

Common Core Summary

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What is the Common Core?

- 1) Common Core State Standards Initiative
 - a) 2 sets of K-12 academic standards that outline what students are expected to learn in English Language Arts and in Mathematics
 - b) Stated goal is to make students “college and career-ready”

Who wrote the Common Core?

- 1) Private organizations in Washington, D.C.: Achieve, Inc., National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officials (CCSSO)
 - a) Not the states, not the schools, not elected officials, not the parents
- 2) Funded by the Gates Foundation

How did Iowa adopt the Common Core?

- 1) **In 2005:** Iowa Legislature passed SF 245 in which the Iowa DOE was to work with the schools to develop a “Model Core” or “Iowa Core” curriculum for Grades 9-12 math, science and literacy. This was a voluntary or optional curriculum.
- 2) **In 2007:** Iowa Legislature passed SF 588 which expanded the Iowa Core to Grades K-8 and also to include the additional subject areas of social studies and “21st century learning skills”.
 - a) 21st century learning skills includes: civic literacy, health literacy, technology literacy, financial literacy, and employability skills.
- 3) **In 2008:** Iowa Legislature passed SF 2216 which made the Iowa Core curriculum mandatory for all school districts. See Iowa Code 256.7 subsections 26 through 28.
 - a) Iowa teachers developed the Iowa Core curriculum.
 - b) The Iowa Core curriculum must be implemented by July 1, 2012 for Grades 9-12 and by July 1, 2014 for Grades K-8.
 - c) The State Board of Education is charged with adopting rules to establish a core curriculum.
 - d) The State Board of Education may not mandate specific textbooks, or instructional strategies.

- 4) **In 2010:** The State Board of Education, not the Iowa Legislature, integrated the Common Core State Standards in Literacy and Mathematics into the Iowa Core Curriculum.
 - a) Cecil: Iowa received no Race to the Top Funding.
 - b) Iowa joined the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) by action of the Governor, the Department of Education and the State Board of Education. The assessment is due to be finished in 2015.
- 5) **In 2013,** where Iowa is at currently:
 - a) In the budget the Iowa legislature passed (conference committee report) \$1 million is allocated in FY 14 and \$500,000 is allocated in FY 15 for the Iowa Core.
 - b) Iowa has not planned at this point to use the SBAC assessment. The Iowa Legislature commissioned a state task force to study the state's assessment needs. It will provide recommendations by Jan. 1, 2015 to the State Board of Education who will in turn submit recommendations to the Legislature for final approval. In the meantime schools will continue to use the Iowa Assessments (which are aligned to the Iowa Core we had prior to the Common Core).
 - c) The Iowa Dept. of Education is currently convening a task force to review the Next Generation Science Standards. They will make a recommendation later this year to the State Board of Education on whether to adopt them.

What is good about the Common Core?

- 1) Having all school districts study the same thing at the same time enables children who move from one school to another to not have any "gaps" in their education because they can pick up at the new school where they left off at the old school.
- 2) Intended focus is on critical thinking and higher order thinking skills.
- 3) In math, a push for a deeper cognitive understanding, "how do you know?"
- 4) In science, there is a focus on experiential learning.
- 5) Common Core Math and Science standards are design to fit together.

What is bad about the Common Core?

1) Issues: Federalism and Parental and States Rights.

This is a federal government takeover of our children's education!

- a) Many in the federal government's Dept. of Education wanted to have a set of national standards like the Common Core and they used 2 main means to get the states to adopt the Common Core:
 - i) The federal DOE used Race to the Top funding during the recession to lure states who needed money to adopt the Common Core in exchange for a chance to get the funding.

