

The Common Core State Standards as Applied to the Instruction of Students With Disabilities:

Special Education Teachers' Perceptions

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## ABSTRACT

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The Common Core State Standards are a set of challenging learning goals in English language arts/literacy and math and their use in special education has been a controversial topic. On the one hand, many special education advocates have been pleased that the standards were written for *all* students, including students with disabilities. On the other hand, many special education teachers have been concerned that an overemphasis on the Common Core State Standards is limiting their students' access to the full benefits of an Individualized Education Program, which is the central component of special education that makes it so special.

Recent research conducted on teachers across the United States has shown that, overall, they believe that the Common Core State Standards are beneficial for students. However, there is a gap in the research documenting the specific views of special education teachers. It is important to understand their experiences because they have the unique task of balancing the general education curriculum with individualized instruction that may include skills not covered by the Common Core. This study aims to address this gap by answering several key questions about the experiences of special education teachers who use the Common Core State Standards with students with disabilities.

A total of 476 special education teachers from across the United States were surveyed. This study found that they have a moderately strong understanding of the standards and they frequently used them to guide their teaching. The results of this study showed that while the

majority of these teachers echoed the general belief that the Common Core State Standards are beneficial for students *without* disabilities, they did not believe that they are beneficial for students *with* disabilities. Strikingly, 86.9% did not believe that the standards provide adequate information about their application to students with disabilities. Of concern, 70.9% reported that, when using these standards, they are unable to address their students' individualized goals—especially in the areas of social and functional skills. Moreover, when asked if they believed that the Common Core State Standards would help their students to be prepared for independent life, 79.1% said “no.” These results yield important information regarding current practice using the Common Core State Standards in special education and suggest important implications for teacher training courses related to the Common Core State Standards and students with disabilities as well as how the Common Core State Standards document and guidance materials may be revised to better meet the needs of students with disabilities.

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## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to special education teachers and students with disabilities across the United States. It is my hope that research about your experiences will continue to give you a voice in the field of education.

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background and Need**

Use of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in special education has been a controversial topic since the first draft of these learning goals was released in 2009. On the one hand, many special education advocates who have fought for decades for the full inclusion of students with disabilities are pleased that the CCSS were written for all students—with and without disabilities—and hold them accountable to high expectations (Council of Administrators of Special Education [CASE], ca. 2010; Ziegler, ca. 2010). On the other hand, a vocal contingent of special education teachers who are actually using these standards in the classroom have expressed their concerns that the emphasis placed on teaching (and testing) based on these new standards is denying students access to the unique qualities that make special education so special—namely, a focus on addressing the specific goals outlined in a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) (Kanso, 2015). At the heart of this dichotomy lies the question, *What should a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities look like?* This study aims to contribute to the goal of answering this essential question for our current era by documenting and analyzing the perceptions of special education teachers toward the application of the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities.

In classrooms across America, general and special education teachers alike may not be specifically pondering how to provide a free appropriate public education for their students as much as they are simply wondering, *How can I give my students the **best** education possible?* This thought is a burning flame within the hearts of dedicated teachers nationwide. But fulfilling this mission, undoubtedly, can be rather complex. Teachers have to constantly evaluate an

immeasurable flurry of factors when attempting to provide a group of children with a high-quality education: curricula, strategies for differentiation, projects, field trips, assessments, social-emotional needs, family outreach; the list goes on and on. To begin the process of addressing the vast array of variables involved in educating a child well, many teachers look for guidance from their state's academic standards.

A strong set of standards can provide a framework for the school year and help teachers to understand what they need to teach—a great launching point for any educator committed to providing a superior learning experience for children. Unfortunately, though, for much of our history, the quality and content of standards throughout the United States has varied widely, making this important foundation solid for some educators, but quite shaky for others. This is primarily due to the fact that education in our country is largely a state issue, and local priorities differ. While some states have traditionally provided comprehensive standards to support their teachers and students, others have not (Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSS Initiative], 2016a; Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011). The CCSS are attempting to address this inconsistency.

The CCSS are defined as “a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA)” (CCSS Initiative, 2016a). They are learning goals that outline “what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade” (CCSS Initiative, 2016a) between kindergarten and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Upon release of the standards, forty-six states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) voluntarily adopted and began implementing the CCSS (CCSS Initiative, 2016b).



The goals for regions that opted into the CCSS are to raise the bar for students specifically in the areas of ELA and math as well as to take advantage of the many possibilities for collaboration that exist under a shared system. Within this partnership, states and territories preserve control over the standards by adding to them to match their local needs—thereby creating somewhat unique versions of them—while keeping the spirit of the core intact. That spirit is embodied in six instructional shifts away from typical teaching practices of the past that, together, create the increase in expectations that participating regions anticipate will empower students to become college and career ready (CCSS Initiative, 2016a, 2016b). Simply stated, these shifts challenge teachers to: encourage students to engage in regular practice with complex texts; expect students to cite evidence from texts; assist students in building knowledge through nonfiction; provide a greater focus on fewer math topics; link math topics across grades; and treat understanding, procedural skills, and application in math with equal intensity. Beyond the ELA and math standards that make up the “Common Core,” states and territories maintain individual authority over the development of content standards in all other subject areas.

In both general terms and in regard to special education, the six instructional shifts of the CCSS have been a major source of debate during the standards’ development, adoption, and implementation, in part, because they are a significant change from decades-old pedagogy in many regions. Initially, a handful of states (Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia) and one territory (Puerto Rico) rejected the CCSS outright for this reason—and other, more political, ones. Minnesota only adopted the Common Core ELA standards but passed on the math standards since their state’s math standards had been revised prior to the development of the CCSS. The rest of the country, though, ultimately joined the movement, motivated at first by many of their own governors’ and state education leaders’ direct involvement in the initiative

and, then, after adopting these benchmarks (or any set of college-and-career readiness standards) was heavily incentivized by the Obama administration's Race to the Top (RTTT) fund, a powerful reinforcer that raised the eyebrows of many who saw this as a federal overstep. Nevertheless, by 2010 the CCSS had taken hold and clear camps of supporters and detractors began to form.

Many advocates spoke out to defend the standards, claiming that:

- they provide consistency, efficiency, and opportunities for collaboration among states around shared academic goals;
- they are rigorous and meet the expectations of colleges and employers;
- they help teachers by giving them an organized set of learning goals for students;
- they are more focused than many states' previous standards;
- they are internationally benchmarked; and
- they will result in the creation of higher-quality assessments.

At the same time, vocal critics emerged who asserted that:

- the process for creating the CCSS was not transparent;
- implementation happened too quickly, they aren't funded well, and curricula and resources aren't aligned well;
- it is unclear if research supports some of the areas that the standards emphasize;
- there are major inconsistencies surrounding implementation efforts across states;
- international benchmarking wasn't done well; and
- guidance surrounding application of the standards to the instruction of students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs) has been lacking.

The initial energy surrounding the CCSS and their promotion by the federal government encouraged large investments of time, money, and resources by the regions involved. Teachers across the country made significant changes to their practices and lesson plans. But, shortly thereafter, as the roll-out of these standards took shape—including changes in curricula, standardized tests, and teacher evaluation systems—enthusiasm around these standards waned and division over their use widened.

Unfavorable responses continued to swell in much of the nation, and a few states (Florida, Indiana, Oklahoma, and South Carolina) dropped their participation in this initiative early on. Dissatisfaction continued in the years to come and calls to abolish the CCSS altogether even became a prominent part of the 2016 presidential and congressional elections. In some cases, state governors and state education commissioners have called for a review of the CCSS and the initiation of a revision process for the standards as applied in their state.

Other areas, however, held steadfast to the standards, citing their deep investments as justification to carry on. It was important, after all, to determine whether these new standards would lead to positive increases in student achievement. For that reason, most states took a “wait and see” approach. In the seven years since the first states enacted full implementation of the standards, effects on student achievement have been mixed. Perhaps it is still too early to determine the full impact of the CCSS given that no group of students has utilized these standards throughout their entire K-12 tenure and then transitioned into college or a career.

Whatever the future may hold for the CCSS in particular (and their signature instructional shifts), all signs point to a general trend toward a continued process of development, revision, and implementation of rigorous college-and-career-focused standards across the United States. As this happens, it is important to thoughtfully consider the perceptions of the special education

teachers who currently use the CCSS and who will be using these revised standards to instruct their students with disabilities in the future. It is necessary to determine whether states are effectively providing guidance and support for these teachers. It is also critical to discuss how schools can maintain an appropriate balance of strong academic standards for students with disabilities while ensuring that their individual and special needs are met in a way that secures positive opportunities and outcomes for their lives. Taking these steps will support the positive actualization of the legal mandate to provide a “free and appropriate public education for students with disabilities.”

## **Terms and Definitions**

### **Academic Standards**

The term “academic standards” means clear learning outcomes that describe what is to be achieved through schooling. They include the content knowledge that students should know as well as the skills that they should be able to demonstrate by the end of each grade level. They provide a means for holding students, schools, districts, and states accountable for what occurs within our public schools (Powell, 2000).

### **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**

The term “free appropriate public education” means “special education and related services that (a) have been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; (b) meet the standards of the State educational agency; (c) include an appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the State involved; and (d) are provided in conformity with a student’s individualized education program”

(Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 2012).

## **Full Implementation of the Common Core State Standards**

The term “full implementation of the Common Core State Standards” means “the school year the state expects teachers in grades K-12 in English language arts and mathematics to incorporate the standards into classroom instruction” (CCSS Initiative, 2016b).

## **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

The term “individualized education program (IEP)” means “a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with section 614(d) [of the IDEA]” (IDEA, 2012).

## **Least Restrictive Environment**

The term “least restrictive environment (LRE)” means “to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (IDEA, 2012).

## **Related Services**

The term “related services” means “transportation, and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services (including speech-language pathology and audiology services, interpreting services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation, social work services, school nurse services designed to enable a child with a disability to receive a free appropriate public education as described in the individualized education program of the child, counseling services, including rehabilitation

counseling, orientation and mobility services, and medical services, except that such medical services shall be for diagnostic and evaluation purposes only) as may be required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, and includes the early identification and assessment of disabling conditions in children” (IDEA, 2012).

### **Special Education**

The term “special education” means specially designed instruction that meets the unique needs of a student with a disability including (a) instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and (b) instruction in physical education (IDEA, 2012).

### **Special Education Teacher**

The term “special education teacher” means a teacher who holds a certificate and/or degree in special education (teaching students with disabilities) in any grade, K-12, and has at least one student with a disability [a student with an IEP] in his/her class.

### **Students with Disabilities**

The term “students with disabilities” means any students with: (a) intellectual disabilities, developmental delays, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, specific learning disabilities, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities; and (b) who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services (IDEA, 2012).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The impact of the CCSS on students is starting to become evident and there has been some research documenting the views of the public, district administrators, and teachers about

these standards. Those who are knowledgeable about the standards tend to have positive opinions about them. Reviews about implementation, however, are mixed.

The impact of the CCSS on students with disabilities is certainly less clear, though, as limited research has been conducted to study the effects of the standards on this specific population or to examine special education teachers' perceptions of these learning goals. It is important to understand special education teachers' opinions about the CCSS as they use them so that education leaders can respond with appropriate guidance about how to best apply these standards to the instruction of students with special needs.

Given that few studies have investigated the opinions of special education teachers on the CCSS and the exploratory nature of this study, no specific hypotheses were formed before conducting this study. However, it was expected that special education teachers would use this study as a platform to share their practical views regarding the CCSS as applied to students with disabilities.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study seeks to understand special education teachers' perceptions of the CCSS and their implementation when using these standards to instruct students with disabilities.

The aims of this study include:

1. To determine the extent to which special education teachers understand the CCSS.
2. To determine the extent to which special education teachers use the CCSS in their classrooms.
3. To determine the opinions that special education teachers hold about the CCSS and their implementation.

4. To determine what factors can predict the extent to which special education teachers believe the CCSS are beneficial for students *without* disabilities.
5. To determine what factors can predict the extent to which special education teachers believe the CCSS are beneficial for students *with* disabilities.
6. To determine what factors can predict the extent to which special education teachers believe that, with the right supports in place, their students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS.
7. To determine what factors can predict the extent to which special education teachers feel they need more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities.
8. To determine what factors can predict the extent to which special education teachers like the CCSS.

### **A Brief Overview of the Study Design**

A cross-sectional research design and researcher self-designed survey were utilized. This survey was specifically distributed to special education teachers across the U.S. states and territories that use the CCSS, as well as the District of Columbia. Due to its public availability online, it was accessible to potential participants worldwide.

This design was chosen because a cross-sectional research design specifically provides a snapshot into conditions at a given moment in time. The first states to begin full implementation of the CCSS began to utilize these standards in the 2011-12 school year. The last states to begin full implementation did so in 2014-15. Therefore, this study allows special education teachers to reflect on their experiences at a point in time when they have had a minimum of two full years to use the CCSS within their state or territory.



A researcher self-designed survey was chosen because of the lack of any survey instrument available at this time to examine special education teachers' perceptions of the unique features of the CCSS and its implementation. This instrument is ideal for testing the hypothesis for this study because individual survey items were created to assess perceptions of the CCSS as well as individual aspects of implementation including professional development, classroom use, curricula and resources, and aligned standardized state assessments.

### **Contribution of the Study**

This study will shed light on the level of understanding special education teachers possess about the standards, their development, and their intended use. It will also elucidate how special education teachers have used the standards, their appendices, and resources provided to them through implementation efforts. It will provide specific insight into the thoughts, feelings, and needs of special education teachers regarding the standards and their implementation. Finally, it will identify teacher, student, and school background variables that can predict the extent to which special education teachers hold various beliefs about the CCSS and their implementation.

This study will provide useful information to education policy makers, state education secretaries and commissioners, and other education leaders on the state, local, and school levels so that they may provide more targeted guidance to special education teachers who are tasked with the job of applying these standards to the instruction of students with disabilities. It will open up a conversation that has been largely overlooked in the literature regarding the CCSS. Furthermore, it will raise awareness of the important considerations that need to be made as states move to include students with disabilities in rigorous academic work—whether that work

be outlined by the CCSS or by any other set of high-level academic standards known by a different name.

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Context for the Study**

The review of the literature covers five major topics that, together, provide the necessary context for the study: (a) a brief history of special education in the United States; (b) a historical perspective on academic standards in the United States; (c) a thorough examination of the CCSS including its key instructional shifts, perceived benefits and critiques, and their application to students with disabilities; (d) a look at key components of CCSS implementation; and (e) perceptions of various groups of stakeholders toward these standards.

#### **Special Education in the United States**

Today, special education in the United States is grounded on the principle that students with disabilities have the fundamental right to receive a *free appropriate program of public education in the least restrictive environment* (IDEA, 2012). This has not *always* been the case, however. In fact, this concept is a relatively new one within American education—less than fifty years old. Additionally, our society’s interpretation of the word “appropriate” has changed significantly since this word was first used to describe what a “special education” should be. To fully apprehend the intersection of a FAPE and the CCSS, it is important to explore the evolution that has led us to our current moment in the national story of special education.

By 1918, all American states had compulsory education laws. However, despite this fact, children with disabilities were often excluded from schools—a practice that persisted for decades to come (Yell, Rogers, & Rogers, 1998). Many states enacted laws that permitted public schools to deny enrollment to children with disabilities (Murdick, Gartin, & Crabtree, 2006). Oftentimes, these children were restricted from public education because they were considered unable to

benefit from schooling or troublesome to teachers and other students. Some states even went as far as to make it a crime for parents to persist in forcing their children with disabilities to attend classes after being discharged from a public school (Yell et al., 1998). When these laws were contested, the courts generally ruled in favor of exclusion (Heward, 2006).

When local public schools began to take some responsibility for educating certain students with disabilities, they often did so in segregated classrooms. The two exceptions to this practice were children with mild learning disabilities and children with behavioral disorders. However, while included in general education, they rarely received any kind of special help. Rather, if they struggled to make academic progress, these students were often labeled “slow learners” or “failures” and if they exhibited difficult behaviors, they were labeled “disciplinary problems” and were suspended (Heward, 2006). Children with more severe disabilities were usually placed in segregated schools or, worse, sent away from home altogether to institutions like Willowbrook State School, a facility in Staten Island, New York, where residents received little education and were frequently victimized and abused (Goode, Hill, Reiss, & Bronston, 2013).

Inspired by the civil rights movement and armed with the legal victory of the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954)—which maintained that education must be made available to all children under equal terms—in the late 1960s and early 1970s, parents and advocates of students with disabilities became reinvigorated to fight for equal educational opportunity using the court system. These efforts led to various pieces of new legislation and the emergence of special education programs in many states (Yell et al., 1998). Specifically, Congress passed several acts, including the Special Education Act (1961), which provided funding to train teachers of children with various disabilities. Additionally, when the Elementary

and Secondary Education Act was passed in 1965, it included funding for states and local districts to develop programs for economically disadvantaged children and children with disabilities (Heward, 2006).

One of the most significant court cases of this period was the class action suit *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972). In this case, PARC challenged a state law that denied public education to those children who were deemed “unable to profit from public school attendance.” It argued that despite the fact that the children that it represented had intellectual disabilities, this did not mean that they were ineducable or untrainable. The state was unable to prove that these children could not benefit from an education or that there was a rational need to exclude them from a public school setting. As a result, the court ruled that these children were entitled to receive a free appropriate public education. The court further stipulated that placements in regular classrooms and regular public schools were preferable to segregated settings and that parents had the right to be notified before any changes were made to their children’s educational program. The language used in this decision was a major breakthrough and became the basis for the wording used in federal legislation to come (Heward, 2006).

While positive changes were being made through the judicial system, there were significant inconsistencies regarding the rights offered to individuals with disabilities across states. The first national effort to protect individuals with disabilities came in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a law that guarded them against discrimination by any agency receiving federal funds. It stated that “no otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States...shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving

Federal financial assistance.” This legislation went a long way in guaranteeing basic civil rights for people with disabilities and applied to public school districts, virtually all of which receive federal support (Heward, 2006). This statute, however, was not comprehensive. Additionally, while other laws were passed throughout the country on the state level, still, these initiatives were uneven regarding access to education; some states provided substantial rights to students with disabilities, while other states merely admitted them into schools (Yell et al., 1998).

By 1975, it became clear that substantive national intervention was needed to specifically guarantee equal access to education for all students with disabilities regardless of where they lived. In response, the federal government passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), also known as P.L. 94-142, a law that addressed the differences that existed between states and fundamentally changed the face of public education in this country (Yell et al., 1998; Heward, 2006).

EAHCA mandated six key rights for students with disabilities: (a) a guarantee that schools must educate *all* children with disabilities ages 6 to 21; (b) nondiscriminatory identification, testing, evaluation, and placement procedures; (c) a free appropriate public education; (d) an education in the least restrictive environment; (e) due process safeguards; and (f) parent and student participation and shared decision making (Yell et al., 1998; Heward, 2006). Additionally, the centerpiece of the EAHCA was the Individualized Education Program (IEP), a document created for every student receiving special education services that outlines their educational placement, learning goals and objectives, length of school year, and evaluation and measurement criteria (Yell et al., 1998; Heward, 2006).

During its 1990 reauthorization, EAHCA was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and it was improved with the addition of several amendments. These

changes included: (a) person-first language that emphasized the person before the disability; (b) the identification of students with autism and traumatic brain injury as now being eligible for the law's benefits; (c) the addition of a transition plan on every student's IEP by age 16, and (d) an expanded definition of the term "related services" (Yell et al., 1998; Heward, 2006).

The law was reauthorized again in 1997 and, for the first time, mandated access to the general education curriculum as well as inclusion in state and district-wide assessments for students with disabilities. In doing so, the law now set the stage for the merging of special education with standards-based education and related testing. Its main intent was to support the academic improvement of students with disabilities. Congress mandated a number of additional changes including: (a) the addition of a general education teacher to a child's IEP team, (b) a new emphasis on creating measurable goals on a student's IEP and reporting progress toward achieving those objectives, (c) a requirement for states to offer mediation as a voluntary option to parents and educators as an initial process for the resolution of disputes, and (d) the addition of a behavior management plan based on a functional behavioral analysis to the IEPs of students with disabilities who also have behavioral problems (Yell et al., 1998; Heward, 2006).

Four years later, in 2001, Congress reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, renaming it the "No Child Left Behind Act" (NCLB). The ultimate goal of this legislation was for all children to attain proficiency in all subject matter by the year 2014 and for all teachers to be highly trained in their subjects. Schools were expected to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward the 100% proficiency goal with initial emphasis on assuring that every child would be able to read at or above grade level by the end of third grade and that all educators teaching core academic subjects were "highly qualified" by the end of the

2005-2006 school year (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2006; Heward, 2006; Center on Education Policy [CEP], 2013).

NCLB has four key principles: (a) stronger accountability for results, (b) greater flexibility for schools' use of federal funds, (c) more options for parents, and (d) an emphasis on evidence-based curricula and instructional methods (Heward, 2006). While each of these has had implications for students with disabilities, the increased focus on accountability stands out as being a source of heated debate and concern. Although IDEA already required students with disabilities to participate in state- and district-wide assessments, NCLB further mandated the inclusion of students with disabilities in annual statewide assessments (Ziegler, 2002). Under the accountability requirements of this act, "at least 95% of all students in grades 3 through 8 and one high school grade, including students with disabilities, must be tested in math and ELA to determine their progress in meeting state academic standards" (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2006). Students with IEPs may qualify for accommodations but are ultimately expected to take the same tests as their non-disabled peers unless they fall into the small percentage of students eligible for alternate assessment. The results of these tests are then used to determine whether schools, as well as various subgroups of their students, are making AYP (CEP, 2013). Annual school "report cards" provide comparative information on the performance of each school. The intention is that these report cards will not only show how well students are doing toward meeting academic standards, but also the progress that each subgroup of students—including students with disabilities—is making in closing achievement gaps. Districts and schools that do not make AYP are initially targeted for assistance. However, if they continue to miss benchmarks, they are then flagged for corrective action, and ultimately, restructuring. Those schools that meet or exceed goals are eligible for "academic achievement awards" (No Child



Left Behind Act of 2001, 2006). Heward (2006) points out that this system of sanctions for schools that do not meet AYP and incentives for those that do defines the term “high-stakes testing.” The requirement to adhere to NCLB expectations continued even as states transitioned to the new CCSS (CEP, 2013).

In 2015, Congress reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 again, changing its name from the “No Child Left Behind Act” to the “Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESSA). Given the fact that NCLB’s goal of 100% student proficiency in all subject matter by 2014 was not achieved, ESSA refocused on the more realistic, yet still challenging, goal to “provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.” This statement of purpose shifts the focus away from the minimum requirement set in NCLB for all students to reach “proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” and focuses instead on eliminating differences in performance between groups of students within the population—among which includes students with disabilities.

