

COMMON CORE

A BAD CHOICE FOR AMERICA

A red apple cut in half, showing its core and seeds. A lit firework is attached to the stem, with sparks flying out. The background is a dark, textured surface with a yellowish glow behind the apple.

Second
Edition

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Common Core: A Bad Choice for America

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Introduction

In 2010, every state but Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia adopted Common Core State Standards, a set of requirements for what elementary and secondary school children should know in each grade in math and English language arts. Five years later, three in five Americans said they don't know if Common Core is in their local schools.¹ While 25 states have renamed Common Core² to avoid a growing public backlash³ against these mandates, 43 states kept Common Core standards in some form and are now using them to teach students.

The public's lack of knowledge – and bureaucrats' and politicians' attempts to reinforce that ignorance by deceptive practices such as name-switching – is troubling because what public schools teach is of fundamental importance to the country's democracy, individual freedom, and prosperity.⁴ Public dialogue on Common Core is

1 "Education Next — Program on Education Policy and Governance— Survey 2015," *Education Next*, Winter 2016, <http://educationnext.org/files/2015ednextpoll.pdf>.

2 Tonette Salazar and Kathy Christie, "States and the (not so) new standards — where are they now?" Education Commission of the States, September 1, 2014.

3 Frederick Hess and Kelsey Hamilton, "The Real Deal with Public Opinion and the Common Core," American Enterprise Institute, October 2015, <https://www.aei.org/publication/the-real-deal-with-public-opinion-and-the-common-core/>.

4 Joseph Bast, "Education in the U.S. and How to Improve It," *Somewhat Reasonable*, February 25, 2013, <http://blog.heartland.org/2013/02/education-in-the-u-s-and-how-to-improve-it/>.

necessary to ensure high quality and prevent special-interest groups from promulgating lessons tainted by ideology and other agendas. The notorious Russian communist Vladimir Lenin⁵ knew the power of controlling schools. He once said, “Give me four years to teach the children and the seed I have sown will never be uprooted.”⁶

Debate should never be discouraged by appeals to what experts say they know or claims that the “general public” is too stupid or lacks the proper credentials to make informed choices. Parents whose children will be subject to these requirements and citizens who will pay for the standards, associated tests, and myriad related initiatives deserve to know what the standards contain and to have a say in whether states retain and adopt them.

Not Really a National Curriculum?

Some advocates of Common Core insist it is “not a curriculum,” while others say it will promulgate “an academic curriculum based on great works of Western civilization and the American republic.”⁷ But the mandates essentially outline what must be covered in all the textbooks used in K–12 math and English classes. This may not technically constitute a curriculum, but it certainly defines what children will be taught in these two subjects, especially when they and their teachers will be judged by performance on national tests aligned with these standards.

“These standards will form the core curriculum of every public school program, drive another stronger wave of high stakes testing, and thus become student selection criteria for K–12 school programs such as Title I services, gifted and talented programs, high

5 Lenin killed between 6 and 8 million people by execution or starvation by deliberately causing famines. See <http://necrometrics.com/20c5m.htm>.

6 Vladimir Lenin, http://quotes.liberty-tree.ca/quote_blog/Vladimir.Lenin.Quote.57B5.

7 Kathleen Porter-Magee and Sol Stern, “The Truth about Common Core,” *National Review Online*, April 3, 2013, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/344519/truth-about-common-core-kathleen-porter-magee>.

school course placement, and other academic programs,” write a pair of education scholars.⁸ This reinforces the urgency of reviewing these standards carefully.

Initiatives related to Common Core include teacher evaluations, since 43 states tie teacher ratings to student performance on tests;⁹ school choice, because many states require home schools and private schools to administer state tests; nearly all learning materials, because these must now correspond to Common Core; and college entrance exams, including ACT and SAT.

People who characterize Common Core as anything other than a national takeover of schooling are either unaware of these sweeping implications or deliberately hiding this information from the public.

Do We Need National Standards?

Why should centrally controlled, taxpayer-funded, unaccountable-to-the-public committees have the power to define what nearly every U.S. school child will learn?

The most important thing to understand about education standards is that research has demonstrated they have no effect on student achievement. That’s right: no effect at all. A series of data analyses from the Brookings Institution found no link between high state standards and high student achievement. “Every state already has standards placing all districts and schools within its borders under a common regime. And despite that, every state has tremendous within-state variation in achievement,” says a 2012 Brookings report.¹⁰

8 Christopher H. Tienken and Yong Zhao, “Common Core National Curriculum Standards,” *Journal of Scholarship and Practice*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Winter 2012), http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/Journals/AASA_Journal_of_Scholarship_and_Practice/Winter_10_FINAL.pdf.

9 “2015 State Policy Yearbook,” National Council on Teacher Quality, p. 4: http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/2015_State_Policy_Yearbook_Executive_Summary.

10 Tom Loveless, “How Well Are American Students Learning?” *The 2012 Brown Center Report on American Education*, Volume III, Number 1 (February 2012), Brookings Institution, <http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/>

International analyses have found similar results:¹¹ Most foreign countries have centrally determined curriculum, but their student performance varies widely.

Why, then, have many intelligent people argued for a single set of national education standards? The typical argument, voiced by Bill Gates in *The Wall Street Journal*, goes like this: “It’s ludicrous to think that multiplication in Alabama and multiplication in New York are really different.”¹² With states using different standards and tests, a school with the same average student performance could be, for example, considered failing in Massachusetts yet performing well in Mississippi.

These proponents ignore that penalties and rewards created by the national government are a central reason states have such abysmal standards for K–12 performance. The 2001 No Child Left Behind law required states to get nearly all children testing “proficient” by 2014, but it allowed states to define proficient because laws prohibit the national government from determining curriculum and testing. To qualify for grants from the national government, most states set the bar for proficiency in each grade low so few students could fail to reach it.

Along with the anti-academic and anti-accountability preferences of the education establishment¹³ and the influence of special interests such as textbook publishers in determining state standards,¹⁴

newsletters/0216_brown_education_loveless.pdf.

11 Jay Greene, “One Size Fits None,” *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, April 11, 2010, <http://jaypgreene.com/2010/04/11/sandy-and-jay-on-national-standards/>. <http://educationnext.org/is-the-common-core-just-a-distraction/>.

12 Jason L. Riley, “Was the \$5 Billion Worth It?” *The Wall Street Journal*, July 23, 2011, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424053111903554904576461571362279948>.

13 See self-described liberal and University of Virginia professor emeritus E.D. Hirsch’s *The Schools We Need and Why We Don’t Have Them* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1999).

14 See Beverlee Jobrack, *Tyranny of the Textbook* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

interference in education by the national government is a central reason state standards before Common Core were an embarrassment and wildly different from one another.¹⁵

The federally funded Common Core test organizations have not revealed the percentage of test questions a student must answer correctly to be deemed “advanced,” “proficient,” “partially proficient,” or “not proficient.” They overlook or deliberately ignore the fact that the country already has a national testing program that sets cut scores: the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as “the nation’s report card.” NAEP is a valid, well-respected measuring stick that already offers states and citizens the ability to compare schools’ progress across state lines without the intrusions and muddled curriculum the Common Core introduces.