- (1) Even if states didn't get chosen for the funding they still had to adhere to the Common Core because that was agreed upon in the application process.
 - (2) States that agreed to adopt the Common Core must accept it word for word and may not change it. The Common Core standards are owned and copyrighted by nongovernmental entities unaccountable to parents and students.
 - (3) States may supplement the Common Core standards but only up to 15% of the State's total standards. And this "15%" will not be included in the standardized tests.
 - (4) This was before the Common Core standards were published so the states did not have the chance to study them, pilot them, assess their cost, or even discuss them with their legislators and citizens.
- ii) The Obama administration indicated a promise of a waiver from the federal No Child Left Behind Law if the states would adopt the Common Core standards and its tests (assessments).
 - iii) President Obama and the DOE also stated their intentions that states be required to adopt Common Core standards to receive federal Title 1 education funding.
- b) According to our Constitution and its 10th Amendment the control over children's education is not one of the powers of the federal government but rather belongs to the "states....or to the people".
- i) Having a set of national standards like the Common Core takes the control away from the local school district, its parents, its teachers and its administrators and the states as well.
 - ii) We have relinquished our control over public education to the federal government and have given up the parental right to direct the education of their children and state's rights under the 10th Amendment! We have abandoned our constitutional authority over our children's education!
 - iii) We have abandoned control of significant policy decisions for our children's education to unknown staff people of private special interest organizations and to unelected bureaucrats in the federal Dept. of Education all of whom are unaccountable to parents and their elected state officials and who live thousands of miles away in Washington D.C.
 - iv) This is nothing short of nationalized education just like any socialist/communist country!
- c) Besides this, our federal laws explicitly state that the federal government may not establish a set of national educational standards or national curriculum or a national test. And our Obama administration has done and is doing exactly these things in violation of the law using back-door means.
- i) National educational standards will drive the standardized testing (assessments).

- (1) The federal government is funding the development of tests (assessments) which will align to the Common Core. This is nothing less than a national test aligned to national standards.
- ii) National educational standards and national testing will drive the curriculum and therefore the instructional textbooks and materials and programs of instruction.
 - (1) The federal funds discussed above being used to develop national tests will also be used to help develop national curriculum.
 - (2) It is illegal for the federal government to be directing or controlling the curriculum.
 - (3) Further, if teacher evaluations become tied to student test results that will cement the Common Core standards/national test/national curriculum model and bury local control of education.
 - (a) Also, teachers, if their evaluations are tied to their students' test results, will use their time to teach the 85% of the curriculum that is Common Core and will be tested instead of the 15% of the curriculum which is state or locally added and will not be tested.

2) Issue: Education Content.

The Common Core standards are of mediocre quality according to some educational experts.

- a) They prepare students for nonselective community colleges rather than 4-year universities, according to these experts.
 - i) English Language Arts
 - (1) Dr. Sandra Stotsky, CC Validation Committee, did not sign off on the CC standards.
 - (2) No English professors or high school English teachers were on the work group that developed the standards.
 - (3) ELA standards were “empty skill sets that weaken the basis of literary and cultural knowledge needed for authentic college coursework”.
 - (4) Might not require reading skills any higher than middle-school level.
 - (5) De-emphasis of the study of classic literature in favor of “informational texts” such as government documents, court opinions, and technical manuals.
 - (a) Examples of included items: Manual on Recommended Levels of Insulation by the EPA, Presidential Executive Order #13423, and an article from New Yorker magazine promoting Obamacare.
 - (b) Students are deprived of the intangible benefits of studying classic literature: understanding great principles that have endured throughout human history, imagining themselves in other times and in other worlds, understanding different perspectives and points of view, appreciating the history of their nation and others, inspiring a love for reading and enjoying the well-written sentence.

(c) Focus is not on truly educating students who are creative human beings who can fulfill their own potential and take their place in society as thoughtful, understanding and caring citizen leaders who are empowered in their exercise of the precious gift of liberty secured for them at great cost, but rather on training them to conform and obey in static jobs that will produce a good or a service for the collective.

(6) Critical thinking exercises not always age appropriate.

(7) Cursive writing not required.

ii) Mathematics

(1) Dr. James Milgram, the only mathematician on the CC Validation Committee, did not sign off on the standards.

(2) These standards will place students 2 years behind where those of many high-achieving countries, he said.

(3) Algebra I will be taught in Grade 9 instead of in Grade 8.

(4) Geometry is taught according to an experimental method never successfully used anywhere else. It was used in the Soviet Union but then abandoned because it did not work.

(5) There are a number of gaps and deficiencies in the CC Math program.

(6) Delays development of some key concepts and skills.

(7) De-emphasizes performing many similar problems (repetition needed to solidify knowledge)

iii) Science – called “Next Generation Science Standards”

(1) Created by the same groups that created the Math Common Core and are designed to fit with it

(2) NGSS were released in April 2013

(3) Examined by 9 scientists and mathematicians and the Fordham Institute for content, rigor, and clarity

(4) Fordham Institute gave them a “C”

(5) They promote a too simplified understanding of science

(6) Some central scientific concepts are ignored, such as acids and bases in chemistry.

