Key Steps to Aligning Teacher Effectiveness with the Common Core

1. Ensure teachers/instructional leaders get the message that the key shifts for instruction required by the Standards align with the demands of current and future assessments.
2. Ensure alignment of the materials teachers use with the Core Standards by tying all purchasing of materials at state and district level with publisher's criteria.
3. Additionally, align the measures used to measure teachers much more closely with the Core:

a. Make the academic core of teacher observational tools focus on specific measurable practices that cultivate the core. Then, align teacher supports to focus on these precise areas. Teachers would find immediate focused support around the areas being measured.

Here is an example for 3-12 literacy. It does not cover all literacy instruction, but a core of it. This could work for 3-12 ELA as well as literacy in history/science.

i. **Quality of Text**: Is there a text or texts under discussion – and are the texts of sufficient complexity and quality, where quality of text selection includes different considerations in different disciplines, such as the coherent contribution to knowledge. (A question – should we place any responsibility at the teacher level that they make an attempt to balance informational/literary text K-5, or introduce literary non-fiction in 6-12, or identify sources in history/science).

ii. **Quality of Questions**: Are the questions a) text dependent b) coherent c) high quality (not just explicit restatement) d) attend to key vocabulary/syntax

iii. **Integration of evidence into speaking and writing**: Student speaking and writing shows evidence of students drawing on text effectively

iv. **Breadth and depth of student work and engagement**: Are **all** students participating through writing/speaking, at an equal level of intensity, and a diverse group participating

v. **Quality of feedback and growth**: Do students receive timely, effective feedback and does their work show progress.

One nice idea is that this rubric defines student engagement as drawing evidence effectively from text, rather than a more general interest level of participation.

b. Align school review techniques and student surveys to align with the core.

Where possible, the school review process should, using the same questions, widen the lens to the # of classrooms for which evidence-based literacy instruction or the conceptual understanding of mathematics is happening.

c. Collect student work in a similar format, scalable way, and score it consistently across classrooms.

In literacy, the concept is that writing to sources is a perfect expression of the Core Standards, if those source texts are of adequate complexity. In math, all students must achieve a deep conceptual understanding of the math concepts and learning experience should be directed towards that goal. So, we have long envisioned a technical solution in which students encounter high quality texts, with good questions visibly aligned to the standards, and high quality AI that also allows an interface where teachers can add comments on voice and quality of argument etc. This would have huge upside in aligning teacher judgment with standards.

d. Consider creating a hierarchy of teacher knowledge and practice aligned with the core, supported by key tools.

There are four levels of demonstrated mastery of the Core Standards. Each level must be first achieved before the next level.

Level 1: Demonstrated understanding of the Standards and the Research behind them, including their implications for instruction, student work, and assessment. This level might be judged by an online certification course. The online certification would include evaluations of assignments, student work, curriculum for its alignment to the Standards.

Level 2: Demonstrated integration of the Standards into instructional practice – this could be demonstrated through a combination of observations of teacher practice and the collection of assignments and samples of student work.

Level3: Demonstrated improvement of student performance against the Core Standards – this would include assessments of progress on key portions of the Standards, such as writing to adequately complex sources, or performance in a focus area of mathematics.

Level 4: Demonstrated teacher of teachers: This level would be achieved when teachers who make progress through the levels give the credit to a mentor. The mentor who can demonstrate he or she has helped other teachers advance obtains level 4. Another way to obtain level 4 is if materials developed by a teacher help other teachers advance.

e. Align teacher grading with the expectations of summative assessment; measure and reduce the gap. Ensure teacher grades are at least as demanding as the summative assessments.

One part of this idea is that the hypothesis that the grade of effective teachers are at least as demanding as the scores of summative assessment; that is, that teachers whose grades are as or more demanding than summative results are higher value added.

The other crucial idea is that the gap between teacher grading and summative results needs to close to support accountability and to improve student performance. That is, students/parents need much more honest signals throughout the year. And this will create a pull towards assignments that align with end of year expectations, raising those expectations. This would be useful in the interim with current tests and more powerful in the era of the next generation assessments.

f. Use the Core Standards to guide effective solutions for untested grades and subjects, particularly in K-2 ELA and math, and 6-8 social studies and science.