



# Reaching Higher

## The Common Core State Standards Validation Committee

A REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL GOVERNORS  
ASSOCIATION CENTER FOR BEST PRACTICES &  
THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

June 2010

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### **National Governors Association Center for Best Practices**

Founded in 1908, the National Governors Association (NGA) is the collective voice of the nation's governors and one of Washington, D.C.'s most respected public policy organizations. Its members are the governors of the 50 states, three territories, and two commonwealths. NGA provides governors and their senior staff members with services that range from representing states on Capitol Hill and before the Administration on key federal issues to developing and implementing innovative solutions to today's most pressing public policy challenges through the NGA Center for Best Practices (NGA Center). The NGA Center is the only research and development firm that directly serves the nation's governors. For more information, visit [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org).

### **Council of Chief State School Officers**

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public. For more information, visit [www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org).

### **Acknowledgment**

The NGA Center and CCSSO wish to acknowledge the work of Denis P. Doyle, chief academic officer of Schoolnet, Inc., for the preparation of this report. Doyle, a nationally and internationally known education writer and consultant, is co-author, with Susan Pimentel, of the book *Raising the Standard: An eight-step action guide for schools and communities* (Corwin Press, 1999).

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June 2010

## The Common Core State Standards Initiative Validation Committee

### Co-Chairs

David Conley—Professor and Director of the Center for Educational Policy Research, Educational Methodology, Policy, and Leadership at the University of Oregon's College of Education.

Brian Gong—Executive Director of the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment.

### Members

Bryan Albrecht—President of Gateway Technical College, Kenosha, Wis.

Arthur Applebee—Distinguished Professor of Education and Director of the Center on English Learning & Achievement at the University at Albany—State University of New York.

Sarah Baird—Mathematics Specialist/Teacher, Kyrene Elementary School District, Tempe, Ariz

Kristin Buckstad Hamilton—Nationally Board Certified Teacher, Battlefield Senior High School, National Education Association

Jere Confrey—Senior Research Fellow and Joseph D. Moore Distinguished Professor at The William & Ida Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, North Carolina State University's College of Education.

Linda Darling-Hammond—Charles Ducommun Professor of Education and Co-Director of the School Redesign Network at Stanford University's School of Education.

Alfinio Flores—Hollowell Professor of Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematical Sciences and School of Education at the University of Delaware's College of Education & Public Policy.

Kenji Hakuta—Lee L. Jacks Professor of Education at Stanford University's School of Education.

Feng-Jui Hsieh—Associate Professor in the Mathematics Department at the National Taiwan Normal University.

Mary Ann Jordan—Teacher, New York City Dept. of Education, American Federation of Teachers

Jeremy Kilpatrick—Regents Professor of Mathematics Education at the University of Georgia.

Dr. Jill Martin—Principal, Pine Creek High School

R. James Milgram—Emeritus Professor at Stanford University's Department of Mathematics.

David Pearson—Professor and Dean of the Graduate School of Education at the University of California—Berkeley.

Steve Pophal—Principal, D.C. Everest Junior High

Stanley Rabinowitz—Director, Assessment & Standards Development Services at WestEd in San Francisco.

Lauren Resnick—Professor and Director of the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh.

Andreas Schleicher—Head of the Indicators and Analysis Division with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Directorate for Education.

William Schmidt—University Distinguished Professor and Co-Director of Michigan State University's Education Policy Center.

Catherine Snow—Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Christopher Steinhauser—Superintendent of Schools, Long Beach Unified School District, California.

Sandra Stotsky—Endowed Chair in Teacher Quality at the University of Arkansas's Department of Education Reform and Chair of the Sadlier Mathematics Advisory Board.

Dorothy Strickland—Distinguished Research Fellow at the National Institute for Early Education Research and the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Chair in Education at Rutgers University.

Martha Thurlow—Director, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

Norman L. Webb—Senior Research Scientist with the Wisconsin Center for Education Research and the National Institute for Science Education, both based at the University of Wisconsin—Madison's School of Education.

Dylan William—Director, Learning and Teaching Research Center at the Educational Testing Service.

## INTRODUCTION

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) commissioned this report to chronicle the work of the Common Core State Standards Validation Committee, a key element of the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI).

