some of our funders to think about developing tools and resources to support this effort and focus on formative assessment. So we knew that we had that to do. So we designed the Summer Design Institute, which occurred in Berkeley last summer, just about a year ago—the end of June, early July of 2012—and we invited just over 200 teachers and district staff from across the then eight districts. (I should note there were eight districts with us at the time. We have since added two more.) And they came together for a three-day intensive design institute which was facilitated by experts in various key areas.

One of the nice things about this effort is we've had great support from a variety of content experts, including members of the Common Core writing team, the actual authors—people like Phil Daro and Jason Zimba on the math side, and folks from the Student Achievement Partners Group in New York—have been invaluable, as well as many other folks who have all given input and given us great advice and direction on some of these pieces. And many of those folks actually came to the institute in Berkeley, and were on the ground and helped facilitate the activities, which began with a focus on, "Okay, most of you all have heard of the Common Core, but let's really dig in a little bit on some of the key issues. What are the instructional shifts?"—the kind of initial immersion that probably many of you have seen or been involved in when it comes to sort of bringing people quickly up to speed on the Common Core. We knew we needed to begin there.

We also focused on, again, this idea of formative assessment as a concept, and had some really fabulous presenters on topics like that; for example, a researcher some of you may know, Margaret Heritage, and others who have spent a lot of time focusing on this area.

So the goal really of the Summer Design Institute was twofold. One, we had a product outcome, which is, we were seeking to develop a set of tools and resources. We ultimately called them Performance Task Modules, and actually managed to produce over the course of the two—well, actually, a total of five days. We had folks continue to work when they left the institute back in their home districts. So they generated a total of 84 modules, which was the tangible outcome.

But the other outcome that I want to talk about—and I'll come back to this in a little bit—is the process outcome, or the professional learning that seemed to occur as a result of this three-day intensive and the follow-up. So, really, there was a dual outcome; the one is the results of the work itself, the products, and then the second being what people actually learned and gained from this intensive immersion in this topic. **[Slide: Module Content/Grade Levels]** And I should note that we did target several grades, knowing that it would be probably hard to take on all the grade levels at once. So they were in grades 1, 4, 7, and 9 in ELA, and 3, 5, and 7 in math. And there was a rationale for that, which I won't take the time now to go into as to why we chose those particular grade levels.

[Slide: Performance Task Assessment Design] So a couple of notes about the actual modules themselves. There were a couple of sort of key design features that we wanted to be mindful of. The first is that they really ideally would be modeled after and aligned to the Smarter Balanced design specifications, which at the time had just been released. And I will say that we had several members of the senior Smarter Balanced team review and reflect on the model that we created and gave input and, in fact, felt confident that it was reasonably reflective of the kinds of approaches and specifications that they were working on—literally as we spoke—in terms of what would be reflected in the final Smarter Balanced assessment, both in terms of the final summative and then the so-called interim assessments that we are patiently awaiting release of as well.

The second thing, obviously, is that they were aligned to the Common Core. That goes without saying, but we did want to make sure that that was the case. And I think it's fair to say that, just as a way to start, that we really focused on the so-called instructional shifts, which again most of you are familiar with. So that was kind of the overall design concept to the modules themselves.

[Slide: SBAC-Aligned Performance Task Assessment Module] So let me just take a moment and share with you this graphic, which we've gotten a lot of usage out of over the last two years in terms of defining or demonstrating kind of the conceptual design.

You see in the bottom left corner, there is a stimulus. So each of the modules begins with what we call the stimulus. Much of this language we took directly from the Smarter Balanced lexicon, if you will. So the stimulus in this case, if it was an ELA module, in almost every case was a text. It could have been a video; it could have been a visual; but in almost every case, because of the emphasis on text as part of the instructional shift, access to increasingly complex text, that was almost always the case. In math, it was typically a set of numbers or data. Along with that could be included some analytic tools.

Then you see that each of the. . . there was a set of what we refer to again as constructed response items—again using the language of Smarter Balanced—and these are relatively short-answer questions that engage students in beginning to unpack. . .if it's the ELA, to begin to unpack and make sense of the text selection. And you can see an important element here. We borrowed this term from some peers who were working on this work as well, and that is this notion of a cognitive *ramp*, where each of the questions becomes increasingly more complex and more demanding, sort of bringing students up this ramp or ladder, if you will, of complexity.