No Track Record, Mediocre Quality

An astonishing thing to note about Common Core is that no state, school district, or even school had ever used Common Core before all were forced to do so. Nearly every state rushed to put the nation’s students into a test tube with no evidence of the effects. Ordinarily, changes to curriculum, even small ones, are made incrementally, giving experts, policymakers, teachers, and parents time to review and respond to them. While the Common Core standards were never pilot-tested, curriculum experts and consultants continue to claim the standards are “rigorous” and “internationally benchmarked.”

The standards are neither. The Common Core’s website labeled skepticism about this as one of many Common Core “myths,” insisting “international benchmarking played a significant role in both sets of standards.”¹⁶ To evaluate that claim, several math and English language arts curriculum experts who didn’t have professional conflicts of interest (as most evaluators have) compared the Com-

15 Three states resisted this tendency: Indiana, Massachusetts, and, partly, California. Regardless, all three jettisoned their superior standards for Common Core in 2010.

16 “Myths About Content and Quality: General,” CoreStandards.org, www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/myths-vs-facts.

mon Core to the best international standards. They found the Common Core substantially deficient.

Former U.S. Department of Education official and mathematician Ze'ev Wurman has said Common Core math standards would graduate students “below the admission requirement of most four-year state colleges.”¹⁷ He reported Common Core pushes algebra back to grade 9, “contrary to the practice of the highest-achieving nations,”¹⁸ which begin algebra in grade 8.

University of Arkansas professor and reading expert Sandra Stotsky served on the Common Core’s validation committee but, along with four other committee members, refused to endorse the committee’s final report. One of her reasons: The standards writers refused to provide evidence that research supports Common Core and that it is benchmarked to international tests. She says the Common Core’s “hard to follow,” “low-quality” English language arts standards constitute “simply empty skill sets.”¹⁹

Leaving Students Unprepared

Another way to evaluate the rigor and quality of the Common Core is to compare its grade requirements to what top schools have found is necessary to equip all students for success. One such set of requirements is offered by the Core Knowledge Foundation, which supports public and private schools across the United States – many in high-poverty, high-minority neighborhoods – and publishes books outlining what high-quality schools expect in each grade.²⁰

17 Ze'ev Wurman and W. Stephen Wilson, “The Common Core Math Standards,” *Education Next*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Summer 2012), <http://educationnext.org/the-common-core-math-standards/>.

18 *Ibid.*

19 Sandra Stotsky, “Invited Testimony on the Low Quality of the Common Core Standards,” Colorado State Board of Education, December 6, 2012, www.uark.edu/ua/der/People/Stotsky/Stotsky_Testimony_for_Colorado.pdf.

20 Although the names are similar, the Core Knowledge Foundation is distinct from and did not participate in the development of the Common Core

Comparing the Common Core to the foundation's metrics immediately reveals a quality gap. As early as kindergarten, Core Knowledge students encounter money in math class, whereas Common Core students don't learn about money until second grade.²¹ In second grade, Core Knowledge students begin learning multiplication, while Common Core delays multiplication until third grade.²²

Common Core students are still exploring multiplication in sixth grade, which Core Knowledge materials say is far too late. "By fifth grade in countries like Japan or France, students are already at work on a sophisticated curriculum, quite different in its demands from their work in third and even fourth grade. Students still learning multiplication facts in fourth grade would not be prepared for such demands."²³ This quality gap widens as students age.

Two conservative defenders of Common Core, Kathleen Porter-Magee and Sol Stern, said the new curriculum would include important literary works such as Tom Paine's *Common Sense*, Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*.²⁴ These materials, however, don't appear in the actual standards but on accompanying lists of book *suggestions*. Those lists also include a number of sexually graphic and low-quality books. Further, the books Common Core recommends assigning students to help them

State Standards. Regretfully, on its website the Core Knowledge Foundation indicates it supports the Common Core standards initiative.

21 See E.D. Hirsch, ed., *What Your Kindergartner Needs to Know* (New York, NY: Delta, 1997) and "Common Core State Standards for Mathematics," National Governors Association and Chief Council of State School Officers, 2010.

22 See E.D. Hirsch, ed., *What Your First Grader Needs to Know* (New York, NY: Delta, 1999) and "Common Core State Standards for Mathematics," National Governors Association and Chief Council of State School Officers, 2010.

23 See E.D. Hirsch, ed., *What Your Third Grader Needs to Know* (New York, NY: Delta, 2002) and "Common Core State Standards for Mathematics," National Governors Association and Chief Council of State School Officers, 2010.

24 Porter-McGee and Stern, *supra* note 7.

understand U.S. founding documents paint those documents in a slanted, historically incorrect, and negative light.²⁵ Calling Common Core rigorous is like calling an average high school soccer team “world-class.”

Now that Common Core has been in schools nationwide for several years, we can also consider student test scores, even though researchers say it’s a bit early for these initial results to be considered conclusive. In late 2015, Ze’ev Wurman examined all the state and national evidence of Common Core-influenced student achievement and found no evidence children were doing better under Common Core.

In fact, Wurman found evidence Common Core had worsened student achievement: In 2015, NAEP scores declined in all subjects by two to three points nationally, for the first time ever; national ACT scores have slightly declined since 2009; SAT scores declined in 2015 for the first time in eight years; and in 2015, for the first time in a decade, fewer children learned algebra in eighth grade. Calculus scores stopped improving nationwide, and a previous trend that showed more minority students passing national calculus tests reversed.²⁶

These are only a few examples demonstrating that Common Core is not challenging, effective, or internationally competitive, despite myriad press releases claiming the contrary.

Blindly Spending and Blindly Testing

Most states did not estimate the costs to phase-in Common Core before adopting it. Non-government estimates varied from \$3 bil-

25 Terrence Moore, *The Story-Killers: A Common-Sense Case Against the Common Core* (Amazon.com, 2013).

26 Ze’ev Wurman, “Reassess Common Core and Consider Reversing Direction,” *Breitbart.com*, December 25, 2015, <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2015/12/25/re-assess-common-core-and-consider-reversing-direction/>.

lion²⁷ to \$16 billion²⁸ nationwide. Such analyses typically factor in new textbooks, teacher training, and some technology upgrades. These and many state analyses, however, usually did not take into account the significant new technology requirements for Common Core tests.

They also didn't take into account that Common Core gave school districts an excuse to ask local property owners for more money. A case study found California's biggest districts doing exactly that, to the tune of billions of dollars,²⁹ atop the extra \$2.75 billion their state government spent on Common Core.³⁰

National Common Core test creators initially said the tests would have to be taken exclusively online,³¹ which is more expensive and troublesome than paper tests, especially for rural and poorer schools. Online testing requires not only hardware – computers, tech labs, earphones, and microphones – but fast Internet connections, newer

27 Patrick Murphy and Elliot Regenstein, "Putting a Price Tag on the Common Core," Thomas B. Fordham Institute, May 2012, www.edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2012/20120530-Putting-A-Price-Tag-on-the-Common-Core/20120530-Putting-a-Price-Tag-on-the-Common-Core-FINAL.pdf.

