

In 1977, as President Jimmy Carter was creating his new Cabinet position, Secretary of the US Department of Education, the debate was raging over potential loss of state and local control of our country's public schools. Then Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Joseph Califano, who opposed the creation of this Cabinet post warned:

“...any set of test questions that the Federal Government prescribed should surely be suspect as a first step towards a national curriculum.”

“...in its most extreme form, national control of curriculum is a form of national control of ideas.”

Liberty Chalkboard Presents A Researched Rebuttal Issues in school governance

Massachusetts Association of School Committees

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USER'S GUIDE TO THE COMMON CORE

This **ISSUES IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE** publication is the first in a new series of informational pamphlets that MASC will be providing to members on recent and pending critical school governance issues. We hope these updates will be helpful to you in developing any supporting policies and procedures, working with your administrative leadership to implement any changes that may be necessary in the district or in your classrooms and communicating these issues and their impact to your community.

1. Q: What is this thing called the Common Core, and why should my district care about it?

A: The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) was developed to ensure that all high school students are college/career ready upon graduation. **(We shall prove that this is not the purpose of this Federal government take over of our local schools. Designed by ACHIEVE, an organization founded by the National Governor's Association (NGA) with money from the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation and US Department of Education (USDOE) funds, the Common Core Standards are a little known one-size-fits-all set of federal school standards that by definition would ultimately lead us into a uniform national curriculum.)** It aligns expectations for student achievement with the demands of college and careers in the 21st century. **(No, it will align college entrance exams to these inferior standards. David Coleman- CC English Language Arts (ELA) architect is an educational consultant who never actually taught in a classroom. He is now the President of the College Board and is altering college entrance exams to align with the Common Core Standards, giving instant credibility to these untested and largely unknown K-12 'standards'. That Mr. Coleman was so heavily involved with developing the Common Core Standards at the ground level and is now essentially in charge of legitimizing them through his revision of the college entrance exams poses a remarkable and classic case of conflict of interest. It is startling that one man has so much power over what our children are taught and are required to learn.)** It represents a common platform for states to compare student performance. **(The simultaneous take over of college entrance exams will force ALL US students into this program**

(public/private/parochial/charter/home school). States already have the ability to compare their student's attainment of knowledge using the already present College Board Exams.) These new standards will require for some teachers dramatically different methods and goals for instruction, (Yes, indeed, and the cost of these changes are estimated to be in the tens of billions nationally. The burden for payment will fall on you, the taxpayer.) with the intent of teaching students to think and express themselves critically, conceptually and in-depth in both English Language Arts and mathematics. (Although this infers that students will learn to think creatively and individually, these proposed methods of teaching will actually force the students--and teachers--to follow and repeat convoluted tasks to arrive at a pre-determined solution.) They will be expected to focus on enhanced literacy and comprehension and creative, real-world, analytical problem solving skills. (Yet these standards minimize the use of classical literature. Instead, there is a vastly increased emphasis on the use 'informational' and governmental texts with no contextual reference.)