So that was sort of the intention on the constructed response items. And that would then lead us to the culminating task, which we call the performance task, which in the case of the ELA was generally nothing more than a good old-fashioned essay prompt, which gave students a chance to sort of put together everything they had learned from the constructed response items and generate a full-blown essay. In the case of math, the product was typically some sort of. . . solving of a fairly multi-step problem, which in most cases required students to actually write about their answer; again, not a new idea by any means, but one that, frankly, I think is sort of, in reality, not commonly practiced in math classes. So this idea that students would either have to write a letter, or make a defense for why they would take a particular position based on what the numbers actually say. So they would do their analyses and then go ahead and come up with an argument, and articulate that argument in writing.

And again, that's, I think you would all agree, in keeping with the goal of the Common Core in terms of developing not only fluency and skill with mathematics, but this deeper conceptual understanding, and then ultimately the application of that understanding, to the solving of complex problems. So that was the overarching goal. The modules included some teacher directions, and ultimately will include student exemplars, which is the next piece of this whole process.

[Slide: SDI Participant Evaluation Survey] So I will just go ahead and quickly talk a little bit about the actual results of this three-day institute. And I did just want to note that the survey results seemed to indicate a fairly high level of. . .this is self-reported, of course, but that the participants seemed to get a lot out of this experience, and we'll have our panelists in a short while talk a little bit about that experience. And I don't expect them to make it seem overly rosy, but at least in terms of the survey feedback we got, it was seemingly pretty well received. **[Slide: SDI Participant Feedback]** And I just wanted to note this particular data chart here, which is. . .the question was essentially, "What was your self-reported perception of your knowledge of the Common Core before the institute and after?", and you can see that there appeared to be a significant growth in folks' understanding of the Common Core.

I want to come back to this point in a moment, but before I do, I just want to note. . .people have heard me talk about this, but one of my favorite responses is actually that, I think, the person said they came in at a 7 and left at a 4. So they actually felt like they learned less, or lost knowledge, but what I think they really meant, of course, was they thought they knew more than they probably did about the nuances of the Common Core, and now they are, after this experience, just a bit more sobered by the reality of what they have yet to learn. So that was kind of an interesting point.

[Slide: CORE Fall Pilot] But let me just quickly keep going here, because I really want to be able to hear from our participants and talk a little bit about the fall pilot. So what we did, once we generated these 84 modules—we actually chose 64 of the 84 and actually revised them for content and context alignment, which is to say we made sure that the alignment to both the standards and the Smarter Balanced frame seemed appropriate—and we did some copy editing and just cleaned them up a bit, and actually engaged ultimately over 400 teachers from across the then eight CORE districts to participate in the fall pilot. And by participating, what it really meant was that the teachers would agree to implement some of these modules in their classrooms and engage students in the work itself.

And there was a certain amount of preparation that they got before engaging in the pilot. So each pilot teacher participated in a certain amount of professional learning to become familiar with the modules themselves and then go ahead and try them out in their classrooms. As it turned out, once we did the math, we realized that 400 teachers actually translates to an awful large sample of students, and some of the teachers were secondary folks, and they actually used the modules in multiple sections. And so we realized that it came out to approximately 20,000 students participating in this pilot.

So the teachers were asked to, in addition, to implement the modules with their students, to actually select samples of student work. And there were rubrics included with the module, so that they could use the rubrics to evaluate the samples and ultimately provide. . . the goal was two samples. It was a four-point rubric, essentially, so we wanted each teacher to submit approximately two samples at each level—so if they had two samples of what might be considered a 4, a 3, a 2, and a 1.

As it turned out, not every teacher felt that they had a full range represented in the work. Typically, they were hesitant to give 4s, and I would say they were also somewhat less likely to give 1s. Although when it came to language learners—and oftentimes, I think, students with disabilities—there was an evidence of, at least the initial go-round, that there were some relatively ineffective examples of work, i.e., that kids still obviously had a long way to go. But that was the way we framed the pilot. I should note that teachers also filled out what we called an Experience Log because we really wanted to try to capture a sense of their experience.