Furthermore, in 2017, the Supreme Court ruling in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* further clarified what a FAPE should look like for a student with a disability. The Supreme Court case *Board of Education of Hendrick Hudson Central School Dist. v. Rowley* (1982) had previously established that IDEA guarantees a substantively adequate program of education for all eligible children, and that this requirement is met if the child’s IEP establishes an educational program that is “reasonably calculated to enable the child to receive educational benefits.” For a child who is fully integrated into a general education classroom, this would mean that an IEP should be “reasonably calculated to enable the child to achieve passing marks and advance from grade to grade.” However, that case said nothing about what reasonable

educational benefits might look like for a child with a disability who was not integrated into a general education classroom. In *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*, the Supreme Court interpreted the meaning behind the words “reasonable educational benefits” to signify that a “child’s educational program must be appropriately ambitious in light of his circumstances, just as advancement from grade to grade is appropriately ambitious for most children in the regular classroom. The goals may differ, but every child should have the chance to meet challenging objectives.”

We are now at a point where our current educational paradigm asks schools to appropriately balance the unique needs of students with disabilities—in all of their forms—so that they may be ready for independent life with the need to challenge them academically so that they may have the chance to be ready for college and career.

### **Academic Standards in the United States**

To some degree, academic standards have always been a part of our education system through implicit expectations and the use of local curricula. But it was only in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the United States went through a period of standards-based reform, that explicit standards started to play a key role in American education (CCSS Initiative, 2016a; Rothman, 2014; VanTassel-Baska, 2015). This movement was propelled by *A Nation at Risk*, a 1983 report published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) that highlighted public dissatisfaction with American schools (Powell, 2000). Specifically, this report claimed that America’s education system had fallen behind the evolving needs of its population and behind the quality of learning available to the citizens of other nations. It recommended higher standards for students and teachers, the establishment of a high school core curriculum,

increased high school graduation standards, increased college entrance standards, a lengthened school day and year, and higher teacher salaries (NCEE, 1983).

In response to this report, in 1989, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) established math standards developed through the consensus of America's mathematics educators. Additionally, in that same year, President George H. W. Bush and the governors of all 50 states agreed upon a comprehensive plan to establish the first ever set of national education goals and voluntary academic standards called *Goals 2000* (Powell, 2000). Further steps were taken in 1991-1992 when the U.S. Department of Education provided grants to various private organizations to fund the development of these voluntary academic standards in specific subject areas (Powell, 2000).

In 1994, President Clinton signed the Goals 2000 – Educate America Act into law. This act defined eight national education goals—all to be reached by the year 2000. These included (a) that all children in America will start school ready to learn; (b) that the high school graduation rate will increase to 90%; (c) that all students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter and that every school will ensure that their students are prepared for citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our economy; (d) that the nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills; (e) that the number of American undergraduate and graduate students, especially women and minorities, who complete degrees in mathematics, science, and engineering will increase significantly; (f) that every American adult will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy; (g) that every school will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning; and (h) that every school

will promote partnerships to increase parental involvement and participation in the social, emotional, and academic growth of children. This act also created the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) to monitor standards development and the National Education Standards and Improvement Council (NESIC) to certify national standards being developed privately (Powell, 2000). While the goals set forth in this law stayed intact, ultimately, the idea of creating a set of common, national, academic standards was defeated by a desire among states to develop and establish their own standards and assessments (VanTassel-Baska, 2015).

By the early 2000s, every state in the nation succeeded in doing this. With the support of local stakeholders and various private groups that had developed subject area standards, each of the fifty states adopted its own set of academic standards to specify what students in grades 3-8 and high school should know and be able to do (CCSS Initiative, 2016a). States agreed that standards could be powerful organizers for educators that would help to align different components of education such as curriculum, instruction, materials, and teacher professional development to benefit students (Powell, 2000). Likewise, every state created its own definition of proficiency—the level at which a student is determined to be sufficiently educated at the end of each grade level and upon graduation.

In 2001, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was revised as the No Child Left Behind Act and required that students reach their locally developed state standards. According to this law, if a state were not able to meet its own academic standards, it would lose flexibility in the way that it could use federal funds. While the intention of this law was to encourage states “to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind” (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2006), in many states, standards were actually *lowered* to guarantee that their students would meet the required benchmarks (Shanahan, 2015).

The end result of this movement was that the quality of state standards across the nation varied widely, with many sets considered to be poor.

A problem of equal concern was that no one really knew how students in one state were performing compared to those from another state. Given the system in place, in which every single state was using its own unique set of standards, it was impossible to make any valid comparisons of student performance. Standards from state to state were just not aligned closely enough to really tell which states were doing a better job of preparing their students for the future. A 2009 study by Porter and colleagues examined similarities and differences between standards across the country. It showed that, when compared to one another within a content area, the level of alignment among state standards ranged from low to moderate.

National growth in academic achievement struggled during the early 2000s and, still, in 2012, as much as 42% of the students admitted into college required remediation in reading, writing, and/or math (Complete College America, 2012). The lack of alignment among the academic standards across our nation and the resulting dissatisfaction with student outcomes became an important impetus for states to revisit the idea of creating a set of voluntary national standards and, ultimately, to collaborate on the development of the CCSS in 2009 (CCSS Initiative, 2016a; VanTassel-Baska, 2015).

## **The Common Core State Standards**

### **History and Development**

The Common Core State Standards are defined as “a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA)” (CCSS Initiative, 2016a). They are learning goals that outline “what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade” between kindergarten and 12<sup>th</sup> grade (CCSS Initiative, 2016a). They were created

with a goal of ensuring that all students—including students with disabilities—graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, a career, and life, regardless of where they live (CCSS Initiative, 2016a).

The standards were written through a collaborative effort between governors and commissioners of education from 48 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia, through their membership in the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (CCSS Initiative, 2016a). This initiative received support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Shanahan, 2015). These education leaders recognized that the academic progress of students in the United States had grown stagnant, and that, compared to our international peers, we had lost ground. They also believed that a root cause of this problem was “an uneven patchwork of academic standards that vary from state to state and do not agree on what students should know and be able to do at each grade level” (CCSS Initiative, 2016a). Given the need for a more cohesive set of standards across states, they coordinated an effort to create the CCSS in 2009 and hired a writing team comprised of several advisory committees (Shanahan, 2015).

Throughout the development process, the CCSS creators on this writing team collaborated with teachers, school chiefs, administrators, content experts and leading academics. Work and feedback groups were formed and teachers were organized with the help of professional organizations such as the National Education Association (NEA), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), among others. They also received and incorporated feedback from the public. They looked to a variety of sources to inform the creation of the standards including research, the expectations of colleges and employers, and the best and

most effective standards from across the United States and around the world (CCSS Initiative, 2016a).

As the standards development workgroups aided the process of standards creation, they followed a set of guiding criteria. These criteria began with a preamble that laid out a vision that the standards were to “define the rigorous skills and knowledge in English Language Arts and Mathematics that need to be effectively taught and learned for students to be ready to succeed academically in credit-bearing, college-entry courses and in workforce training programs” (CCSS Initiative, n.d.a). It continued to explain that the standards had been developed to be: (a) fewer, clearer, and higher; (b) aligned with college and work expectations; (c) inclusive of rigorous content and applications of knowledge through higher-order skills; (d) internationally benchmarked; and (f) research and evidence-based (CCSS Initiative, n.d.a). Finally, it emphasized the intention to ensure that *all* American students are prepared for the global economic workplace and success in all entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses in English, mathematics, the sciences, the social sciences and the humanities with success being defined as receiving a grade of C or better (CCSS Initiative, n.d.a).

During the CCSS development process, the standards were divided into two main categories. First are the college- and career-readiness standards, which address what students are expected to know and understand by the time they graduate from high school. Second are the K-12 standards, which address grade specific expectations for elementary school through high school. The college- and career-readiness standards were developed first and then incorporated into the K-12 standards in the final version of the CCSS.

Once the standards were created, the NGA Center and the CCSSO released them for review during two public comment periods. They received nearly 10,000 comments on the

standards from teachers, parents, school administrators, and other citizens concerned with education policy, helping them to shape the final version of the standards (CCSS Initiative, 2016a).

The first comment period took place in September 2009. The comments were summarized and are accessible on the timeline portion of the CCSS website. They indicate very little feedback regarding students with disabilities and how the standards would directly affect them.

The second comment period was held in March 2010. Many concerns were voiced at this time, including questions about why there are no standards for other content areas, pre-K, the arts, etc. This time, there was significant discussion about the effects on students with special needs, students who are gifted and talented, and ELLs. Additionally, uncertainty was expressed around the theme of appropriate implementation. The CCSS website acknowledges this directly by stating that “few respondents believe the current education system is well prepared to meaningfully implement the Common Core State Standards. Local resources and capacity were frequently cited as potential problems. Some suggest the solution lies in the need for phasing in the standards, perhaps one grade level at a time, along with outside resources and outside guidance. Some respondents want guidance on implementation embedded into the CCSS” (CCSS Initiative, 2016a).

In June 2010, the final standards were released and by the following August, 33 states and the District of Columbia had adopted the standards (Rothman, 2014).

Although the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) was not involved in creating the standards, it supported the mission to create a unified set of standards and financially incentivized the adoption of the CCSS (or other high-level standards like them). In 2010, it



allowed states to compete for school reform funding through the Race to the Top competition (RTTT), a federal initiative that provided states with millions of dollars of education aid. One of the primary criteria in the scoring rubric used to grant awards was for states to raise their academic standards. The easiest way to do that was to adopt the CCSS (Porter, 2011; Shanahan, 2015). Two states (Nebraska and Virginia) saw this action as coercive and cited it as a reason for why they wouldn't adopt the CCSS. Indiana independently chose to adopt the CCSS while refusing federal money to avoid what it also saw as interference into local education matters. Other states went ahead and adopted the CCSS after the RTTT competition had ended (Shanahan, 2015). By June 2012, 45 states altogether had chosen to use these standards (Rothman, 2014).

Since this time, however, Florida, Indiana, Oklahoma, and South Carolina have reversed their CCSS adoptions. Currently, forty-one states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) are utilizing the CCSS. But, it's not quite as simple as that. In fact, within Alaska, a state that has not officially adopted the CCSS, individual school districts such as Fairbanks have chosen to adopt these standards. Additionally, Indiana moved to a set of standards that still looks a lot like the CCSS (Shanahan, 2015). Thus, the influence of the CCSS remains widespread and strong. In fact, Lucy Calkins, Mary Ehrenworth, and Christopher Lehman, the authors of *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement* (2012) claim that the CCSS “represent the most sweeping reform of the K–12 curriculum that has ever occurred in this country. It is safe to say that across the entire history of American education, no single document will have played a more influential role over what is taught in our schools.”

## **The Key Instructional Shifts**

The CCSS differentiate themselves from previous sets of state standards in six specific ways, called the “key shifts” in ELA and mathematics. These instructional shifts are at the heart of the change that these standards bring to American public education. It is important that teachers understand the six key shifts in instructional practice—three in ELA and three in mathematics—in order to implement the standards well (CCSS Initiative, 2016c).

### **Key instructional shifts in English language arts.**

The three key shifts outlined by the CCSS for ELA are: (a) regular practice with complex texts and their academic language; (b) reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from texts, both literary and informational; and (c) building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction (CCSS Initiative, 2016c).

#### ***Complex texts.***

College and career readiness anchor standard number 10 for reading specifically asks students to “read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently” (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010a, p.10). Additionally, starting in second grade, each grade’s set of reading standards includes one that calls for students to read grade-level complex texts with independence. The rationale for this emphasis on text complexity is that teachers cannot rely solely on texts that are matched to a student’s reading level, lest they never catch up to grade-level standards (Shanahan, 2015). Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman (2012) consider text complexity to be the “hallmark of the Common Core State Standards” (p. 32). They point out that, throughout the CCSS document, the official CCSS website, and the rhetoric of individuals who are closely associated with the standards, a grave concern is repeatedly expressed about the need for students to be able to read more complex texts.

The Common Core’s discussion of text complexity located in Appendix A of the ELA/literacy standards document (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010b) indicates that this key instructional shift was built into the standards in large part because of a 2006 report released by American College Testing (ACT) entitled, “Reading Between the Lines.” This report stated that “the clearest differentiator in reading between students who are college ready and students who are not is the ability to comprehend complex texts” (p. 2). Additionally, it highlights the fact that, in many states, academic standards in high school reading were insufficient or nonexistent and that no set of state standards within the United States addressed text complexity explicitly. The CCSS explain that the most important implication from this report is that schooling that focuses only on “higher-order” or “critical” thinking skills alone is not enough for students to become college or career ready. The ability to read complex texts is at least as important (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010b).

This key shift also puts an emphasis on academic vocabulary which includes words that appear in a variety of content areas. The standards expect that students will build their vocabularies through a mix of conversation, direct instruction, and reading (CCSS Initiative, 2016c). This skill supports the goal of being able to read complex texts and is necessary for students to continually improve their comprehension as they move up the “staircase of increasing complexity” from elementary through high school (CCSS Initiative, 2016c).

It is important to note that, while the CCSS provide an appendix specifically dedicated to discussing the research base for this key instructional shift, as well as a three-part model for measuring text complexity, they provide limited information about how to support students’ achievement of this kind of advanced reading. Appendix A states that students who read significantly below their grade-band level need additional support to enable them to attain this

goal. Interestingly, this appendix suggests that even students who are on track for college and a career are “likely to need scaffolding as they master higher levels of text complexity” (p. 9). Additionally, Appendix B provides a list of sample texts for each grade but does not provide a required reading list. Instead, the CCSS leave specific text choice up to schools (NGA Center and CCSSO, 2010c). As a document simply geared toward providing academic benchmarks that outline what teachers should teach and what students should learn, it does not aim to suggest *how* teachers should support their students toward these ends.

***Citing evidence.***

The CCSS expect that students will be able to cite evidence from both literary and informational texts when they write and speak. Rather than simply using their prior knowledge and experience, the standards emphasize the ability to read texts closely and use direct evidence to present analyses, defend claims, and share clear information. Students should be able to answer a range of text-dependent questions, some of which may require making inferences based on reading with careful attention to the text (CCSS Initiative, 2016c).

This expectation is a shift from many previous sets of state standards that frequently asked students to draw heavily from their own experience and opinions. The CCSS do include both narrative and opinion writing, but they represent a move toward including more informative and argumentative writing that requires students to write with evidence that they cite directly from source material in order to support their claims. This change in focus is specifically meant to help prepare students for the type of work they will be asked to do in college, career, and life (CCSS Initiative, 2016c).

### ***Building knowledge.***

The CCSS recommend a balanced use of literature and informational texts throughout the school day and year. The expectation is for students to be immersed in information about the world around them so that they can develop the strong general knowledge and vocabulary needed to be successful readers (CCSS Initiative, 2016c). Specifically, the CCSS require that students in grades K-5 spend half of their time on literary texts and half of their time on informational texts. They clarify that informational reading should take place across the curriculum, through content-rich nonfiction in history/social studies, science, technical studies, and the arts.

In sixth grade and beyond, the standards place greater emphasis on the specific genre of literary nonfiction (CCSS Initiative, 2016c). This genre is a form of nonfiction that includes the presentation and interpretation of facts and uses many of the techniques traditionally used in fiction or poetry to report on people, places, and events in the real world. It includes such forms of writing as essay, biography, and memoir (Nordquist, 2018). This is a shift from traditional standards. While the CCSS continue to emphasize literature through its expectation that 50% of the reading done in K-5 focus on this genre, and through its continued use as the core of ELA classes in grades 6-12, they also ask for increased content-specific literacy across all subjects so that students are able to independently build knowledge in these disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening (CCSS Initiative, 2016c).

### **Key instructional shifts in mathematics.**

The three key shifts outlined by the CCSS for math are: (a) greater focus on fewer topics; (b) coherence - linking topics and thinking across grades; and (c) rigor - pursue conceptual

understanding, procedural skills and fluency, and application with equal intensity (CCSS Initiative, 2016d).

***Focus.***

The CCSS call for greater focus in mathematics compared to the standards of the past. Instead of trying to cover a broad range of math topics in any given year, the CCSS ask teachers to narrow and deepen the way they spend their time and energy in the classroom. The CCSS outline a framework for deep focus around the major work of each grade between grades K-8. The goal is to provide students a strong foundation in math that includes a solid understanding of concepts, a high degree of procedural skill and fluency, and the ability to apply math to solve problems (CCSS Initiative, 2016d).

***Coherence.***

The CCSS make a concerted effort to organize math standards in a way that provides coherence, or unity, that emphasizes the interconnectedness between topics. Therefore, the standards progress from grade to grade in a way that allows students to add new understanding onto the foundations built in previous years. Across the grades, standards are presented so that topics are viewed as extensions of previous learning. Additionally, major topics within a grade are reinforced by supporting, complementary topics so that math can be understood as one, coherent, body of knowledge (CCSS Initiative, 2016d).

***Rigor.***

The CCSS expect rigor from students. This means a deep, authentic command of mathematical concepts. A common misconception is that, by calling for rigor, the standards aim to make math complicated or to introduce topics at earlier grades. This is not the case. Instead,

by requesting rigor, the standards ask students to pursue conceptual understanding, procedural skills and fluency, and application with equal intensity (CCSS Initiative, 2016d).

Conceptual understanding refers to the ability to access concepts from a number of perspectives in order to see math as more than a set of discrete procedures. If students have true conceptual understanding, they can manipulate numbers in multiple ways. Procedural skills refer to the ability to perform calculations with accuracy, and fluency means the ability to do so quickly. The ability to access central math functions smoothly allows students to tackle increasingly complex concepts and procedures. Application refers to the ability to use math in situations that call for mathematical knowledge – a skill that is easier to achieve when a student has strong conceptual understanding and procedural fluency (CCSS Initiative, 2016d).

To this end, in addition to academic standards that outline math skills, the CCSS include specific mathematical practice standards that outline the process and thinking skills students should demonstrate in mathematics across the grade levels. An emphasis on all three components of rigor is unique to the CCSS when compared to previous sets of state standards (CCSS Initiative, 2016d).

### **Arguments for the CCSS**

Advocates of the CCSS have highlighted a number of reasons why these standards are beneficial compared to a system of individually developed sets of state standards. These include: (a) consistency across the nation around a core of shared expectations for students; (b) efficiency and collaboration among states; (c) alignment with the expectations of colleges and employers; (d) a focus on depth rather than breadth; (e) they are internationally benchmarked; (f) their existence will improve the quality of standardized assessments; and (g) they are intended for use with all students, including students with disabilities.

A major benefit cited by proponents of the CCSS is that they provide consistency around a core of shared expectations—a quality that opens up many possibilities. When standards are consistent across states, families and teachers gain a sense of stability. The skills and knowledge for which students are responsible in ELA and math will not change if a family moves from one CCSS state to another, a characteristic that is beneficial for both a student and his/her teacher (CCSS Initiative, 2016a; Porter, 2011; VanTassel-Baska, 2015).

This consistency provides teachers with the ability to collaborate with colleagues across many states, opening up avenues for vast online lesson-sharing platforms as well as increased opportunities for interstate student partnerships and projects (CCSS Initiative, 2016a). Additionally, with shared expectations comes the useful ability to compare schools across state lines (Finn, 2010). Additionally, states using the CCSS have the ability to work with each other in the development of a range of tools and services including preservice education, curricula, textbooks, professional development, digital media, assessment systems, and other teaching materials (CCSS Initiative, 2016a; Porter, 2011; Rothman, 2014).

In contrast to many sets of state standards that came before it, the CCSS meet the expectations of colleges and employers. The writers of these standards took care to incorporate the input of colleges, workforce training programs, and employers (CCSS Initiative, 2016a). They focus on the use of more open-ended instructional techniques and require students to produce evidence of learning through products that demonstrate mastery of higher-level skills, an approach that prepares students for the demands of college and a career (Porter, 2011; VanTassel-Baska, 2015).

Additionally, advocates argue, they are focused. According to Shanahan (2015), the CCSS were written according to the “fewer, bigger, better” philosophy which means that the



standards “lay out the major goals that must be accomplished without indicating all the underlying skills or knowledge that must be gained to reach those goals,” leaving the curriculum under local control. The CCSS are more focused than previous sets of state standards and are now in greater alignment with the highest-achieving countries around the world. It is, in fact, the explicit intention of the CCSS math standards to be more focused (Porter, 2011).

The CCSS are internationally benchmarked and correlate well with 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations for world learning and testing (VanTassel-Baska, 2015).

Finally, many believe that the quality of assessments will improve. With a set of common standards and assessments that are aligned to them, it becomes more possible to both deliver assessments electronically and make them computer adaptive. Electronically delivered assessments have the potential to be more animated and engaging for students and computer adaptive testing would produce fewer floor and ceiling effects (Porter, 2011).

### **Arguments Against the CCSS**

Opponents of the CCSS, likewise, have a significant number of critiques of this system. These include: (a) a belief that we are simply pursuing the wrong focus altogether and should be addressing poverty to solve the achievement gap; (b) that the CCSS have been too heavily influenced by the federal government and this infringes on states’ rights; (c) that the research base of the CCSS is incomplete and these standards were never field-tested; (d) international benchmarking was not done well; (e) the rollout of the standards happened too quickly, causing problems with implementation; (f) expecting struggling readers to tackle challenging texts can be inappropriate; (g) the new assessments are too difficult; and (h) there is a lack of guidance for the proper implementation of these standards for students with disabilities.

Some critics of the CCSS think that by putting time, energy, and resources into shifting to a new set of standards, we will continue to ignore the real problem in education—poverty. They believe that we are simply pursuing the wrong issue. Bracey (2009) points out that some of the states that the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) rated as having the most stringent standards before the CCSS had among the lowest scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and some with weak standards had among the highest. Therefore, it is unclear that implementing high-level standards across the board would have any significant effect on student achievement. Perhaps a bigger priority would be to deal more directly with poverty and inequality as ways of closing the achievement gap.

Additionally, opponents of the CCSS claim that they were not “really” state-led. Some believe that they are a back-door way for the federal government to enact national standards. They argue that it is not truly correct to say that the CCSS initiative was state-led because the federal government incentivized adoption of these standards through RTTT and awarded consortia like the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) millions of dollars. This is, in effect, a gross overstep of the federal government and an infringement on state and local governments’ rights regarding education. Finn (2010) argues that several states such as Massachusetts, California, and Indiana have had excellent standards for years. For these states, switching to the CCSS may turn out to be a net negative.