28 "National Cost of Aligning States and Localities to the Common Core Standards," Pioneer Institute, February 2012, <http://pioneerinstitute.org/download/national-cost-of-aligning-states-and-localities-to-the-common-core-standards/>.

29 Hannah Oh, "Common Core Costs: Examining California's Five Largest School Districts," State Budget Solutions, September 16, 2014, <http://www.statebudgetsolutions.org/publications/detail/common-core-costs-examining-californias-five-largest-school-districts>.

30 Joy Pullmann, "California's Common Core Spending Never Ends," *California Political Review*, June 26, 2014, <http://www.capoliticalreview.com/top-stories/californias-common-core-spending-never-ends/>.

31 Leonard Medlock, "EdSurge Talks Common Core Assessment with SmarterBalanced's Tony Alpert," *EdSurge*, December 18, 2012, www.edsurge.com/n/2012-12-18-edsurge-talks-common-core-assessment-with-smarterbalanced-s-tony-alpert.

operating systems, and tech support.³² More than three-quarters of U.S. schools were not prepared to administer computerized tests (which apparently no one bothered to check before requiring that they do so),³³ and as a result hundreds of thousands of students' test scores were invalidated in 2014 and 2015.³⁴

By destroying the reliability of overall and local district test scores, Common Core's flawed roll-out undercut its advocates' claims that Common Core will bring about better public "accountability." Common Core further destroys test-based accountability policies because its test results cannot be compared to results from pre-Common Core tests. This means the public cannot have any trustworthy, apples-to-apples comparisons about student achievement until approximately 2018, according to independent testing expert Doug McRae.³⁵

The new Common Core-related tests also cost far more to administer than earlier tests. Georgia testing officials, for example, said their previous tests cost taxpayers \$5 per student per year, but Common Core tests would cost \$22 per student annually, more than four times as much.³⁶ Spending so much more for testing wouldn't

32 Sean Cavanagh, "Consortium Releases Technology Guidelines for Common-Core Tests," Education Week Digital Education blog, December 21, 2012, http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/DigitalEducation/2012/12/consortium_releases_techology_.html.

33 Ashley Bateman, "Feds May Raise Phone Taxes to Fund Common Core Test-Taking," *School Reform News*, July 13, 2013, <http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-article/2013/07/13/feds-may-raise-phone-taxes-fund-common-core-test-taking>.

34 Valerie Strauss, "More than a dozen states report trouble with computerized Common Core tests," *Washington Post*, April 25, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/04/25/more-than-a-dozen-states-report-trouble-with-computerized-common-core-tests/>.

35 Doug McRae, "California should delay Common Core tests for at least 2 years," *EdSource*, May 19, 2014, <http://edsources.org/2014/california-should-delay-common-core-tests-for-at-least-2-years/62329>.

36 Joshua Stewart, "Costs Jump for New K-12 Testing," Georgia Public Broadcasting, September 21, 2012, <http://www.gpb.org/news/2012/09/21/>

necessarily be bad if it delivered better learning results, but this is not the case.

Even these cost estimates ignore the price of frustration and revamped lesson-planning for teachers. There's also the cost of reengineering teacher colleges, widely known to be resistant to change. Richard Vedder, director of the Center for College Affordability and Productivity, wrote: "Colleges of education are considered vast wastelands of mediocrity at most comprehensive universities. And it certainly seems that most of the good research on learning, educational costs, etc., is being done outside education schools by psychologists, political scientists and economists."³⁷

Recording Children's Beliefs and Behaviors

Proponents expect Common Core to change far more than the basic outlines of what states expect students to know in each grade. In addition to usurping nearly every standardized test, proponents expect it to record and change the values and behaviors of students.

In a panel discussion, representatives from prominent U.S. school districts, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Common Core's lead writing team forecasted necessary changes to teacher colleges and standardized testing apparently with the intention of evaluating students' behavior rather than content knowledge.³⁸ The new federal law that replaces No Child Left Behind, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) signed into law by President Barack Obama in December 2015, encourages states to measure schools by such subjective measures.³⁹

costs-jump-for-new-k-12-testing.

37 Richard Vedder, "Should We Abolish Colleges of Education?" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 16, 2010, <http://chronicle.com/blogs/innovations/should-we-abolish-colleges-of-education/26750>.

38 "Common Core: What's Next for School Systems?" American Enterprise Institute panel discussion, January 10, 2012, www.aei.org/events/2013/01/10/common-core-whats-next-for-scho-ol-systems/.

39 Joy Pullmann, "What Parents Need to Know About Congress's Latest

California, for example, announced the new Common Core tests mean a shift away from fill-in-the-bubble tests and toward measuring “creative thinking.”⁴⁰ The last time the state did that, tests asked students to doodle and conduct group discussions.⁴¹ This sort of testing has been shown to keep poor and minority students permanently behind,⁴² and it moves education from the pursuit of knowledge to social engineering, which invariably means indoctrinating and manipulating children.

A focus on “skills” and “affective” learning (e.g., emotions and values) at the expense of knowledge doomed the previous attempt at national standards, Goals 2000, and the related outcomes-based education movement.⁴³ Then, as now, tests were to shift away from measuring students’ ability to correctly answer grade-level knowledge questions and instead focus on measuring students’ feelings, performance, and beliefs.

A 2009 stimulus bill earmark – guarantees of grants from the national government to recipients willing to do what the government wants – and subsequent federal grants pushed state databases to begin tracking students from preschool through their professional lives and link their profiles to Common Core tests. The U.S. Department of Education issued regulations allowing schools and government agencies to share personally identifiable student information without parent consent, despite a U.S. law prohibiting this. A federal model for state databases includes entries for students’ religious af-

Education Law,” *Conservative Review*, December 29, 2015, <https://www.conservativereview.com/commentary/2015/12/what-parents-need-to-know>.

40 Karen Kucher and Maureen Magee, “California May Ditch Fill-in-the-Bubble Tests,” U-T San Diego, January 8, 2013, www.utsandiego.com/news/2013/jan/08/torlakson-proposes-new-statewide-testing-system/.

41 Mike Antonucci, “CLAS Back in Session?” *Intercepts Online*, January 9, 2013, www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2013/01/09/clas-back-in-session/.

42 See E.D. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1988).

43 Robert Holland, *Not With My Child You Don’t* (Richmond, VA: Chesapeake Capital Services, 1995).

filiations, family income, family voting status, health care history, and disciplinary records.⁴⁴

Loss of Individual Liberty

Defenders of Common Core standards assert the project is state-instigated and -controlled.⁴⁵ Why then do national government officials need to review the related tests? Because the national government provided all the funds for these tests and major grants to the nonprofit groups that wrote Common Core.⁴⁶ They and big funders of government expansion, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, bankrolled the entire Common Core project. Big businesses (including Microsoft) have significant financial stakes in national education markets. They are leading the effort to promote Common Core to lawmakers and business leaders.⁴⁷

The Obama administration has made sure only Common Core standards meet its definition of “college and career readiness standards,” which ESSA requires states to adopt. The administration refused states access to “Race to the Top” stimulus dollars if they refused Common Core. In a State of the Union address, Obama bragged those grants “convinced almost every state” to adopt Common Core.