[Slide: Fall Pilot Research Investigation] So that's what we went ahead and did, and meanwhile we had some partners working with us on doing some research. There were actually three partners you can see listed here who were looking at various elements of the pilot to try

to gain. . . **[Slide: Fall Pilot Research Goals]** I will just quickly walk through some of the goals. . .just have a couple of slides left to go here. The first question or goal of the research was to get feedback from the teachers on the modules themselves, and basically the question was, "How did it go, what did you think, what was effective or what were some of the issues about the modules that would help us understand any number of things about future CORE activities?"

Then we really wanted to get into the perception of their experience actually implementing the tasks; feedback regarding student learning and the reaction to the use of the performance tasks; understanding how this notion of formative assessment helps. . .this one research question was focused on elementary teachers, although we did have secondary teachers in the sample as well. . .understand the instructional shifts. So what was it about the experience of the pilot that may have or may not have contributed to increasing understanding of the Common Core itself?

And then, finally, what did participating teachers see as some of the challenges? So in reality, this pilot was a chance for folks to . . . for those who hadn't yet had a chance to kind of dip their toe into the world of the Common Core and the Smarter Balanced universe, and so we wanted to sort of get a sense from them as to what they see as the real challenges as they began thinking about that. And then, of course, what were some of the additional supports that teachers might need, and what can we learn from this that might help inform ongoing support efforts going forward?

[Slide: Key Lessons Learned] So my last slide here really is to pull out some of the . . . in addition to the research itself, which by the way will be available in various forms shortly and should be rather informative. We're looking forward to disseminating the findings of these various pilot research studies. But I will say, just at a kind of holistic level, we certainly learned some lessons from this process as we reflected back on it. One of which is, I go back to the PD, or the process of engaging in the module design. I think one lesson we learned—and this is probably no great news to many of you—but just reaffirming the fact that really the best kind of professional learning is generative in nature. And I think, again, most would agree to that, but in this case, we actually tested it out, in that the teachers were very much engaged in hands-on development of these resources.

I think what we found was, in addition to the resources themselves, they learned a lot through this process. So much, though, that I might . . . I think one could argue that to the degree that we do Common Core professional learning going forward, as much as possible, it would seem important to engage teachers in a real hands-on development piece. Now, obviously, that's dependent on capacity and scale, and engaging every teacher in that process may seem a little bit daunting, but that was certainly a lesson that we learned from this.

The second thing gets into this notion of formative assessment as a concept (and I think this is going to come as sort of a silly statement in some ways), but we realized there really is no such thing as *a* formative assessment; that it's really not a noun, but rather it's the process. And again, sort of "no, duh"; but I think we really reminded ourselves that there are various types of, or kinds of assessments. And it's funny. . .Joel mentioned them at the beginning with the CLAS piece, and all these years later, we're still now. . . of course, we refer to multiple choice as selected response. I think we all know what that means, but this idea of constructed response and then a more extended performance task.

And that those are various kinds of assessments, which themselves can be used formatively, i.e., embedded close to instruction, so that teachers can ideally take action and ideally be able to analyze the results and make sense and make decisions accordingly—easier said than done, but that's the theory there. And then another possibility is to use these tasks as interim benchmarks or mini-summatives to give folks a sense at a grade level or perhaps schoolwide or even districtwide (or for us, possibly even CORE-wide), as to how kids are doing on these types

of tasks that are much more aligned with both the Common Core and the Smarter Balanced to give us a sense as to where are we going and how we're doing, so that hopefully there aren't too many surprises when we get to the actual common. . .the Smarter Balanced. That any of these items could be used similarly as an end-of-year summative benchmark. Maybe "benchmark" isn't the right term there, but an end-of-year summative that many districts have traditionally used at the end of courses.

So, again, the idea being that there are no such thing as formative or summative assessments; there are assessment types that can be used in these different ways. And, of course, some types of items perhaps lend themselves more effectively to different purposes than others. So one thing we know about selective response or multiple choice is maybe it really doesn't tell us that much about how students are doing on a particular task to the point where we could then make decisions about what to do differently, and that's where perhaps these performance tasks and constructed response items give a little bit more nuance for teachers to be able to unpack exactly what's going on and be able to circle back and make some adjustments.

Those were sort of the big learnings that we have gotten to this point. And I guess to summarize all of this, is that what I think we really ended up working on again, even though we set off to talk . . . to focus on formative assessment, that in the end of the day, it was about *performance* assessment, and that's what's the key sort of shift, if you will, in this work. Again, it's not a new idea for some, but for many classrooms, engaging kids in this kind of more interactive and engaging work will represent perhaps a shift, and we probably have a lot of work to do to be able to support teachers in that effort.