Diane Kern (2014), a reading researcher at The University of Rhode Island, argues that a significant problem with the CCSS is that its research base is incomplete. She points out that Appendix A of the English language arts and literacy standards includes a reference section for reading and reading foundational skills. It includes 41 references: 11 policy documents, 17

books, 2 papers presented at conferences, and 11 peer-reviewed journals. However, she explains, it does not include any references to the *International Reading Association Standards for Reading Professionals-Revised 2010* and does not cite any reading research published in handbooks on reading research, the *Reading Research Quarterly* or the *Journal of Research in Reading*. The appendix only cites one peer-reviewed journal from the International Reading Association. This is problematic. The majority of references focus on high school learners and college readiness while there are no references that address learners with disabilities, English language learners, or culturally diverse students. The references that address foundational skills focus on phonics, vocabulary, and spelling—which may address some instructional needs of early learners and struggling readers—but there is a lack of foundational research on fluency, comprehension, and young children’s cognition and development (Kern, 2014). Others argue that the ELA standards focus primarily on skills over content and there is not a good basis for reduction in literary study and favoring of informational texts in the CCSS. There are similar critiques of the math standards. Some experts believe that they are not rigorous and leave out critical components that students need. Porter (2011) notes that, in terms of topics, it is unclear if the CCSS will benefit students because it “represents less emphasis on geometric concepts, data displays, and probability than current state standards do.”

Another criticism is that the CCSS are not well benchmarked to international standards. Porter (2011) used international benchmarking to judge the quality of the CCSS, and the results were surprising for both ELA and mathematics. Porter found that the top-achieving countries for which there were content standards available put a greater emphasis on the skill “perform procedures” than do the CCSS. This runs counter to the widespread call in the United States for a greater emphasis on higher order cognitive demand.

Another important concern from many is that the rollout of the CCSS happened too quickly and teachers and students did not have enough time to adjust. Textbooks and other curricular materials were not well aligned to the standards during the early years of implementation (Porter et. al., 2011). Additionally, difficulties around finding the funds necessary for successful implementation impact the ability of schools to utilize the CCSS effectively (Rothman, 2014; VanTassel-Baska, 2015). Specifically, VanTassel-Baska points out that there is a real concern that the preparation for the CCSS was slow and uneven across and within states and that many teachers were not trained in the practices required to teach higher-level skills in ELA and math. Many schools have not organized the ongoing professional development that is needed for successful implementation of the CCSS and standards-based instruction generally.

Given that one of the biggest changes that comes along with the CCSS is the emphasis on complex texts, many believe that supporting struggling readers to read complex texts will be a challenge (Halladay, 2013). Unless thoughtfully done, time spent exposing these readers, as well as students in the early childhood grades, to complex texts could unintentionally shift critical time away from establishing foundational reading skills that are necessary for students to make adequate progress.

Along with the new standards came new assessments which some claim are too difficult, don't focus on the right content, and require the use of technology with which students may not be proficient.

Finally, there is insufficient information provided for the application of the standards to students with exceptionalities or special needs. This includes students with disabilities, students who are gifted, and English Language Learners (Schroeder-Davis, 2014). While the standards

were created with the intention of applying to all students, it is unclear that the standards were written with these special populations in mind.

### **Application to Students With Disabilities**

The CCSS directly address the topic of their application to students with disabilities in two places: (a) in an addendum to the standards entitled “Application to Students with Disabilities;” and (b) in the introductions to the ELA/literacy standards and math standards.

The CCSS addendum, “Application to Students with Disabilities” is a one-and-a-half-page statement that provides a strong takeaway message of full inclusion for students with disabilities in the standards as well as general guidelines for using the standards with this population. Specifically, this statement progressively asserts that students with disabilities “...must be challenged to excel within the general curriculum and be prepared for success in their post-school lives, including college and/or careers. These common standards provide an historic opportunity to improve access to rigorous academic content standards for students with disabilities” (CCSS Initiative, n.d.b).

The CCSS statement goes on to emphasize that, “...*how* these high standards are taught and assessed is of the utmost importance in reaching this diverse group of students.” However, it specifically leaves that “how” open for teachers and schools to determine by using their own discretion and professional judgment. The statement does not provide its readers with a list of resources from which they can find guidance on successful implementation. Rather, it leaves that responsibility to ongoing research in the field of instructional practice and suggests some well-known (and even basic, legally required) strategies to assist implementation of the CCSS with students with disabilities. These include incorporating supports such as related services, developing an IEP, providing access to well-prepared teachers and specialized instructional

support personnel, utilizing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) supports, giving accommodations that change material and procedures without changing the standards, and ensuring access to assistive technology (CCSS Initiative, n.d.b).

Language relevant to the implementation of the CCSS with students with disabilities—both explicit and implicit—comes up again in the introduction section to the ELA/literacy standards and the introduction to the mathematics standards.

A subsection of the introduction to the ELA/literacy standards is entitled “*What is **not** covered by the standards*” and lays out some fundamental principles for educators to remember when using the standards. Some of this advice is repeated in the introduction to the math standards. The most relevant statements to students with disabilities are quoted below:

1. “While the Standards focus on what is most essential, they do not describe all that can or should be taught” (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010a).
2. “The Standards set grade-specific standards but do not define the intervention methods or materials necessary to support students who are well below or well above grade-level expectations. No set of grade-specific standards can fully reflect the great variety in abilities, needs, learning rates, and achievement levels of students in any given classroom” (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010a).
3. “It is also beyond the scope of the Standards to define the full range of supports appropriate for English language learners and for students with special needs. At the same time, all students must have the opportunity to learn and meet the same high standards if they are to access the knowledge and skills necessary in their post-high school lives” (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010a).

4. “The Standards should also be read as allowing for the widest possible range of students to participate fully from the outset and as permitting appropriate accommodations to ensure maximum participation of students with special education needs. For example, for students with disabilities *reading* should allow for the use of Braille, screen-reader technology, or other assistive devices, while *writing* should include the use of a scribe, computer, or speech-to-text technology. In a similar vein, *speaking and listening* should be interpreted broadly to include sign language” (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010a).
5. “While the ELA and content area literacy components described herein are critical to college and career readiness, they do not define the whole of such readiness. Students require a wide-ranging, rigorous academic preparation and, particularly in the early grades, attention to such matters as social, emotional, and physical development and approaches to learning” (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010a).

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), a professional association of educators dedicated to advancing the success of children with exceptionalities, echoes the call for full participation of students with disabilities in the CCSS. In fact, the CEC contributed—together with other national organizations like it—to the introductory statement on how to implement the standards for children with disabilities. They believe that “the new standards will move education in the United States in the right direction for all students and will provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and work” (CEC, 2018).

It is clear that the intention of the developers of the CCSS and stakeholders that support its use with students with disabilities is to hold all students accountable to the same high academic standards, regardless of ability level. But this begs some important—and sometimes frustrating—questions:

- Given that the CCSS represent significant change in many states, that they claim to push students to achieve greater academic heights than ever before, and that it is beyond the scope of the standards to provide guidance on successful implementation for students with disabilities, how can states do a better job of providing special education teachers with the support they need?
- While it may be out of the scope of the CCSS to define the full range of supports appropriate for students with disabilities, can it or should it do a better job of referring teachers to the resources they may need?
- When teachers of students with disabilities are faced with the difficult decision to prioritize their limited time with students, how can they find the right balance between teaching under the high expectations of the CCSS and addressing their students' IEP goals (many of which are never measured on high-stakes standardized exams) that often go far beyond the categories of ELA/literacy and math and into the areas of functional skills, vocational skills, social-emotional skills, and communication skills?

It is certainly up to teachers and schools to determine how to give their students, even those with the most significant disabilities, meaningful access to the CCSS. However, in the years that the standards have rolled out across the states, there is some evidence that special education teachers are expressing frustration because targeted support has been lacking, and because they are feeling more pressure than ever to prioritize skills that are tested on new CCSS-aligned exams at the expense of other skills that are important to their students with disabilities. In light of this, states and local school districts have to make sure that guidance is in place for the implementation of the CCSS. It is imperative that students with disabilities get a full and well-



rounded education that is both academically rich and meets their diverse needs. Special education is, indeed, special for that reason.

### **Implementation of the Common Core State Standards**

The term “Common Core State Standards” means different things to different people. For some, it means the written standards alone. For many, though, the phrase evokes the standards plus all of the related aspects of their implementation. All of the states and territories using the CCSS fully implemented them by the 2014-2015 school year (CCSS Initiative, 2016b). In addition to requiring their use by teachers in classrooms, implementation within states has typically included the following components:

1. Updating teacher preparation programs to include coursework about the CCSS
2. Providing professional development to teachers about the CCSS
3. Developing and adopting CCSS-aligned curricula and resources
4. Assessing students using CCSS-aligned standardized exams

The state of Kentucky was the first in the nation to adopt the CCSS. It began implementation during the 2011-2012 school year, taking several measures to support the process along the way (CCSS Initiative, 2016b). During the first two years of execution, teachers, school leaders, and district officials met monthly to discuss methods for fulfilling the vision of the CCSS. The state department of education built an online portal through which teachers could access lessons, tests, and curriculum materials. Additionally, the state began working with institutions of higher education both to rewrite the assessments used for placement of college students in first-year courses so that they align with the CCSS and to redesign teacher education programs (Rodde, 2013; Rothman, 2014).

New York State was also an early adopter of the standards but took until the 2013-2014 school year to enact full implementation (CCSS Initiative, 2016b). While New York gave itself several years before fully putting the standards into operation, it chose a somewhat controversial path for doing so. The state contracted with private, nonprofit organizations to develop new curricula aligned to the CCSS, developed a website that included a variety of resource materials, and then created an assessment based on the standards and administered it immediately, in the spring of 2013. This last step came two years before most other states began to administer new tests. As a result, student proficiency rates dropped, prompting an impassioned outcry from teachers and parents who complained that students had not been given enough time to adjust to the new standards before being evaluated on them (Rothman, 2014).

While Kentucky's path was thoughtful and smooth, leading to a generally positive CCSS roll-out experience, New York's was rocky, resulting in a fair amount of controversy throughout the state. Clearly, implementation is a big deal. When undertaking an initiative as massive as the CCSS—a complete paradigm shift for many students, teachers, and parents—careful planning is needed to ensure positive outcomes. Furthermore, when such a move affects the academic programs of students with disabilities—a population in need of specialized and individualized supports—even more close attention is warranted.

### **Teacher Preparation**

A 2013 Center on Education Policy (CEP) survey found that 33 states had worked with colleges and universities to redesign teacher preparation programs to reflect the standards. In contrast, in a 2013 e-mail survey of more than 2,500 school superintendents by Education Week and Gallup, a majority of superintendents (68%) reported that their district was not coordinating implementation of the CCSS with local colleges and universities.

In an effort to address the national shortage of secondary education teachers who are qualified to support their students in the mathematics portion of the CCSS, the Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities established an initiative called the Mathematics Teacher Education Partnership (MTE-Partnership). This body consists of a group of universities, university systems, community colleges, school districts, several state departments of education, education consortia, and other education-focused organizations in 31 states.

### **Professional Development**

Professional development around the CCSS is necessary to promote understanding and to ensure that conflicting interpretations of the standards do not develop. The 2013 CEP survey to state officials also found that nearly all states that were questioned had developed and disseminated professional development materials around the CCSS and had carried out state-wide professional development initiatives. This study also found that thirty-three of the states surveyed were providing or planned to provide training and materials to help ensure that IEPs for students with disabilities were aligned to the CCSS. Twenty-four states reported that they began doing this in 2012-13 while nine states intended to do so in 2013-14 or later. Finally, this survey reported that in thirty-seven states, officials faced challenges with providing professional development to help teachers align instruction for students with disabilities to the CCSS. No state official ever claimed that providing this type of support was *not* a challenge (CEP, 2013).

A 2011 survey of mathematics teachers in 40 states revealed that while a majority of teachers had read the standards and liked them, 80% said they were “pretty much the same” as previous state standards. This is a concern because, while it is true that some states have standards that are similar to the CCSS, some states have standards that are significantly different, which signals that some teachers are understating the differences. This disconnect can lead to an

unintended poor delivery of the standards to students and indicates that professional development focused on highlighting the key instructional shifts is needed (Cogan, Schmidt, & Houang, 2013).

### **Common Core-Aligned Curricula and Resources**

CCSS-aligned curricula and resources have been developed both on the state and national level by various organizations. One of the largest curriculum development initiatives was undertaken by Pearson Education. Pearson has created a series of curriculum materials for grades PreK-12 in a variety of formats—traditional print, completely digital, and a blended format that includes both print and digital components. The Bill & Melinda Gates foundation has provided support for some of the technology needed to support these curricula (Rothman, 2014).

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) has created a digital library of curriculum frameworks, sample instructional units, and formative assessment tools (Rothman, 2014).

Student Achievement Partners, an organization founded by three of the lead writers of the CCSS—David Coleman, Susan Pimentel, and Jason Zimba—have created “immersion institutes” to provide information about the standards to teachers and to create a pool of materials for them to utilize in their teaching (Rothman, 2014).

The aforementioned 2013 CEP survey indicated that, in thirty states, curricula aligned to the CCSS were being used in at least some districts or grade levels. Twenty-nine states had developed curriculum guides or materials aligned to the CCSS.

Under the guidance of Achieve, Inc., a non-partisan education reform organization, states have developed Educators Evaluating the Quality of Instructional Products (EQuIP), a tool that

enables teachers to evaluate materials for quality and alignment to the standards (Rothman, 2014).

### **Common Core-Aligned Standardized Tests**

In order to assess progress toward the new CCSS, states that adopted them have also had to revamp their state tests that measure student achievement.

Two state-led consortia, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), have developed assessments that aim to provide meaningful feedback to ensure that students are progressing toward attaining the skills outlined in the CCSS (Shanahan, 2015). Many states have chosen to participate in one of these two consortia. However, they are not required to, and some states have decided to create their own assessments (Shanahan, 2015). In 2010, the United States Department of Education (USDE) awarded \$330 million in RTTT funds to these two consortia. PARCC received \$170 million in funds while SBAC received \$160 million (Porter, 2011; Rothman, 2014). The new tests deployed in 2014 (Bushaw & Lopez, 2013).

Two additional consortia, working through the National Center and State Collaborative Partnership and the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternative Assessment System Consortium, are developing a new generation of assessments for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (CCSS Initiative, 2016a).

### **Perceptions of the Common Core State Standards**

Several studies have been conducted to examine the perceptions of various groups of education stakeholders such as the public, school administrators, and teachers toward the CCSS and its implementation. In most cases, surveys were administered to collect information about

the opinions of each group. Only a few of these studies specifically addressed issues involving students with disabilities or examined the unique viewpoints of special education teachers.

### **Perceptions of the Public**

A 2013 Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup poll found that, at the time, the majority (62%) of Americans had never heard of the CCSS. Among the 38% who had heard of the standards, the majority (51%) said that they were somewhat knowledgeable about them. Additionally, among those who had heard of the standards, 41% thought that they would make education in the United States more competitive globally, while 35% said that they would have no effect, and 21% believed that they would make education in the nation less competitive.

In 2014, Achieve Inc., an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit education reform organization, released a report summarizing the results of a November, 2013 survey conducted on behalf of the organization by Public Opinion Strategies and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research. This survey asked 800 registered voters nationwide various questions about the CCSS and the results were compared to those from two similar surveys commissioned by Achieve Inc. in 2011 and 2012. Their report indicated that, for three years in a row (2011, 2012, and 2013) there was majority support among American voters for states to have the same standards and tests rather than separate versions.

In 2013, the report indicated, most voters were still unaware of the CCSS with 63% of participants reporting that they had heard “not much” or “nothing at all” about the standards. Among those who had heard at least something, their opinions about them were nearly equally divided with 37% having a favorable opinion of them and 40% having an unfavorable opinion of them. However, after being read a brief description of the standards and their goals, 69% of voters expressed support for implementing the CCSS and 66% of voters expressed support for

implementing their associated tests. In contrast, 31% of voters surveyed sided with opponents of the CCSS who argued that the standards had not been tested in the classroom, that there was no evidence they would work, and that the standards were an attempt to federalize education.

There were some notable differences between voters from various political parties. In 2013, 61% of republican voters surveyed indicated that they supported the CCSS after being provided a brief description of the standards, as compared to 65% of independents and 80% of democrats. When asked whether they supported CCSS-aligned assessments after being provided a brief description of them, 57% of republican voters surveyed reported that they were in favor of them, as compared to 55% of independent voters, and 76% of democrats. It is interesting to note that, as of 2013, the majority of republicans, independents, and democrats were in favor of the CCSS and aligned tests with democrats supporting them both to the greatest extent.

During administration of the survey, it was explained to voters that test scores may drop as the CCSS and aligned assessments are implemented. The majority of voters (81%) responded that they favored giving teachers and students time to adjust to the CCSS before there are consequences for test results, with 58% of voters favoring a one to two-year adjustment period. At the same time, 78% of voters wanted teacher evaluations, based at least in part on students' test scores, to continue during the adjustment period.

Additionally, this report indicates that as implementation of the CCSS began, there was a slight decline in favorability of the standards as compared to previous years. However, overall in 2013, there continued to be moderately strong support for implementation of both the standards and common assessments.

## **Perceptions of School Administrators**

A 2013 e-mail survey of more than 2,500 school superintendents by Education Week and Gallup indicated that the majority of superintendents (58%) believe the CCSS will improve the quality of education in their community. Additionally, the majority (75%) also believed that the CCSS will provide more consistency in the quality of education between districts and states. Finally, the majority (54%) of school superintendents believed that the CCSS will not inhibit individualized learning. It is important to note that individualized learning is especially important for students with disabilities.

## **Perceptions of Teachers**

According to a 2013 American Federation of Teachers (AFT) member survey conducted by Hart Research Associates, a majority (75%) of AFT members either “somewhat approved” or “strongly approved” of the CCSS. At the same time, a majority (83%) of AFT members agreed that there should be a moratorium on high stakes consequences for students, teachers, and schools until the CCSS and its assessments have been implemented for 1 year.

In regard to implementation, 39% of teachers said their district was “just somewhat prepared” or “not prepared” to implement the CCSS in 2013. A majority (72%) of teachers said that they were provided “very few” or “no resources” to implement the CCSS in 2013. Finally, a majority (53%) of teachers felt that their CCSS training has been “inadequate” or they reported receiving “no training at all” (Hart Research Associates, 2013).

In 2013, the Michigan legislature prohibited spending on the implementation of the standards. A series of hearings followed and the legislature reversed course. During the hearings, teachers and principals expressed their support for the standards and convinced legislators that,



since implementation was already under way, any effort to turn back would be both confusing to teachers and expensive (Rothman, 2014).

A 2015 study by Ritter and McKenzie surveyed 967 teachers in the state of Arkansas about their perceptions of the CCSS. Their survey was organized into three categories: (a) Impact on Student Learning, (b) Impact on Teachers Attitudes, and (c) Implementation. Overall results of the “Impact on Student Learning” items showed that teachers believed that the CCSS encourages students to think more critically, it will lead to improved student learning, students will be better prepared academically, students will be better prepared for college and for the workforce, and that it is not decreasing the amount of time spent on literature or key math concepts. Overall results of the “Impact on Teachers’ Attitudes” items showed that teachers have mixed attitudes. On the one hand, they feel more stressed, they feel the CCSS limit their flexibility to teach what their students need, and they are less clear than previous standards. On the other hand, they feel they are better teachers because of their work, they feel prepared to teach these standards, and they are satisfied with them. Overall results of the “Implementation” items showed that teachers had read the CCSS for their grade and content area, they had participated in professional development, they had access to additional support beyond professional development and they believed implementation went well at their schools. The results for two key items, however, contrasted with these generally positive responses. 73% of teachers expressed concerns about the CCSS not benefitting certain students including students working below grade level, students in special education, and students who were English language learners. Additionally, 87% expressed that they did not like the testing involved with implementing the CCSS.

A 2016 study by Matlock, et. al., also aimed to examine teachers' views of the CCSS and its implementation. 1,303 teachers from one U.S. state were surveyed. All of these teachers were active during the 2012-2013 school year. The survey that was employed consisted of 66 items that could be generally broken up into the following subsets: the teacher's views on the CCSS, the implementation of the CCSS, school leadership, teacher involvement and school climate, teaching conditions, and future conditions as a result of the CCSS. Overall, the study found that teachers had a positive attitude toward the CCSS and its implementation.

Another study (Ajayi, 2016) examined high school teachers' perspectives about their experiences teaching with the ELA/literacy component of the CCSS. Opinions were gathered from twenty-three high school ELA teachers from a unified school district in Southern California using both a survey and interviews. Participants reported that they wanted to acquire more knowledge about many aspects of the ELA standards. They did not believe that their professional development or curricula were sufficient and they personally did not feel ready to teach the CCSS ELA/literacy standards. At the same time, however, they expressed that they believed that the standards would help students to achieve their personal and professional goals.

### **Perceptions of Special Education Teachers**

To the researcher's knowledge, only one peer-reviewed study exists that specifically examines the perceptions of special education teachers toward the CCSS. This 2015 study by Murphy and Haller looked to gain some insight into the experiences of teachers of English language learners (ELLs) and of students with disabilities as they aligned the CCSS with previously used standards and instructional approaches during the first year of implementation within their state. The researchers focused on the ELA/literacy standards and used a qualitative approach in this study. They collected data from 13 teachers using face-to-face interviews. These

teachers cited several key factors as being crucial for success implementing the CCSS. These included time, professional development, strategies, scaffolding, conversations with other teachers, and their own resourcefulness in finding information from books, websites, and other sources. Additionally, the researchers found that successful implementation of the standards was dependent upon teachers having “passion” or “a love for learning” and encouragement from administrators, communities, and local government.

### **Summary and Rationale**

Based on the review of the current literature, there is need for a broader understanding of special education teachers’ perceptions of the CCSS and their implementation across participating states and territories throughout the United States.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions will be addressed:

Research Question 1: To what extent do special education teachers understand the CCSS?

Research Question 2: To what extent do special education teachers use the CCSS in their classrooms?

Research Question 3: To what extent do special education teachers like/dislike the CCSS and what opinions do they have about them?

Research Question 4: What are the teacher, student, and school background variables (e.g., gender, years of experience, classroom setting, level of knowledge about the CCSS, level of use of the CCSS, level of student poverty, school type, etc.) that can predict the extent to which special education teachers believe the CCSS are beneficial for students *without* disabilities?

Research Question 5: What are the teacher, student, and school background variables (e.g., gender, years of experience, classroom setting, level of knowledge about the CCSS, level of use of the CCSS, level of student poverty, school type, etc.) that can predict the extent to which special education teachers believe the CCSS are beneficial for students *with* disabilities?

Research Question 6: What are the teacher, student, and school background variables (e.g., gender, years of experience, classroom setting, level of knowledge about the CCSS, level of use of the CCSS, level of student poverty, school type, etc.) that can predict the extent to which special education teachers believe that, with the right supports in place, their students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS?