Federal regulations for receiving the Race to the Top grants stipulated that states may not change Common Core standards, must adopt all of them at once, and may add no more than an additional

44 Emmett McGroarty and Jane Robbins, “Controlling Education from the Top,” Pioneer Institute/American Principles Project, May 2012, <http://pioneerinstitute.org/download/controlling-education-from-the-top/>.

45 Porter-McGee and Stern, *supra* note 7.

46 Joy Pullmann, “It Doesn’t Take a Tinfoil Hat to Oppose the Common Core,” *National Review Online*, April 4, 2013, <http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/344706/it-doesnt-take-tinfoil-hat-critique-common-core-joy-pullman>.

47 Peter Elkind, “Business Gets Schooled,” *Fortune*, January 1, 2016, http://fortune.com/common-core-standards/?xid=nl_daily.

15 percent of requirements.⁴⁸ The standards include no procedure allowing states to make changes citizens believe are necessary.

Common Core proponents frequently assert the standards allow for great amounts of innovation because they let teachers, textbook companies, administrators, teacher colleges, and others work together on the same project. Instead, Common Core constrains creativity, stating exactly where it may function and how, destroying the very definition of innovation.

“A single set of curriculum guidelines, models, or frameworks cannot be justified at the high school level, given the diversity of interests, talents and pedagogical needs among adolescents,” write the hundreds of bipartisan signatories of the *Closing the Door on Innovation* manifesto. “A one-size-fits-all model not only assumes that we already know the one best curriculum for all students; it assumes that one best way for all students exists.”⁴⁹

The Common Core standards and their related tests already have shown a propensity to quash innovation in school choice programs and private schools. Voucher programs like Indiana’s require students to take state tests, which are now Common Core tests in nearly every state, and private schools have begun to implement Common Core. “A very big consideration is all the textbook publishers, the testing manufacturers, are [adapting] their products” to the Common Core, and so are teacher training programs, a representative of the National Catholic Educational Association told *Education Week*.⁵⁰

48 Willona Sloan, “Coming to Terms with Common Core Standards,” *ASCD InfoBrief*, Vol. 16 No. 4 (December 2012), <http://www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/policy-priorities/vol16/issue4/full/Coming-to-Terms-with-Common-Core-Standards.aspx>.

49 *Closing the Door on Innovation*, May 9, 2011, <http://truthinamericaneducation.com/common-core-state-standards/closing-the-door-on-innovation/>.

50 Erik Robelen, “Common Core Catches On with Private Schools,” *Education Week*, October 8, 2012, www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/10/10/07private_ep.h32.html.

A Bad Choice for America

Special-interest groups are the only ones who had a seat at the table in developing Common Core. Parents and elected officials were largely shut out. Common Core represents an improvement over most state standards only because those standards were so awful, the consequence of earlier national government intervention in K–12 education. Common Core typically replaced low benchmarks with barely better benchmarks, is itself confusing and of poor quality, and introduces a host of privacy and curricular concerns.

Firms that earn significant income by selling tests, textbooks, and professional development materials sponsor the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers, which developed Common Core and own its copyright. Earning money is not bad, of course, but using the force of government to compel people to fund policies to which they have not agreed and may even fiercely oppose is immoral and contrary to American-style government.

Further, a centralized education market is a significant boon to big companies, giving them a large financial stake in getting it and keeping it that way regardless of the effect on teachers and students and cost to taxpayers. “Everybody’s excited about it,” a Chicago investment firm founder told Reuters.⁵¹

“We’re on the cusp of a whole new way of doing schooling,” Joanne Weiss, chief of staff to then-U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, said of Common Core.⁵² That is certainly true, and U.S. schools obviously need to improve. But will Common Core help? The evidence says no.

Instead, states should liberate individuals to make their own education decisions for their own children using their children’s own education funds. Unlike Common Core, parental choice in education has been proven, using the highest-quality studies, to raise student

51 Stephanie Simon, “Privatizing Public Schools: Big Firms Eyeing Profits From U.S. K–12 Market,” Reuters, August 2, 2012, www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/02/private-firms-eyeing-prof_n_1732856.html.

52 American Enterprise Institute panel discussion, *supra* note 38.

achievement, increase social tolerance and respect for others' rights, vastly increase parents' satisfaction with their children's education, and reduce the cost of public education by at least half.⁵³

School choice works⁵⁴ and nearly all parents support it,⁵⁵ but there are no big corporations that can profit from it. Politicians embrace it only reluctantly, because it diminishes their power. The people who benefit the most from school choice – minorities and the poor – are also the least powerful politically.

Opposition to Common Core may lead to greater support for school choice, as more parents and business leaders realize this latest attempt to improve schools from the top down is another failure. Parents must find allies and get involved in policy debates and politics if the threat posed by Common Core to their children is to be averted.

53 Greg Forster, "A Win-Win Solution: The Empirical Evidence on School Choice," Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, April 17, 2013, <http://www.edchoice.org/research/a-win-win-solution-2/>.

54 *Ibid.*

55 Paul DiPerna, 2015 *Schooling in America Survey*, Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, June 2015, <http://www.edchoice.org/research/2015-schooling-in-america-survey/>.

Appendix 1: Acronyms Often Used in Discussions of Common Core

ADP	American Diploma Project
AFT	American Federation of Teachers
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
ASCD	Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
CCSSM	Common Core State Standards Mathematics
CCSSO	Council of Chief State School Officers
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
NAEA	National Arts Education Associations
NCEST	National Council on Education Standards and Testing
NCTE	National Council of Teachers of English
NCTM	National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
NEGP	National Education Goals Panel
NESIC	National Education Standards and Improvement Council
NGA	National Governors Association
NSSB	National Skill Standards Board
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RTTT	Race to the Top

Appendix 2: History of National Standards and Common Core

1983

First standards written by NCTM. No federal monies used.⁵⁶ Research has shown them to be ineffective.

1987

Secretary of Education William J. Bennett releases “James Madison High School. A Curriculum for American Students,” describing “mastery of a common core of worthwhile knowledge, important skills, and sound ideals.”⁵⁷

1988

Bennett releases “James Madison Elementary School: A Curriculum for American Students,” the elementary school version of the 1987 high school report discussing a “core curriculum.”⁵⁸

1989

September

1. ““The first essential step is to establish national performance goals,” said George J. Mitchell of Maine, the Senate major-
ity leader who initiated the project,”⁵⁹ at a press conference

56 Boyce Brown, “Standards-Based Education Reform in the United States Since ‘A Nation at Risk,’” Curriculum Research and Development Group, University of Hawaii College of Education, June 1, 2009, http://www.hawaii.edu/hepc/pdf/Reports/FINAL-History_of_Standards-Based_Education_Reform.pdf.

