

CommunicationPoints

NCSC Debuts Newsletter!

We are excited to debut our first newsletter for our CoP members. From now on, you can expect to see one from us at the beginning of each month during the school year. In each newsletter, we will feature an interesting article that relates to our next webinar. This month, Alson Cole presents us with thoughts on moving our instruction forward to better reflect what we have learned over the last few years. Another regular feature will be our Communication Corner that includes information and tips on communication. As we learn together in our Communities of Practice, we will be asking our members to submit articles on topics and ideas that are relevant to other members. Additionally, we will be highlighting activities that individual states may be doing with their members. So, be on the lookout since there is much more to come!

Now That We Know...

What will it take to improve instruction?

Renowned poet, Dr. Maya Angelou, has said, “When you know better, you do better.” And here we are, about to embark on a new alternate assessment system built on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). So, what has been learned from our previous ventures with large-scale assessments, and what are we now equipped to do better?

Well, for one thing, we’ve learned that before we can assess, we’ve got to provide rich instruction. Yet, many of our states’ alternate assessments have been implemented in such a short time that teachers were thrown into a whirlwind of assessment rules,

procedures, and accountability measures that resulted in more time being spent on assessment than on instruction.

However, this needs to change.

One of the beauties of the NCSC GSEG is that it allows time for professional development—time for teachers to receive the professional development needed before the plane takes off, not in mid-flight.

That’s why we have upcoming webinars that will focus on the design, structure and content of the math unit that was developed through the National Alternate Assessment Center (NAAC). This webinar will walk teachers through the planning and implementation process for a unit of study for high school math that includes a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach and detailed ideas for accommodations and supports for emerging readers and emerging communication users. The lesson was built on the CCSS, and we’ll address the roles of the Learning Progressions (LPs) and Core Content Connectors (CCCs) as they pertain to instructional planning.

Even if you don’t teach high school—or math for that matter—it would be a good idea to participate in this webinar because it will give you an insight as to how instructional lessons and units of study should be designed. As well, we will be providing future units of study for elementary, middle and high school, in both Math and English Language Arts. In particular, we’ll have the elementary and middle school math units that show the progression of concepts and skills associated with that high school math unit from NAAC.

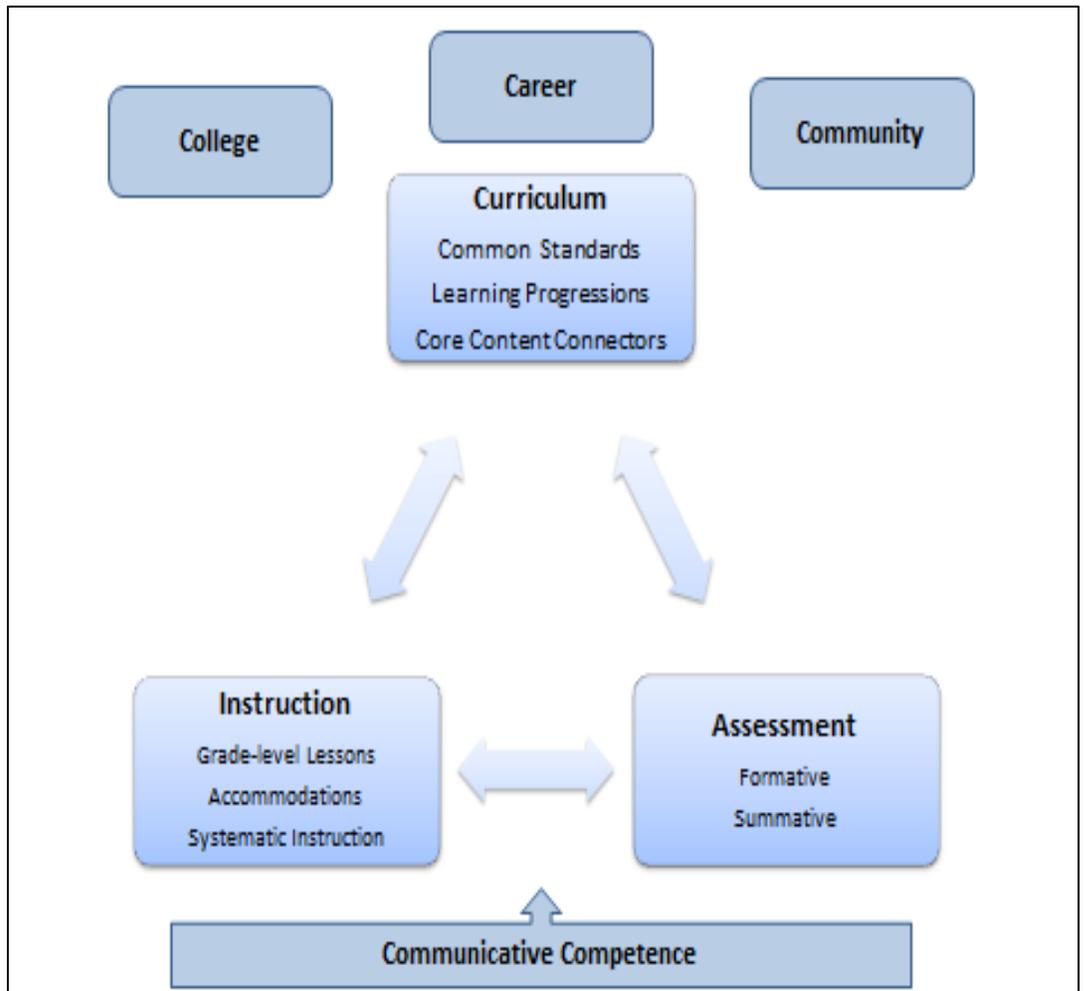
We are optimistic that these lessons and units will provide teachers with valuable insight and tools that