2. Q: Who came up with this set of standards and what was the rationale for this latest round of education reform?

A: The impetus for the development of a single set of national Common Core standards was the realization of the inconsistencies between states' tests on the part of members of a number of organizations. (In truth, forces in our Federal Government have been trying to actively implement a centralized Federal education system since the 1980s. Specific attempts pushing us towards this were Jimmy Carter's Cabinet expansion to include his new Department of Education (DOE); George H. W. Bush's unsuccessful 'America 2000' legislation; Bill Clinton's 'Goals 2000'; George W. Bush's 'No Child Left Behind'; and Obama's 'Race to the Top' and now the 'Common Core'.) Among the best known of these are the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers who represent the state education commissioners. (Both organizations are Washington DC-based trade associations and not elected officials of any state; their business in Washington is influencing policy through lobbying.) They were concerned that states varied widely in the content and scoring of their high school "exit" tests and other assessments mandated under the No Child Left Behind legislation. (So, two DC trade associations suddenly decided that diversity is a bad thing and the Federal Government must take over public education to level the playing field.) With private funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, among others, (One major player among these 'others' in this funding scenario is none other than the US Department of Education (USDOE) wielding your taxpayer dollars as stimulus money.) this coalition of governors, state education commissioners and a team of education consultants went to work to create a single set of skills and standards and common grading criteria. (NONE of the persons involved in the creation of these 'standards' was a true or qualified educator, though some were called in after the fact so that it could be said teachers were involved in the process.) And while federal agencies did not have a role in the program's creation, (This is not true. Arne Duncan and the USDOE certainly were/are in charge of funding it, directing its development and are currently involved with forcing its implementation.) the Obama administration gave strong vocal support to the creation of the standards, tying grants for Race to the Top dollars in exchange for an agreement to implement the Common Core. (In 2009, the stimulus package contained 4.35 billion taxpayer dollars dedicated to the transformation of our educational system through Race To The Top (RTTP). States competed for RTTP grants and for waivers from its predecessor the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) program. As a condition for entering this

competition, States were required to promise to fully accept Common Core Standards --sight unseen and still incomplete--along with the Common Core demand for massive, longitudinal collection and storage of sensitive and personally-identifiable student data.) Since 2010, 46 states and the District of Columbia have signed onto the program. (This is not correct. According to corestandards.org, 45 states, the District of Columbia, and 4 territories have accepted the Common Core.) Massachusetts is both a Race to the Top grant winner and a signatory to the Common Core. (...Massachusetts effectively lowered its present educational standards to qualify for this money.)

3. Q: What is the timeline for implementing these standards?

A: The current plans call for the 2014-2015 school year to be the first to administer the new assessment tests that will measure how well teachers are teaching and students are learning the skills identified in the Common Core. (Notice how carefully this is worded. Are they going to test actual subject knowledge? These standards are not being taught yet, how can they be tested? More likely these assessments will monitor how well students and teachers are complying with what the government thinks they should know and how they are thinking. Parents will never actually see these assessments. You will not know what is going on between your child and the computer, and what data is being collected while your child is online.) However, the US Department of Education may authorize delays (If they can 'authorize a delay', then it would appear that the Federal Government is in control of our this new Federal education system. The transformation of our educational system is underway.) to give states that need it more time to put the system in place.

4. Q: I keep hearing that some states have already begun to implement the Common Core. What are we doing in Massachusetts?

A: The standards were first introduced in June, 2010 and since that time school districts have been working to understand how the new expectations will translate into the classroom. (This is not correct. In exchange for RTTT stimulus funds, the Governor promised the MA DOE would adopt them sight unseen in 2009, before they were complete.) Across the country, more than 1,000 individual school districts have been examining how closely their existing curricula align to the Common Core standards and, where necessary, evaluating curriculum adjustments. Based on these changes, school districts are also beginning to plan for appropriate professional development for teachers (This will be a large and ongoing expense for each school district. In a recent presentation in Falmouth, MA, former Senior Associate Commissioner of MA DOE, Sandra Stotsky, stated that some school districts in the country have hired "Common Core Consultants" at an exorbitant cost to develop common curricula across their English classes and common reading and writing assignments. Yet who are they and what are their qualifications? That information continues to be very vague.) to teach to these new, more rigorous standards. (No matter how it is phrased, the actual standards are lower than MA standards.) Among those field testing sample test questions and evaluation approaches are a number of districts in Massachusetts, (The student data collection component is already being tested in Everett, MA.) which was one of a handful of states that served as a model for the development, delivery and ultimately management. of the standards and related assessments.

5. Q: When I hear about assessments, I keep hearing the term "PARCC." What is this?

A: PARCC stands for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, one of the two groups that are designing consistent, high-quality math and ELA/literacy tests for grades 3-11 based on the Common Core standards.