57 William J. Bennett, “James Madison High School: A Curriculum for American Students,” U.S. Department of Education, December 1987, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED287854.pdf>.

58 William J. Bennett, “James Madison Elementary School: A Curriculum for American Students,” U.S. Department of Education, August 1988, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED295760.pdf>.

59 Julie A. Miller, “Democrats Stress Party’s Historic Role With Set of Six Key Goals for Schools,” *Education Week*, September 27, 1989, <http://www.>

prior to the Charlottesville, Virginia education summit. The press conference's aim was to weaken President George H.W. Bush's effort to co-opt "what has traditionally been a Democratic issue."⁶⁰

2. Education Summit in Charlottesville, Virginia

- a. Attendees include President George H.W. Bush, representatives of NGA, business leaders, and education groups. Congress was excluded from the event. "There was clear agreement that these are national, not federal goals; that the goals should be performance – or outcome-oriented."⁶¹ National goals are goals set at the national level, but not set by the federal government.
- b. "The White House has agreed to work with the governors to develop a set of national performance goals, for the first time in history."⁶²
- c. Key summit participants: President George H.W. Bush, Gov. Bill Clinton (D-AR), NGA Director of Education Policy Michael Cohen, Assistant to the President for Economic and Domestic Policy Roger Porter, Gov. Roy Romer (D-CO), and Gov. Terry Branstad (R-IA).⁶³
- d. The summit was cloaked in secrecy. The concluding summit document states the following: "The quick and often secret deliberations that led to Charlottesville, as well as the closed sessions at the summit itself, may have been necessary to bring the governors and the White House together. But they

edweek.org/ew/articles/1989/09/27/09070016.h09.html?r=1752180853.

60 *Ibid.*

61 *The Road to Charlottesville: The 1989 Education Summit*, National Education Goals Panel, September 1999, <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/negp/reports/negp30.pdf>.

62 *Ibid.*

63 Allison Klein, "Key Players of the 1989 Education Summit," *Education Week*, September 23, 2014, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/key-players-1989-education-summit.html>.

also limited the ability of each side to explore carefully or to explain fully their strategy not only to the general public but also to their own members and to other interested parties. As a result, while public support for the idea of the summit and the proposed national education goals was widespread, many people did not fully realize what all of this might mean in practice.”⁶⁴

- e. *Education Week* reported on the secretive dealings as well, noting, “Arguably, however, the real action took place in a room at the Boar’s Head Inn, where three governors and a White House official, accompanied by their aides, hammered out an agreement on the document that was to be the summit’s only tangible product.”⁶⁵
3. Commission on Standards for School Mathematics releases a set of math standards relying heavily on calculators.⁶⁶

1991

- April – “America 2000” education reform plan released by President George H.W. Bush. Two of the plan’s main goals are “development of new standards for student performance” and “establishment of skill standards for the workforce.”⁶⁷ The proposal did not make it out of Congress. Democrats were leery of national standards and testing at this time.
- “June 27, 1991, the Education Council Act passed. ... [It] charged [NCEST] with examining ‘the desirability and feasibility of establishing national standards and testing in education.’”⁶⁸

64 *The Road to Charlottesville*, *supra* note 61.

65 Julie A. Miller, “Small Group’s Inside Role in Goals-Setting Provides Clues to Education Policymaking,” *Education Week*, March 14, 1990, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/1990/03/14/09300021.h09.html>.

66 Boyce Brown, *supra* note 56.

67 *Ibid.*

68 *Ibid.*

- NEGP’s first report “advocated strongly for national standards.”⁶⁹

1992

- January – NCEST “endorses the adoption of high national standards and the development of a system of assessments to measure attainment of those standards.”⁷⁰

1994

- March – Goals 2000: Educate America Act becomes law.
 1. “[C]reates [NESIC] to develop model national standards.”⁷¹
 2. Shifted control of the standards-setting process away from governors to Congress and the executive branch.⁷²
 3. Created NSSB “to facilitate development of rigorous occupational standards.”⁷³
 4. “Title III of the act has played a significant role in many jurisdictions in helping education leaders move forward with the standards agenda.”⁷⁴
- Federally funded art standards released by NAEA and intra-

69 *Ibid.*

70 *Ibid.*

71 “Timeline: Fueling the Push for Education Standards,” *Education Week*, September 23, 2014, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/federal-government-states-and-standards-25-years-timeline.html>.

72 Robert B. Schwartz and Marian A. Robinson, “Goals 2000 and the Standards Movement,” *Brookings Papers on Education Policy*, 2000, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/brookings_papers_on_education_policy/v2000/2000.1schwartz.html.

73 “Summary of Goals 2000: Educate America Act,” North Central Regional Education Laboratory, 1994, <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/stw/sw0goals.htm>.

74 Robert B. Schwartz and Marian A. Robinson, *supra* note 72.

disciplinary associations.⁷⁵

- November – Federally funded civics and government standards released by the Center for Civic Education.⁷⁶
- ESEA reauthorization forced states to have their reform plans approved by the secretary of education or NESIC before they receive any K–12 federal funding.

1995⁷⁷

- May – Non-federally funded standards for health education released by the Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards.
- June – Non-federally funded standards for physical education released by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education.
- November – Federally funded science standards released by the National Research Council of the National Academies of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine.
- NEA provides two principles for standards: “[R]igorous national standards should not be restricted to one set of standards per subject area” and “standards should embody a coherent, professionally defensible conception of how a field can be framed for purposes of instruction.”
- NCEST reiterates, “[S]tandards must be national, not federal ... [and they] must be voluntary, not mandated by the federal government.”

1996

- January – Federally funded foreign language standards released by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign

⁷⁵ Boyce Brown, *supra* note 56.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Source for all 1995 items is *ibid.*

Languages.⁷⁸

- March – Federally funded English language arts standards released by NCTE and the International Reading Association.⁷⁹
- April – NESIC dissolved by Congress. Republicans opposed the “perceived over-involvement of the federal government in education” with the “conservative base [believing] the standards-based reform model remained a Trojan horse, a potentially nefarious ploy for the federalization of education.”⁸⁰
- Second National Education Summit held in Palisades, New York.
 1. Included business leaders, sought a return to state and local written standards, but with a much bigger emphasis on “workplace readiness.” Further, the “close participation of business in standards development socialized job training costs into public education.”⁸¹
 2. Six corporate CEOs and six governors planned the summit with 40 governors and 40 CEOs attending the summit. Several education organizations attended or submitted papers. The most notable education attendees included “Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Beverly H. Sgro, Virginia’s secretary of education, and David Hornbeck, superintendent of Philadelphia Public Schools.”⁸²
 3. Attendees decide to create Achieve, Inc., a private organization also known as the Achieve Resource Center on Standards, Assessment, Accountability and Technology, to fill the void left by the end of NESIC. Achieve,

78 *Ibid.*

79 *Ibid.*

80 *Ibid.*

81 *Ibid.*

82 Sybil Eakin, “A New Initiative in the Battle for Standards,” *Technos Quarterly*, Summer 1996, http://www.ait.net/technos/tq_05/2eakin.php.