[Slide: Today's Panelists] Okay, so thank you for bearing with me as I walked through that. I'm pleased now to be able to turn to some really wonderful educators from our districts. And I would like to thank you, Meg. I like this slide better in terms of introducing them. I'm not sure if Marlene has yet joined us, so we may have to stand by. All these folks are hopping out of classrooms to join us, and so they will maybe seem a little out of breath because they've just probably got online a short while ago. But we have Michelle Carr, Cynthia Chavez, and Hannah Valencia from Sanger Unified, and Patricia Hernandez and Molly Stuart from Fresno joining us. And, hopefully, Marlene from Oakland will hop on the line shortly. So let me first confirm that we can hear you all, so if you could all say "hello," that would be helpful. [*multiple hellos*]

BEN SANDERS

Thank you all for taking the time to join us today.

[*Oops, you know what, I think I need to go back to my . . . should I just go ahead and click on this PowerPoint, because I do have my questions here, yeah.*]

So I will just walk through these questions. The idea here is, I'm just going to toss out these open-ended questions and ask folks to respond. **[Slide: Panelist Question 1]** And so this first one is really about the Summer Design Institute itself, and I think . . . So for that reason, I happen to know that Patricia from Fresno and Michelle from Sanger actually participated in both the Summer Design Institute as well as the follow-up fall pilot. So this is really a question for Patricia and Michelle, and maybe we can start with Michelle and then turn to Patricia on this. But how would you describe the experience of, which I tried to outline at a high level, and what was your experience with that? And did it affect your understanding of the Common Core, or Smarter Balanced, to any degree?

MICHELLE CARR

Our participation was a very helpful format to be able to go ahead and create performance tasks, because we were given time to work with teachers in our district plus other districts, and we were able to give each other feedback and go through multiple drafts of the performance tasks so that we could just get it as much aligned to the Common Core as we

could. And they also showed us videos of what it would look like in classroom practice at the Summer Design Institute. So it was a very helpful task that we're looking forward to replicate in our district.

BEN SANDERS

Great. . .and Patricia?

PATRICIA HERNANDEZ

Oh, hi. I feel the same way. It was a wonderful opportunity. I went thinking that I knew about Common Core, but came to realize I was probably at level one. And once I was there, I was involved with so many knowledgeable individuals about Common Core, and I was thankful to be part of this opportunity, being able to create an assessment module from scratch with a challenging project. But it did allow me to understand the amount of planning required to create a module. Therefore, I realized at the end that my deeper. . .I had acquired a deeper understanding of the various module components of Common Core State Standards and the Smarter Balanced assessment. So it was a huge learning curve, but it was worth it.

BEN SANDERS

[Slide: Panelist Question 2] So now I'll turn to the larger group and just ask a question—again sort of open-ended—but if anybody would be willing to share their experience participating in the pilot, kind of at an overall level? And so why don't we turn to the folks from Sanger and ask them to talk a little bit about that. Either one of you gals want to share just from your experience participating in the pilot itself?

CYNTHIA CHAVEZ

For me, it was very eye-opening. I realized that the students don't know how to discuss. They can "conversate" with one another, but it was really difficult for them to actually have a conversation, an academic conversation, and be able to discuss their answers and especially say, "Okay, well, what else?" It was a lot of probing and getting them to actually have a discussion.

HANNAH VALENCIA

And for me, it was helpful because it helped us to see where we need to shift in our instruction. Like Cindy was saying, we need to be better able to facilitate those sorts of academic discussions, beyond just the basic As share with Bs, Bs share with As. They need to be able to think deeper and justify using evidence in more complex matters.

BEN SANDERS

. . . a bunch of other questions. Anybody else want to respond at sort of a general level about the experience of the pilot itself?

MOLLY STUART

For us in Fresno, one of the things we already know is the fact that reading and writing go hand in hand. But once we put them together in the pilot, the students were able to do a lot of the readings, standards-based strategies. But once they came to the writing portion, a lot of them were lost. And we noticed that a lot of our advanced students, they were so unsure of what to do, and most of them shied away from the performance tasks. They were not willing to complete it because they were so afraid of what it would look like at the end.