("The funding for the two testing consortia (PARCC and SBAC) came from the USDOE. The USDOE has also set up a "technical review committee" which suggests that whatever products come out of these these two consortia will be reviewed by the people the USDOE put on this review committee. No discipline-based experts in either a college mathematics or college English department are on this review committee." Sandra Stotsky) Early field tests and sample assessment items have already been published to help districts understand what will be expected and some districts have already begun to phase in practice "testlets" in order to assess what gaps exist, from a both a learning and technology standpoint. **(Language and the choice of words here is very important. "In case you are curious, here are some definitions:**

- **A test or quiz is used to examine someone's knowledge of something to determine what he or she knows or has learned. Testing measures the level of skill or knowledge that has been reached.**
- **Evaluation is the process of making judgments based on criteria and evidence.**
- **Assessment is the process of documenting knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs, usually in measurable terms. The goal of assessment is to make improvements, as opposed to simply being judged. In an educational context, assessment is the process of describing, collecting, recording, scoring, and interpreting information about learning."**

<http://istudy.psu.edu/tutorials/testing/TestingAssessment2.html>)

6. Q: Why do I keep hearing "Common Core standards" and "upcoming train wreck" in the same sentence? Should I be worried that our students are not going to meet the new standards?

A: Under the new standards, many students and teachers will face dramatically changed, and more demanding, expectations for math and literacy skills. **(Not demanding a greater knowledge; rather a convoluted way of teaching and learning which tests both the teacher and the student on how closely they follow the exacting directions and thought processes. For example, parents have reported that it is not the answer to the math problem that is of concern, it is the demand that the student follow the prescribed and tortuous path to that specific answer. It appears we are transforming math education into a massive compliance training exercise for both our teachers and our students.)** These skills will be evaluated in new ways from our current MCAS system. **(The children will be assessed online. This will mean a huge cost for enhanced technological capacity, currently available in very few school systems across the United States. Again, this portends yet another hike in your taxes.)** Some school districts will find that their existing curricula and teaching strategies are already aligned with the new requirements. Teachers who emphasize critical thinking and analysis as well as creativity will be right at home with the adjustments. **(Can the MASC please direct the reader to these districts?)** Other districts will confront fundamental shifts in learning and practice for both classroom teachers and students. **(This is true. Teachers who are skilled at conveying knowledge to their students will find that the micromanagement of their classrooms required by this transformation will be oppressive.)** Teaching to the MCAS test, long a criticism of the current system, will evolve under the Common Core into preparing students to respond to questions that require critical thinking that requires good problem solving and analysis skills. **(Quite the opposite. Ongoing assessment is central to the Common Core. Teachers will only be teaching to these assessments. Rote memorization and learned thought processes are not indicators of original thought or true problem solving or**

analytical skills.) Closing this anticipated curriculum gap will require considerable time, tools and real professional development and technology. **(It is going to cost billions of dollars and you will have to pay for it.)** There will also be a cost to implement effectively the new expectations and assessments. **(Profits from the transformational materials and associated assessments will be realized by the same companies and organizations that were involved in the conception and development of the Common Core Standards.)** As one observer has noted, Implementing the standards "Is not about thinking out of the box. It is about transforming the box itself." **(So why are we sending our children and forcing our teachers into a box that we have never seen and has never been tested?)**

7. Q: How are the new tests different from our current, high standards MCAS tests?

A: MCAS is essentially a multiple-choice test of what students already know and can demonstrate. It measures how well students have learned the current curriculum as set by the state. **(What is the problem with this? By all measures, Massachusetts has set high standards and our students' scores continue to rise.)** Instead of MCAS, the new assessment system, PARCC, will measure not just the specific content students have learned, but how well they have mastered the interpretative [sic], literacy and analytical/conceptual skills that are the foundation of the Common Core standards and the basis of determining college and career readiness. Another way of putting it is that MCAS is primarily a "knowledge-based" test, whereas PARCC is more "performance and evidence-based." **(The new "assessment" will determine how closely the student has been taught/trained in accordance with the federal curriculum.)** Other important differences are that PARCC will provide teachers with assessment data throughout the year, thereby enabling them to adjust instruction mid-course **("[A]ssessment data throughout the year"... There will be more assessment, more teaching to the test. Teachers will be evaluated on the students' scoring. In order for the students to score well, what the teacher does in class will essentially be micromanaged through exact compliance with what is to be taught and how it is to be taught. In other words, teachers will be expected to teach the children what and how to think about the material they have covered. The assessments will be that discrete. In this way, teachers will be evaluated as well.)** and students will take the tests on computers rather than pencil and paper.

