



# White Paper

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Executive Summary  
Transitioning to the Common Core State Standards

## Transitioning to the Common Core State Standards

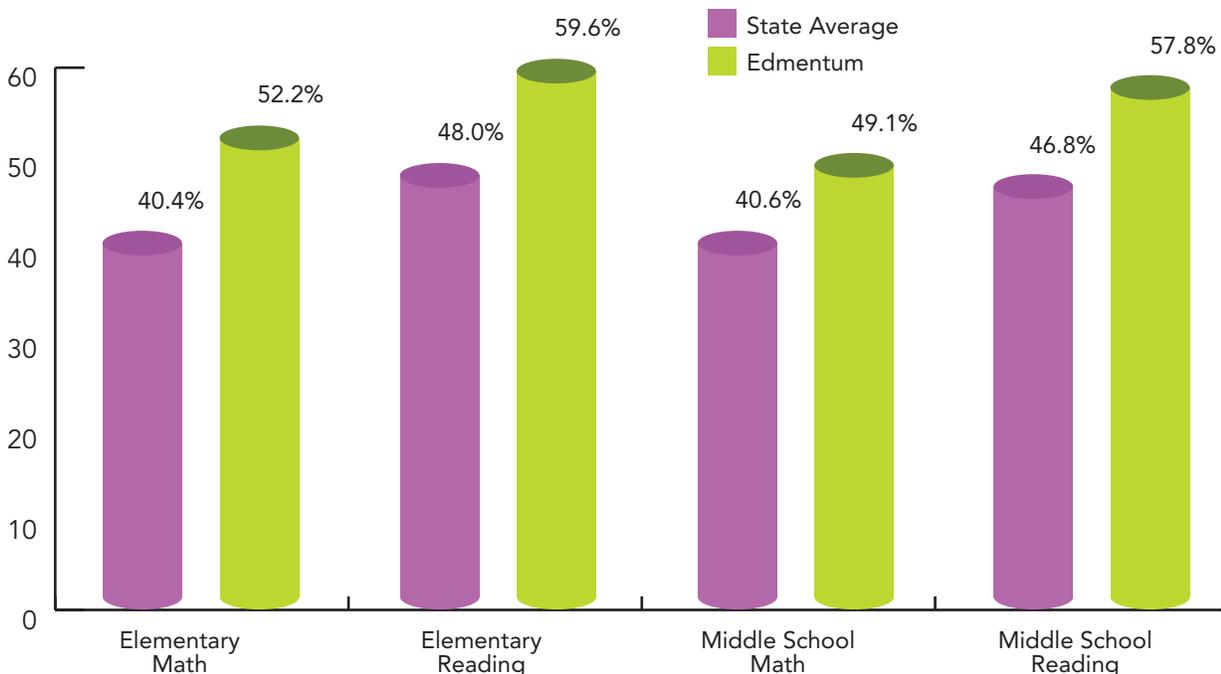
With the start of the 2014–2015 school year, current state tests will be replaced by exams that evaluate students against a new set of higher, more rigorous standards. The Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) is a state-led effort to define the knowledge and skills students should acquire within their K–12 education in order to graduate from high school with the ability to succeed in college courses and workforce training programs.

## Getting Ahead of the Challenges with Edmentum Benchmark Assessments

Early indicators reveal that the transition to the new standards and assessments will be particularly challenging for students, educators, and administrators. During the 2011–12 academic year, Kentucky—the first state to adopt the CCSS—administered statewide tests that were developed explicitly to measure proficiency in the Common Core State Standards. While the new Kentucky tests are not the actual tests from either the PARCC or Smarter Balanced Assessments, they are closely aligned with the CCSS and thus seen as a harbinger of things to come. Compared to the previous academic year (2010–11), the percentage of students scoring “proficient” or better dropped by more than 33 percent in math and reading.

During the same period in which Kentucky experienced a precipitous decline in test scores, students in schools using Edmentum benchmark assessment solutions outperformed the state average on the new assessments by approximately 25 percent. Figure 1 compares the performance of students who used Edmentum benchmark assessment solutions during the 2011–12 academic year to the state average on Kentucky’s Common Core assessments.

Figure 1. Proficiency Rates on Kentucky’s Common Core Assessments



It's highly likely that other states will have a similar experience to Kentucky's as they move toward testing the Common Core, which requires higher levels of rigor in English language arts and math than ever before. Edmentum benchmark assessments are not only valid and reliable measures of progress toward college and career readiness, but they provide rich information and resources that can be used during this time of transition and uncertainty to help students and educators prepare for the Common Core.

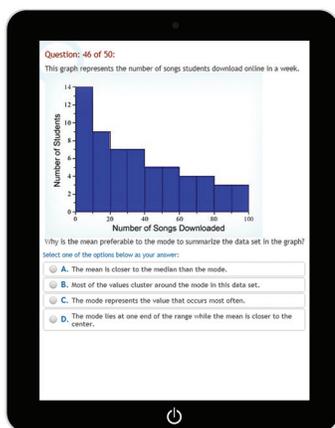
Teachers will bear the brunt of the transition to the Common Core. Ideally, the new standards would be implemented with extensive curricular resources, instructionally supportive assessments, and professional development for teachers, but funding has been scarce in many states still recovering from the recession. Edmentum benchmark assessments assist in bridging the gap to help students and educators prepare for the Common Core.



## Bridging the Gap: The Solution for Educators

Edmentum specifically developed the Test Packs benchmark assessments to measure these new, more challenging standards. Preliminary item- and test-level analyses of the Test Packs detailed in this report indicate that Edmentum benchmark assessments capture the standards' content focus and higher-order cognitive challenges.

Because students will be challenged by the new standards and corresponding assessments, educational experts have warned of the likelihood of precipitous drops in student performance. The 2012 assessment results from Kentucky corroborate the challenges that students, educators, and administrators will encounter once the new assessments are administered operationally. Edmentum's new Common Core benchmark assessments provide accurate details on student progress relative to the CCSS and give educators and administrators a valid tool to begin the transition to the new standards and assessments.



## Next Phases

When the CCSS were initially released, Edmentum curriculum and assessment experts carefully analyzed the differences between existing standards and the Common Core. Because the CCSS require students to master skills that have rarely been assessed by state or benchmark assessments, our content experts found that existing assessments could not adequately prepare students for the new standards. Simply reconfiguring existing tests without regard for the instructional intent of the Common Core would have run contrary to the high level of quality that educators expect of us and that we demand of ourselves.

Edmentum has chosen a different strategy for fully assessing the Common Core. The Test Packs Common Core benchmark assessment solution is one way Edmentum is partnering with educators to bridge the gap during this time of transition.

These flexible and customizable assessments will give teachers valid and reliable information on the progress of their students relative to the CCSS. Edmentum is building a solution that is responsive enough to meet the needs of the classroom teacher and rigorous enough to meet the new demands of assessing the Common Core State Standards.

At Edmentum, our work has just begun. We will continue to make significant investments in products that help educators prepare students for college and the workplace.

## Conclusion

While there are still many questions about the Common Core Standards, one thing is certain: In the 2014–2015 school year, states that have voluntarily chosen to use the CCSS will replace their current tests with either the PARCC or Smarter Balanced Assessment. These exams will evaluate students against a new set of standards that have been designed to be more rigorous than previous standards. Schools in states that choose to adopt the new standards need a plan to transition from their current testing programs to a new, national achievement test that measures the Common Core. Schools that obtain accurate, reliable, and timely results of student progress on the Common Core now will be better prepared for a successful transition.