will ultimately ease the administrative burden of assessment while improving the quality of instruction students with significant cognitive disabilities receive. NCSC is applying the knowledge learned from the past

decade of research on alternate assessment to make these improvements because we feel that now that we know better, we must do better.

Webinar Framework

The staff at the National Center and State Collaborative developed a visual framework to represent the important components of our professional development. All of the webinars will be developed from this framework. The instructional framework uses a triangle to identify the three key components: curriculum, instruction, and assessment.



The arrows are multi-directional because each component of the triangle is used to inform the other components of the triangle. The triangle is placed upon a base: communication. Without communication, students cannot adequately access the core content because academic content by definition is symbolic in nature. Therefore, all work must start with communication competency. Finally, the triangle is located on the background of college, career, and community – ensuring that these real world components are integrated into the system of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. As we move forward with our webinars, you will see how they each fit within our guiding framework.

Communication Corner: Communication implies a broad set of output behaviors and combinations of output behaviors which may or may not be of a standardized form but which convey intent (purpose for communicating) and are understood and “readable” by the listener (i.e., the listener demonstrates comprehension by acknowledging the speaker’s intent). So, it takes intent, mode, and listener understanding in order to have successful communication. Since academic content is symbolic in nature, we must work to help students find ways to communicate what they know. We know this can be challenging for many students. Working closely with related services professionals and the students’ parents is key.

Upcoming Webinar Topics

Overview and Review	Nov
CCSS and Learning Progressions –Math	Dec/Jan
Instructional Unit – Math	Jan
How to Develop an Instructional Unit	Feb
Communication – Getting Ready for the Triage and Summit	March
CCSS and Learning Progressions – Reading	April

Common Myths about the Common Core State Standards

Myth #1: The Common Core State Standards are a national curriculum. Standards are not curriculum: *standards* spell out what students should know and be able to do at the end of a year; *curriculum* defines the specific course of study—the scope and sequence—that will enable students to meet standards. **Myth #2 The Common Core State Standards represent a modest change from current practice.** The CCSS calls for a level of

knowledge that is in many respects very different from what many state standards outline and what schools currently practice. The definition of college and career readiness in the CCSS is very rigorous. The CCSS demands that students develop a depth of understanding and the ability to apply various skills to new situations, just as they will in college and on the job. **Myth #3 The Common Core State Standards are the tool that will single handedly change schools.** Standards by themselves do not improve education. Standards only spell out what students should know and be able to do at the end of the school year. In order to meet the new CCSS, districts and schools will have to make many changes, including: curricula and assessments to align with the standards, professional development so teachers know what they are expected to teach, and changes in teacher preparation programs so that all teachers have the capability and knowledge to teach all students the rigorous content that the standards demand. **Myth #4 The Common Core State Standards tell teachers what to teach.** Teachers know what works best in the classroom. Standards only tell teachers what students should know, not how to teach it. Teachers will continue to develop lesson plans and deliver instruction based on the individual needs of all students in their classrooms. **Myth #5 The Common Core State Standards are not intended to be implemented with students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.** The CCSS create rigorous educational demands on all students. Because of this expectation, the CCSS help to create an atmosphere where all students, including students with disabilities, should receive access to the general curriculum. The biggest challenge in implementing the CCSS with students with significant cognitive disabilities will be helping all teachers to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to provide quality instruction for all students.

References

- Council for Exceptional Children. (2010, September) Common core standards: What special education teachers need to know. *CEC Today*. Retrieved from <http://cec.sped.org>.
- National Governors Association & Council of Chief State School Officers (2010, March). *Myths v. Facts About the Common Core Standards*. Retrieved from <http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CoreFacts.pdf>.
- Rothman, R. (2011, September/October). Five myths about the Common Core State Standards. *The Harvard Education Letter*, 27(5). Retrieved from <http://hepg.org/hel/article/513>.