8. Q: Tests on computers? We don't have that kind of technology available in our schools/ district. Why would they do this?

A: Today's students (and tomorrow's workers) are far more engaged by and need to be able to use technology effectively in both learning and workplace environments. In addition, computer-administered tests will not only increase access for students with disabilities and English language learners, but also significantly shorten the time to analyze the results. Yes, it is true that one of the major challenges for districts will be to both integrate technology into the learning process and ensure the appropriate tools are available to administer the tests. **(The vast majority of districts in the nation do not have the computer capacity to comply with this approach. However, the only way the Common Core goals can be achieved is by assessing each student's compliance with each "standard" and for this, computers are necessary. After several rounds of assessments, the assessments will be designed to measure Common Core performance in each child. In other words, each child's computer will be programmed to assess—and reassess—until the child demonstrates that the goal has been met.)** This is where many states are hoping to use Race to the Top dollars to fund necessary upgrades. **(The stimulus RTTT money has already been spent, and we have an over 17 trillion dollar deficit.)** This means committing to spend the money needed to obtain curriculum materials and the testing and Internet capacity to make it work. **(This means a huge increase in cost to the taxpayer on the federal level (in exchange for**

control), on the state level (eager to take federal tax dollars for relief of the common core costs), and on the local level (cities and towns already paying high taxes will see an increase in taxes, fees, and fines to come up with the money). This means you. At the same time, the taxpayer can have no say in what or how our children are learning. No legislator at the federal, state, or local level voted to accept the "Common Core." Literally, what is developing is Taxation without Representation.)

9. Q: The cost of developing the standards, designing the assessment and training and ensuring aligned practice and technology seems overwhelming. Any estimates?

A: One estimate calls for an overall \$15.8 billion, much of it federal money. (Tax dollars we all have paid to the feds through the IRS and spent to implement a national curriculum via grants to states and local school districts with no input or vote by the taxpayer.) Local districts will differ widely in the amount of training and technology that will be needed, although Massachusetts is in a far better position than many other states, having already implemented many of the same or similar standards. However, even in Massachusetts there are large areas where there is no wireless Internet access or sufficient technical capacity to administer the system as required. (This means there will be a higher federal, state, and local tax burden for what the "system" "requires.")

10. Q: Is Common Core a national curriculum in disguise that further subverts local control and initiative?

A: Despite what some of its more vocal opponents contend, the Common Core is neither a designated curriculum for schools nor is it intended to dictate what and/or how teachers will teach. (The assessments, designed by consultants, will measure not only how well students have "learned" the common core standards but how effective the teacher has been in conveying the material. In Common Core's tests, the assessments are going to drive a common curriculum because, in ELA, there is no content to serve as an appropriate guideline. The reduction of curriculum materials to just a few publishers (e.g., Pearson) will mean more of a commonality across states than ever before. Thus we have, de facto, a national curriculum.) The thinking behind the Common Core was to formulate out of the patchwork of state standards a new set of common guidelines and common tests, while allowing local districts the flexibility to be as creative and collaborative as desired in developing curricula and the delivery of it. (The state, accepting federal tax dollars, agrees in return to conform to federal demands. In Massachusetts, local school districts are required by law to comply with Massachusetts General Laws(MGL). In some districts, teachers currently training to implement the science portion report that they have been given tomes of line by line lesson plans which they are told they may not deviate from.) The assessment-the standardized yardstick-will evaluate how effective are the approaches that different districts adopt. (They will evaluate whether or not a district is complying, whether or not all the teachers and their students are 'thinking' and 'acting' in conformity with the standards. The Common Core has never been piloted. This national takeover of education is a huge and dangerous experiment with our children at risk as well as our form of representative government.)