## BACKGROUND

The CCSSI is a historic effort designed to advance nationwide education reform. Coordinated by the NGA Center and CCSSO, 48 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands have voluntarily come together to create shared common core standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The ultimate goal is for all American children to graduate from high school ready for college, career pathways, and success in a global economy.

Work groups comprised of representatives from higher education, K-12 education, teachers, and researchers drafted the Common Core State Standards. The work groups consulted educators, administrators, community and parent organizations, higher education representatives, the business community, researchers, civil rights groups, and states for feedback on each of the drafts. A list of work groups and expert members is available at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).

Unlike past standards setting efforts, the Common Core State Standards are based on best practices in national and international education, as well as research and input from numerous sources including scholars, assessment developers, professional organizations, and educators representing all grade levels from kindergarten through postsecondary instruction. Contributions from the states and the public also served to inform the standards development process.

The Common Core State Standards represent what American students need to know and do to be successful in college and careers. Once the standards are adopted and implemented, states will determine how best to measure and hold students accountable for meeting these standards.

## THE VALIDATION COMMITTEE

The NGA Center and CCSSO, as part of the CCSSI, convened a 28-member Validation Committee (VC) composed of leading figures in the education standards community. The committee was charged with providing independent, expert validation of the process of identifying the Common Core State Standards as part of the CCSSI. The VC:

- » Reviewed the process by which evidence was used to create K-12 and college- and career-readiness standards; and
- » Determined that the standards-development principles were adhered to by examining the standards for:
  - evidence of the knowledge and skills students need to be college- and career-ready,
  - a proper level of clarity and specificity,
  - evidence that the standards are comparable with other leading countries' expectations, and
  - a grounding in available evidence and research.

The VC also provided the work groups with invaluable input on the draft standards.

*The Common Core State Standards represent what American students need to know and do to be successful in college and careers.*

## SELECTION OF THE VALIDATION COMMITTEE

Six governors and chief state school officers from states involved in the CCSSI selected the individual VC members based on nominations from national organizations and states. The individuals selected for the VC have experience in the development or implementation of national or international standards in education or have a demonstrated record of exceptional or unique expertise in English language arts, mathematics, or a related field, such as special education, English language learners, assessments, or curriculum development.

The VC's charge was to:

- » Review the process used to develop the Common Core State Standards and provide input and feedback on that process; and
- » Validate the sufficiency of the evidence supporting the Common Core State Standards.

As a free-standing committee—independent of standard-setting responsibility—the VC's role was to observe and validate the process of identifying Common Core State Standards and assess the evidentiary base for the standards.

## PROCESS

The VC was appointed in September 2009 and first met in Washington, D.C., in December 2009. The committee's second meeting was held in April 2010. Staffed by NGA Center and CCSSO personnel, these meetings were augmented with intermittent telephone conference calls and e-mail exchanges among the committee members.

## FINDINGS

On April 7, 2010, the VC met in Washington, D.C., to discuss the strengths and areas for additional consideration in the publicly released draft standards. The day-long conversation resulted in rich, substantive feedback that informed the final content of the Common Core State Standards. The VC generally praised the writers of the standards, as well as NGA Center and CCSSO staff for the tremendous overall progress.

The VC was, for the most part, pleased with the content of the standards and with the direction they were headed. The committee also provided suggestions for areas of the draft that would benefit from additional consideration. In mathematics, these areas included: strengthening the use of technology; paying attention to the specifics of the standards; providing a clearer explanation for the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) label; and streamlining all of the learning progressions. In English language arts, the committee focused on implementation issues, ranging from greater attention to the assessment of the standards to stronger guidance on the intent of the standards.

In May 2010, the VC received an embargoed copy of the final content of the Common Core State Standards for review and certification. The VC, in reviewing the processes employed to develop the standards, ultimately found them to be:

*These certified research- and evidenced-based standards—aligned with college and career expectations—respect unique state contexts and the authority of each state to govern its public education system.*

- » Reflective of the core knowledge and skills in ELA and mathematics that students need to be college- and career-ready;
- » Appropriate in terms of their level of clarity and specificity;
- » Comparable to the expectations of other leading nations;
- » Informed by available research or evidence;
- » The result of processes that reflect best practices for standards development;
- » A solid starting point for adoption of cross-state common core standards; and
- » A sound basis for eventual development of standards-based assessments.