Research Question 7: What are the teacher, student, and school background variables (e.g., gender, years of experience, classroom setting, level of knowledge about the CCSS, level of use of the CCSS, level of student poverty, school type, etc.) that can predict the extent to which special education teachers feel they need more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities?

Research Question 8: What are the teacher, student, and school background variables (e.g., gender, years of experience, classroom setting, level of knowledge about the CCSS, level of use of the CCSS, level of student poverty, school type, etc.) that can predict the extent to which special education teachers like the CCSS?

## Chapter III

### METHOD

#### **Participants**

This study utilized the responses of 476 special education teachers from across the United States. The inclusion criteria were to: (a) be/have been a teacher who holds a certificate and/or degree in special education (teaching students with disabilities) and (b) have taught at least one student with a disability [a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)] between grades Kindergarten and 12 while using the CCSS.

Throughout the approximately six-week data collection window, 664 potential participants visited the survey website. Of these, 661 provided their consent to participate in the study, 600 indicated that they met the inclusion criteria, and 490 went on to complete the survey. After careful review, 14 of these cases were deleted. This was done when a respondent: (a) did not indicate the state or territory where she/he used the CCSS with students with disabilities; (b) indicated that she/he was responding about experiences from multiple regions at once; (c) indicated that she/he was responding about a region that had never formally adopted the CCSS; or (d) indicated that she/he taught in a DoDEA school (clearance was not requested from the Department of Defense to include these responses). As a result, the final valid sample for this study consisted of 476 participants.

#### **Research Design**

This study utilized a cross-sectional research design with a researcher self-designed survey. The survey asked participants to provide general background information about themselves, their schools, and their students—without divulging any personally-identifiable information. It also asked them about their knowledge of the CCSS, how much they use/used the

CCSS in their classrooms, and their perceptions of the CCSS and its implementation in their state or territory. The survey was created and administered using the online survey and questionnaire platform SurveyMonkey.

Field testing of the survey instrument was conducted before the main study was implemented. This was done to assess the relevance and clarity of the survey items and to evaluate the time needed for survey completion. A convenience sample of six special educators who met the inclusion criteria for the main study was contacted. The participants in this set were notified that data collection for the survey items was not required for field testing but, rather, that their expertise was needed to ensure that the survey items were clear and that appropriate response choices were available for each one. Furthermore, field testing participants were invited to provide suggestions for additional survey items that they believed would be useful for this study. Feedback from these participants demonstrated that the overall survey instrument was appropriate for the study, minor clarifications were needed in the wording of several items, and that the time required for survey completion was approximately 10-15 minutes. Revisions were made and the survey was finalized for use in the main study.

Shortly thereafter, an application for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was submitted to Teachers College, Columbia University. A copy of the recruitment e-mail and flyer (see Appendix A) as well as the informed consent form (see Appendix B) and researcher self-designed survey (see Appendix C) were submitted. The IRB committee determined that this study was exempt from committee review on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The number assigned to this research protocol was 17-141.

## **Instrumentation**

### **Researcher Self-Designed Survey**

A researcher self-designed survey was used in this study. This survey includes four sections:

1. The first section contains questions (2 to 16) that request demographic information from participants about themselves, their students, and their schools (e.g., gender, years of experience, classroom setting, level of student poverty, school type, etc.).
2. The second section contains statements (17 to 24) about the CCSS and asks participants to indicate whether each statement is true or false in order to assess the extent to which they understand these standards.
3. The third section contains items (25 to 29) that ask participants to self-report the frequency with which they use the CCSS in their classrooms.
4. The fourth section contains statements (30 to 62) about the CCSS and their implementation and asks participants to rate their level of agreement with each statement in order to collect information about their perceptions.

### **The Dependent and Independent Variables**

#### **The dependent variables.**

There are five dependent variables in this study. These include: (a) the extent to which a participant believes that the CCSS are beneficial for students *without* disabilities; (b) the extent to which a participant believes that the CCSS are beneficial for students *with* disabilities; (c) the extent to which a participant believes that, with the right supports in place, her/his students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS; (d) the extent to which

a participant believes that she/he needs more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities; and (e) the extent to which a participant likes the CCSS.

**The independent variables.**

There are a large number of independent variables in this study. These include a series of teacher, student, and school background characteristics such as gender, years of experience, classroom setting, level of knowledge about the CCSS, level of use of the CCSS, level of student poverty, school type, etc.

A full description of the dependent and independent variables can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

*Description of Variables and Measures*

Variable	Measure
<i>Dependent variable</i>	
The extent to which a participant believes that the CCSS are beneficial for students <i>without</i> disabilities	1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree
The extent to which a participant believes that the CCSS are beneficial for students <i>with</i> disabilities	1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree
The extent to which a participant believes that, with the right supports in place, her/his students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS	1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree
The extent to which a participant believes that she/he needs more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities	1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree
The extent to which a participant likes the CCSS	1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree

(continued)



Table 1 (continued)

*Description of Variables and Measures*

Variable	Measure
<i>Independent variable</i>	
Teacher background characteristic	
Gender female	1 = Yes, 0 = No
Gender male	1 = Yes, 0 = No
Gender other	1 = Yes, 0 = No
Years teaching	1 = 1 / This is my first year teaching, 2 = 2, ... 39 = 39, 40 = 40+
Years teaching students with disabilities as a special education teacher	1 = 1 / This is my first year teaching students with disabilities as a special education teacher, 2 = 2, ... 39 = 39, 40 = 40+
Started teaching after the No Child Left Behind Act was passed by Congress in 2001 (i.e., has 16 years of teaching experience or less)	1 = Yes, 0 = No
Classroom	1 = Self-contained, 0 = Not self-contained
Early childhood elementary school (K, 1, or 2)	1 = Taught any grade K, 1, or 2; 0 = Did not teach any grade K, 1, or 2
Upper elementary school (3, 4, or 5)	1 = Taught any grade 3, 4, or 5; 0 = Did not teach any grade 3, 4, or 5
Middle school (6, 7, or 8)	1 = Taught any grade 6, 7, or 8; 0 = Did not teach any grade 6, 7, or 8
High school (9, 10, 11, or 12)	1 = Taught any grade 9, 10, 11, or 12; 0 = Did not teach any grade 9, 10, 11, or 12
ELA	1 = Taught ELA, 0 = Did not teach ELA
Math	1 = Taught math, 0 = Did not teach math

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

*Description of Variables and Measures*

Variable	Measure
Taught students who took a typical end-of-year assessment (e.g., PARCC, SBAC, state-created common core exam)	1 = Yes, 0 = No
Taught students who took an alternate assessment (e.g., DLM, NCSC, state-created common core alternate assessment)	1 = Yes, 0 = No
Taught students who were not in a testing grade	1 = Yes, 0 = No
Taught students who took their end-of-year assessment on the computer	1 = Yes, 0 = No/Not sure/Students not in testing grade
Knowledge Score	Range = 0 - 6
Usage Score	Range = 4 - 20
Is familiar with the six key instructional shifts of the CCSS	1 = Yes, 0 = No
Is familiar with the standards for mathematical practice in the CCSS	1 = Yes, 0 = No
Has received sufficient professional development about aligning student IEP goals to the CCSS	1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree
Has received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities	1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree
Feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS	1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

*Description of Variables and Measures*

Variable	Measure
Believes school's reading curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS	1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree
Believes school's writing curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS	1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree
Believes school's math curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS	1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree
Believes it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities	1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree
Student background characteristic	
Percentage of students living in poverty	1 = 0-25%, 2 = 26-50%, 3 = 51-75%, 4 = 76-100%
School background characteristic	
Rural	1 = Yes, 0 = No
Suburban	1 = Yes, 0 = No
Urban	1 = Yes, 0 = No
School	1 = Traditional or specialized public, 0 = Non-public or charter
Year of full CCSS implementation in participant's state or territory	1 = Year 1 (2011-2012), 2 = Year 2 (2012-2013), 3 = Year 3 (2013-2014), 4 = Year 4 (2014-2015)

The "Knowledge Score" variable was created by adding up participants' responses to six survey items that reflected the extent to which they understood various aspects of the CCSS. These survey items included the following: (a) The CCSS are a curriculum (i.e., a logically ordered guidebook of lessons based on education standards); (b) The CCSS provide standards for the areas of math and English language arts (ELA)/literacy; (c) The CCSS provide content

standards for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects; (d) The CCSS tell teachers what to teach their students; (e) The CCSS tell teachers how to teach their students; and (f) The CCSS are a state-led initiative. Participants were asked whether they believed each of these statements to be true or false. Based on whether their response to each item was correct or incorrect, they were given a score of 1 or 0, respectively. Thus, the range of knowledge scores was between 0 and 6. If an individual participant chose to skip any of the six survey items that made up their knowledge score, a score was not calculated for that respondent and, therefore, was not included in the “Knowledge Score” variable.

Similarly, the “Usage Score” variable was created by adding up participants’ responses to four survey items that reflected the extent to which they use the CCSS in their classrooms. These survey items included the following: (a) The first thing I look at to determine what I need to teach is the CCSS; (b) I have read the CCSS for the grade(s) that I teach; (c) I use the CCSS when I plan lessons; and (d) I have used the resources provided in the appendices of the CCSS. Each of these items was on a Likert scale, in which 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. Thus, the range of usage scores was between 4 and 20. If an individual participant chose to skip any of the four survey items that made up her/his usage score or indicated that a specific item was not applicable, a score was not calculated for that respondent and, therefore, was not included in the “Usage Score” variable.

## **Procedure**

### **Recruitment**

Participants were recruited through the use of flyers, word-of-mouth recommendations, snowball sampling, as well as direct e-mail requests to school principals, other school or district administrators, and professional organizations that work with special education teachers. The

flyer and e-mail contained a link to the survey. Participants were able to share the flyer with or forward the e-mail to others who might qualify to participate. The special education teachers who were interested in participating in this study then used the link to access the survey.

### **Obtaining Consent**

A consent form was presented to participants to read on SurveyMonkey prior to filling out the survey. This included the purpose of the study, the inclusion criteria, and participants' rights. Contact information for the researcher was provided to participants so that they may ask questions about the consent process or the study. Participants were asked to click a radio button indicating their agreement to participate in the study. It was necessary for participants to complete the consent form prior to answering the survey items.

### **Administration of Instrument**

Once participants provided consent, they were able to fill out the researcher self-designed survey on SurveyMonkey. Data was collected between January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The duration for completing the survey per each participant was typically between 10-20 minutes.

### **Data Analysis**

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v.19) was used for all statistical analyses. Each participant was given a unique identification number instead of being asked to provide personally identifiable information of any kind.

Participants were told that, when responding to survey items, they may choose to skip items that they did not wish to answer or that they did not feel applied to them. When participants chose to do so, this produced missing data. Throughout the following data analyses,

missing data are excluded. Results for each particular survey item are reported based on those participants who responded.

Continuous, ordinal, and nominal data were collected. Descriptive statistics were calculated for these data. These included means and standard deviations for continuous data; frequencies, percentages, and means for ordinal data; and frequencies and percentages for nominal data. Numeric codes were assigned for all ordinal and nominal data.

Research questions 1, 2, and 3 were analyzed using descriptive statistics. For research question 1 (i.e., To what extent do special education teachers understand the CCSS?), frequencies and percentages were calculated to determine how many teachers correctly answered various true/false questions about the CCSS. For research question 2 (i.e., To what extent do special education teachers use the CCSS in their classrooms?), frequencies, percentages, and mean Likert scores were calculated to determine the extent to which special education teachers use the CCSS in their classrooms. Finally, for research question 3 (i.e., To what extent do special education teachers like/dislike the CCSS and what opinions do they have about them?), frequencies, percentages, and mean Likert scores were calculated to better understand special education teachers' perceptions about the CCSS and its implementation.

Research questions 4 (i.e., What are the teacher, student, and school background variables that can predict the extent to which special education teachers believe the CCSS are beneficial for students *without* disabilities?), 5 (i.e., What are the teacher, student, and school background variables that can predict the extent to which special education teachers believe the CCSS are beneficial for students *with* disabilities?), 6 (i.e., What are the teacher, student, and school background variables that can predict the extent to which special education teachers believe that, with the right supports in place, their students with disabilities have the potential to

meet the standards outlined in the CCSS?), 7 (i.e., What are the teacher, student, and school background variables that can predict the extent to which special education teachers feel they need more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities?), and 8 (i.e., What are the teacher, student, and school background variables that can predict the extent to which special education teachers like the CCSS?) were analyzed using inferential statistics. Each of these questions examined a specific dependent outcome variable that was continuous. Therefore, independent variables that served as potential predictors of the dependent outcome variables were assessed using multiple linear regression analysis.

A two-step process was used to determine the predictors for each dependent outcome variable. First, the association between each independent variable and each dependent variable was established. For continuous variables, Pearson's  $r$  correlations were run. For dummy variables,  $t$  tests were used. Because of the large number of relationships that were examined, a conservative significance level of  $p < .01$  was set. Second, the independent variables that emerged as having significant associations with the dependent variables were then entered into stepwise multiple linear regression analyses. A cutoff criterion of  $.01$  was set for the potential predictors. Possible multicollinearity among the potential predictors was checked using the tolerance and the variance inflation factors (VIF); VIF values  $> 10$  and tolerance values  $< .10$  indicate a multicollinearity problem (Abu-Bader, 2011, p. 102).

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS

#### **Demographic Information of Participants**

The final sample consisted of 476 special education teachers who used the CCSS with students with disabilities. The mean number of years spent teaching students with disabilities as a special education teacher was 10.39 (SD = 8.55; minimum = 1 year, maximum = 40+ years). They were from 46 out of the 46 states (100%) that originally adopted the CCSS, the District of Columbia, and Guam. Of the 46 original states, three have since dropped out of the CCSS initiative altogether (Indiana, Oklahoma, and South Carolina) and one state (Minnesota) never adopted the CCSS math standards. The only regions that use the CCSS but were not represented in this final sample were American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S Virgin Islands and the DoDEA. A significant proportion of participants were from the state of New York (32.4%). The next three highest percentages came from the states of California (8.2%) Illinois (5.7%), and New Jersey (5.0%).

The majority of the participants were female (92%) and worked at a traditional public school (85.1%) in an urban (41.8%) or suburban (35.5%) area. These participants mostly taught in a self-contained classroom (37.7%), resource room (24.6%), or Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) / Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classroom (20.8%). They taught all grades from kindergarten to twelfth but mostly fourth (43.5%), fifth (41.6%), and third (41.2%). They mostly taught ELA (87.8%), math (82.6%), social studies/history (49.2%), and science (43.7%)

Information about the participants' characteristics can be found in Table 2.



Table 2

*Participants' Characteristics*

Characteristic	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	435	92.0
Male	37	7.8
Other	1	0.2
<b>Area</b>		
Rural	108	22.7
Suburban	169	35.5
Urban	199	41.8
<b>Primary School Setting</b>		
Traditional Public School	405	85.1
Specialized Public School	33	6.9
Charter School	19	4.0
Cyber Charter School	2	0.4
Traditional Private School	0	0.0
Specialized Private School	8	1.7
Parochial / Religiously Affiliated School	4	0.8
Student's Home	3	0.6
Other	2	0.4
<b>Primary Classroom Setting / Position</b>		
General Education Classroom / Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS)	52	10.9
Resource Room / Pull-Out Services	117	24.6
Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) / Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT)	99	20.8
Self-Contained Classroom	179	37.7
Itinerant	2	0.4
Multiple Settings	11	2.3
Other	15	3.2

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

*Participants' Characteristics*

Characteristic	n	%
<b>Grades Taught*</b>		
Kindergarten	141	29.6
First	165	34.7
Second	181	38.0
Third	196	41.2
Fourth	207	43.5
Fifth	198	41.6
Sixth	153	32.1
Seventh	133	27.9
Eighth	121	25.4
Ninth	109	22.9
Tenth	109	22.9
Eleventh	108	22.7
Twelfth	98	20.6
<b>Subjects Taught**</b>		
English Language Arts	418	87.8
Math	393	82.6
Social Studies / History	234	49.2
Science	208	43.7
Music	17	3.6
Art	25	5.3
Theater	1	0.2
Physical Education	19	4.0
Technology	39	8.2
Life Skills/Transition	11	2.3
Social Skills	9	1.9
Vocational Skills/Business	6	1.3
Speech Therapy	2	0.4
Braille	3	0.6
Other	8	1.7

Note. \*Participants were able to select all of the grades they had taught using the CCSS.

\*\*Participants were able to select all of the subjects they had taught using the CCSS.

Participants were asked to report the disability classifications listed on the IEPs of their students. The majority of participants (75.6%) taught students with autism. The next three highest percentages were for specific learning disabilities (72.7%), other health impairment (68.9%), and speech or language impairment (62.4%). A large proportion of participants (31.1%) taught students in which 76-100% of those students lived in poverty. The majority of participants taught students whose race or ethnicity was White (80.9%). The next three highest percentages were for Black or African American (77.7%), Hispanic or Latino (77.7%), and Asian (33.4%). Participants were asked to report the CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments that are administered or will be administered to their students with disabilities. A large proportion of participants (44.5%) reported that their students took or will take a state-created common core assessment. Finally, a large proportion of participants (45.4%) reported that their students took or will take this assessment on the computer.

The characteristics of participants' students can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

*Characteristics of Participants' Students*

Characteristic	n	%
<b>Disability Classification*</b>		
Autism	360	75.6
Deaf-Blindness	14	2.9
Developmental Delay	169	35.5
Emotional Disturbance	277	58.2
Hearing Impairment (including Deafness)	95	20.0
Intellectual Disability	266	55.9
Multiple Disabilities	173	36.3
Orthopedic Impairment	46	9.7
Other Health Impairment	328	68.9
Specific Learning Disabilities	346	72.7
Speech or Language Impairment	297	62.4
Traumatic Brain Injury	66	13.9
Visual Impairment (including Blindness)	69	14.5
Other / Classification Unclear	5	1.1
<b>Percent Living in Poverty</b>		
0-25%	125	26.6
26-50%	89	18.9
51-75%	110	23.4
76-100%	146	31.1
<b>Race / Ethnicity**</b>		
American Indian or Alaska Native	61	12.8
Asian	159	33.4
Black or African American	370	77.7

(continued)

Table 3 (continued)

*Characteristics of Participants' Students*

Characteristic	n	%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	370	77.7
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	47	9.9
White	385	80.9
Other	49	10.3
CCSS-Aligned Standardized State Assessment***		
Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Assessment	92	20.1
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) Summative	82	17.9
State-Created Common Core Assessment	204	44.5
American Institutes for Research (AIR) Assessment	5	1.1
ACT/ACT Aspire	9	2.0
SAT	1	0.2
Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Alternate Assessment	62	13.5
National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) Alternate Assessment	12	2.6
State-Created Common Core Alternate Assessment	112	24.5
Other	6	1.3
Parents Opted Students Out of Testing	2	0.4
Students Not in a Testing Grade	57	12.4
Assessment Taken on a Computer?		
Yes	212	45.4
No	168	36.0
Only Some	52	11.1
Students Not in a Testing Grade	35	7.5

Note. \*Participants were able to select as many disability classifications as needed for the students they had taught.

\*\*Participants were able to select as many races and ethnicities as needed for the students they had taught.

\*\*\*Participants were able to select as many assessments as needed for the students they had taught.

## **Results for Research Questions**

### **Research Question 1: To What Extent Do Special Education Teachers Understand the CCSS?**

Eight survey items were presented to determine the extent to which special education teachers understand the CCSS. These items (labeled A through H) and participants' responses are presented in Table 4. Six items (A through F) were presented to assess special education teachers' level of knowledge about various key attributes of the CCSS. They asked participants to respond "True" or "False" to a series of questions about these features. Each of these questions has a correct and incorrect answer. Two items (G and H) asked participants to self-report whether or not they are familiar with the six key instructional shifts and the mathematical practice standards, unique features of the CCSS. A response of "True" to these statements indicates that the participant self-reported that they have some level of understanding of these properties.

Across the six knowledge questions, the percentage of correct responses ranged from 40.5% to 99.4%. There were only 20 participants (4.2%) who answered all six knowledge questions correctly and, at the same time, self-reported that they were familiar with the CCSS features presented in survey items G and H. This shows that several key features of the CCSS may still be unclear to some special education teachers or that some special education teachers have a different understanding of central aspects of the CCSS due to popular political views. For example, while the CCSS defines itself to be a state-led initiative, and participants may be aware of this, they simply might not believe this claim given the existence of federal incentive programs that have promoted use of the CCSS.

There was no single survey item regarding key features of the CCSS about which 100% of participants demonstrated knowledge by answering correctly or self-reporting familiarity. However, item B came *very* close at 99.4%, showing that nearly all participants understand that the CCSS provide standards for the areas of math and ELA/literacy.

Approximately 70% or more of the participants indicated that they had an understanding that a) the CCSS are not a curriculum; b) the CCSS tell teachers *what* to teach their students; c) the CCSS do not tell teachers *how* to teach their students; and d) the CCSS include standards for mathematical practice.

However, less than 50% of participants indicated that they had an understanding that a) the CCSS do not provide content standards for the areas of history/social studies, science, and technical subjects; b) the CCSS are a state-led initiative; and c) the CCSS include six key instructional shifts.

The average correct percentage across all 6 knowledge questions is 69.8%. This shows that, overall, as a group, special education teachers demonstrated a moderate level of knowledge about these key features of the CCSS.

In terms of self-reported familiarity with the CCSS, the results of these 2 items show that participants have a moderate understanding of the mathematical practice standards and a weak understanding of the six key instructional shifts.

Table 4

*Participants' Responses to Level of Knowledge Survey Items*

Survey Item	Answer Choices	n	%
A. The CCSS are a curriculum (i.e., a logically ordered guidebook of lessons based on education standards).	True	103	21.6
	False	373	78.4
B. The CCSS provide standards for the areas of math and English language arts (ELA)/literacy.	True	473	99.4
	False	3	0.6
C. The CCSS provide content standards for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.	True	269	57.0
	False	203	43.0
D. The CCSS tell teachers what to teach their students.	True	331	69.8
	False	143	30.2
E. The CCSS tell teachers how to teach their students.	True	59	12.4
	False	416	87.6
F. The CCSS are a state-led initiative.	True	191	40.5
	False	281	59.5
G. I am familiar with the six key instructional shifts of the CCSS.	True	228	48.1
	False	246	51.9
H. I am familiar with the standards for mathematical practice in the CCSS.	True	361	76.0
	False	114	24.0

Note. The correct answers for items A-F are highlighted in gray.