PATRICIA HERNANDEZ

I kind of broke it into pro and con sides, and I will go through that quickly. The approach for me was, it was engaging for the children. The text and the questions were rigorous. It was rich vocabulary, and the children did enjoy the group discussions. But I agree with my Sanger colleagues in the fact that there had to be a lot of teacher facilitation to get them to that deeper level. The children. . .As far as cons, the children did struggle a bit with independent work as far as actually taking the graphic organizer and synthesizing that into a writing piece independently. And just as a teacher, I was trying to think about, especially during this transitional time of us transitioning into Common Core in Fresno, how much scaffolding would be required during that time and kind of a gradual pull away from that.

BEN SANDERS

[Slide: Panelist Question 3] I actually have. . .feel free to continue, but I do have some specific questions and which I think some of you have already touched on. But I wonder if folks can comment on the degree to which the performance tasks are similar to or different from the kinds of work that your students normally experienced, and generally related to that, how did they react? So some of you have already touched on that. Was their reaction that this was difficult for them, and did they feel like they were up to the task? What was the student response?

CYNTHIA CHAVEZ

Well, I found the similarities to be the finding evidence. We are real big on justifying answers—justifying answers, going back to the text and finding the evidence. But I felt like my students were really comfortable with that. Just, the big difference was the collaboration and not knowing when they got to *My Thoughts Now*; it was getting them to dig deeper and instead just saying, "Oh well, we all have got the same thing." "Okay, well, what else could you find?" or "What else does it make you think about?"

A couple of students were able to do that and think, "Oh." Where I would probe them with a little question: "What is this really saying about this?" and then they would have an academic conversation about it. But that was the big difference. Instead of just turning to a partner, it was in a group of four or group of three and really getting to get each other's ideas and to go further with them.

BEN SANDERS

I should actually pause there for a second, and I probably should have mentioned this earlier in the presentation. What some of the folks have been referring to is an important part of the constructed response items that I did show on the ramp, and that included. . .for the ELA task, you heard reference to this idea of a graphic organizer. And what that simply did is, it arrayed a few questions along the column on the left, and then there were blank columns for students to fill in the responses to those questions. And the way it was designed was that the students would give their answers initially on their own; that is, they would read the text and respond to some of the questions, and fill in and jot down some notes. That was just sort of their general answer to the question.

And then the second column, in most cases, asked them to actually cite evidence from the text in justifying their answers, so building again some of that muscle around "Okay, don't only tell us what you think or how you feel, but give us evidence for why you believe that based on the text itself."

And then the third column was a little bit of a twist, which is, once the students had done those two steps, they were asked to turn to a partner or a small group and share their answers and their evidence to classmates and discuss, and in some cases, perhaps even debate different

answers to those initial questions, thereby hopefully establishing what we might even call a bit of an academic discourse; again, hopefully, all being able to. . .If there's an argument, that's fine; just justify your answer with some evidence.

And then there was a column that gave students a chance to sort of review their answers. *My Thoughts Now* is typically what it said, which basically gave the kids a chance to say "Okay, now based on that conversation, do you still think what you originally thought? Did somebody actually sway your opinion? Do you now believe something a little different, or do you understand something a little differently?" And so in some ways, it was really requiring students to engage in that kind of academic dialog that. . .I think if that was Cynthia who was just talking, is something that is perhaps not as familiar to students. Is that correct? Could others comment on the experience of the graphic organizer?

HANNAH VALENCIA

As far as the graphic organizer went, with my students I noticed that the *My Thoughts Now* column really gave them freedom to have made a mistake in the beginning. Like they were like, "Oh, we can change our answer." "Yes, that's the whole purpose of the group discussion." And then they really saw the value behind the academic discussion; that it was not just to talk and share and parrot back what we'd been telling them. They were able to express their ideas, back it up with evidence, confer with their colleagues, and then come up with the best idea that they could, which would later translate into the writing prompt. So it was really helpful.

BEN SANDERS

And could you stay with that, Hannah, just the idea of the translation to the writing prompt. How did that piece go for your students?

HANNAH VALENCIA

At first, they were like, "Okay, these things are completely separate; this is questions, this is a writing prompt." And then when we delved into the writing prompt a little deeper, they were able to see, "Oh, I can use my evidence from my multiple choice graphic organizer and expound upon that into a paragraph format, and create my writing assignment out of that." And then they were like, "Oh, so I already did all the hard work." They really finally made that connection that, no, we weren't just having you answer random questions and then we're going to ask you something completely separate; they were very much married together.

