

# COLLABORATING FOR NGSS ALIGNMENT

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## THE STORY OF THE RHODE ISLAND/DELAWARE INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS COLLABORATIVE

### **What is the Rhode Island/Delaware Instructional Materials Collaborative?**

The collaborative is a state-led effort to determine how closely each state's existing K–12 instructional materials are aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and to develop suggestions for improvement and increased alignment that could benefit the field at large.

### **Why did Rhode Island and Delaware decide to collaborate?**

At the [2014 NGSS Leadership Conference](#), representatives from Rhode Island and Delaware identified a common challenge: Both used a kit-based curriculum that met previous state standards and were not ready or able to purchase or create NGSS-aligned instructional materials.

As the teams of educators discussed the challenge, both wanted to find ways to use their existing instructional materials during their states' transition to the NGSS and to potentially provide feedback to instructional materials developers on how they might better align new K–12 instructional materials to the NGSS.

### **How did Rhode Island and Delaware collaborate?**

As a result of the conversations that began during the 2014 NGSS Leadership Conference, Rhode Island and Delaware asked Achieve to assist them in launching an instructional materials collaborative. Achieve helped each state assemble teams of K–12 educators to evaluate eight existing units of instruction. Using a version of the Educators Evaluating the Quality of Instructional Products (EQuIP) Quality Review Process modified to meet the objectives of this specific project, the educator teams were able to develop meaningful feedback and suggestions for improvement for use by the states and potentially publishers that can be used to better align existing and future instructional materials to the NGSS.

### State Team Composition

#### *Delaware*

The Delaware team was composed of six members, all of whom were district- and school-level science specialists or representatives of the state Department of Education. Several critical factors influenced the composition of this team, including familiarity with the NGSS. State leaders wanted to include members who already possessed some depth of knowledge of the NGSS. To accomplish this goal, several participants were selected based on their prior involvement with the Delaware state team that participated in the development of the NGSS. The remaining members were selected based on their roles as science content specialists for elementary and/or middle grades.

## *Rhode Island*

Rhode Island created a team composed of 14 members including classroom teachers, district-level administrators, and representatives from the state Department of Education. Rhode Island leaders strategically selected the 14 individuals based on their ability to use what they learned through the collaboration to aid their districts' transitions to the new, NGSS-aligned instructional materials. For face-to-face meetings that involved travel, Rhode Island sent six of its members, including state-level representatives, district administrators, and classroom teachers, who then shared their learning with the rest of the state team upon their return.

### Review Timeline

- Spring through fall 2014: The collaborative team leads and Achieve met monthly to define the group's goals, create a work plan, and monitor the group's progress.
- Summer 2014: Rhode Island and Delaware brought their respective teams together for a training on the use of the EQuIP Rubric for Science and the Quality Review Process.
- Fall 2014 through early 2015: Representatives from the two states met twice more in person to check in and review the feedback that came from each state's independent reviews.

### Outcomes

The states' ultimate goal for the collaborative was to evaluate the alignment of existing instructional materials. However, there have already been many additional outcomes from this project, both for the field at large and for the participants from both states.

#### *Primary Outcomes*

- Eight units and lessons have been evaluated for alignment to the NGSS.
- Feedback for publishers has been collected and will provide information on how they could modify classroom materials to align more closely with the NGSS.

#### *Secondary Outcomes*

- Participants increased their own capacity to evaluate instructional materials and make shifts in their lessons and units, and they will be able to use their enhanced skills in their states to further guide the transition of instructional materials.

### **What lessons can we learn from the Rhode Island/Delaware Instructional Materials Collaborative?**

Despite some differences in their goals for the work, the teams from Rhode Island and Delaware came away with a set of key lessons about making such a collaboration work effectively and efficiently.

- *Common goals are essential:* At the start of this project, the two teams realized that they had slightly different visions for the outcome of this collaboration. The group had to overcome this first impasse before they could effectively work together to evaluate the instructional materials. While the two state teams did not change their individual goals, they did spend time identifying what was common about the work they wanted to do. The two groups then collaborated on this common work. When forming a collaborative like this one, it is imperative that all parties have a mutual understanding of the goal(s) of

the work. With a common vision, planning the best approach from training and preparation through to the final product is possible.

- *Proper preparation is key:* To do the work, individuals using the EQulP rubric or working to revise instructional materials to align to the NGSS must have a strong foundation in the [Framework for K–12 Science Education](#) and the NGSS. In addition, reviewers should be trained in the use of the EQulP rubric using a common set of training tools. One helpful tool that is available to download online free of charge is a set of EQulP training modules, which can be found at [the NGSS Website](#) (nextgenscience.org).
- *This work takes time:* Participants' knowledge of the NGSS, the rubric, and what makes for good feedback and suggestions for improvement grew over time, especially through the process of sharing their work with other members of their state team and across state teams.