## **Research Question 2: To What Extent Do Special Education Teachers Use the CCSS in Their Classrooms?**

Five survey items were presented to assess special education teachers' level of use of the CCSS in their classrooms. These items and participants' responses can be found in Table 5. Participants were asked to rate their level of use of the CCSS according to each survey item using a 5-point Likert scale where 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, and 5=Always. Mean scores were calculated for each item.

Nearly all participants (96.8%) reported that, at least sometimes, they have read the CCSS for the grades that they teach. The majority of participants (83.2%) use the CCSS at least sometimes when they plan lessons. Additionally, the majority of participants (73.4%) reported that, at least sometimes, the first thing they look at to determine what they need to teach is the CCSS.

Responses about the level of use of performance scores from CCSS-aligned standardized state assessment are quite mixed. However, the majority (62.3%) of participants reported that, at least sometimes, they have used these scores to inform their instruction. Finally, the majority of participants (56.1%) rarely or never use the resources provided in the appendices of the CCSS.

Overall, the results from this set of questions indicate that the special education teachers in this study often used the CCSS to guide their teaching. However, they tended not to use the resources located in the appendices of the CCSS.

Table 5

*Participants' Responses to Level of Use Survey Items*

	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always		Mean Likert Score
	1		2		3		4		5		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
The first thing I look at to determine what I need to teach is the CCSS.	31	6.6	95	20.1	150	31.8	132	28.0	64	13.6	3.22
I have read the CCSS for the grade(s) that I teach.	4	0.8	11	2.3	105	22.1	154	32.4	201	42.3	4.13
I use the CCSS when I plan lessons.	23	4.9	56	11.8	134	28.3	134	28.3	126	26.6	3.60
I have used the resources provided in the appendices of the CCSS.	113	24.4	147	31.7	124	26.7	64	13.8	16	3.4	2.40
I have used my students' performance results on CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments to inform my instruction.	84	18.7	85	18.9	129	28.7	102	22.7	49	10.9	2.88

**Research Question 3: To What Extent Do Special Education Teachers Like/Dislike the CCSS and What Opinions Do They Have About Them?**

Thirty-three survey items were presented to determine special education teachers' opinions about the CCSS and their implementation. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with each survey item according to a 5-point Likert scale where 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree. Results for these survey items are

grouped into the following categories for analysis: (a) participants' opinions about their students' potential to meet the CCSS; (b) participants' opinions about benefits and appropriateness of the CCSS; (c) participants' opinions about implementation on the state level; (d) participants' opinions about guidance and professional development; (e) participants' opinions about curricula and resources; (f) participants' opinions about the impact of the CCSS on special education practice; (g) participants' opinions about CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments; (h) participants' opinions about student outcomes; and (i) participants' overall opinion about the CCSS.

**Participants' opinions about their students' potential to meet the CCSS.**

One survey item asked special education teachers to share their opinion about whether or not their students with disabilities have the potential to meet the CCSS when the right supports are in place. This item and participants' responses can be found in Table 6. Nearly half of participants (49.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement compared to 28.7% who agreed or strongly agreed. These results show that even when the necessary supports are in place, more special education teachers believe it would not be possible for their students to meet these rigorous standards than those who believe it would.

Table 6

*Participants' Opinions About Their Students' Potential to Meet the CCSS*

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean Likert Score
	1		2		3		4		5		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
With the right supports in place, my students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS.	87	18.6	143	30.6	103	22.1	119	25.5	15	3.2	2.64

**Participants' opinions about benefits and appropriateness of the CCSS.**

Four survey items asked participants about whether they think the CCSS is beneficial or developmentally appropriate for students with and without disabilities. These items and participants' responses can be found in Table 7. Overall, participants believe that the CCSS are more beneficial for students without disabilities than they are for students with disabilities as indicated by respective mean Likert scores of 3.44 and 2.39. More than half (53.8%) of participants agree or strongly agree that the CCSS are beneficial for students without disabilities compared to 25.1% who say the same thing for students with disabilities. Overall, participants also believe that the CCSS are more developmentally appropriate for students without disabilities than they are for students with disabilities as indicated by respective mean Likert scores of 3.04 and 1.89. However, a score of 3.04 also indicates that, overall, participants are neutral about the statement that the CCSS are developmentally appropriate for students without disabilities. In

addition, the majority (77.2%) of participants disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that the CCSS are developmentally appropriate for students with disabilities.

Table 7

*Participants' Opinions About Benefits and Appropriateness of the CCSS*

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean Likert Score
	1		2		3		4		5		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
The CCSS are beneficial for students without disabilities.	28	5.9	67	14.2	123	26.1	179	37.9	75	15.9	3.44
The CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities.	158	33.3	115	24.3	82	17.3	95	20.0	24	5.1	2.39
The CCSS are developmentally appropriate for students without disabilities.	55	11.7	116	24.6	105	22.3	147	31.2	48	10.2	3.04
The CCSS are developmentally appropriate for students with disabilities.	222	47.1	142	30.1	58	12.3	37	7.9	12	2.5	1.89

**Participants' opinions about implementation on the state level.**

Two survey items asked participants to share their opinions about implementation on the state level. These items and participants' responses can be found in Table 8. The majority of participants (66.6%) disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that overall, their state/territory has done a good job of implementing the CCSS for students with disabilities. Additionally, the majority of participants (52.9%) feel that their state/territory started using the CCSS too quickly.

Table 8

*Participants' Opinions About Implementation on the State Level*

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean Likert Score
	1		2		3		4		5		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Overall, my state/territory has done a good job of implementing the CCSS for students with disabilities.	148	31.3	167	35.3	103	21.8	52	11.0	3	0.6	2.14
My state/territory started using the CCSS too quickly.	9	2.0	68	14.8	140	30.4	126	27.3	118	25.6	3.60

**Participants' opinions about guidance and professional development.**

Four survey items asked participants to share their opinions about guidance and professional development. These items and participants' responses can be found in Table 9. A significant majority of participants (86.9%) reported that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that the CCSS provide adequate information about their application to students with disabilities. The majority (61.6%) also reported that they need more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities.

Regarding professional development specifically, the majority (61.3%) of participants reported that they disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that they have received sufficient professional development to help them align their students' IEP goals to the CCSS. An even larger majority (67.8%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they

have received sufficient professional development to help them apply the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities.

Overall, the survey items from this category showed that special education teachers are in need of more guidance to help them apply the CCSS to the instruction of their students.

Table 9

*Participants' Opinions About Guidance and Professional Development*

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean Likert Score
	1		2		3		4		5		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
The CCSS provide adequate information about their application to students with disabilities.	231	48.8	180	38.1	42	8.9	18	3.8	2	0.4	1.69
I need more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities.	31	6.6	70	14.9	79	16.8	180	38.4	109	23.2	3.57
I have received sufficient professional development to help me align my students' IEP goals to the CCSS.	148	31.4	141	29.9	86	18.2	78	16.5	19	4.0	2.32
I have received sufficient professional development to help me apply the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities.	152	32.2	168	35.6	70	14.8	66	14.0	16	3.4	2.21

### **Participants' opinions about curricula and resources.**

Four survey items asked participants to share their opinions about curricula and resources. These items and participants' responses can be found in Table 10. The majority of participants (65.3%) reported that the reading curriculum in their school is well-aligned to the CCSS. The majority of participants (61.7%) reported that the writing curriculum in their school is well-aligned to the CCSS. The majority of participants (78.8%) reported that the math curriculum in their school is well-aligned to the CCSS. Finally, the majority of participants (66.4%) reported that it was not easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for their students with disabilities.

Overall, the results for the survey items in this category show that while special education teachers are using curricula for the core subjects that are well-aligned to the CCSS, it is difficult to access additional materials specifically for their students with disabilities.



Table 10

*Participants' Opinions About Curricula and Resources*

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean Likert Score
	1		2		3		4		5		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
The reading curriculum in my school is well-aligned to the CCSS.	31	6.9	50	11.1	76	16.8	222	49.1	73	16.2	3.57
The writing curriculum in my school is well-aligned to the CCSS.	28	6.3	61	13.7	81	18.2	209	47.1	65	14.6	3.50
The math curriculum in my school is well-aligned to the CCSS.	16	3.6	25	5.6	54	12.1	241	53.8	112	25.0	3.91
It is easy for me to find CCSS-aligned resources for my students with disabilities.	116	24.5	198	41.9	82	17.3	71	15.0	6	1.3	2.27

**Participants' opinions about the impact of the CCSS on special education practice.**

Eight survey items asked participants to share their opinions about the impact of the CCSS on special education practice. These items and participants' responses can be found in Table 11. The majority of participants (70.9%) responded that, when using the CCSS, they are not able to address all of their students' IEP goals. To a related item, the majority of participants

(54.8%) responded that they felt pressure to spend most of their time teaching their students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS.

Four of the survey items in this category specifically examined special education teachers' perceptions of the impact that the CCSS is having on four types of skills: academic, social-emotional, functional, and communication. Participants had mixed opinions about whether the CCSS have diminished their ability to teach academic skills, but a significant percentage (47.4%) reported that they either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Participants were also mixed in their opinions about whether the CCSS have diminished their ability to teach communication skills, but a slight majority (51.2%) either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Participants' opinions were clearer in regard to social-emotional and functional skills. The majority of participants (62.7%) responded that the CCSS have diminished their ability to teach social-emotional skills to their students with disabilities. An even larger majority (66.7%) responded that the CCSS have diminished their ability to teach functional skills to their students with disabilities.

The final two questions of this category asked participants if the CCSS helped them to be a more effective special education teacher and if these standards valued their professional judgment. The majority of participants (65.9%) did not believe that the CCSS helped them to be a more effective special education teacher. An even larger majority (78.3%) did not feel that the CCSS valued their professional judgment.

Overall, these results show that special education teachers perceive that the CCSS are having a significant impact on their ability to address the individual goals of their students with disabilities in the classroom, especially when those goals are not the skills that are covered directly by these standards. Special education teachers feel some level of pressure to spend most

of their time teaching according to these standards. They do not feel that these standards help them to be more effective in their roles as special educators and in fact, they feel that these standards do not value their professional judgment.

Table 11

*Participants' Opinions About the Impact of the CCSS on Special Education Practice*

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean Likert Score
	1		2		3		4		5		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
When using the CCSS, I am able to address all of my students' IEP goals.	180	38.3	153	32.6	62	13.2	65	13.8	10	2.1	2.09
I feel pressure to spend most of my time teaching my students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS.	23	4.9	101	21.4	89	18.9	172	36.4	87	18.4	3.42
The CCSS have diminished my ability to teach academic skills to my students with disabilities.	31	6.6	121	25.9	94	20.1	119	25.4	103	22.0	3.30

(continued)

Table 11 (continued)

*Participants' Opinions About the Impact of the CCSS on Special Education Practice*

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean Likert Score
	1		2		3		4		5		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
The CCSS have diminished my ability to teach social-emotional skills to my students with disabilities.	26	5.6	90	19.4	57	12.3	142	30.7	148	32.0	3.64
The CCSS have diminished my ability to teach functional skills to my students with disabilities.	22	4.8	80	17.5	50	10.9	124	27.1	181	39.6	3.79
The CCSS have diminished my ability to teach communication skills to my students with disabilities.	29	6.3	127	27.5	69	15.0	118	25.6	118	25.6	3.37
The CCSS help me to be a more effective special education teacher.	146	31.1	163	34.8	106	22.6	48	10.2	6	1.3	2.16
The CCSS value the professional judgment of special education teachers.	209	44.8	156	33.5	79	17.0	20	4.3	2	0.4	1.82

### **Participants' opinions about CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments.**

Six survey items asked participants to share their opinions about CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments. These items and participants' responses can be found in Table 12. Results show that participants have mixed opinions about whether participation in these assessments is beneficial for students *without* disabilities. 39.8% disagree or strongly disagree with this statement, 32.0% agree or strongly agree with this statement, and 28.2% chose to remain neutral. However, opinions about whether participation in these assessments is beneficial for students *with* disabilities are decidedly clearer with an 80.2% majority of participants responding that they disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. To a related question, the majority of participants (85.7%) reported that CCSS-aligned standardized assessments do not measure the skills that are most important for their students with disabilities.

The striking majority (92.6%) of participants reported that their students with disabilities experience frustration when taking CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments. Of these, 71.1% strongly agreed with this statement. Only 3.4% of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. The majority of participants (63.0%) do not believe that information about the performance of their students with disabilities on CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments is useful. Finally, the majority of participants (72.7%) reported that they have not received their students' test scores quickly enough to apply the results to their teaching.

Overall, these results show a generally negative perception around standardized testing. Particularly when discussing the impact of testing on students with disabilities, special education teachers in this study do not find the tests to be beneficial for students and in fact, report that they are a source of frustration for students. These teachers do not feel the tests assess the skills that

are most relevant for their students, that the scores are useful, or that feedback from these assessments gets back to them quickly enough to make an impact on instructional decision-making for their students.

Table 12

*Participants' Opinions About CCSS-Aligned Standardized State Assessments*

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean Likert Score
	1		2		3		4		5		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Participation in CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments is beneficial for students without disabilities.	75	16.1	110	23.7	131	28.2	128	27.5	21	4.5	2.81
Participation in CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments is beneficial for students with disabilities.	236	50.3	140	29.9	54	11.5	37	7.9	2	0.4	1.78
CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments measure the skills that are most important for my students with disabilities.	241	51.9	157	33.8	42	9.1	22	4.7	2	0.4	1.68

(continued)

Table 12 (continued)

*Participants' Opinions About CCSS-Aligned Standardized State Assessments*

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean Likert Score
	1		2		3		4		5		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
My students with disabilities experience frustration when taking CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments.	7	1.6	8	1.8	18	4.0	96	21.5	317	71.1	4.59
Information about the performance of my students on CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments is useful to me.	161	36.1	120	26.9	86	19.3	74	16.6	5	1.1	2.20
I have received my students' scores on CCSS-aligned standardized assessments quickly enough for the results to be applied to my teaching.	169	39.9	139	32.8	61	14.4	48	11.3	7	1.7	2.02

**Participants' opinions about student outcomes.**

Three survey items asked participants to share their opinions about student outcomes.

These items and participants' responses can be found in Table 13. The majority of participants (67.1%) reported that they do not believe that their students with disabilities will be more

prepared for college because of the CCSS. Likewise, the majority of participants (70.1%) reported that they do not believe their students with disabilities will be more prepared for a career because of the CCSS. The largest majority (79.1%) do not believe that their students with disabilities will be more prepared for independent living because of the CCSS.

Overall, these results show that the special education teachers in this study do not believe that the CCSS will help their students with disabilities to attain three major life outcomes.

Table 13

*Participants' Opinions About Student Outcomes*

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean Likert Score
	1		2		3		4		5		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
My students with disabilities will be more prepared for college because of the CCSS.	181	39.4	127	27.7	89	19.4	53	11.5	9	2.0	2.09
My students with disabilities will be more prepared for a career because of the CCSS.	190	40.9	136	29.2	83	17.8	49	10.5	7	1.5	2.03
My students with disabilities will be more prepared for independent living because of the CCSS.	231	49.8	136	29.3	61	13.1	32	6.9	4	0.9	1.80

**Participants' overall opinion of the CCSS.**

The final survey item asked participants to share their opinion about whether they like or dislike the CCSS. This item and participants' responses can be found in Table 14. The slight



majority (51.7%) either disagree or strongly disagree with this statement, 28.7% are neutral, and only 19.6% responded that they either agree or strongly agree with this statement.

Table 14

*Participants' Overall Opinion of the CCSS*

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean Likert Score
	1		2		3		4		5		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
I like the CCSS.	142	30.0	103	21.7	136	28.7	84	17.7	9	1.9	2.40

**Research Question 4: What Are the Teacher, Student, and School Background Variables (e.g., gender, years of experience, classroom setting, level of knowledge about the CCSS, level of use of the CCSS, level of student poverty, school type, etc.) That Can Predict the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Believe the CCSS Are Beneficial for Students Without Disabilities?**

A stepwise multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to estimate a regression model that best predicts the extent to which special education teachers believe the CCSS are beneficial for students without disabilities. Potential predictor variables included the teacher, student, and school background variables listed in Table 1. Due to the large number of factors, the relationships between the dependent variable and independent variables were examined before performing a regression analysis to determine which ones should be chosen for inclusion in the analysis. Pearson's *r* correlations were used for continuous and ordinal variables and *t*-tests were used for nominal variables. A conservative cutoff criterion of  $p < .01$  was chosen.

Significant relationships (i.e.,  $p < .01$ ) were evident between the dependent variable and nine independent variables. Results for these analyses can be found in Table 15. The independent

variables that emerged as being significant include: (a) Years teaching; (b) Usage score; (c) Has received sufficient professional development about aligning student IEP goals to the CCSS; (d) Has received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities; (e) Feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS; (f) Believes school's reading curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS; (g) Believes school's writing curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS; (h) Believes it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities; and (i) Started teaching after the No Child Left Behind Act was passed by Congress in 2001. Therefore, these variables were entered into the multiple linear regression analysis.

Table 15

*Description of Relationships Between Independent Variables and the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Believe the CCSS Are Beneficial for Students Without Disabilities*

Variable	Significance test
<i>Independent variable</i>	
Teacher background characteristic	
Gender female	$t(467) = -2.268, p = .024$
Gender male	$t(467) = 2.384, p = .018$
Gender other	$t(467) = -.509, p = .611$
Years teaching*	$r = -.145, p < .01$
Years teaching students with disabilities as a special education teacher	$r = -.112, p = .016$
Started teaching after the No Child Left Behind Act was passed by Congress in 2001 (i.e., has 16 years of teaching experience or less)*	$t(469) = -3.442, p < .01$
Classroom	$t(469) = -.868, p = .386$
Early childhood elementary school (K, 1, or 2)	$t(470) = -.704, p = .482$
Upper elementary school (3, 4, or 5)	$t(470) = -.223, p = .823$
Middle school (6, 7, or 8)	$t(470) = -.670, p = .503$
High school (9, 10, 11, or 12)	$t(470) = .040, p = .968$
ELA	$t(470) = -1.702, p = .089$
Math	$t(470) = -.996, p = .320$
Taught students who took a typical end-of-year assessment (e.g., PARCC, SBAC, state-created common core exam)	$t(455) = .484, p = .628$
Taught students who took an alternate assessment (e.g., DLM, NCSC, state-created common core alternate assessment)	$t(455) = -1.306, p = .192$
Taught students who were not in a testing grade	$t(455) = -.781, p = .435$
Taught students who took their end-of-year assessment on the computer	$t(470) = -2.343, p = .020$
Knowledge Score	$r = .099, p = .034$
Usage Score**	$r = .262, p < .001$
Is familiar with the six key instructional shifts of the CCSS	$t(468) = -1.728, p = .085$
Is familiar with the standards for mathematical practice in the CCSS	$t(469) = -.920, p = .358$

(continued)

Table 15 (continued)

*Description of Relationships Between Independent Variables and the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Believe the CCSS Are Beneficial for Students Without Disabilities*

Variable	Significance test
Has received sufficient professional development about aligning student IEP goals to the CCSS*	$r = .146, p < .01$
Has received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities*	$r = .126, p < .01$
Feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS*	$r = -.126, p < .01$
Believes school's reading curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS**	$r = .164, p = .000$
Believes school's writing curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS*	$r = .156, p < .01$
Believes school's math curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS	$r = .080, p = .091$
Believes it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities*	$r = .134, p < .01$
Student background characteristic	
Percentage of students living in poverty	$r = -.078, p = .094$
School background characteristic	
Rural	$t(470) = .470, p = .639$
Suburban	$t(470) = -.234, p = .815$
Urban	$t(470) = -.172, p = .864$
School	$t(470) = 1.297, p = .195$
Year of full CCSS implementation in participant's state or territory	$r = -.024, p = .599$

Note: \* =  $p < .01$ , \*\* =  $p < .001$

Of the nine variables that were entered into the stepwise variable selection procedure, four remained significant in a multivariate linear model ( $F = 16.73, p < .001$ ). Evaluation of the VIF and tolerance values show no multicollinearity exists among the four factors. The details are given in Table 16.

Table 16

*Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Believe That the CCSS Are Beneficial for Students Without Disabilities*

Factor	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Usage Score**	.27	.07	.29	6.08	< .001	31.70	< .001
Feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS**	.32	.10	-.18	-3.84	< .001	23.19	< .001
Years teaching	.35	.12	-.15	-3.36	< .01	19.19	< .001
Believes school's writing curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS	.37	.14	.14	2.88	< .01	16.73	< .001

*Note:* All coefficients are rounded to the nearest two decimals; \*\* =  $p < .001$

The set of variables in this model significantly predicts the extent to which special education teachers believe the CCSS are beneficial for students without disabilities. Usage score emerged as the strongest predictor ( $\beta = .29$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and accounted for 7.1% of the variance in the outcome. The positive beta value indicates that the more special education teachers use the CCSS, the more they think these standards are beneficial for students without disabilities. The second strongest predictor was the extent to which a special education teacher feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS ( $\beta = -.18$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and accounted for an additional 3% of the variance in the outcome. The negative beta value indicates that the more pressure special education teachers feel, the less beneficial they believe the CCSS to be for students without disabilities. The third strongest predictor was years teaching ( $\beta = -.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and accounted for an additional 2.2% of the variance in the outcome. The negative beta value indicates that the more years special education

teachers have taught, the less beneficial they believe the CCSS to be for students without disabilities. Finally, the fourth strongest predictor was the extent to which a special education teacher believes the writing curriculum in her/his school is well-aligned to the CCSS ( $\beta = .14$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and accounted for an additional 1.7% of the variance in the outcome. The positive beta value indicates that the more special education teachers believe the writing curriculum in their school is well-aligned to the CCSS, the more they believe these standards are beneficial for students without disabilities.

The results indicate that the extent to which special education teachers believe that the CCSS are beneficial for students without disabilities is positively predicted by the extent to which they use the CCSS in their classrooms and the extent to which they believe that the writing curriculum in their school is well-aligned to the CCSS. It is negatively predicted by the extent to which special education teachers feel pressure to spend most of their time teaching their students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS and the number of years they have been teaching. Overall, this model explains 14.0% of the variance in this outcome variable ( $R = .37$ ).

**Research Question 5: What Are the Teacher, Student, and School Background Variables (e.g., gender, years of experience, classroom setting, level of knowledge about the CCSS, level of use of the CCSS, level of student poverty, school type, etc.) That Can Predict the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Believe the CCSS Are Beneficial for Students *With* Disabilities?**

A stepwise multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to estimate a regression model that best predicts the extent to which special education teachers believe the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities. Potential predictor variables included the teacher,

student, and school background variables listed in Table 1. Due to the large number of factors, the relationships between the dependent variable and independent variables were examined before performing a regression analysis to determine which ones should be chosen for inclusion in the analysis. Pearson's *r* correlations were used for continuous and ordinal variables and *t*-tests were used for nominal variables. A conservative cutoff criterion of  $p < .01$  was chosen.