(7) Some content was inaccurate.

(8) They criticized the “ceiling on the content and skills that will be measured at each grade”

(9) Content more advanced students can learn is excluded

(10) Failure “to include essential math content that is critical to science learning” in physics and chemistry

(11) Wording of standards is “confusing”

(12) Focus on students “performing” activities rather than learning a base of knowledge and information needed to engage in scientific reasoning.

- (13) In spite of the focus on experiential learning no chemistry labs are required.
- (14) There is a shift away from traditional biology, chemistry, and physics over to engineering, which has pros and cons
- (15) Students will not be prepared to major in STEM subjects at a 4-year university.
- (16) Focus on promoting political controversial topics of climate change, man's impact on the environment, and evolution that do not belong in a science curriculum.
 - (a) They are taught under the guise of objective science.
 - (b) There are plenty of other science topics to cover.
 - (c) Teaching interdisciplinary topics is not appropriate for students at the K-12 level when they need to be learning the rudiments of the basic science disciplines.
 - (d) *Education Week*: "The standards make clear that evolution is fundamental to understanding the life sciences."
 - (e) Teaching evolution in this way means that a 'faith' is being taught in the classroom which amounts to indoctrination, not education.
 - (f) Frank Niepold, a U.S. "expert" on climate change celebrated the new science standards for their potential to shift the nation's schools towards teaching the liberal view of climate change.
- b) The standards are not "internationally benchmarked" with those of high-achieving countries, but rather are only "informed" by standards of other high-achieving countries.
- c) Fordham Institute: a proponent of CC, admits that several states had standards superior to CC and that many states had standards at least as good.

3) Issue: Fiscal Responsibility.

The only national study done of the potential costs of implementing the standards and tests estimates nationwide costs of almost \$16 billion over 7 years.

- a) Continuing costs will be substantial, especially in:
 - i) professional development of teachers
 - ii) technology and infrastructure maintenance and upgrades
 - iii) textbooks and instructional materials aligned to the Common Core

4) Issue: Value of and Respect for the Individual and the Family. *The Common Core program, in the two ways listed below violates the respect that is owed by the government to students and their families.*

- a) The Common Core is a set of national education standards which presumes children from one area of the country have the same needs, interests, and/or aptitudes as children from another area of the country. This assumption is not true.

- i) Having to adhere to a set of national standards taught at the same pace in a one-size-fits-all fashion takes some of the creativity, initiative, resourcefulness and joy of learning away from the teachers and the students.
- b) Putting students on either a “college” or “career” track early on is part of the Common Core program.
 - i) Children are not cogs in an economic machine to be plugged into their “proper place” in a managed economy by educational bureaucrats.
 - ii) A student’s future after school is determined by the student himself and his parents with input from the teachers and administrators of the school.

5) Issue: Student and Family Privacy.

Mandating the states to construct a massive student database called the State Longitudinal Database System, is part of the Common Core program.

- a) This was done by the federal Dept. of Education requiring states to build their huge student databases in order to qualify for Stimulus Bill funding.
 - i) Information suggested to be included is educational data, test scores, homework completion, extracurricular activity, health care history, disciplinary record, family income range, family voting status, political affiliations, religious affiliation, housing information, bus information, telephone information, family government assistance information, personality traits, work techniques and effort etc., over 400 data points in all.
- b) The Obama administration wants to share the student data with other government agencies and private entities.
 - i) Partnering with the Department of Labor, the federal DOE wants to track individual students from preschool through graduation and into the workforce.
 - ii) The federal government wants to use this information to match the citizens to the workforce needs of industry and plan the future labor market.
 - iii) This is part of the vision of the Obama administration to manage the American economy, thus transforming our free-market driven, private enterprise-based economy into a managed, planned, command economy which more resembles a government-directed, socialistic economy.
- c) The federal Department of Education is doing this in violation of the federal student privacy law (FERPA), thus allowing transmission of students’ personally identifiable information (PII) without student or parental consent.

6) Issue: Experience.

Common Core is not evidence-based. Its effect on academic achievement is unknown and has not been field-tested anywhere.

- a) The claim that Common Core is “rigorous” by its proponents is unproven because it has never been piloted anywhere.
- b) The organizations who are receiving federal funds to develop the new standardized test aligned to the Common Core want the new test to have a greater reliance on open

response test questions (i.e. short answer and essay questions) than the traditional multiple-choice test questions. This is a heavier reliance in these high-stakes tests on subjective questions where answers are not necessarily right or wrong and less reliance on objective questions that have definite right and wrong answers.