JOEL KNUDSON

This is Joel, if I can just interject here. I think there is a clarifying question on the right asking if any of the teachers participated in the math pilot?

HANNAH VALENCIA

No, we did not. We were ELA.

BEN SANDERS

Actually, that's a great question, and I think perhaps a little bit of an oversight. It would have been actually great to hear from folks on the math side during this conversation. But we ended up scaring up some ELA folks, so perhaps we'll just think of this as focused on the ELA side, although it would be great to hear ultimately from math teachers as well.

Okay, so any other thoughts about that piece and generally how students. . .I'm just curious again about how they went from this interactive piece to then sitting down and saying, "Okay, now we've actually got to do some writing on our own." And did they feel like they were able to draw on that experience?

MICHELLE CARR

I think for me. . .I already touched on that a little bit, but that for me was the most difficult piece for the students. It's actually translating and synthesizing that into a final writing piece. And I think like Hannah or Cynthia had mentioned, there was a bit of a disconnect between okay, this is actually a first step to your writing; a graphic organizer is used to then synthesize into a final writing piece. So for me, that was the most difficult part for the students.

BEN SANDERS

I've got a couple of more questions to share, but before we move on, just generally, how would you describe their reaction? Did they feel a little bowled over and say, "Gee, this is really hard," or did they sort of feel like "It's hard, but gosh, you know what, we can do this work"? How would you describe their mindset about that?

PARTICIPANT

I think initially, they were kind of like, "What is this? This doesn't look like anything that we're used to. This is going to be so hard. I don't want to read. I don't want to talk to my group." But once we actually got into it, they seemed to pretty much enjoy themselves because it wasn't an isolated task. And for me, it was my RSP and special needs students. They were really able to have success, because with multiple choice-style tasks, it was either you got it right or wrong—there was no wiggle room. So here they were able to work with somebody else and express their ideas and show me what they knew in a different format, so they had more success than they would have on a traditional test.

PARTICIPANT

My kids were into it. Yeah, when they first saw it, they saw it as a graphic organizer, and when we broke it down. . .we actually did a second one almost as a lesson more towards the end of the year, and I really broke it down with them. We had a lot of class discussions on the constructed response part. I told them, "This is your note page; you really need to take a lot of notes." We utilized it in diagrams. And then they said, "Okay, well, we did it," and I said, "No, you have to turn this into an actual paragraph."

And they kind of looked at me at first like, "The answer's right here." I said, "Yeah, now give me a coherent constructed paragraph per question." And at first they were kind of hesitant, they were kind of resistant, but I said, "Your answer's right in front of you. You've got to figure out how to put it into a paragraph. Use your transitions, careful with your spelling," and they did it. They were able to do it once they actually put their mind to it. But, yeah, they were very timid at first because it was so different.

BEN SANDERS

[Slide: Panelist Question 4] So here's a set of questions, now transitioning to this next phase of the work, which is really around evaluating the student work. So as you began to look at some of the samples of the student work, if any of you could comment on how that process went, and I know that some of you perhaps did that sort of individually, just looking at your own class work. Others, if you may have done that in a little bit of a team where you did perhaps even a little bit of calibration, looking at different samples and trying to come up with a common rating using the rubric.

I wonder if folks could comment on that process. And maybe connected to that is, what, if anything, did the student work results tell you about your students' achievement level on what might be considered Common Core or Smarter Balanced-aligned tasks? So first, what was the process of looking at the student work like for you, and then, what did it tell you about where your students are right now?

PATRICIA HERNANDEZ

Molly and I, we were able to look [at] about 120 student samples and at first, seating them with the rubric, trying to calibrate since it was a new rubric for us—trying to figure out what a level 4 would look like. It took a while before we could decide on that, and that probably took about 30 to 40 minutes after looking at all the work samples, and looking at the rubric, and making sure that it had all the elements required to be a 4. And after that, it was a lot easier to figure out what a 3 would look like, and a 2, but we realized that there was a huge discrepancy in between the student work.