Significant relationships (i.e.,  $p < .01$ ) were evident between the dependent variable and eight independent variables. Results for these analyses can be found in Table 17. The independent variables that emerged as being significant include: (a) Classroom; (b) Usage score; (c) Has received sufficient professional development about aligning student IEP goals to the CCSS; (d) Has received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities; (e) Feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS; (f) Believes school's reading curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS; (g) Believes school's writing curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS; and (h) Believes it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities. Therefore, these variables were entered into the multiple linear regression analysis.

Table 17

*Description of Relationships Between Independent Variables and the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Believe the CCSS Are Beneficial for Students With Disabilities*

Variable	Significance test
<i>Independent variable</i>	
Teacher background characteristic	
Gender female	$t(469) = -1.309, p = .191$
Gender male	$t(469) = 1.543, p = .124$
Gender other	$t(469) = -1.266, p = .206$
Years teaching	$r = -.052, p = .257$
Years teaching students with disabilities as a special education teacher	$r = -.048, p = .304$
Started teaching after the No Child Left Behind Act was passed by Congress in 2001 (i.e., has 16 years of teaching experience or less)	$t(471) = -1.563, p = .119$
Classroom*	$t(471) = 3.319, p < .01$
Early childhood elementary school (K, 1, or 2)	$t(472) = -1.721, p = .086$
Upper elementary school (3, 4, or 5)	$t(472) = .132, p = .895$
Middle school (6, 7, or 8)	$t(472) = -.120, p = .905$
High school (9, 10, 11, or 12)	$t(472) = -.031, p = .975$
ELA	$t(472) = .227, p = .821$
Math	$t(472) = .309, p = .758$
Taught students who took a typical end-of-year assessment (e.g., PARCC, SBAC, state-created common core exam)	$t(456) = .215, p = .830$
Taught students who took an alternate assessment (e.g., DLM, NCSC, state-created common core alternate assessment)	$t(456) = -1.351, p = .177$
Taught students who were not in a testing grade	$t(456) = -2.129, p = .034$
Taught students who took their end-of-year assessment on the computer	$t(472) = -1.077, p = .282$
Knowledge Score	$r = .101, p = .030$
Usage Score**	$r = .296, p < .001$
Is familiar with the six key instructional shifts of the CCSS	$t(470) = -2.415, p = .016$
Is familiar with the standards for mathematical practice in the CCSS	$t(471) = -1.559, p = .120$

(continued)



Table 17 (continued)

*Description of Relationships Between Independent Variables and the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Believe the CCSS Are Beneficial for Students With Disabilities*

Variable	Significance test
Has received sufficient professional development about aligning student IEP goals to the CCSS**	$r = .299, p < .001$
Has received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities**	$r = .331, p < .001$
Feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS**	$r = -.203, p < .001$
Believes school's reading curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS**	$r = .191, p < .001$
Believes school's writing curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS*	$r = .139, p < .01$
Believes school's math curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS	$r = .113, p = .017$
Believes it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities**	$r = .302, p < .001$
Student background characteristic	
Percentage of students living in poverty	$r = -.084, p = .070$
School background characteristic	
Rural	$t(472) = .205, p = .838$
Suburban	$t(472) = -.383, p = .702$
Urban	$t(472) = .198, p = .844$
School	$t(472) = .677, p = .499$
Year of full CCSS implementation in participant's state or territory	$r = -.023, p = .621$

Note: \* =  $p < .01$ , \*\* =  $p < .001$

Of the eight variables that were entered into the stepwise variable selection procedure, five remained significant in a multivariate linear model ( $F = 22.80, p < .001$ ). Evaluation of the VIF and tolerance values show no multicollinearity exists among the five factors. The details are given in Table 18.

Table 18

*Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Believe That the CCSS Are Beneficial for Students With Disabilities*

Factor	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Has received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities	.33	.11	.16	3.39	< .01	50.18	<.001
Usage Score**	.39	.15	.25	5.35	< .001	37.55	< .001
Feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS**	.46	.21	-.24	-5.46	< .001	36.40	< .001
Believes it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities	.48	.23	.13	2.73	< .01	30.75	< .001
Classroom	.49	.24	-.12	-2.73	< .01	26.37	< .001

*Note:* All coefficients are rounded to the nearest two decimals; \*\* =  $p < .001$

The set of variables in this model significantly predicts the extent to which special education teachers believe the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities. The strongest predictor to emerge was usage score ( $\beta = .25$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and accounted for 4.6% of the variance in the outcome. The positive beta value indicates that the more special education teachers use the CCSS, the more beneficial they believe the CCSS to be for students with disabilities. The second strongest predictor was the extent to which special education teachers feel pressure to spend most of their time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS ( $\beta = -.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and accounted for an additional 5.5% of the variance in the outcome. The negative beta value indicates that the more pressure special education teachers feel, the less beneficial they

believe the CCSS to be for students with disabilities. The third strongest predictor was the extent to which a special education teacher has received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities ( $\beta = .16, p < .01$ ) and accounted for an additional 10.8% of the variance in the outcome. The positive beta value indicates that the more special education teachers received professional development, the more they think the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities. The fourth strongest predictor was the extent to which a special education teacher believes it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities ( $\beta = .13, p < .01$ ) and accounted for an additional 2.1% of the variance in the outcome. The positive beta value indicates that the more special education teachers believe it is easy to find resources, the more they believe that the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities. Finally, the fifth strongest predictor was the type of classroom in which a special education teacher primarily taught ( $\beta = -.12, p < .01$ ) and accounted for an additional 1.3% of the variance in the outcome. The negative beta value indicates that the special education teachers who did not work in a self-contained classroom were more likely to believe that the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities.

The results indicate that the extent to which special education teachers believe that the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities is positively predicted by the extent to which they have received sufficient professional development to help them apply the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities, the extent to which they use the CCSS in their classrooms, and the extent to which they feel it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for their students with disabilities. It is negatively predicted by the extent to which they feel pressure to spend most of their time teaching their students with disabilities the standards outlined in the

CCSS and working in a self-contained classroom. Overall, this model explains 25.0% of the variance in this outcome variable ( $R = .50$ ).

**Research Question 6: What Are the Teacher, Student, and School Background Variables (e.g., gender, years of experience, classroom setting, level of knowledge about the CCSS, level of use of the CCSS, level of student poverty, school type, etc.) That Can Predict the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Believe That, With the Right Supports in Place, Their Students With Disabilities Have the Potential to Meet the Standards Outlined in the CCSS?**

A stepwise multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to estimate a regression model that best predicts the extent to which special education teachers believe that, with the right supports in place, their students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS. Potential predictor variables included the teacher, student, and school background variables listed in Table 1. Due to the large number of factors, the relationships between the dependent variable and independent variables were examined before performing a regression analysis to determine which ones should be chosen for inclusion in the analysis. Pearson's  $r$  correlations were used for continuous and ordinal variables and  $t$ -tests were used for nominal variables. A conservative cutoff criterion of  $p < .01$  was chosen.

Significant relationships (i.e.,  $p < .01$ ) were evident between the dependent variable and ten independent variables. Results for these analyses can be found in Table 19. The independent variables that emerged as being significant include: (a) Classroom; (b) High school (9, 10, 11, or 12); (c) Math; (d) Usage score; (e) Has received sufficient professional development about aligning student IEP goals to the CCSS; (f) Has received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities; (g) Believes school's

reading curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS; (h) Believes school's writing curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS; (i) Believes it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities; and (j) Percentage of students living in poverty. Therefore, these variables were entered into the multiple linear regression analysis.

Table 19

*Description of Relationships Between Independent Variables and the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Believe That, With the Right Supports in Place, Their Students With Disabilities Have the Potential to Meet the Standards Outlined in the CCSS*

Variable	Significance test
<i>Independent variable</i>	
Teacher background characteristic	
Gender female	$t(462) = 2.315, p = .021$
Gender male	$t(462) = -2.289, p = .023$
Gender other	$t(462) = -.316, p = .752$
Years teaching	$r = -.097, p = .036$
Years teaching students with disabilities as a special education teacher	$r = -.071, p = .128$
Started teaching after the No Child Left Behind Act was passed by Congress in 2001 (i.e., has 16 years of teaching experience or less)	$t(464) = -1.464, p = .144$
Classroom**	$t(464) = 4.840, p < .001$
Early childhood elementary school (K, 1, or 2)	$t(465) = -.334, p = .738$
Upper elementary school (3, 4, or 5)	$t(465) = 1.559, p = .120$
Middle school (6, 7, or 8)	$t(465) = 1.020, p = .308$
High school (9, 10, 11, or 12)*	$t(465) = -3.304, p < .01$
ELA	$t(465) = 1.922, p = .055$
Math*	$t(465) = 3.254, p < .01$
Taught students who took a typical end-of-year assessment (e.g., PARCC, SBAC, state-created common core exam)	$t(449) = -1.712, p = .088$
Taught students who took an alternate assessment (e.g., DLM, NCSC, state-created common core alternate assessment)	$t(449) = 2.360, p = .019$
Taught students who were not in a testing grade	$t(449) = -.974, p = .330$
Taught students who took their end-of-year assessment on the computer	$t(465) = -.509, p = .611$
Knowledge Score	$r = .042, p = .373$
Usage Score**	$r = .192, p < .001$

(continued)

Table 19 (continued)

*Description of Relationships Between Independent Variables and the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Believe That, With the Right Supports in Place, Their Students With Disabilities Have the Potential to Meet the Standards Outlined in the CCSS*

Variable	Significance test
Is familiar with the six key instructional shifts of the CCSS	$t(463) = -2.517, p = .012$
Is familiar with the standards for mathematical practice in the CCSS	$t(464) = .666, p = .506$
Has received sufficient professional development about aligning student IEP goals to the CCSS*	$r = .120, p = .010$
Has received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities*	$r = .154, p < .01$
Feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS	$r = -.083, p = .075$
Believes school's reading curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS*	$r = .160, p < .01$
Believes school's writing curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS*	$r = .129, p < .01$
Believes school's math curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS	$r = .067, p = .160$
Believes it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities**	$r = .314, p < .001$
Student background characteristic	
Percentage of students living in poverty*	$r = -.157, p < .01$
School background characteristic	
Rural	$t(465) = 1.012, p = .312$
Suburban	$t(465) = 1.495, p = .136$
Urban	$t(465) = -2.320, p = .021$
School	$t(465) = .099, p = .921$
Year of full CCSS implementation in participant's state or territory	$r = -.037, p = .432$

Note: \* =  $p < .01$ , \*\* =  $p < .001$

Of the ten variables that were entered into the stepwise variable selection procedure, four remained significant in a multivariate linear model ( $F = 18.26, p < .001$ ). Evaluation of the VIF and tolerance values show no multicollinearity exists among the four factors. The details are given in Table 20.

Table 20

*Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Believe That, With the Right Supports in Place, Their Students With Disabilities Have the Potential to Meet the Standards Outlined in the CCSS*

Factor	$r$	$r^2$	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$F$	$p$
It is easy for me to find CCSS-aligned resources for my students with disabilities**	.30	.09	.25	5.28	< .001	41.45	< .001
Classroom**	.37	.14	-.19	-4.06	< .001	32.04	< .001
High school (9, 10, 11, or 12)	.40	.16	.15	3.36	< .01	25.10	< .001
Usage Score	.42	.17	.14	2.92	< .01	21.26	< .001

*Note:* all coefficients are rounded to the nearest two decimals; \*\* =  $p < .001$

The set of variables in this model significantly predicts the extent to which special education teachers believe that, with the right supports in place, their students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS. The strongest predictor to emerge was the belief that it is easy for special education teachers to find CCSS-aligned resources for their students with disabilities ( $\beta = .25, p < .001$ ) and accounted for 9.2% of the variance in the outcome. The positive beta value indicates that the more special education teachers believe that it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for their students with disabilities, the more they think that, with the right supports in place, their students have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS. The second strongest predictor was the type of classroom in which a



special education teacher primarily taught ( $\beta = -.19, p < .001$ ) and accounted for an additional 4.4% of the variance in the outcome. The negative beta value indicates that special education teachers who did not teach in a self-contained classroom are more likely to believe that, with the right supports in place, their students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS. The third strongest predictor was having taught high school (grades 9, 10, 11, or 12) ( $\beta = .15, p < .001$ ) and accounted for an additional 2.0% of the variance in the outcome. The positive beta value indicates that the more special education teachers have taught high school, the more they believe that, with the right supports in place, their students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS. Finally, the fourth strongest predictor was the extent to which a special education teacher uses the CCSS in her/his classroom ( $\beta = .14, p < .01$ ) and accounted for an additional 1.7% of the variance in the outcome. The positive beta value indicates that the more special education teachers use the CCSS in their classrooms, the more they believe that, with the right supports in place, their students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS.

The results indicate that the extent to which special education teachers believe that, with the right supports in place, their students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS is positively predicted by the extent to which they believe it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for their students with disabilities, having taught high school (grades 9, 10, 11, or 12), and the extent to which they use the CCSS in their classrooms. It is negatively predicted by special education teachers' primary placement being a self-contained classroom. Overall, this model explains 18.3% of the variance in this outcome variable ( $R = .43$ ).

**Research Question 7: What Are the Teacher, Student, and School Background Variables (e.g., gender, years of experience, classroom setting, level of knowledge about the CCSS, level of use of the CCSS, level of student poverty, school type, etc.) That Can Predict the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Feel They Need More Guidance on How to Use the CCSS With Students With Disabilities?**

A stepwise multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to estimate a regression model that best predicts the extent to which special education teachers feel they need more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities. Potential predictor variables included the teacher, student, and school background variables listed in Table 1. Due to the large number of factors, the relationships between the dependent variable and independent variables were examined before performing a regression analysis to determine which ones should be chosen for inclusion in the analysis. Pearson's  $r$  correlations were used for continuous and ordinal variables and  $t$ -tests were used for nominal variables. A conservative cutoff criterion of  $p < .01$  was chosen.

Significant relationships (i.e.,  $p < .01$ ) were evident between the dependent variable and eight independent variables. Results for these analyses can be found in Table 21. The independent variables that emerged as being significant include: (a) Years teaching; (b) Years teaching students with disabilities as a special education teacher; (c) Started teaching after the No Child Left Behind Act was passed by Congress in 2001 (i.e., has 16 years of teaching experience or less); (d) Taught students who took an alternate assessment (e.g., DLM, NCSC, state created alternate assessment); (e) Is familiar with the standards for mathematical practice in the CCSS; (f) Has received sufficient professional development about aligning student IEP goals to the CCSS; (g) Has received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the

instruction of students with disabilities; and (h) Believes it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities. Therefore, these variables were entered into the multiple linear regression analysis.

Table 21

*Description of Relationships Between Independent Variables and the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Feel They Need More Guidance on How to Use the CCSS With Students With Disabilities*

Variable	Significance test
<i>Independent variable</i>	
Teacher background characteristic	
Gender female	$t(464) = -.645, p = .519$
Gender male	$t(464) = .715, p = .475$
Gender other	$t(464) = -.365, p = .715$
Years teaching**	$r = -.273, p < .001$
Years teaching students with disabilities as a special education teacher**	$r = -.260, p < .001$
Started teaching after the No Child Left Behind Act was passed by Congress in 2001 (i.e., has 16 years of teaching experience or less)**	$t(466) = -4.516, p < .001$
Classroom	$t(466) = -.078, p = .938$
Early childhood elementary school (K, 1, or 2)	$t(467) = 1.138, p = .256$
Upper elementary school (3, 4, or 5)	$t(467) = .226, p = .821$
Middle school (6, 7, or 8)	$t(467) = .347, p = .729$
High school (9, 10, 11, or 12)	$t(467) = .227, p = .821$
ELA	$t(467) = .581, p = .562$
Math	$t(467) = 1.139, p = .255$
Taught students who took a typical end-of-year assessment (e.g., PARCC, SBAC, state-created common core exam)	$t(451) = .082, p = .935$
Taught students who took an alternate assessment (e.g., DLM, NCSC, state-created common core alternate assessment)*	$t(451) = 2.741, p < .01$
Taught students who were not in a testing grade	$t(451) = -.481, p = .631$
Taught students who took their end-of-year assessment on the computer	$t(467) = .909, p = .364$
Knowledge Score	$r = .037, p = .431$
Usage Score	$r = -.049, p = .299$

(continued)

Table 21 (continued)

*Description of Relationships Between Independent Variables and the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Feel They Need More Guidance on How to Use the CCSS With Students With Disabilities*

Variable	Significance test
Is familiar with the six key instructional shifts of the CCSS	$t(465) = 1.499, p = .134$
Is familiar with the standards for mathematical practice in the CCSS*	$t(466) = 3.438, p < .01$
Has received sufficient professional development about aligning student IEP goals to the CCSS**	$r = -.359, p < .001$
Has received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities**	$r = -.370, p < .001$
Feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS	$r = .086, p = .063$
Believes school's reading curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS	$r = -.095, p = .045$
Believes school's writing curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS	$r = -.063, p = .186$
Believes school's math curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS	$r = -.067, p = .162$
Believes it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities**	$r = -.163, p < .001$
Student background characteristic	
Percentage of students living in poverty	$r = .020, p = .660$
School background characteristic	
Rural	$t(467) = 2.111, p = .035$
Suburban	$t(467) = .093, p = .926$
Urban	$t(467) = -1.885, p = .060$
School	$t(467) = .002, p = .998$
Year of full CCSS implementation in participant's state or territory	$r = -.013, p = .780$

Note: \* =  $p < .01$ , \*\* =  $p < .001$

Of the eight variables that were entered into the stepwise variable selection procedure, three remained significant in a multivariate linear model ( $F = 29.12, p < .001$ ). Evaluation of the VIF and tolerance values show no multicollinearity exists among the three factors. The details are given in Table 22.

Table 22

*Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Feel They Need More Guidance on How to Use the CCSS With Students With Disabilities*

Factor	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Has received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities**	.37	.14	-.32	-7.38	< .001	67.26	< .001
Years teaching**	.44	.19	-.24	-5.56	< .001	51.34	< .001
Is familiar with the standards for mathematical practice in the CCSS	.45	.21	-.12	-2.88	< .01	37.15	< .001

*Note:* All coefficients are rounded to the nearest two decimals; \*\* =  $p < .001$

The set of variables in this model significantly predicts the extent to which special education teachers feel they need more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities. The strongest predictor to emerge was having received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities ( $\beta = -.32, p < .001$ ) and accounted for 13.4% of the variance in the outcome. The negative beta value indicates that the more special education teachers have received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities, the less they feel they need more guidance on how to use these standards with students with disabilities. The second strongest predictor was the number of years a special education teacher has been

teaching ( $\beta = -.24, p < .001$ ) and accounted for an additional 5.7% of the variance in the outcome. The negative beta value indicates that the more years a special education teacher has been teaching, the less they feel they need more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities. Finally, the third strongest predictor was the extent to which a special education teacher is familiar with the standards for mathematical practice in the CCSS ( $\beta = -.12, p < .01$ ) and accounted for an additional 1.3% of the variance in the outcome. The negative beta value indicates that the more special education teachers are familiar with the standards for mathematical practice in the CCSS, the less they feel they need more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities.

The results indicate that the extent to which special education teachers feel they need more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities is negatively predicted by having received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities, the number of years they have been teaching, and the extent to which they are familiar with the standards for mathematical practice in the CCSS. Overall, this model explains 21.2% of the variance in this outcome variable ( $R = .46$ ).

**Research Question 8: What Are the Teacher, Student, and School Background Variables (e.g., gender, years of experience, classroom setting, level of knowledge about the CCSS, level of use of the CCSS, level of student poverty, school type, etc.) That Can Predict the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Like the CCSS?**

A stepwise multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to estimate a regression model that best predicts the extent to which special education teachers like the CCSS. Potential predictor variables included the teacher, student, and school background variables listed in Table 1. Due to the large number of factors, the relationships between the dependent variable and

independent variables were examined before performing a regression analysis to determine which ones should be chosen for inclusion in the analysis. Pearson's  $r$  correlations were used for continuous and ordinal variables and  $t$ -tests were used for nominal variables. A conservative cutoff criterion of  $p < .01$  was chosen.

Significant relationships (i.e.,  $p < .01$ ) were evident between the dependent variable and eleven independent variables. Results for these analyses can be found in Table 23. The independent variables that emerged as being significant include: (a) Years teaching; (b) Usage score; (c) Has received sufficient professional development about aligning student IEP goals to the CCSS; (d) Has received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities; (e) Feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS; (f) Believes school's reading curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS; (g) Believes school's writing curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS; (h) Believes it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities; and (i) Started teaching after the No Child Left Behind Act was passed by Congress in 2001. Therefore, these variables were entered into the multiple linear regression analysis.



Table 23

*Description of Relationships Between Independent Variables and the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Like the CCSS*

Variable	Significance test
<i>Independent variable</i>	
Teacher background characteristic	
Gender female	$t(469) = -.750, p = .454$
Gender male	$t(469) = .700, p = .484$
Gender other	$t(469) = .346, p = .729$
Years teaching*	$r = -.139, p < .01$
Years teaching students with disabilities as a special education teacher*	$r = -.140, p < .01$
Started teaching after the No Child Left Behind Act was passed by Congress in 2001 (i.e., has 16 years of teaching experience or less)*	$t(471) = -3.294, p < .01$
Classroom	$t(471) = 2.563, p = .011$
Early childhood elementary school (K, 1, or 2)	$t(472) = -1.966, p = .050$
Upper elementary school (3, 4, or 5)	$t(472) = -.123, p = .902$
Middle school (6, 7, or 8)	$t(472) = .703, p = .483$
High school (9, 10, 11, or 12)*	$t(465) = -3.304, p < .01$
ELA	$t(472) = -.750, p = .454$
Math	$t(472) = .729, p = .467$
Taught students who took a typical end-of-year assessment (e.g., PARCC, SBAC, state-created common core exam)	$t(454) = -.590, p = .555$
Taught students who took an alternate assessment (e.g., DLM, NCSC, state-created common core alternate assessment)	$t(454) = -.176, p = .860$
Taught students who were not in a testing grade	$t(454) = -1.249, p = .212$
Taught students who took their end-of-year assessment on the computer*	$t(472) = -2.858, p < .01$
Knowledge Score	$r = .115, p = .013$
Usage Score**	$r = .282, p < .001$
Is familiar with the six key instructional shifts of the CCSS	$t(470) = -1.991, p = .047$
Is familiar with the standards for mathematical practice in the CCSS	$t(471) = -.767, p = .443$

(continued)

Table 23 (continued)

*Description of Relationships Between Independent Variables and the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Like the CCSS*

Variable	Significance test
Has received sufficient professional development about aligning student IEP goals to the CCSS**	$r = .241, p < .001$
Has received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities**	$r = .243, p < .001$
Feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS**	$r = -.198, p < .001$
Believes school's reading curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS**	$r = .174, p < .001$
Believes school's writing curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS	$r = .129, p = .007$
Believes school's math curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS	$r = .103, p = .030$
Believes it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities**	$r = .286, p < .001$
Student background characteristic	
Percentage of students living in poverty	$r = -.071, p = .125$
School background characteristic	
Rural	$t(472) = -.167, p = .868$
Suburban	$t(472) = -.302, p = .762$
Urban	$t(472) = .434, p = .664$
School	$t(472) = 1.160, p = .247$
Year of full CCSS implementation in participant's state or territory	$r = -.017, p = .717$

Note: \* =  $p < .01$ , \*\* =  $p < .001$

Of the eleven variables that were entered into the stepwise variable selection procedure, five remained significant in a multivariate linear model ( $F = 21.46, p < .001$ ). Evaluation of the VIF and tolerance values show no multicollinearity exists among the five factors. The details are given in Table 24.