Inc. was “designed to help states move toward a common standard.”⁸³

4. Al Shanker, president of AFT, made two statements showing even though national standards were not mentioned at the summit, they were ever present:
 - i. “[T]here ought to be some mechanism for cooperation among the states because basically kids ought to learn the same math in California that they do in Alabama.”⁸⁴
 - ii. “[E]ach district and even each teacher may have a different curriculum. Each teacher has a different set of standards. So there’s going to be a call for some form of standard assessment and some form of more common and universal curriculum. Otherwise, this stuff doesn’t mean anything.”⁸⁵

1997

- January – Non-federally funded economic standards released by the National Council on Economic Education and interdisciplinary associations.⁸⁶
- Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning creates a database to consolidate and compare state and local standards.

1998

- AFT, the Council for Basic Education, and Thomas B. Fordham Foundation begin reviewing and grading state standards.⁸⁷
- “Achieve begins its Academic Standards and Assessments

83 Robert B. Schwartz and Marian A. Robinson, *supra* note 72.

84 Sybil Eakin, *supra* note 82.

85 *Ibid.*

86 Boyce Brown, *supra* note 56.

87 Robert B. Schwartz and Marian A. Robinson, *supra* note 72.

Benchmarking Pilot Project.”⁸⁸

- NEGP report included data on:⁸⁹
 1. Children’s health
 2. Immunizations
 3. Family–child reading and storytelling
 4. Early prenatal care
 5. Birthweight

1999

- October – Gates Foundation grant of \$1 million to Achieve, Inc. “To support comprehensive benchmarking and review of academic standards and assessments between states.”⁹⁰
- Achieve, Inc. funds an education summit of business leaders, governors, and educators.⁹¹

2000

“The Council for Basic Education publishes ‘a book presenting condensed, edited and commonly-formatted versions of the national standards.’”⁹²

2001

- April – Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning hosts the National Dialogue on Standards-Based Education for continuation of standards cooperation.⁹³

88 “Our History,” Achieve, Inc., <http://www.achieve.org/history-achieve>.

89 *The National Education Goals Report*, National Education Goals Panel, 1998, <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/negp/reports/98RPT.PDF>.

90 “Grant Database,” Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, October 25, 1999, <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/How-We-Work/Quick-Links/Grants-Database/Grants/1999/10/OPP369>.

91 Achieve, Inc., *supra* note 88.

92 Boyce Brown, *supra* note 56.

93 *Ibid.*

- September – Gates Foundation donates \$25,000 to Achieve, Inc. to “support the National Education Summit in Palisades, NY on October 9–10, 2001.”⁹⁴

2002

- From 2002 to 2007, Gates Foundation donates \$47.1 million to CCSSO,⁹⁵ with the largest donation amounts to be used for developing ways to capture data and make it more easily accessible by researchers.
- From 2002 to 2008, Gates Foundation donates \$23.6 million to NGA.⁹⁶

2003

November – Gates Foundation joins Texas Gov. Rick Perry (R), the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, and the Communities Foundation of Texas in committing \$130 million to form a PPP with the Texas High School Project to “create new academically rigorous schools”⁹⁷ and “services designed to help them graduate ready for college.”⁹⁸

2004

ADP benchmarks its “common core of fundamental literacy and

94 “Achieve, Inc. Grant,” Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, September 2001, <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/How-We-Work/Quick-Links/Grants-Database/Grants/2001/09/OPP13788>.

95 Mercedes Schneider, “A Brief Audit of Bill Gates’ Common Core Spending,” *The Huffington Post*, August 29, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mercedes-schneider/a-brief-audit-of-bill-gat_b_3837421.html.

96 *Ibid.*

97 “\$130 Million Committed to Boost High School Graduation and College Attendance Rates Throughout Texas,” Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, November 2011, <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Media-Center/Press-Releases/2003/11/Texas-High-School-Project-Receives-Grant>.

98 *Ibid.*

numeracy”⁹⁹ on “empirical evidence of what the post-secondary world – employers and educators – actually requires of employees and students.”¹⁰⁰

2005

- February – Gates Foundation partners with NGA, the “Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Wallace Foundation, The Prudential Foundation, and the State Farm Foundation”¹⁰¹ to commit \$42 million for the purpose of “reforms aimed at preparing students for college and the workplace.”¹⁰²
- October – Gates Foundation provides a \$2.15 million grant to Achieve, Inc. “to help states align secondary school math expectations with the demands of postsecondary education and work.”¹⁰³
- November – Gates Foundation gives a \$750,000 grant to the National Center for Educational Achievement “to support a national campaign to increase the quality, completeness, and accessibility of state educational data systems.”¹⁰⁴
- December – Gates Foundation and the Texas High School Project commit \$71 million to launch the Texas Science, Technol-

99 *Creating a High School Diploma That Counts*, American Diploma Project, 2004, https://www.scribd.com/fullscreen/21934426?access_key=key-bjw8hpcuek6sn35y7xf&allow_share=true&escape=false&view_mode=scroll.

100 *Ibid.*

101 “Leaders Call for Equity, Rigor in the American High School – Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation,” Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, February 2005, [http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Media-Center/Press-Releases/2005/02/\\$42-Million-Initiative-Builds-on-High-School-Summit](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Media-Center/Press-Releases/2005/02/$42-Million-Initiative-Builds-on-High-School-Summit).

102 *Ibid.*

103 Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, *supra* note 94.

104 “National Center for Educational Achievement Grant,” Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, November 2005, <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/How-We-Work/Quick-Links/Grants-Database/Grants/2005/11/OPP40416>.

ogy, Engineering, and Math Initiative, which “establish[es] a statewide network to equip all Texas high schools to adopt best practices and math and science teaching techniques honed at the academies. Another unique aspect of this initiative is its commitment to aligning high school, post-secondary education and economic development activities.”¹⁰⁵

- Achieve, Inc. co-sponsors the National Education Summit on High Schools, at which 29 states agreed to sign on to and promote the American Diploma Project.¹⁰⁶ The stated commitments were the following:¹⁰⁷
 1. “Align high school standards and assessments with the knowledge and skills required for the demands of college and careers.”
 2. “Establish graduation requirements that require all high school graduates to complete a college- and career-ready curriculum so that earning a diploma assures a student is prepared for postsecondary education.”
 3. “Develop statewide high school assessment systems anchored to college- and career-ready expectations.”
 4. “Create comprehensive accountability and reporting systems that promote college and career readiness for all students.”
 5. The ADP network grew to “35 states educating 85 percent of all U.S. public school students.” Participating states are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine,

105 “\$71 Million Committed to Launch the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (TSTEM) Initiative,” Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, December 2005, <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Media-Center/Press-Releases/2005/12/Texas-Science-Technology-Engineering-and-Math-TSTEM-Initiative>.

106 Boyce Brown, *supra* note 56.

107 *The ADP Network*, Achieve, Inc., 2005, <http://www.achieve.org/adp-network>.

Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Washington, DC.