11. Q: Despite the fact that the new standards have been enthusiastically endorsed across a wide spectrum of state and education leaders, educators, business community and parents, (Please forward the minutes to these meetings and a list of the contributors and participants.) there seems to be a loud and growing pushback to the upcoming implementation. What is the controversy about?

A: There are many points of principled criticism or skepticism about the Common Core and PARCC. Some question whether a national system of curriculum guidelines and standardized tests undermine local control of schools. **(In accordance with MGL, local school districts must conform to what the state law and DOE regulations demand. The local school district has no say with Common Core. If there is disagreement here, where is any demonstrable evidence that local districts will have any control over what and how the children are taught?)** Advocates for basic skills worry that mastery of basic skills(rules of grammar, mathematical processes, classical literature, or foreign languages) will decline and yield to a less rigorous system. Skeptics always fear how the new program might evolve in the hands of future state or federal administrations. **(Notice how there is no mention here of any control at the local level now or in the future.)** Others wonder if the shift from one system to another will be fair to all students given the enormous diversity of learning styles. In a bitterly partisan political environment, proponents and adversaries of the system confuse the public. In fact, we have no long term research to prove that either MCAS or PARCC will be preferable to the other. **(In fact, the Common Core Standards were not tested or researched in one classroom before the USDOE and the state DOEs decided to execute them in every classroom in 45 states and the District of Columbia effectively rendering our children and their teachers subjects in a huge and expensive experiment. There have been no longitudinal studies of the Common Core. The Common Core is being implemented circumventing any scientific process while, without documentation, its proponents are maintaining it is rigorous and will make our children more college and career ready).** Normal Advocates for non- traditional learners wonder whether the system will help them reach their full potential. Will the new system serve kids at economic risk or who are just learning the English language? And advocates for students will always wonder whether the new PARCC data will be used to fulfill a political agenda as much as an academic mission-something that was the basis of wide criticism of the No Child Left Behind programs. **(Regarding the statement “ enthusiastically endorsed across a wide spectrum of state and education leaders, educators, etc...” Most of these endorsements have come from the US DOE and organizations that have received generous grants from the Gates Foundation and from those who developed the Common Core. This is not only a biased endorsement, but also, where there is profit to be realized, a grave conflict of interest. Can we really trust our PTAs to give us the best advice knowing this?:**

BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation

HOW WE WORK

GRANT

← BACK

National Congress of Parents and Teachers

Date: May 2013
Purpose: to educate parents and communities on the new standards and to empower leaders to create the changes they need in their school systems for Common Core implementation
Amount: \$499,962
Term: 26
Topic: College-Ready
Regions Served: GLOBAL|NORTH AMERICA
Program: United States
Grantee Location: Alexandria, Virginia
Grantee Website: <http://www.pta.org/>

GENERAL INFORMATION

- [How We Develop Strategy](#)
- [How We Make Grants](#)
- [Glossary of Terms](#)
- [Information Sharing Approach](#)
- [How We Measure Success](#)
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- [Grant Opportunities](#)
- [Grant Seeking Resources](#)
- [What We Do Not Fund](#)
- [Reporting Email Scams](#)
- [Tax Status Definitions](#)

12. Q: Is it really reasonable to expect that just because the Common Core standards are higher and more demanding that we will be able to muster the will and the resources to help our most challenged and vulnerable students achieve them? (Without a close examination by discipline-based experts in Massachusetts institutions of higher education, is it really reasonable to accept the claim that Common Core's standards are rigorous and demanding?)

