

Teachers reported moderate to major concerns prior to 2015 state testing

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Prior to the first round of K-12 standardized testing under Common Core education standards last year, most teachers had moderate to major concerns about test difficulty and low student performance, according to new studies from the RAND Corporation.

Most English language arts and mathematics teachers felt prepared to help their students meet the standards. However, the new standards expect teachers in other subjects to help students improve their literacy and master mathematics concepts, and these teachers reported less familiarity with the new state standards. Both groups reported needing additional [professional development](#), according to results of a new survey.

"The survey results provide an opportunity for school district leaders to understand how prepared teachers are to teach the new Common Core standards and then tailor the professional development to the areas the teachers feel they need the most support," said Julia Kaufman, co-author of the studies and a policy researcher at RAND Corporation, a nonprofit research organization.

The findings are from the first survey done with the RAND American Teacher Panel, a representative national panel of K-12 teachers organized to provide feedback on issues of educational policy and practice.

With the introduction of Common Core State Standards during the past

few years, many states made major changes to K-12 student testing programs. The new tests were administered to students across the country for the first time in spring 2015.

The new state standards changed expectations for what students should learn in English language arts and mathematics, and what teachers should know and teach in their classroom. The RAND surveys asked teachers how prepared they felt to address Common Core State Standards in their classrooms and what additional professional development is needed. It also gathered information about teachers' concerns about the new state tests.

Non-English language arts teachers reported needing professional development in writing instruction and differentiation of instruction for students at different achievement levels. Non-mathematics teachers reported needing professional development in complex, inquiry-based modes of instruction, such as problem-solving and argumentation.

Researchers said that the analysis did not show any differences in perceived preparedness between teachers in high- and low-poverty schools, although teachers at high-poverty schools expressed a greater need for writing professional development compared to those at low-poverty schools. There were also differences between teachers in states that had adopted Common Core State Standards and those that had not and thus were preparing students for non-Common Core tests.

Among English language arts teachers in Common Core states, only 47 percent reported some level of familiarity with the standards. Meanwhile, 70 percent of teachers in non-Common Core states reported being familiar enough with their non-Common Core standards to develop lesson plans. Mathematics teachers in Common Core states were also significantly less likely to report being well prepared to address the Common Core mathematics standards than were mathematics teachers

in non-Common Core states regarding their own non-Common Core standards.

At the time of the survey, the American Teacher Panel was composed of approximately 1,129 teachers, and the companion American School Leader Panel was composed of approximately 557 school leaders. The same teachers and school leaders, along with others recruited during the past year, will participate in future surveys. The first surveys provide a baseline that will allow researchers to see the changes over time in teacher and school leader perspectives and experiences with the new state standards and tests.

To ensure a representative sample, panel members were chosen randomly from across the country. The teacher sample included full-time public school teachers in grades K-12 across all subjects, including [teachers](#) of special education students and English-language learners.

More information: The reports, "What Are Teachers' and School Leaders' Major Concerns About New K-12 State Tests?", "What Supports Do Teachers Need to Help Students Meet Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy?" and "What Supports Do Teachers Need to Help Students Meet Common Core State Standards for Mathematics?" are available at www.rand.org

Provided by RAND Corporation

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