For Immediate Release
January 7, 2014

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Teacher-Developed Common Core-Aligned Assessment Tools Available on CORE Open Source Site

SACRAMENTO – The California Office to Reform Education (CORE) has posted online a bank of 60 teacher-developed Performance Assessment Modules that are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and to the Smarter Balanced Assessments. These assessment resources were developed by cross-district groups of teachers that participated in CORE's 2012 Summer Design Institute, and were piloted in classrooms over the 2012-2013 school year.

The Performance Assessment Modules are a freely available resource for educators everywhere to use to inform their instructional plans.

"Our teachers and administrators learned a lot about the Common Core through their work developing and piloting these modules," said Chris Steinhauser, Superintendent of the Long Beach Unified School District. "This process gave us important knowledge that enhanced our own Common Core transition plans and gave us tangible tools for assessing student learning."

More than 15,000 students across the state experienced the modules when they were field tested in many of the districts participating in the CORE consortium. Feedback from the field test was incorporated to improve the module's effectiveness, and most of the participating teachers incorporated new instructional strategies that specifically addressed the gaps revealed by students' performance on the assessment modules.

"We have a moral imperative to prepare all students for successful futures," said Richard Carranza, Superintendent of San Francisco Unified School District. "We are happy to share these modules with other educators and hope that these resources will help many students benefit from the new approach to teaching and learning through the Common Core State Standards."

In a recently released policy brief examining the pilot of the Performance Assessment Modules, the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning at WestEd reports that, "The development and use of performance assessment tasks is one strategy that has shown promise in supporting desired changes in teachers' instructional practice."

Based on interviews with teachers and administrators participating in the pilot of the Performance Assessment Modules, the Center for Future of Teaching and Learning found:
- Using the Performance Assessment Modules helped teachers understand the Common Core expectations for students;
- The performance tasks helped teachers realize gaps and alignment between students' current knowledge and skills and Common Core expectations; and,
- The performance tasks helped teachers understand the changes in instructional practice demanded by the Common Core.

The Formative Assessment Modules were designed to provide feedback for both students and teachers so that teachers can modify lesson plans or teaching methods to evaluate if students understand and are able to apply what they are learning. They require students to demonstrate and apply increasingly higher levels of conceptual understanding and skill and thus provide a richer learning experience.

"The Common Core State Standards will push all educators to approach their teaching in new ways," said Michael Hanson, Superintendent of the Fresno Unified School District. "The development of these modules is a great example of the innovation the Common Core will spur in our classrooms."

The Performance Assessment Modules are open source with a Creative Commons copyright license, allowing for universal access and redistribution at no cost. Teachers can download the English Language Arts and Math modules as word documents that can be customized, updated, and scaled for their students' needs. Although they were developed as mid-instruction formative assessments, the modules can also be used as diagnostic pre-assessments and as mini summative benchmark assessments.

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