2006

Gates Foundation builds a network called STAND UP, which it launches on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, to push for reform within the public school system with the purpose of making sure students are college- and career-ready.¹⁰⁸

2007

- November – CCSSO discusses national common standards at its annual policy forum.¹⁰⁹
- “Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Eli Broad Foundation pledged \$60 million to inject their education vision, including uniform ‘American standards,’ into the 2008 campaigns.”¹¹⁰
- Achieve, Inc. builds a coalition of governors and businesses leaders to establish a database of standards and assessment methodologies.¹¹¹
- Student Achievement Partners (SAP) formed by David Coleman, Jason Zimba, and Sue Pimentel.¹¹²

108 “National Campaign to Address America’s Education Crisis – Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation,” Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, April 2006, <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Media-Center/Press-Releases/2006/04/STAND-UP-to-Address-Americas-Education-Crisis>.

109 “Common Core Timeline,” Home School Legal Defense Association, no date, <https://www.hsllda.org/commoncore/timeline.aspx>.

110 *Controlling Education from the Top*, Pioneer Institute and American Principles Project, May 2012, <http://americanprinciplesproject.org/wp-content/uploads/Controlling-Education-From-the-Top-2013.pdf>.

111 Boyce Brown, *supra* note 56.

112 Sarah Garland, “The Man Behind Common Core,” NPR, December 29, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2014/12/29/371918272/the-man-behind->

2008

- January – Gates Foundation awards \$1.12 million to the Ohio Department of Education “to support a project that will focus on key areas of the systemic education reform recommended by the 2006 policy study titled ‘Creating a World-Class Education System in Ohio,’¹¹³ conducted by Achieve, Inc.”¹¹⁴
- May – Gates Foundation awards a \$2.2 million grant to the Hunt Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy “to work with governors and other key stakeholders” on national education standards.¹¹⁵
- June – Hunt Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy hosts an NGA conference on strategies to “promote the adoption of national standards.”¹¹⁶
- December – *Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S. Students Receive a World-Class Education* report:
 1. Produced by NGA, CCSSO, and Achieve, Inc.¹¹⁷
 2. Funded by Gates Foundation.¹¹⁸
 3. Provided to the Obama transition team.¹¹⁹
- David Coleman, founder of SAP and Gene Wilhot, director

common-core-math.

113 *Creating a World-Class Education System in Ohio*, Achieve, Inc., 2006, http://www.achieve.org/files/World_Class_Edu_Ohio_FINAL.pdf.

114 “Ohio Department of Education,” Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, January 2008, <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/How-We-Work/Quick-Links/Grants-Database/Grants/2008/01/OPP49223>.

115 Pioneer Institute and American Principles Project, *supra* note 110.

116 *Ibid.*

117 Home School Legal Defense Association, *supra* note 109.

118 *Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S. Students Receive a World-Class Education*, National Governors Association, Council of Chief State School Officers, and Achieve, Inc., December 2008, <http://www.edweek.org/media/benchmarking%20for%20success%20dec%202008%20final.pdf>.

119 Pioneer Institute and American Principles Project, *supra* note 110.

of CCSSO, meets with Bill Gates asking for money to implement CCSS.¹²⁰

- Gates donates more than \$200 million for writing CCSS and putting into place a politically supportive infrastructure for adoption and implementation.¹²¹
- NGA, CCSSO, and Achieve, Inc. begin processing grants for the writing of CCSS.¹²²

2009

- February – RTTT created by the Obama administration as part of ARRA. It provides grants to states adopting “rigorous standards.”¹²³
- April – “NGA and CCSSO convene governors’ education policy advisors and chief state school officers in Chicago to discuss creation of the Common Core State Standards Initiative.”¹²⁴
- May
 1. Creation of Common Core begins.¹²⁵
 2. SAP is hired by CCSSO to write CCSS.¹²⁶
 3. “[F]unding was provided by the Bill and Melinda Gates

120 Lindsey Layton, “How Bill Gates pulled off the swift Common Core revolution,” *The Washington Post*, June 7, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/how-bill-gates-pulled-off-the-swift-common-core-revolution/2014/06/07/a830e32e-ec34-11e3-9f5c-9075d5508f0a_story.html.

121 *Ibid.*

122 Home School Legal Defense Association, *supra* note 109.

123 “Timeline: Fueling the Push for Education Standards,” *Education Week*, September 23, 2014, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/federal-government-states-and-standards-25-years-timeline.html>.

124 “Development Process,” Common Core State Standards, <http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/development-process/>.

125 *Ibid.*

126 Sarah Garland, *supra* note 112.

Foundation (another supporter of NPR), Carnegie and other foundations, as well as state membership dues from CCSSO and the NGA.”¹²⁷

- June – NGA and CCSSO have participation commitment of the governors and chief state school officers in 49 states and territories.¹²⁸
- July – NGA and CCSSO announce the development and feedback teams.¹²⁹
- September – “NGA and CCSSO release for public comment a draft of college and career ready standards.”¹³⁰
- November – “First draft of the K–12 grade by grade college and career readiness standards is released for comment by chiefs and other state education agency staff (the states).”¹³¹
- December – “Validation committee provides edits and feedback on draft of K–12 grade by grade college and career readiness standards.”¹³²
- Gates Foundation awarded grant of \$550,844 to Common Core, Inc. “to develop K–10 [English Language Arts] curriculum aligned to the Common Core standards under development by CCSSO.”¹³³

127 *Ibid.*

128 Common Core State Standards, *supra* note 124 and “Forty-Nine States and Territories Join Common Core Standards Initiative,” NGA Center and CCSSO, June 1, 2009, http://www.nga.org/cms/home/news-room/news-releases/page_2009/col2-content/main-content-list/title_forty-nine-states-and-territories-join-common-core-standards-initiative.html.

129 “Forty-Nine States and Territories Join Common Core Standards Initiative,” *ibid.*

130 Common Core State Standards, *supra* note 124.

131 *Ibid.*

132 *Ibid.*

133 “Common Core Inc. Grant,” Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, December 2009, <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/How-We-Work/Quick-Links/Grants-Database/Grants/2009/12/OPP1011748>.

- Only CCSS met the standards requirement in the application guidelines for RTTT grants.¹³⁴

“Standards and Assessments (70 points)

State Reform Conditions Criteria

(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards (40 points) The extent to which the State has demonstrated its commitment to adopting a common set of high quality standards, evidenced by (as set forth in Appendix B) —

(i) The State’s participation in a consortium of States that— (20 points)

(a) Is working toward jointly developing and adopting a common set of K–12 standards (as defined in this notice) that are supported by evidence that they are internationally benchmarked and build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation; and

(b) Includes a significant number of States; and

(ii) (20 points)

(a) For Phase 1 applications, the State’s high-quality plan demonstrating its commitment to and progress toward adopting a common set of K–12 standards (as defined in this notice) by August 2, 2010, or, at a minimum, by a later date in 2010 specified by the State, and to implementing the standards thereafter in a well-planned way; or

(b) For Phase 2 applications, the State’s adoption of a common set of K–12 standards (as defined in this notice) by August 2, 2010, or, at a minimum, by a later date in 2010 specified by the State in a high quality plan toward which the State has made significant progress, and its commitment to implementing the standards thereafter in a well-

134 “Race to the Top Program Executive Summary,” U.S. Department of Education, November 2009, <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf>.

planned way.”