## **THE FUTURE: A WORK IN PROGRESS**

The certification and release of the Common Core State Standards is a historic milestone; however, it does not mark the end of the work. Standard setting is an iterative process; there is no finish line. Alignment of curricula and assessments to the Common Core State Standards—the next great task facing the states—will be essential to the staying power and lasting impact of the standards.

The vital task of maintaining the continuity of the standards over time is another challenge. The standards will need to be continuously updated through processes that may, on occasion, pull stakeholders in opposite directions as consistency competes with the inevitable calls for changes or adjustments.

Effective long-term governance and organization of the CCSSI—sustaining a complex and demanding process over the span of years—is critical. The NGA Center and CCSSO are committed to ensuring that the Common Core State Standards remain state-driven and state-based. This includes encouraging states to lead cycles of revisions to the standards as new knowledge, best practices, and research emerge. The role of the VC or a similar structure will also need to be incorporated into the structure of long-term standards revision and governance.

In conclusion, it is worth remembering that the CCSSI was built on the following foundations:

- » While the states are autonomous, when they work together on matters such as education, the collective knowledge can yield significant improvements.
- » When the states voluntarily move in the same direction, they demonstrate their ability to achieve national goals.

These certified research- and evidenced-based standards—aligned with college and career expectations—respect unique state contexts and the authority of each state to govern its public education system. The lasting hallmark of this process on student achievement, then, will be clear, easy, and straightforward comparability over time—standard by standard, assessment by assessment, and state by state. These common standards are an important step in bringing about a real and meaningful transformation of the education system for the benefit of all students.

The CCSSI is more than a symbol of interstate collaboration; it could usher in a new era of cooperation on important public policy matters. It reflects 21st Century America as a place where states have come together on a shared vision of excellence.

## **CERTIFICATION**

Based on the deliberations of, and review by, the Validation Committee, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers accept the Validation Committee's certification that the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics are consistent with the criteria established in the charge to the Validation Committee.

Signed,

*Bryan Albrecht*

*Arthur Applebee*

*Sarah Baird*

*Kristin Buckstad Hamilton*

*Jere Confrey*

*David T. Conley*

*Linda Darling-Hammond*

*Brian Gong*

*Kenji Hakuta*

*Feng-Jui Hsieh*

*Mary Ann Jordan*

*Jeremy Kilpatrick*

*Dr. Jill Martin*

*David Pearson*

*Steve Pophal*

*Stanley Rabinowitz*

*Lauren Resnick*

*Andreas Schleicher*

*William Schmidt*

*Catherine Snow*

*Christopher Steinhauser*

*Dorothy Strickland*

*Martha Thurlow*

*Norman Webb*



## APPENDIX I

### Validation Committee Members Biographical Sketches

#### **Bryan Albrecht**

*President of Gateway Technical College, a two-year college in Kenosha, Wisconsin*  
Albrecht also serves as president of the Association for Career and Technical Education and on the president's advisory council for the National Coalition of Advanced Technology Centers. He has a background in secondary and postsecondary education, serves on numerous workforce-related boards, and participates in related standards and assessment organizations that bridge the education and economic and workforce development fields.

#### **Arthur Applebee**

*Distinguished Professor of Education and Director of the Center on English Learning & Achievement at the University at Albany—State University of New York*  
Applebee is a nationally recognized authority on English language arts and a long-time advisor to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). He received the David A. Russell Award for Distinguished Research in the Teaching of English from the National Council of Teachers of English for his book, *Curriculum as Conversation: Transforming Traditions of Teaching and Learning*, which re-conceptualized the role of curriculum in American schools. He has also advised policymakers at the national, state, and district levels on curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

#### **Sarah Baird**

*Mathematics Specialist/Teacher with Kyrene Elementary School District in Tempe, Arizona*

Baird, a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards—certified instructor, was named Arizona Teacher of the Year in 2009 and is a member of Arizona's Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Academy. Baird, who is the math coach for two district schools, serves K-5 students in roughly 60 classrooms.