I would say we were having a really difficult time trying to find the 4 and 3 at that moment, which is hard to see. You spend all this time in class discussions and you think, as a teacher, are they really getting it, and then you get the end result—the student writing sample—and you realize that there's a lot of work to get done in the next few months and years ahead of us. But the positive note is that the children are very resilient, and they're willing to always work with us. And I think if we as teachers can become proficient with Common Core, we will be able to deliver the right instruction to them.

PANELIST

We also went through a similar process. We have a PLC of seven members, and we sat down together and graded and calibrated what we thought was a 4, a 3, a 2, and a 1. And we did find that the rubric was quite extensive, so I think maybe in the future, we might be looking at modifying that. It was a lot for a student to look at to try to see what they needed to get a score of 4. But we did have that discussion because we needed to get on the same page, and then the teachers went ahead, and after we did that process, graded the rest on their own.

But we did notice that I had some teachers comment that while based on CST, "I thought this student would be below basic," and kind of had a similar expectation for this task, yet they did see some students surprise them and that they could perform well on this kind of a task, and then others that they thought would do really well, didn't. So it does give students that might not succeed on regular multiple choice tests a way to show their progress in other ways. So I think that's a positive.

BEN SANDERS

Anybody else on that point? I think I've got one more question, so I'll just go ahead and toss this out. **[Slide: Panelist Question 5]** I think we're doing pretty well on time here. So I guess the question really becomes. . .going to this notion of formative assessment, the idea that ideally you will be able to draw out information from that analysis of the student work that might help you think a lot about how you might work differently with your students or what adjustments you might make. And I wondered. . .and again, I don't presume this is necessarily the case, but did that actually happen? That is, did you draw information out from looking at the student work that actually gave you, in some cases, some concrete ideas about what you could do? Perhaps areas to focus on going forward; thinking about this notion that the Common Core is coming, and most of you are going to be engaging in a much more full-blown implementation in the next year or two. So how did that go for folks?

PANELIST

Well, for us, in our AC meetings, they would shift the content of our meetings; we switched to more Common Core, and we departmentalized the way we teach at our school. So we actually had to meet with our science teacher, our writing, social studies teacher, and our reading teacher, and we decided to start looking into Common Core from now on and start implementing some of those standards in those subject areas. That way, students can see the standard in the different areas, and they get to see how it's integrated.

And by using the nonfiction texts, like in social studies and science, students were always engaged with those types of subjects. We were able to maximize our standard that we wanted to teach and be able to have the students get it throughout the day and throughout the week, and they became more proficient as we were moving along. So that's going to be our goal for next year, to start moving more into the Common Core State Standards and being part of it on a weekly basis from now on.

BEN SANDERS

Again, to clarify, do you feel like this process helped stimulate that discussion and that effort to some degree, that this gave you an understanding of what that might involve?

PANELIST

Yes. Well, the fact that we keep hearing about Common Core coming, but we are not really training for it yet in fourth grade. I think it really opened up our eyes as we need to start now, and we need to get involved with this process and get an early start on it. I mean, I don't know how early we are now, but I think the fact that seeing the kids write, and we don't think that they are writing at the level that they are expected to be writing. We know that the comprehension in reading is there. So now we need to make sure that they are able to translate their thoughts in writing. And I think this process truly helps us make that realization that we need to start now. I mean, we don't want to get behind in the process, and we want to be fair to our children.

PANELIST

As far as my concerns or things that I would do differently, my biggest issue was the timing of the first kind of activity, where they're supposed to get their own evidence and their own thoughts. I had some students fly through it with really great evidence and really great responses, and then I had some slower students that really took their time and weren't having great responses. But then I had kids. . .they were all a mixture of levels—high, low, medium— just took all different times. So I had some kids done within the first 10 minutes. Well, I didn't want to cut the other ones short, but what do I do with those students that are sitting and waiting? I didn't like the fact that they just were sitting and waiting. So having something for them to do to still keep them engaged and keep them thinking about the process at hand, and then getting them to go on and really have something worthwhile, because if they don't complete the first step, they can't get to the *My Thoughts Now,* and they can't discuss with their partners.

The other thing, obviously—modeling how to discuss, how to share ideas. We talked about how are you going to take turns in your group, numbering them off or having some sort of a system. And then when it gets to the constructed responses, giving them some sort of thinking map or a way so that when they are able to do this on their own, they know how to break down a writing prompt. They know what specifically is it asking for, so that towards the end of year or whenever, if these are used as formative assessments, they are able to do it on their own, and there is not a lot of teacher instruction, and they are able to use it as an actual assessment.