Table 24

*Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Like the CCSS*

Factor	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Usage Score**	.28	.08	.30	6.33	< .001	35.52	< .001
Feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS**	.38	.15	-.24	-5.28	< .001	35.22	< .001
Believes it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities**	.42	.18	.18	3.89	< .001	29.64	< .001
Years teaching	.44	.19	-.14	-3.03	<.01	24.51	<.001
Taught students who took their standardized state assessment on the computer	.46	.21	.12	2.77	< .01	21.46	< .001

*Note:* all coefficients are rounded to the nearest two decimals; \*\* =  $p < .001$

The set of variables in this model significantly predicts the extent to which special education teachers like the CCSS. Usage score emerged as the strongest predictor ( $\beta = .30$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and accounted for 8.0% of the variance in the outcome. The positive beta value indicates that the more special education teachers use the CCSS, the more they like these standards. The second strongest predictor was the extent to which a special education teacher feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS ( $\beta = -.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and accounted for an additional 6.7% of the variance in the outcome. The negative beta value indicates that the more pressure special education teachers feel, the less they like the CCSS. The third strongest predictor was the extent to which special education teachers feel it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities ( $\beta = .18$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and accounted for an additional 3.2% of the variance in the outcome. The positive beta value

indicates that the more special education teachers feel it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for their students, the more they like the CCSS. The fourth strongest predictor was years teaching ( $\beta = -.14, p < .01$ ) and accounted for an additional 1.5% of the variance in the outcome. The negative beta value indicates that the more years special education teachers have taught, the less they like the CCSS. Finally, the fifth strongest predictor was having taught students who took their standardized state assessment on the computer ( $\beta = .12, p < .01$ ) and accounted for an additional 1.5% of the variance in the outcome. The positive beta value indicates that the more special education teachers taught students who took their standardized state assessment on the computer, the more they like the CCSS.

The results indicate that the extent to which special education teachers like the CCSS is positively predicted by the extent to which they use the CCSS in their classrooms, the extent to which they believe it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities, and having taught students who took their standardized state assessment on the computer. It is negatively predicted by the extent to which special education teachers feel pressure to spend most of their time teaching their students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS and the number of years they have been teaching. Overall, this model explains 20.9% of the variance in this outcome variable ( $R = .46$ ).

## Chapter V

### DISCUSSION

#### **Overview of Findings**

This study surveyed 476 special education teachers from across the United States about their experiences and opinions using the CCSS with students with disabilities. Overall, the special education teachers in this study do not perceive that the CCSS are beneficial for students *with* disabilities. Additionally, they indicate that they do not like the CCSS and many aspects of their implementation. It is important to note that the exact reasons why these special education teachers hold these opinions are unclear and these opinions may differ for special education teachers who have certain background characteristics. At the same time, overall, the special education teachers in this study perceive that the CCSS are beneficial for students *without* disabilities. This last finding is consistent with the finding of Matlock et al. (2013), in a study that did not focus on special education teachers specifically, but surveyed teachers in general.

#### **Special Education Teachers' Knowledge of the CCSS**

The results of this study indicate that the special education teachers who participated in this survey demonstrated a moderate level of knowledge about the key features of the CCSS, with an average correct percentage across all six knowledge questions of 69.8%. This finding suggests that they have a foundational understanding of the standards.

#### **Special Education Teachers' Use of the CCSS in Their Classrooms**

The results of this study indicate that the special education teachers who participated in this survey read the standards for the grades that they teach and use them to plan lessons. These findings suggest that they practice the fundamental components of standards implementation within a classroom setting.

## **Special Education Teachers' Opinions of the CCSS**

Before discussing the opinions that the special education teachers who participated in this study have about the CCSS and their implementation, one should keep the following three points in mind.

First, since the majority of these participants demonstrate knowledge and use of the CCSS, there is a basis for the opinions that they express about the standards' application to students with disabilities.

Second, the teachers who participated in this study teach students in a continuum of specialized instructional settings and across the spectrum of disability classifications. Participants reported their primary classroom setting/position while using the CCSS with students with disabilities (i.e., General Education Classroom / SETSS, Resource Room / Pull-Out Services, CTT/ICT Classroom, Self-Contained Classroom, Itinerant, Multiple Settings, or Other). Thus, inferences can be made about how their opinions relate to their experiences in these settings/positions. However, it was impractical to ask participants to report the specific number of students with a disability they had taught while using the CCSS and each and every one of their students' disability classifications. They were only asked to report, in general terms, the disability classifications present among the entire set of students they taught while using the CCSS. Thus, inferences cannot be made about how participants' opinions relate to their experiences working with individual students or subsets of students with a specific disability classification.

Third, nearly half (49.2%) of participants reported that they do not believe that their students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS, even when the right supports are in place. 22.1% stayed neutral with regard to this topic and less than

a third (28.7%) reported that their students do have the potential to meet the standards under these conditions. The results of this survey item are important to keep in mind when interpreting the results of many of the other opinion-based survey items in this study because this item clarifies special education teachers' perceptions of their students' potential to achieve the standards under ideal circumstances. It is not clear why nearly half of special education teachers do not believe that their students with disabilities have the potential to achieve the CCSS, even if all of the necessary supports were in place. For some, they might believe that the standards are not developmentally appropriate and, therefore, it is unreasonable to expect that their students could master skills beyond the scope of their developmental range. In fact, 77.2% of participants reported that they do not believe the CCSS are developmentally appropriate for students with disabilities. Furthermore, 36.3% do not believe they are developmentally appropriate for students without disabilities. Others might believe that due to the nature of their students' disabilities—especially if those disabilities are severe—advanced academic achievement is particularly challenging. Still others might hold low expectations for their students. The specific reasons behind this distribution of responses are worth further investigation.

Keeping the previously mentioned points in mind for context, several survey items stood out among those that inquired about special education teachers' perceptions of the CCSS and its implementation. While special education teachers report that they are using CCSS-aligned curricula in their classrooms, they also report that it is hard for them to find CCSS-aligned resources for their students with disabilities. This suggests that there may be a lack of resources that have been specifically created to meet the needs of diverse learners while at the same time addressing the CCSS. It may also be the case that whatever resources are available are simply difficult to find.

The special education teachers who responded to this survey do not feel that participation in CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments is beneficial for their students with disabilities. This may be in part because they perceive that their students experience frustration when taking these tests, because they perceive that these tests don't measure what they consider to be the most important skills for their students with disabilities, or because they don't get the scores back in time to apply the results to classroom instruction. Efforts to move to computer-adaptive testing may help to address some of these concerns. Computer-adaptive testing presents questions that are differentiated to students based on their answers as they move throughout the test. Students receive easier questions when they are not doing well and are presented with more challenging questions when they are. Also, computer-based testing allows for instantaneous results on many types of tests items.

Additionally, perhaps part of the reason that teachers do not feel that CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments are beneficial for their students is because, given that these exams are designed to measure the standards for their students' grade level, these tests may present material that is too difficult for any students who are not performing on grade level. While the purpose of standardized testing is to measure how any particular student measures up compared to his or her peers, and this is an important endeavor, it is important to consider how a student who has significant academic difficulties fits into this paradigm. Throughout the entire school year, special education teachers take care to differentiate instruction based on the individual needs of their students by modifying the content, process, or product of each lesson. Standardized tests, by their nature, can only be differentiated to a small degree—by giving students accommodations such as extended time, questions and directions read aloud, or a distraction free environment, for example. The content of standardized exams cannot be



modified, lest they would no longer be standardized. Given this reality, it may be useful to consider new and innovative ways to find a balance between measuring the progress of all students—including students with disabilities—and reducing the level of frustration that comes along with these assessments.

One solution could be to increase the use of computer-adaptive tests since they can provide some level of differentiation by presenting appropriately leveled questions to a student while maintaining some level of standardization by selecting those questions from a common set. Another could be to reduce the amount of time spent on testing generally by shortening standardized tests or the number of days spent on testing. Yet another could be to allow more flexibility for IEP teams to determine the type of assessment that is appropriate for any given child—whether that be a typical standardized assessment, an alternate assessment, or a portfolio assessment—while maintaining high expectations for that child to achieve grade-level standards.

Certainly, the impact of testing on students should be balanced with the need for our education system to measure and track student performance on a large scale. It is also important to include students with disabilities in statewide measures of performance so that we continue to keep them and their teachers accountable. But, given the persistent negative attitudes that surround testing, the recent opt-out movement by parents across many states, and the high levels of frustration that the current system is invoking in our children, especially as we attempt to implement rigorous standards with all students, it is time for new thinking on how to improve educational assessment systems.

Finally, it is interesting to see that the majority of special education teachers do not believe that the CCSS will help their students with disabilities to achieve the goals of being more prepared for college or a career—the very goals that these standards tout as being their aim. This

may be due to the fact that the majority of special education teachers in this study feel pressure to spend most of their time teaching these standards and that, while using these standards, they are not able to address their students' IEP goals, many of which may be outside of the realm of ELA/literacy and math.

### **The Factors Predictive of the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Believe the CCSS Are Beneficial for Students *Without* Disabilities**

Four factors emerged as being predictive of the extent to which special education teachers believe the CCSS are beneficial for students without disabilities. These include usage score, feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS, years teaching, and believes a school's writing curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS.

The more special education teachers use the CCSS, the more likely it is that they will believe the CCSS are beneficial for students without disabilities. This finding suggests a positive relationship between use of the standards and the belief that they are beneficial for students without disabilities. In order to promote a belief among special education teachers that the standards are beneficial for students without disabilities, efforts should be made to increase their use of the standards. These efforts can include encouragement from school and district administrators to use the standards, the creation of collaborative teams of teachers to write CCSS-aligned units of study and lesson plans, professional development about how to use the standards to plan and implement instruction, and coaching from an educator who has experience with the CCSS and their use in classrooms.

The more pressure special education teachers feel to spend most of their time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS, the less likely they are to believe

the CCSS are beneficial for students without disabilities. This finding suggests a negative relationship between pressure and the belief that the CCSS are beneficial for students without disabilities. It also suggests that special education teachers' beliefs about how beneficial the CCSS are for students without disabilities may be affected by their work using the standards with students with disabilities. Special education teachers might feel pressure when using the CCSS with students with disabilities for several reasons. Pressure to spend most of their time using the CCSS in their classrooms may be placed on them by school and district administrators. Additionally, they may feel pressure because of CCSS-aligned standardized tests and the high-stakes attached to them. These high stakes may be putting enough pressure on special education teachers (and their students) that they may be unintentionally causing these teachers to believe that the standards are not beneficial for students—including students without disabilities.

The more years special education teachers have taught, the less beneficial they believe the CCSS to be for students without disabilities. This finding suggests a negative relationship between amount of time teaching and the belief that the CCSS are beneficial for students without disabilities. This may be because teachers with more years of experience have seen various initiatives come and go with little effect on improving students' academic achievement.

The more special education teachers believe the writing curriculum in their school is well-aligned to the CCSS, the more they believe these standards are beneficial for students without disabilities. This finding suggests a positive relationship between CCSS-alignment in a school's writing curriculum and the belief that the CCSS are beneficial for students without disabilities. In order to encourage more special education teachers to believe that these standards are beneficial for students without disabilities, school administrators should make sure that their school's writing curriculum is well-aligned to the CCSS. Special education teachers might

believe that a well-aligned writing curriculum will guide teachers on how to teach the writing standards in the CCSS. They might also believe that such a curriculum is important for students without disabilities because it would help teachers to address the instructional shifts of the CCSS that require students to cite evidence in and build content knowledge through their writing.

### **The Factors Predictive of the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Believe the CCSS Are Beneficial for Students *With* Disabilities**

Five factors emerged as being predictive of the extent to which special education teachers believe the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities. These include has received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities, usage score, feels pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS, believes it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities, and classroom.

The more special education teachers use the CCSS, the more likely it is that they will believe the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities. This finding suggests a positive relationship between use of the CCSS and the belief that they are beneficial for students with disabilities. In order to promote the belief among special education teachers that the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities, efforts should be made to encourage use of these standards. These efforts can include providing guidance to special education teachers about how to use these standards when they also have to address their students' IEP goals. School and district administrators can provide support with the creation of standards-based IEPs as well as provide special education teachers strategies to integrate their students' unique IEP goals into CCSS-aligned units of study.

The more pressure special education teachers feel to spend most of their time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS, the less likely they are to believe the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities. This finding suggests a negative relationship between pressure and the belief that the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities. In order to promote the belief among special education teachers that the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities, efforts should be made to reduce the pressure special education teachers feel. These efforts may include school and district administrators working closely with their special education teachers to help them plan daily and weekly schedules that provide time for both specially designed CCSS-aligned instruction and individualized instruction to address IEP goals that are not easily integrated into CCSS-based lessons. Additionally, policy makers can work to minimize the stress of CCSS-aligned standardized testing, not only by reducing the high stakes attached to them, but by implementing assessment formats that are more appropriate for students with disabilities. These might include computer-based adaptive testing, alternate assessments, or portfolio assessments.

The more special education teachers received professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities, the more likely they are to believe the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities. This finding suggests a positive relationship between professional development and the belief that the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities. In order to promote the belief among special education teachers that the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities, efforts should be made to provide more professional development about how to apply the standards to the instruction of these students. It may also be useful for state and district education leaders to provide professional development to school

administrators about how to apply the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities so that they can more effectively support their teachers.

The more special education teachers feel it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for their students with disabilities, the more likely they are to believe the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities. This finding suggests a positive relationship between easy access to CCSS-aligned resources and a belief that the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities. In order to promote the belief among special education teachers that the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities, school and district administrators should support their teachers in finding CCSS-aligned resources. This may include choosing curricula for the school that are aligned to the standards so that teachers are not tasked with the work of adapting curricula that are not well-aligned or creating many CCSS-aligned lessons from scratch. This may also include giving teachers time to collaborate and share CCSS-aligned resources that they have found or created for their students with disabilities.

Special education teachers who did not work in a self-contained classroom were more likely to believe that the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities. This finding suggests a negative relationship between working in a more restrictive environment and the belief that the CCSS are beneficial for students with disabilities. This may be because students who are placed in self-contained classrooms typically have more significant learning needs than those who are placed in less restrictive settings.

**The Factors Predictive of the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Believe That, With the Right Supports in Place, Their Students With Disabilities Have the Potential to Meet the Standards Outlined in the CCSS**

Four factors emerged as being predictive of the extent to which special education teachers believe that, with the right supports in place, their students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS. These include the belief that it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities, classroom, having taught high school (9, 10, 11, or 12), and usage score.

The more special education teachers feel it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for their students, the more likely they are to believe that, with the right supports in place, their students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS. This finding suggests a positive relationship between easy access to CCSS-aligned resources and a belief that students with disabilities have the potential to achieve the standards given the right supports. In order to promote more special education teachers to believe that their students can achieve the standards outlined in the CCSS, efforts should be made to support them in finding CCSS-aligned resources. In addition to the possible efforts that were previously mentioned for increasing access to CCSS-aligned resources, state education departments that have created databases of CCSS-aligned materials can increase the number of resources available that include options for differentiation or that are universally designed. Additionally, states can create or expand web-based lesson-sharing platforms so that teachers can easily share CCSS-aligned lesson plans and materials that are differentiated for use with diverse learners.

Special education teachers who did not teach in a self-contained classroom are more likely to believe that, with the right supports in place, their students with disabilities have the

potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS. This finding suggests a negative relationship between teaching in a more restrictive setting and the belief that students with disabilities can achieve the standards given the right supports. This may be because students who are placed in self-contained classrooms typically have more significant learning needs than those who are placed in less restrictive settings.

The more special education teachers have taught high school, the more they believe that, with the right supports in place, their students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS. This finding suggests a positive relationship between teaching at the high school level and the belief that students with disabilities can achieve the standards, given the right supports. This may be because, when students are in high school they are much closer to the end goal of graduation than are students in elementary or middle school. Their teachers may believe that they are more likely to reach the goal of achievement of the skills outlined in the CCSS simply because they are closer to it.

The more special education teachers use the CCSS in their classrooms, the more they believe that, with the right supports in place, their students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS. This finding suggests a positive relationship between use of the CCSS and a belief that students with disabilities can achieve the standards given the right supports. In order to encourage more special education teachers to believe that their students with disabilities can achieve the skills outlined in the CCSS, efforts should be made to encourage the use of the CCSS. In addition to the previously mentioned efforts for encouraging use of the CCSS, schools and districts can encourage intervisitation among teachers so that they can observe the different ways that they use the standards in the classroom and share strategies for successful application of the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities.



## **The Factors Predictive of the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Feel They Need More Guidance on How to Use the CCSS With Students With Disabilities**

Three factors emerged as being predictive of the extent to which special education teachers feel they need more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities. These include having received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities, years teaching, and being familiar with the standards for mathematical practice.

The more special education teachers have received sufficient professional development about applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities, the less they feel they need more guidance on how to use these standards with students with disabilities. This finding suggests a negative relationship between receiving professional development and feeling the need for more guidance about how to use the standards with students with disabilities. This indicates that schools and districts should invest resources into professional development specifically focused around strategies for the successful application of the CCSS to students with disabilities. Additionally, schools may want to implement long-term professional learning opportunities that are facilitated by a coach who holds expertise on both the CCSS and working with students with disabilities.

The more years special education teachers have been teaching, the less they feel they need more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities. This finding suggests a negative relationship between amount of time teaching in the classroom and feeling a need for more guidance about how to use the standards with students with disabilities. This may indicate that teachers with more years of teaching experience feel more confident implementing policy initiatives like the CCSS. School administrators may want to promote teacher

collaboration between more and less experienced teachers to aid in successful implementation of the CCSS.

The more special education teachers are familiar with the standards for mathematical practice in the CCSS, the less they feel they need more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities. This finding suggests a negative relationship between level of familiarity with the mathematical practice standards and feeling the need for more guidance on how to use the standards with students with disabilities. The standards for mathematical practice are a particularly unique feature of the CCSS, and knowledge of them may indicate a deep knowledge of the standards generally. Teachers who understand them well may feel more confident applying the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities.

#### **The Factors Predictive of the Extent to Which Special Education Teachers Like the CCSS**

Five factors emerged as being predictive of the extent to which special education teachers like the CCSS. These include usage score, feeling pressure to spend most of her/his time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS, the belief that it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for students with disabilities, years teaching, and having taught students who took their standardized state assessment on the computer.

The more special education teachers use the CCSS, the more likely it is that they will like these standards. This finding suggests a positive relationship between using the standards and liking them. This also suggests that if teachers choose to use the CCSS more, they may find aspects of the CCSS that they like.

The more pressure special education teachers feel to spend most of their time teaching students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS, the less likely they are to like the CCSS. This finding suggests a negative relationship between feeling pressure to use the

standards and liking them. This also suggests that efforts should be made to avoid placing unnecessary pressure on special education teachers to use the CCSS in their classrooms all the time. Instead, school administrators could encourage special education teachers to balance the time used to teach the CCSS with time spent on the other specific needs of their students with disabilities as indicated by their students' IEPs. Pressure to use the CCSS may lead to feelings of bitterness and, ultimately, rejection of the standards. In addition to the possible efforts that policy makers can take to reduce the pressure that teachers feel to use the standards, they might also consider minimizing the role that that CCSS-aligned standardized test scores of students play in teacher evaluations. Placing too much weight on these scores may cause teachers to feel that they must "teach to the test", a practice which may ultimately cause them to dislike the standards.

The more special education teachers feel it is easy to find CCSS-aligned resources for their students, the more likely they are to like the CCSS. This finding suggests a positive relationship between easy access to CCSS-aligned resources and liking the standards. This also suggests that in order to encourage special education teachers to like the CCSS, it is important to make it easy for them to find aligned resources. It is possible that if teachers find it difficult or frustrating to track down resources, or if they feel that they need to create resources on their own, they might begin to dislike the standards.

The more years special education teachers have taught, the less likely they are to like the CCSS. This finding suggests a negative relationship between amount of time teaching in the classroom and liking the standards. This may be because the CCSS represent a significant change to the way they have traditionally taught students with disabilities. If they feel that they have been doing a good job of supporting their students and meeting their needs, they may feel that these new standards are impeding on their ability to do their job as they see fit.

Finally, the more special education teachers teach students who took their standardized state assessments on the computer, the more likely they are to like the CCSS. This finding suggests a positive relationship between having students who take computerized exams and liking the standards. This also suggests that, if state education policy makers want more special education teachers to like the CCSS, they should work toward moving to a summative assessment system that uses computerized tests as opposed to traditional paper and pencil tests. Many of these computer-based tests are adaptive so that questions adjust based on a student's performance in real time. Additionally, computer-based tests may be more engaging for students. Both of these factors may lead to less frustration for students while still providing states with data about academic performance in ELA/literacy and math.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Several limitations of the current study exist. These include issues with recruitment, a geographically skewed distribution of participants, a limited survey instrument, and the methods used for analysis.

Among the several recruitment methods used was a snowball sampling method that included direct outreach to special education teachers through schools and social media. The teachers who ultimately chose to participate in this study were self-selected and not chosen through a random sampling process. Then, through word-of-mouth, some of these teachers encouraged their colleagues to participate in the study. As a result, it is likely that only teachers who were interested in the research topic chose to participate. Those teachers who were not interested in the research topic may have chosen to not participate in this study.