#### **Kristin Buckstad Hamilton**

*Nationally Board Certified Teacher, Battlefield Senior High School, National Education Association*

#### **Jere Confrey**

*Senior Research Fellow and Joseph D. Moore Distinguished Professor at The William & Ida Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University's College of Education*

Confrey has co-authored research for the National Research Council's Scientific Research in Education; produced extensive work in formative assessment in mathematics; and participates in the Generating Increased Science and Math Opportunities (GISMO) lab.

#### **David Conley**

*Professor and Director of the Center for Educational Policy Research, Educational Methodology, Policy, and Leadership at the University of Oregon's College of Education*

Conley has conducted extensive research on standards-based education and systemic school reform. He also directed the Standards for Success project for the Association of American Universities and The Pew Charitable Trusts, which documented the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in entry-level university courses. His recent book, *College Knowledge*, expands on this line of research.

#### **Linda Darling-Hammond**

*Charles Ducommun Professor of Education and Co-Director of the School Redesign Network at Stanford University's School of Education*

Darling-Hammond's focus is on international curriculum studies, school restructuring, teacher quality, and educational equity. She is former president of the American Educational Research Association and former executive director of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, whose 1996 report, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, led to sweeping teaching and teacher education policy changes.

#### **Alfinio Flores**

*Hollowell Professor of Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematical Sciences and School of Education at the University of Delaware's College of Education & Public Policy*

Flores is a nationally recognized expert in mathematics education and mathematics teaching and learning, curriculum development, and pre- and in-service preparation of teachers of mathematics.

#### **Brian Gong**

*Executive Director of the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment*

Gong is a nationally recognized expert in standards and assessment and a research scientist. He has served as associate commissioner for the Kentucky Department of Education. As a former member of the technical advisory committee for the New England Common Assessment Program, Gong possesses a keen understanding of the working relationship between standards and large-scale assessment programs.

#### **Kenji Hakuta**

*Lee L. Jacks Professor of Education at Stanford University's School of Education*

Hakuta's studies focus on bilingualism and the acquisition of English in immigrant students. He co-authored the National Academy of Sciences report, *Improving Schooling for Language-Minority Children: A Research Agenda*; co-edited a book on affirmative action in higher education, *Compelling Interest: Examining the Evidence on Racial Dynamics in Colleges and Universities*; has testified before Congress on topics such as language policy, the education of language-minority students, affirmative action in higher education, and the improvement of quality in educational research; and was founding dean of the University of California—Merced School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts.

#### **Feng-Jui Hsieh**

*Associate Professor in the Mathematics Department at the National Taiwan Normal University*

Hsieh researches mathematics learning, mathematics teaching, teacher education, and pre-service and in-service teacher professional development. He served as chairman of Taiwan's first evaluation committee of the junior high school mathematics textbook, as a member of the first evaluation committee of the elementary school mathematics textbook, and as a member of the committee to develop the first national curriculum standards for private textbook publishers at the senior high school level. He has received grants from Taiwan's National Science Council and Ministry of Education. Hsieh serves as Taiwan's representative on two international studies administered by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement and the National Science Foundation.

#### **Mary Ann Jordan**

*Teacher, New York City Dept. of Education, American Federation of Teachers*

#### **Jeremy Kilpatrick**

*Regents Professor of Mathematics Education at the University of Georgia*  
Kilpatrick, a charter member of the National Research Council's (NRC) Mathematical Sciences Education Board, has received numerous education awards, including the Felix Klein Medal in 2007 for lifetime achievement in mathematics education from the International Commission on Mathematical Instruction and the 2003 Lifetime Achievement Award for Distinguished Service to Mathematics Education from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. He chaired the committee that produced *Adding It Up: Helping Children Learn Mathematics*, a 2001 NRC report on arithmetic proficiency.

#### **Dr. Jill Martin**

*Principal, Pine Creek High School*

**R. James Milgram**

*Emeritus Professor at Stanford University's Department of Mathematics*  
Milgram, one of the authors of the California Mathematics Standards and the California Mathematics Framework, has worked with a number of states, and with the Achieve Mathematics Advisory Panel, on standards in education. As a member of the National Board for Education Sciences, he has worked with the U.S. Department of Education on the math that pre-service K-8 teachers need to know and understand.