BEN SANDERS

Any other thoughts?

PANELIST

And I don't know if this is going a bit off topic, but [*garbled*] informed our practice. Our principal also had us present to our entire staff, and we presented to them what our interpretation was as far as implications for teachers, and told our entire staff K–6 that it implies there needs to be writing across the curriculum. There needs to be more evidence-

based writing, more synthesizing of notes, graphic organizer, and higher expectations. So we were actually able to share that with our entire staff.

BEN SANDERS

Well, how did they react to that?

PANELIST

There was a little bit of like, "Oh, my gosh, this is coming," and a little bit of a panic across the staff room, and a lot of questions for us that we didn't feel well-informed enough to answer. But we shared our experience and kind of just our interpretation of what it meant. And it kind of prompted them to even go and start accessing their own research and they started getting on the Common Core website. So it's a bit of a domino effect, but in a good way. It kind of started waking a lot of people up.

BEN SANDERS

I think we're about heading towards our conclusion here. Why don't we just take a moment and see if anybody on our panel has any last sort of thoughts that they may want to share with our listeners, any advice they might even give, or thoughts about this process as to whether others might want to engage, and the value that they may feel for doing a similar type of process.

PANELIST

We found great value in giving this performance test, so much so that we went ahead and gave another one towards the end of the year after CSTs, so we actually did two this year. And we just wanted to see what our students could do, and sometimes we get scared, and a lot of times teachers are used to holding kids' hands too much. But really letting them go and show us that they can talk in a group and discuss and come up with these answers on their own. Because I think a little bit of a productive struggle is important for kids so that they learn that they can do it, and so that when they get to college and their careers, they feel confident and they've been through a task or they've struggled a little bit, but then overcame that struggle.

BEN SANDERS

Great point. Anybody else? Any final comments for the good of the order?

MEG LIVINGSTON ASENSIO

Ben, I do see a question from a participant about the quality of the work of the students that finished first, if someone would like to comment on that.

PANELIST

Well, I had said earlier that I had some kids filling out their work, their graphic organizer pretty quickly. And it was quality. I mean, I kind of would check on them like, "Hey, you finished kind of fast, let me check on yours." But their answers were there, they were thinking; they were good quality answers, and their evidence was right on. And when they got to the constructed responses, I just had some great writers that knew how to formulate their ideas and put them into responses. I mean, there were some that kind of rushed through, and I could see that, and I had to get them to dig a little bit deeper and say, "Hey, well, go back, did you completely answer the question?" But for the most part, the ones that did finish early, this was just right up their alley and they were able to perform really well.

PANELIST

I think for Patricia and I, like she mentioned earlier, we administered it to about 120 fourth graders, and we have an extremely wide, or long, spectrum of students. So we kind of saw the whole process differently for different students. And some of our lower students, or our C students, really struggled with it. And the ones that did tend to rush did not do very well, and it was, I think, almost a panic-type thing: "If I just say I'm done, then I can stop, because this is way over my head." So we kind of saw both sides of the coin with that.

MEG LIVINGSTON ASENSIO

Thanks. Ben, do you have any last comments before I push out the survey and close things up?

BEN SANDERS

No. I just want to thank everybody for sticking in there with us, **[Slide: We Appreciate Your Feedback]** and especially to our panelists for taking time out of your busy school day. I truly, personally appreciate it, and I felt that your comments were extremely insightful. So thank you all so very much. **[Slide: Thank You]**

PANELISTS

Thank you.

MEG LIVINGSTON ASENSIO

I thank our panelists and presenters. I want to let everyone know that the webinar recording, as well as the CLAS report and the two PowerPoints, will be available shortly on the REL West website, which is here: relwest.wested.org. You can click on the Events tab and find this event. **[Slide: We Appreciate Your Feedback]** We also have a short survey that helps us report to our funder to continue to be funded. I'm going to put that up now. **[Slide: Participant Survey]** This will remain up; it's only 12 questions. . .[*audio disturbance*]. . .appreciative. So thank you all very much for participating. This concludes the webinar, and again, the survey will be up for a little bit, and we really appreciate you taking two minutes to fill this out for us. So thank you very much for attending.