A: Common Core advocates and state academic leaders believe that the new system can bring about improvement. We also believe that the system can be modified and fine-tuned to work more efficiently. (There has been NO examination of Common Core's standards in any state by those who teach mathematics or English/reading to the state's college freshmen. What is the basis for the assertion that the "standards are higher and more demanding"? According to three independent analyses of the Common Core versus MA current standards conducted by Boston's Pioneer Institute, the standards being imposed are lower and less demanding. The only mathematician on the validation committee, James Milgram, would not sign off on the standards citing the standards as having extremely serious failings and reflecting very low expectations. Dr. Sandra Stotsky, also on the validation committee, would not sign off on the ELA standards. Check any of her lectures at the Liberty Chalkboard School Feed or on youtube and she will tell you in great detail why.)

13. Q: Will the Common Core Standards bring about a renaissance in US education and student's ability to think and perform critically and analytically or will it become mired in process and fear of retaliation and go the way of other reform efforts?

A: We anticipate that the new systems will allow teachers and school administrators to find the right balance between basic skill building, critical thinking, and creativity that was missing in the current system that has been criticized for encouraging teachers to "teach to the test." We believe that promoting critical thinking will help students prepare for college, apprenticeships, military service and successful lives that will require them to adapt and adjust as never before.

(Teachers that are already using CCS are claiming they must "teach to the test", that there is no time left for the 15% leeway, that the assessments take up more class time than original tests. There will be no creativity. Sadly, some teachers are leaving the career they love because they complain there is no need for real "teaching" anymore. They are handed scripts and told exactly what to do. So what can our teachers who feel Common Core is not a good choice for their students? In some cases, those teachers opposing CCS have been fired. Many teachers are afraid to speak out in fear for their jobs. Some have effectively been given "gag orders" not to speak about the details of what they will be teaching in the classroom. This does not sound like a program that teachers feel will "promote critical thinking" and "help students prepare".)

14. Q: What will be the responsibilities of School Committees as we begin implementing the Common Core and administering the PARCC system.

A: The role of the School Committee will take on an added dimension of importance.

For example:

- A characteristic of high performing school committees is that they help educate their communities as well as their students. School Committees can host community forums to educate the public. They can set aside time in meetings to discuss the Common Core and measure how well their students are doing, using the data to make informed decisions about budgets and policy. (Unless they do their own research, most school committees will merely be cheerleaders for the accommodation of, compliance with, and surrender to a completely new

untested and unproven system of assessment driven "education". They will also authorize the data mandated by the Common Core system which contains personally identifiable, longitudinal information about the children and teachers in the district. Local taxpayers deserve School Committees who are accountable to them for the transformation of "education" and for the invasion of privacy of students and teachers.)

- School Committees oversee the collective bargaining process with teachers unions that include educator evaluations. Data from the PARCC assessment should be among the valuable information to help teachers improve their, professional practice of educating children. (Evaluation of teachers, their "performance," will be determined by how well the teachers conform to the script that is the common core. Teachers will be reduced to parroting the script they are given.)

- School Committees will evaluate the performance of the school superintendents as they implement the new system, lead the principals and teachers who will do the work in the class- room, and report to the community. A diligent committee will ensure that their chief executive makes the system work effectively. (This means the School Committees will charge the superintendent with micromanaging the principals and the principals will micromanage the teachers and their classrooms.)

- School Committees should monitor the success and efficiency of the new system as one of its "due diligence" obligations to make sure that the public's tax dollars are spent appropriately and wisely. (Measuring compliance with the common core will be the local School Committee's only true function. In this education transformation, there is no local control. The bureaucracy of the Department of Education and their corporate and non-profit partners in Washington, DC are in charge. At the same time, by law (which no elected official ever voted for), the School Committee will use local tax dollars--to meet these new federal goals.)

- As advocates for students, School Committees will monitor academic achievement and determine how the systems affect the social and emotional well being of the children they serve. (They will serve to support the fed's demand for compliance with the national standards as measured by ongoing assessment of the human resources that are the children and teachers of the district. They will also be responsible for providing the personally identifiable, longitudinal data on the students and teachers in the district.)



For Further Information and over 60 References which cover all the above statements and much more, please visit:

www.LibertyChalkboard.org

"TheSchoolFeed"