**David Pearson**

*Professor and Dean of the Graduate School of Education at the University of California–Berkeley*

Pearson, a literacy expert, conducts research on practice and policy in literacy instruction and assessment. He was president of the National Reading Conference and served on the board of directors for the International Reading Association, National Reading Conference, and American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, all of which bestowed on Pearson several honors and awards for his service.

**Steve Pophal**

*Principal, D.C. Everest Junior High*

**Stanley Rabinowitz**

*Director of Assessment & Standards Development Services at WestEd in San Francisco, California*

At WestEd, Rabinowitz oversees program activities and directs assessment development for the Kentucky and Nevada statewide assessment programs. He also directs the WestEd/CRESST Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center. He has authored papers on the use of integrated standards and assessment systems in high-stakes state programs and worker-training initiatives and directed the statewide assessment program for the New Jersey Department of Education.

**Lauren Resnick**

*Professor and Director of the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh*  
Resnick is an internationally known scholar in the cognitive science of learning and instruction whose research involves the learning and teaching of literacy, math, and science. She is former director of the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh. Resnick also co-founded the New Standards Project, a nearly 10-year effort to develop performance-based standards and assessments that widely influenced state and school district practices.

**Andreas Schleicher**

*Head of the Indicators and Analysis Division with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Directorate for Education*

Schleicher also directs OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Indicators of Education Systems program. She previously served as director for analysis at the Institute for Educational Research in the Netherlands. She was awarded the Theodor Heuss prize for exemplary democratic engagement in association with the public debate on PISA.

**William Schmidt**

*University Distinguished Professor and Co-Director of Michigan State University's Education Policy Center*

Schmidt also co-directs the US–China Center for Research on Educational Excellence and the Promoting Rigorous Outcomes in Math and Science Education Project. He has provided recommendations for internationally competitive K-12 math standards for Minnesota and participated in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study.

**Catherine Snow**

*Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education*

An international expert on literacy instruction, Snow has chaired several major committees on literacy, has studied low-income students, and has written about bilingualism and its relation to language-policy issues.

**Christopher Steinhauser**

*Superintendent of Schools for the Long Beach Unified School District in California*

Steinhauser possesses extensive knowledge about California's ELA standards and their implementation across a very large school district. During his previous tenure as deputy superintendent, students in all major racial and ethnic groups throughout the district made unprecedented gains on rigorous state tests.

**Sandra Stotsky**

*Endowed Chair in Teacher Quality at the University of Arkansas's Department of Education Reform and Chair of the Sadlier Mathematics Advisory Board*

Stotsky has abundant experience in developing and reviewing ELA standards. As senior associate commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Education, she helped revise pre-K-12 standards. She also served on the 2009 steering committee for NAEP reading and on the 2006 National Math Advisory Panel.

**Dorothy Strickland**

*Distinguished Research Fellow at the National Institute for Early Education Research and the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Chair in Education at Rutgers University*

A national expert on literacy, Strickland assisted the New Jersey Department of Education with developing its ELA standards for young children. She has served on many national panels and task forces over her multi-decade career in education, most recently on the National Center for Learning Disabilities professional advisory board and on a Head Start research and evaluation board at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**Martha Thurlow**

*Director of the National Center on Educational Outcomes*

Thurlow focuses on implications of contemporary U.S. policy and practice for students with disabilities and English language learners, including national and statewide assessment policies and practices, standards-setting efforts, and graduation requirements. She has conducted research and published extensively on assessment, learning disabilities, early childhood education, dropout prevention, effective classroom instruction, and integration of students with disabilities in general education settings.