- i) In addition they want these test questions to be scored exclusively by a computer and not to use a trained human rater as is currently done for those tests that have open-response questions. This is an experimental approach on a high-stakes test that has not been perfected.
- ii) Current tests only use open-response questions on a limited scale and computer-scoring of those tests is only done on a limited scale.

7) Issue: Students who Move.

Students who move from state to state are less than 2% of the population. Most families who move do so within their state.

8) Issue: Comparison of Student Performance.

We can already compare our students' performance with that of students from other states using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the SAT and the ACT.

9) Issue: Link between Standards and Student Performance.

Brookings Institute found states with high academic standards scored about the same on standardized tests as states with low standards.

What have other states done with Common Core?

- 1) 45 states have already adopted the Common Core, including Iowa.
- 2) Minnesota only adopted the English Language Arts standards.
- 3) Nebraska, Texas, Alaska, and Virginia have refused to adopt the Common Core.
- 4) Michigan Legislature has voted to withhold implementation funding of Common Core.
- 5) Missouri Senate called for statewide hearings on Common Core.
- 6) Indiana Senate called for slowing down the implementation of Common Core.
- 7) States pulling back or considering it: Alabama, South Dakota, and Georgia.

What other backlash actions have there been against Common Core?

- 1) The Republican National Committee passed a resolution opposing Common Core.
- 2) Several Congressmen are asking for an accounting from the Dept. of Education on the national student database.
- 3) Sen. Chuck Grassley and other senators are calling on their colleagues to stop implementation of the Common Core.

Optional Legislative Actions:

Dealing with the Core:

(Code 256.7 Sec. 26 and 28)

- 1) Repeal the Iowa legislature's action establishing an Iowa Core Curriculum. Then we would be back to what we had before any "core".
- 2) Override and repeal or rescind the State Board of Education's 2010 action in which they adopted the Common Core into the Iowa Core. Then we would be back to the "old" Iowa Core and it would be mandatory.
- 3) Repeal the Iowa legislature's action making the Iowa Core with its Common Core curriculum mandatory and instead make it voluntary again. This would allow districts to use any or all parts of the Iowa Core or Common Core they want to.
- 4) Remove the requirement that the core curriculum be aligned to a set of national or international standards.
- 5) Defund the Iowa Core program
 - a) Michigan House did this in their Education Budget bill that funded their DOE but the school aid money (our SSA or allowable growth money) could be used by the school districts to implement the Common Core on their own if they chose to do so.

Dealing with the State Board of Education:

(Code 256.7 Sec. 26 and 28)

- 6) Strip the State Board of Education of its authority to adopt or amend standards and curriculum.
- 7) Limit the State Board of Education's authority to a set of "lean" state standards. The rest of the standards can be "filled in" and curriculum can be determined by the individual school district. The districts can use as much or as little of the Iowa Core and the Common Core as they want.
- 8) Allow the State Board of Education to be able to adopt or amend standards and curriculum but require legislative approval for such action.
- 9) Allow the State Board of Education's authority to remain as is.

Dealing with the Assessments:

- 10) Repeal the requirement that the students be administered an assessment aligned to the Common Core. This would mean they would use the current Iowa Assessments which are aligned to the "old" Iowa Core.
- 11) Repeal the requirement that the students be administered an assessment aligned to the Common Core. Let the school districts choose the standardized tests they want to use.

- 12) Exit the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). There are provisions in the MOU for exiting the SBAC.
- 13) Wait until the State Board of Education makes its recommendations to the legislature by Jan. 1st, 2015 based upon task force input. Then decide.

Dealing with the Student Database System:

- 14) Limit the size and scope of the individualized student database.
- 15) Limit sharing the student database with other agencies including the federal government.
 - a) Require the written consent of a parent. (Oklahoma did this.)
- 16) Limit the database to “aggregate” student test data records.

Other Actions to Improve Education:

- 17) Tax Credits for Homeschool/Private School tuition/textbook/curriculum expenses.
- 18) Tax credit for families with a stay-at-home parent.
- 19) Tax credit for families who have a parent volunteer regularly at their child’s school.
- 20) Lift regulations off charter schools.