More teachers from New York State (32.4%) participated in this study than teachers from other states. While the "core" of the CCSS is common to all regions that use these standards,

New York has made some additions to the standards and implementation practices here may be very different from other areas. Therefore, the results of this study may reflect more about how the CCSS has been implemented in this state than other regions.

In the instructions given prior to completing the survey, participants were asked to provide their answers based on the version of the CCSS used in their state or territory. Regardless of their location, a vast majority of the standards should be identical. However, states had the opportunity to add additional standards to the CCSS so that as much as 15% of their state's version was locally created. Therefore, participants' responses may have been influenced by standards that were applicable only to their region.

Furthermore, even though the participants in this survey are from all of the states in the United States, for most states, there are fewer than 30 teachers who participated in this study. The CCSS is unique in that the standards are common to all states and territories that have adopted them. However, since each state is implementing these standards in its own unique way, it would have strengthened this study to be able to include more special education teachers from each state or territory that has utilized the CCSS.

It is also important to note that the final sample does not include any participants from American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, or the U.S. Virgin Islands. In the case of American Samoa, several teachers who work with students with disabilities reached out to the researcher to express interest in the study. However, they each indicated that they did not meet the inclusion criteria; while they had used the CCSS with students with disabilities, they held neither a regional certificate in special education nor a degree in this field. One participant from this territory indicated that it might be difficult to find *any* teacher on the islands who met the inclusion criteria because many teachers who work with students with disabilities in American

Samoa simply do not hold either a certificate or advanced degree in special education. It is worth considering the implications of such instances for students with disabilities in places like American Samoa, where access to certification or advanced training in special education is uncommon. Students with disabilities do exist in these regions and attend school. While their teachers are expected to utilize the CCSS with them, these educators may be lacking the specific training needed to differentiate instruction appropriately and give them meaningful access. Due to the fact that these teachers—who do indeed use the CCSS with students with disabilities—did not meet the inclusion criteria for this study, their very valuable perceptions are not included in this study.

This study only used one researcher self-designed survey that does not ask anything about students' ability levels. However, students' ability level may influence teachers' perceptions about the CCSS. Future studies may want to include a survey specifically targeting students' ability levels in order to specifically analyze the relationship between students' ability levels and teachers' perceptions of the CCSS.

Finally, it is important to note that there are other methods that can be used to complete the inferential statistical analyses needed to answer research questions 4 through 8, such as using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with multiple t-tests. In this study, the percentage of variance obtained for each of these questions was not very high, which indicates that key variables were excluded. Because this is the first study to specifically identify and analyze special education teachers' perceptions of the common core state standards as applied to the instruction of students with disabilities, there was little previous research available to help identify appropriate variables for inclusion. The variables that were used were identified through

an examination of current research on the topic of the perceptions of school administrators and teachers in general toward the CCSS, and personal judgment.

### **Implications for Practice**

The results of this study suggest that districts and schools should make efforts to provide more comprehensive support for special education teachers to help them apply the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities. They also suggest that if special education teachers hope to use the CCSS in a way that benefits their students, they should make efforts to use the standards in their classrooms.

Districts and schools should consider providing professional development that focuses on two main topics: (a) how to use the CCSS in daily instructional practice and (b) how to apply the standards to the instruction of students with disabilities. But, isolated professional development alone may not be enough.

Special education teachers are expressing challenges regarding the task of providing their students access to the CCSS while at the same time addressing their IEP goals. They also express difficulty finding CCSS-aligned materials for use with their students. Therefore, districts and schools may want to support the creation of long-term collaborative teacher teams that meet regularly throughout the school year to study the standards, break them down into their component skills, plan CCSS-aligned units of study, create lesson plans for those units, and discuss strategies for differentiation of those plans. These teams might benefit from having a mix of teachers—some of whom are new to the profession and others who might have more experience. Additionally, efforts should be made to provide these teachers with coaching from educators who are experienced in the use of the CCSS, the instruction of students with disabilities, or both. Districts and schools can further support their teachers by helping them to

access curricula and resources that are well-aligned to the CCSS and to create online file-sharing platforms where teachers who create CCSS-aligned materials can upload them for use by colleagues.

To further address the challenge of balancing standards-based instruction with individualized instruction, schools should work to create flexible instructional schedules. These schedules should allow special education teachers to have the time to teach the ELA and math skills required by the CCSS as well as address the individual needs of their students with disabilities. This effort is especially important if some of those needs are not easily integrated into standards-based lessons.

Finally, if special education teachers hope to use the CCSS (or any other similar set of academic standards that their state may adopt) in a way that benefits their students with disabilities while addressing their individual needs, they can be proactive in several ways. They can let their school administrators know what kinds of supports they need or if they are feeling that the pressure to use the CCSS is interfering with specialized teaching practices. They can request that school-wide teaching schedules be planned with their input so that academic instruction across the day, week, and year is balanced with other important skills that are not standards-based. They can also collaborate with their colleagues to plan CCSS-aligned lessons that include options for differentiation, share CCSS-aligned resources that they find, and discuss strategies they feel are working in their classrooms.

### **Implications for Education Policy**

While the CCSS and other sets of state academic standards specifically tell teachers *what* to teach and don't attempt to tell teachers *how* to teach (nor should they), this study suggests that



policy makers and developers of academic standards should work to improve the guidance materials available for teachers who work with students with disabilities.

The results of this study suggest that the CCSS should improve their written guidance to special education teachers beyond what is written in the “Application to Students with Disabilities” statement. While the CCSS explicitly state that it is up to teachers to decide how to teach their students using these rigorous standards, special education teachers are expressing that they are in need of support in this area. While it may be beyond the scope of the standards themselves to provide comprehensive guidance here, it may be helpful to provide information about resources where special education teachers can find the support they need.

Additionally, as state and federal policy makers work to improve the standardized testing schedules that are currently used to hold districts and schools accountable for student achievement, they should consider the impact that such testing paradigms have on what actually gets taught in schools on a day-to-day basis. This study suggests that the pressure that special education teachers feel is restricting their ability to provide the time necessary for their students’ individual goals. Some of this pressure may be coming from the need to prepare for CCSS-aligned standardized tests. The key here is striking the right balance. While standardized testing can be a valuable tool for measuring how students are doing on essential academic skills, we have to be careful not to over-test our children or make these summative assessments too high-stakes. The result of doing so could be a narrowing of the curriculum and an unintentional emphasis on core academic skills to the detriment of the social, emotional, and functional skills that may be needed by some students with disabilities.

### **Implications for Future Research**

To the researcher's knowledge, this study is the first to specifically examine special education teachers' perceptions of the CCSS as applied to the instruction of students with disabilities on a national scale. It is important to conduct further survey studies to evaluate the perceptions of special education teachers on a national level as well as within individual states.

Additional nationwide studies will help to paint a clearer picture of the changing perceptions of special education teachers over time. Studies within individual states will help policy makers to understand how local policy changes are affecting the experiences of special education teachers and their students. As individual states revise their academic standards, stay the course with the CCSS, or take a completely different path altogether, it is important to listen to and document the voices of special education teachers living through these changes.

Finally, future research should include a qualitative study of the issues explored in this survey. It would be helpful to gather more specific information about *why* special education teachers hold the beliefs that they do. When special education teachers express the opinion that they do not like the CCSS, is this because they do not like the standards themselves or because they do not like the way they are being implemented? Focus groups and interviews regarding specific aspects of CCSS implementation would clarify the underlying reasons for many of the perceptions held by the special education teachers who participated in this study.

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## APPENDICES

### *Appendix A*

#### Recruitment Email and Flyer Sent to Potential Participants

Subject: Survey about the Common Core and Students with Disabilities

Hello!

You are invited to participate in a national survey about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and students with disabilities.

The purposes of this research are to: (a) identify the extent to which special education teachers are familiar with the CCSS; (b) identify the extent to which special education teachers use the CCSS in their classrooms; and (c) identify the perspectives of special education teachers toward the CCSS as applied to the instruction of students with disabilities.

My name is Damien E. LaRock, and I am a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York. If you have any questions about this survey, you may contact me at del2109@tc.columbia.edu.

In order to qualify for this study, you must:

- (a) be/have been a teacher who holds a certificate and/or degree in special education (teaching students with disabilities) and
- (b) have taught at least one student with a disability [a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)] between grades Kindergarten and 12 while using the CCSS.

If you meet the above qualifications and would like to participate, please click on the link below. Completing this survey is voluntary and you may stop at any time or skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This survey generally takes about 10-15 minutes to complete. Your name will not be collected, and any personal information you provide will be completely confidential. Only results without identifying information will be presented. You will learn more about this study when you click on the link, after which you may begin the survey.

As an incentive, you will be entered into a lottery to receive one of several \$50.00 Amazon e-gift cards. Your chances of winning the lottery are approximately 1 in 50.

If you know other special education teachers who qualify as participants for this study, you may share the survey link with them.

This survey will be available until **February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017**.



I appreciate your input very much! It will help me to complete my doctoral research and it will add valuable information to the national discussion about special education and the CCSS!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ccssdisabilities>

Sincerely,  
Damien E. LaRock  
Teachers College, Columbia University  
IRB Protocol # 17-141

# Share Your Opinions About Using the Common Core State Standards with Students with Disabilities!

You are invited to participate in a national survey about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and students with disabilities.

In order to qualify for this study, you must:

- (a) be/have been a teacher who holds a certificate and/or degree in special education (teaching students with disabilities) and
- (b) have taught at least one student with a disability [a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)] between grades Kindergarten and 12 while using the CCSS.

If you meet the above qualifications and would like to participate, please go to the website below. Completing this survey is voluntary and generally takes about 10-15 minutes to complete. Your name will not be collected, and any personal information you provide will be completely confidential. Only results without identifying information will be presented.

You will learn more about this study when you go to the website.

As an incentive, you will be entered into a lottery to receive one of several \$50.00 Amazon e-gift cards. Your chances of winning the lottery are approximately 1 in 50.

This survey will be available until **February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017**.

I greatly appreciate your participation! Not only will it help me to complete my doctoral research, but your voice will make a valuable contribution to the national discussion about special education and the CCSS!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ccssdisabilities>

Principal Investigator: Damien E. LaRock  
del2109@tc.columbia.edu  
Teachers College, Columbia University

IRB Protocol #: 17-141

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ccssdisabilities>

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<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ccssdisabilities>

## *Appendix B*

### Informed Consent and Participants' Rights

Teachers College, Columbia University  
525 West 120<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10027  
(212) 678-3000  
www.tc.edu

#### **INFORMED CONSENT**

**Protocol Title:** The Common Core State Standards as Applied to the Instruction of Students with Disabilities: Special Education Teachers' Perspectives  
(IRB Protocol # 17-141)

**Principal Investigator:** Damien E. LaRock, Doctoral Candidate  
Teachers College, Columbia University (617) 872-3387

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

You are being invited to participate in this research study called “The Common Core State Standards as Applied to the Instruction of Students with Disabilities: Special Education Teachers' Perspectives.” You may qualify to take part in this research study because you may (a) be/have been a teacher who holds a certificate and/or degree in special education (teaching students with disabilities) and (b) have taught at least one student with a disability [a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)] between grades Kindergarten and 12 while using the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Approximately 1,600 people will participate in this study and it will take 10-15 minutes of your time to complete.

#### **WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?**

The purposes of this research are to: (a) identify the extent to which special education teachers are familiar with the CCSS; (b) identify the extent to which special education teachers use the CCSS in their classrooms; and (c) identify the perspectives of special education teachers toward the CCSS as applied to the instruction of students with disabilities.

#### **WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

If you decide to participate, you will respond to survey items about your knowledge of, experience with, and opinions about the CCSS and students with disabilities. Survey items will be presented using the on-line survey platform, SurveyMonkey.

### **WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. You can refuse to participate, decline to answer specific items, or withdraw your participation at any time. The principal investigator will not ask for your name, so any information you provide will be completely anonymous.

### **WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. However, an indirect benefit is that the findings of this study may provide important information for education leaders who are responsible for directing the implementation of the CCSS or providing guidance to special education teachers about their application to students with disabilities.

### **WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?**

You will not be paid to participate; however, you may choose to enter a lottery to receive one of several \$50.00 Amazon e-gift cards. The chances of winning the lottery are approximately 1 in 50. Participants will qualify for this incentive upon completion of the survey, even if they refuse to answer individual survey items. Individuals who refuse to participate, or withdraw from participation altogether, will not qualify for the aforementioned incentive.

### **WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?**

The study is over when you have completed the survey. However, you can leave the study at any time, even if you haven't finished.

### **PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your name will not be collected during this study. Codes will be randomly assigned to participants for data analysis. After you complete the survey, you will be provided with a link to a separate form where you can provide your e-mail address if you wish to enter the Amazon e-gift card raffle. Your e-mail address will not be connected to your survey responses in any way and will only be used for the distribution of Amazon e-gift cards. To protect your confidentiality, the list of participants' e-mail addresses will be kept on a password-protected computer and cannot be linked to the coded data. The SurveyMonkey account belongs to the principal investigator and is password protected. For information on SurveyMonkey's security policies, please visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/security/>. Regulations require that research data be kept for at least three years.

### **HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?**

The results of this study will be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your name or any identifying information about you will not be published. Data from individuals who withdraw their participation will be deleted and will not be used. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the principal investigator.

### **WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?**

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, Damien E. LaRock, at (617) 872-3387 or at del2109@tc.columbia.edu. You can also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Hsu-Min Chiang at hchiang@tc.columbia.edu.

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If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at (212) 678-4105 or e-mail IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10027. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

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## **PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS**

Principal Investigator: Damien E. LaRock

Research Title: The Common Core State Standards as Applied to the Instruction of Students with Disabilities: Special Education Teachers' Perspectives

- I have read the informed consent. If I have questions regarding the purposes and procedures regarding this study, I may e-mail the principal investigator who will answer my questions (del2109@tc.columbia.edu).
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate, decline to answer specific items, or withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
- The principal investigator may withdraw me from the research at his professional discretion (i.e., if the participant does not meet the inclusion criteria outlined in the study.)
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the principal investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research project that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- If, at any time, I have questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact the principal investigator, Damien E. LaRock, who will answer my questions. The principal investigator's e-mail address is del2109@tc.columbia.edu.
- If, at any time, I have comments or concerns regarding the conduct of the research or questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact the Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The phone number for the IRB is (212) 678-4105. Or, I can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10027, Box 151.
- I should print or save a copy of the Research Description and this Participants' Rights document.

1. Do you agree to participate in this study?

- Yes, I agree to participate in this study. (Please continue.)
- No, I do not agree to participate in this study. (Please stop here.)

*Appendix C*

Researcher Self-Designed Survey

**The Common Core State Standards as Applied to the Instruction of Students with Disabilities: Special Education Teachers' Perspectives**

In order to qualify for this study, you must:

- (a) be/have been a teacher who holds a certificate and/or degree in special education (teaching students with disabilities) and
- (b) have taught at least one student with a disability [a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)] between grades Kindergarten and 12 while using the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Please do not complete this survey if you do not meet these qualifications.

2. Do you meet the above qualifications?

- Yes (Please proceed to the next item.)
- No (Please stop here.)

**Important!**

**When responding to this survey, please answer according to your knowledge of the CCSS as applied in your state or territory, including the additions or modifications that your state or territory has made to these standards.**

**Please be aware that your state or territory may have renamed their version of the CCSS for local use or integrated the CCSS into a broader set of academic standards for all subjects. For example, New York calls its version of the CCSS the “Common Core Learning Standards,” Maryland calls them the “Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards,” and American Samoa has integrated the CCSS into “The American Samoa Department of Education Content and Performance Standards.”**

**Items 3 - 16 ask for demographic information about you and your students with disabilities. Mark the answers that best apply.**

3. How many years have you been a teacher?

- One / This is my first year teaching
- Two, Three, etc. (Choose from scroll down menu.)



4. How many years have you taught students with disabilities as a special education teacher?

One / This is my first year teaching students with disabilities as a special education teacher.

Two, Three, etc. (Choose from scroll down menu.)

5. What is your gender?

Female

Male

Other

6. **Primarily**, in what state or territory do/did you teach while using the CCSS with students with disabilities? \_\_\_\_\_

**Please answer the rest of the survey with your experiences from this state/territory in mind.**

7. In what type of area do/did you teach when using the CCSS with students with disabilities?

Rural

Suburban

Urban

8. **Primarily**, in what type of school do/did you teach students with disabilities using the CCSS?  
(Mark only one answer.)

Traditional Public School

Specialized Public School (only for students with disabilities)

Charter School

Traditional Private School

Specialized Private School (only for students with disabilities)

Parochial / Religiously Affiliated School

I am a home-school teacher

Other (e.g., hospital setting, correctional facility, I am a Special Education Itinerant Teacher for students who are home-bound, etc. Please specify.) \_\_\_\_\_

9. **Primarily**, in what type of classroom setting do/did you teach students with disabilities using the CCSS? (Mark only one answer.)

- General Education Classroom
- Resource Room
- Collaborative Team Teaching / Integrated Co-Teaching Classroom
- Self-Contained Classroom
- Other (Please specify.) \_\_\_\_\_

10. What grade(s) do/did you teach when using the CCSS with students with disabilities? (Mark all that apply.)

- Kindergarten
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12

11. What subject(s) do/did you teach when using the CCSS with students with disabilities?  
(Mark all that apply.)

- English Language Arts
- Math
- Social Studies / History
- Science
- Music
- Art
- Physical Education
- Technology
- Other (Please specify.) \_\_\_\_\_

12. According to their IEPs, what are/were the disability classifications of your students when using the CCSS? (Mark all that apply.)

- Autism
- Deaf-Blindness
- Developmental Delay
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment (including Deafness)
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Specific Learning Disabilities
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment (including Blindness)
- Other (Please specify.) \_\_\_\_\_

13. What percentage of students with disabilities that you teach/taught when using the CCSS live/lived in poverty?

- 0-25%
- 26-50%
- 51-75%
- 76-100%

14. What racial/ethnic groups are/were represented by your students with disabilities when using the CCSS? (Mark all that apply.)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino (of any race)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other

15. What CCSS-aligned standardized state assessment(s) do/did your students with disabilities take? (Mark all that apply.)

- Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exam
- Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) exam
- State-created common core exam
- Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) alternate assessment
- National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) alternate assessment
- State-created common core alternate assessment
- Other (Please specify.) \_\_\_\_\_
- I don't know
- My students are/were not in a testing grade

16. Do/did your students with disabilities take CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments on the computer?

- Yes
- No
- Only some
- I don't know
- My students are/were not in a testing grade

**Items 17 - 24 present statements to assess your level of familiarity with the CCSS. Please mark the following statements as being True or False.**

17. The CCSS are a curriculum (i.e., a logically ordered guidebook of lessons based on education standards).

True False

18. The CCSS provide standards for the areas of math and English language arts (ELA)/literacy.

True False

19. The CCSS provide content standards for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects.

True False

20. The CCSS tell teachers **what** to teach their students.

True False

21. The CCSS tell teachers **how** to teach their students.

True False

22. I am familiar with the six key instructional shifts of the CCSS.

True False

23. I am familiar with the standards for mathematical practice in the CCSS.

True False

24. The CCSS are a state-led initiative.

True False

**Items 25 - 29 present statements to identify the extent to which you use the CCSS with students with disabilities. Please rate the following statements according to this scale:**

- 1 Never**
- 2 Rarely**
- 3 Sometimes**
- 4 Often**
- 5 Always**
- N/A Not Applicable**

25. The first thing I look at to determine what I need to teach is the CCSS.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
26. I have read the CCSS for the grade(s) that I teach.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
27. I use the CCSS when I plan lessons.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
28. I have used the resources provided in the appendices of the CCSS.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
29. I have used my students' performance results on CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments to inform my instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

**Items 30 - 62 present statements to identify your perspectives toward the CCSS as they are applied to the instruction of students with disabilities in your state/territory. Please rate the following statements according to this scale:**

- 1 strongly disagree**
- 2 disagree**
- 3 neutral**
- 4 agree**
- 5 strongly agree**
- N/A Not Applicable**

30. The CCSS are beneficial for students <b>without</b> disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
31. The CCSS are beneficial for students <b>with</b> disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
32. The CCSS are developmentally appropriate for students <b>without</b> disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
33. The CCSS are developmentally appropriate for students <b>with</b> disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

34. The CCSS provide adequate information about their application to students with disabilities.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
35. I have received sufficient professional development to help me align my students' IEP goals to the CCSS.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
36. I have received sufficient professional development to help me apply the CCSS to the instruction of students with disabilities.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
37. When using the CCSS, I am able to address all of my students' IEP goals.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
38. My students with disabilities will be more prepared for college because of the CCSS.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
39. My students with disabilities will be more prepared for a career because of the CCSS.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
40. My students with disabilities will be more prepared for independent living because of the CCSS.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
41. I feel pressure to spend most of my time teaching my students with disabilities the standards outlined in the CCSS.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
42. The CCSS have diminished my ability to teach academic skills to my students with disabilities.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
43. The CCSS have diminished my ability to teach social-emotional skills to my students with disabilities.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
44. The CCSS have diminished my ability to teach functional skills to my students with disabilities.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A
45. The CCSS have diminished my ability to teach communication skills to my students with disabilities.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      N/A

46. The reading curriculum in my school is well-aligned to the CCSS.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
47. The writing curriculum in my school is well-aligned to the CCSS.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
48. The math curriculum in my school is well-aligned to the CCSS.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
49. It is easy for me to find CCSS-aligned resources for my students with disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
50. Overall, my state/territory has done a good job of implementing the CCSS for students with disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
51. My state/territory started using the CCSS too quickly.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
52. Participation in CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments is beneficial for students <b>without</b> disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
53. Participation in CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments is beneficial for students <b>with</b> disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
54. CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments measure the skills that are most important for my students with disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
55. My students with disabilities experience frustration when taking CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
56. Information about the performance of my students on CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments is useful to me.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
57. I have received my students' scores on CCSS-aligned standardized state assessments quickly enough for the results to be applied to my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
58. With the right supports in place, my students with disabilities have the potential to meet the standards outlined in the CCSS.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A



59. I need more guidance on how to use the CCSS with students with disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
60. The CCSS help me to be a more effective special education teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
61. The CCSS value the professional judgment of special education teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
62. I like the CCSS.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Thank you for taking this survey!

Your participation is greatly appreciated and your responses provide valuable information that will be used to advance the field of special education!

If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, you may contact Damien E. LaRock at del2109@tc.columbia.edu.

Please click on the following link to enter the Amazon e-gift card raffle!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/amazonegift>

(Participants will be brought to a new survey.)

1. Please enter your e-mail address to be entered into the Amazon e-gift card raffle. You will be notified during the first week of March, 2017 if you have won!

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