- Gates Foundation donates \$31.9 million to CCSSO, mostly for CCSS support, CCSS-aligned tests, and private data collection/studies between 2009 and 2013.¹³⁵

2010

- January
 1. RTTT Phase 1 deadline.¹³⁶
 2. Feedback from states requested by NGA and CCSSO.¹³⁷
- February – Standards revised and sent to states.¹³⁸
- March – Drafts of grade-by-grade standards released to the public for comments.¹³⁹
- April – RTTT Phase 2 application begins. States must adopt “a common set of K–12 standards by August 2, 2010.”¹⁴⁰
- May – ASCD endorses Common Core.¹⁴¹
- June
 1. Final CCSS released.¹⁴²
 2. Validation report released.¹⁴³

135 Mercedes Schneider, *supra* note 95.

136 Home School Legal Defense Association, *supra* note 109.

137 Common Core State Standards, *supra* note 124.

138 *Ibid.*

139 *Ibid.*

140 *Ibid.*

141 “ASCD and the Common Core Policy Timeline,” Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, <http://www.ascd.org/common-core-state-standards/cc-policy-timeline.aspx>.

142 Common Core State Standards, *supra* note 124.

143 *Reaching Higher: The Common Core State Standards Validation Committee*, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, June 2010, http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CommonCoreReport_6.10.pdf.

- August – RTTT Phase 2 revision deadline showing “implementation efforts.”¹⁴⁴

2011

- March – ASCD receives \$3 million from Gates Foundation to “support educators’ understanding and implementation” of CCSS.¹⁴⁵
- November – ASCD advocates for “whole child approach” saying, “The standards themselves are necessary but insufficient for real improvement for each child. Standards, no matter how high, do not actually increase student achievement.”¹⁴⁶ Whole child education is the expansion of education beyond just learning reading, writing, and arithmetic to include student health, community engagement, and social emotional learning (SEL). SEL focuses on feelings, emotions, and self-reflection, leading to the inclusion of social responsibility and social justice initiatives.¹⁴⁷

2012

- June – Gates Foundation awards SAP a \$4.04 million grant “to support teachers nationwide in understanding and implementing the Common Core State Standards.”¹⁴⁸
- August – CCSSO declares “accountability systems, teacher and principal preparation, educator licensure, professional de-

144 Home School Legal Defense Association, *supra* note 109.

145 Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, *supra* note 141.

146 “Common Core History and Timeline,” Hot Chalk Education Network, April 3, 2014, <http://www.hotchalkeducationnetwork.com/common-core-history-timeline/>.

147 “Student Achievement Partners Inc. Grant,” Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, June 2012, <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/How-We-Work/Quick-Links/Grants-Database/Grants/2012/06/OPP1061551>.

148 *Ibid.*

velopment, and educator evaluation policies and practices must be aligned to and consistent with the Common Core State Standards in order to avoid conflicting messages to educators.”¹⁴⁹

- David Coleman hired as president of the College Board, developer of the SAT.¹⁵⁰

2013

- February – Jason Zimba, writer of CCSSM, inadvertently admits the math standards were written without comparison to international benchmarks. In an interview, Zimba stated, “I opened the document with some trepidation. After all that work, how had we really done? Did we actually succeed?”¹⁵¹ Zimba was speaking in reference to a 2012 report by William H. Schmidt and Richard T. Houang comparing CCSSM to high-performing countries.
- August – ASCD receives \$250,000 from Gates Foundation for CCSS support.¹⁵²
- Kentucky becomes the first state to adopt CCSS.¹⁵³
- Forty-five states adopt CCSS via the RTTT incentives by the end of 2013.
- States not adopting CCSS: Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia. Minnesota adopted only the English language arts

149 “Implementing the Common Core State Standards State Spotlights,” Council of Chief State School Officers, August 2012, http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2012/CCSSO_State%20Spotlight%20Document_August%202012_%20PDF%20online%20version.pdf.

150 “David Coleman,” College Board, <https://www.collegeboard.org/about/leadership/david-coleman>.

151 Frederick Hess, “Straight Up Conversation: Common Core Guru Jason Zimba,” *Education Next*, February 28, 2013, <http://educationnext.org/straight-up-conversation-common-core-guru-jason-zimba/>.

152 Hot Chalk Education Network, *supra* note 146.

153 Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, *supra* note 141.

standard.¹⁵⁴

2014

- March – Indiana drops CCSS for its own standards, which are essentially CCSS poorly written.
- May – South Carolina drops CCSS starting 2015–16 school year.¹⁵⁵
- June
 - a. Oklahoma drops CCSS for its own standards, which are essentially CCSS poorly written.¹⁵⁶
 - b. Gates Foundation calls for a two-year moratorium on using CCSS-aligned testing to make “high-stakes decisions.”¹⁵⁷

2015

- Missouri and Tennessee join South Carolina in writing their own standards, thereby replacing CCSS, but only with minor changes.¹⁵⁸
- Other states undertaking a review of CCSS: Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, New Jersey, and Utah.¹⁵⁹
- New York Commission recommends keeping CCSS but re-writing sections of the standards.¹⁶⁰

154 Hot Chalk Education Network, *supra* note 146.

155 *Ibid.*

156 *Ibid.*

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- March – Oklahoma adopts new state standards maintaining many aspects of Common Core.¹⁶¹
- May
 1. New Jersey adopts new state standards to replace Common Core. Eighty-four percent of the new standards are based on Common Core.¹⁶²
 2. North Dakota starts process to replace Common Core.¹⁶³
 3. Missouri adopts new state standards replacing Common Core, but only with minor changes.¹⁶⁴
- June – Louisiana adopts new state standards to replace Common Core. Nearly 80 percent of the new standards are based on Common Core¹⁶⁵

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About the Author

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In 2010, every state but Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia adopted Common Core education standards, a set of requirements for what elementary and secondary school children should know in each grade in math and English language arts. The initiative represents a dramatic centralization of authority over the nation’s historically decentralized K-12 education system.

Proponents insist Common Core originated in a “state-led” process, but the truth is that a group of private trade organizations commissioned a small group of consultants to write Common Core behind closed doors. There is no legal authority in this country for elected leaders to gather together and write policies except in the halls of Congress.

This elite-driven, closed-doors process created a set of what can accurately be described as mediocre mandates. While proponents say Common Core is “internationally benchmarked” and “rigorous,” independent scholars conclude Common Core will graduate students prepared at best for a two-year community college. Several states had better standards in place before they adopted Common Core.

JOY PULLMANN is a research fellow for The Heartland Institute. She has emerged as one of the nation’s leading experts and most sought-after speakers on Common Core. She was the 2013 recipient of a Robert Novak journalism fellowship for in-depth reporting on the topic and is author of the forthcoming *The Education Invasion: How Common Core Fights Parents for Control of American Kids*, from Encounter Books.



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