**Norman L. Webb**

*Senior Research Scientist with the Wisconsin Center for Education Research and the National Institute for Science Education, both based at the University of Wisconsin–Madison's School of Education*

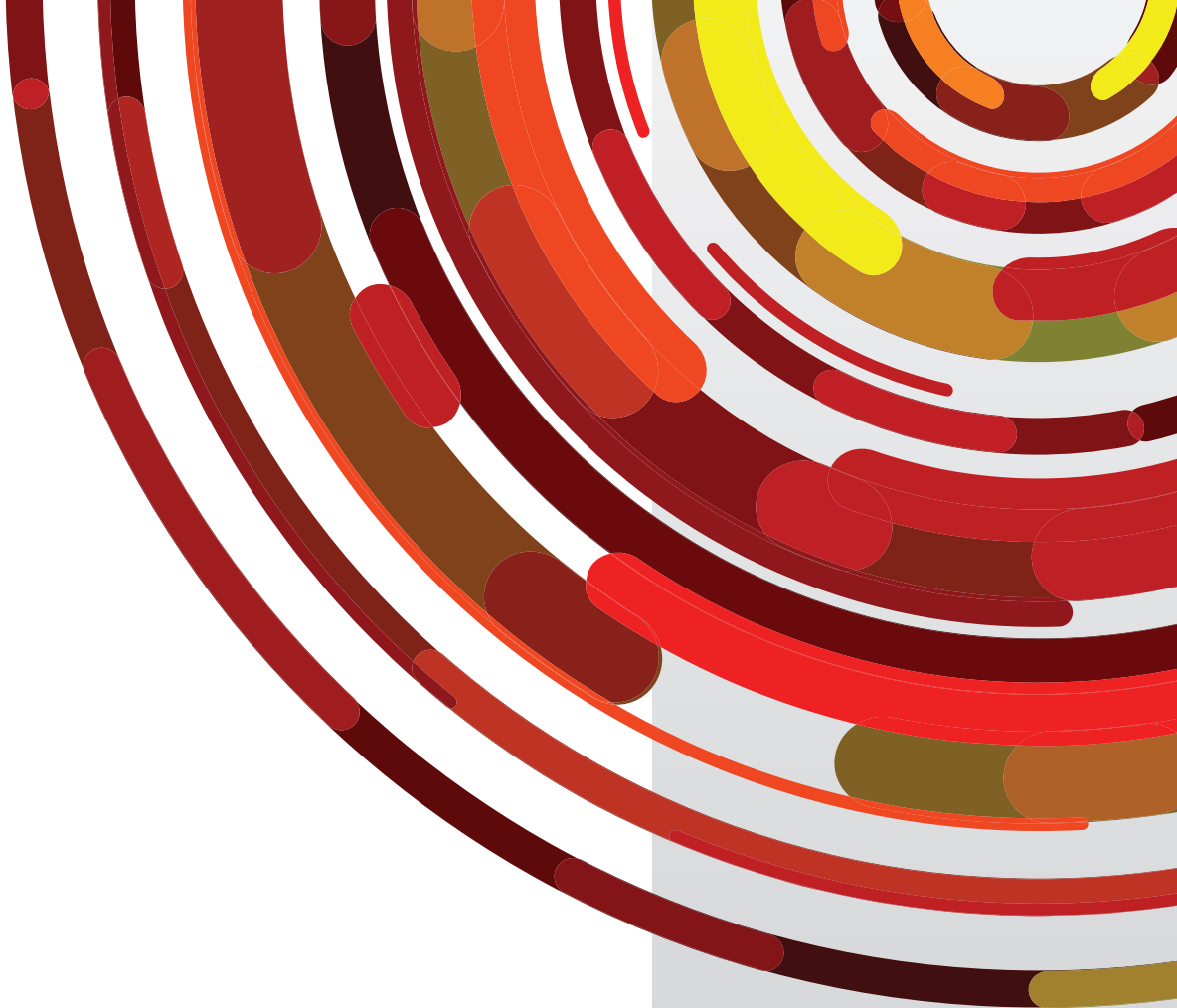
Webb works on strategies for evaluating reform and rethinking aspects of math and science education. He also conducts research on assessing students' knowledge of math and science and aligning standards and assessments, and directs evaluations of curriculum and professional-development projects.

**Dylan William**

*Director of the Learning and Teaching Research Center at the Educational Testing Service*

William has taught Master's and doctorate-level courses on educational assessment, research methods, and the use of information technology in academic research. He served as the academic coordinator for the Consortium for Assessment and Testing in Schools, which developed a variety of statutory and non-statutory assessments for the national curriculum of England and Wales. He is currently exploring how assessments can be used to support learning.





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