

POINTS DEVELOPED BY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION CHAIR

1. The Common Core State Standards were developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, NOT by the federal government;
The NGA and the CCSSO are Washington DC trade associations- they are essentially lobbyists. They are not of or for the states; they are not elected by the states to represent them. The money they used to 'develop' these standards was from the Federal Department of Education (yes FEDERAL) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The standards were actually 'finalized' through an organization named ACHIEVE, which was founded from the NGA using Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation money. The money that was used to bribe states into accepting Common Core through Race to the Top was from TARP. The USDOE is also using No Child Left Behind Act waivers to coerce states into adopting Common Core.
2. Massachusetts voted to adopt new standards in July of 2010 that incorporated many elements of the Common Core, BUT retained those Massachusetts standards that were found by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to be more rigorous than the Common Core;
*Massachusetts did not vote to adopt the common core, but did vote to fund the data collection portion of it in 2010. This was part of an appropriations bill "House Docket No. 94800 No. 4800 filed on 6/23/10. 710-9760 For the purpose of a federally funded grant entitled, Common Core Data Project (note the title!)\$355,000".
Our legislators did not even know what the Common Core was until recently (and some still do not).*
3. Massachusetts is in the second year of implementing the new Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks that incorporate the Common Core standards and the overwhelming majority of teachers support the standards;
That is a subjective and not easily proven statement. Teachers are afraid to speak out against the Common Core because their jobs are at risk. I do not know any teacher who is using the Common Core who does not have great concerns for the education and wellbeing of their students. I dare you to take an honest poll of teachers involved. Many teachers are biding their time for a safe retirement and pension. They tell us privately they will keep quiet but hate to see what is happening in the classrooms. The Massachusetts Teachers Association just elected an anti-common core President for a reason.
4. The standards have already been reviewed, adopted (after an exhaustive review by education policy leaders, teachers, higher education professionals) and implemented; there is no line item in the FY 15 budget that specifically funds the Common Core;
The group that wrote these standards did NOT INCLUDE even one qualified educator. The Common Core standards were rejected by the only qualified educators on the validation committee (Dr. Sandra Stotsky –ELA and Dr. James Milgram- math) Further, the standards were never tested before they were implemented in the classroom. The above statement is totally false. May we submit a FOIA request to get the names and credentials of these education policy leaders, teachers, and higher education professionals?

There should have been a line item in the FY 15 budget because the FEDERAL GOVERNMENT rewarded MA 250 million dollars to MA to adopt CC via Race to the Top. The Pioneer Institute projects it will cost 16 billion nationwide. School districts need money for teacher training, upgrading information technology, and new text books. This is yet another financial burden that towns and cities will have to bear.

5. Districts typically conduct ongoing curriculum reviews into which the implementation of the Massachusetts Common Core standards have been incorporated;
It does not matter whether or not they do. There is no room to alter any of the curriculum associated with these standards. They children are heavily over tested. Teachers have made it clear that they have little to no room to alter what is given them to teach. Some have said that they feel like robots reading a script. They have specifically said that they must stick to the script, there is no time or alternatives to do otherwise. Some teachers noted that their children barely have extra time to go to the bathroom.
6. These “standards” are goals that articulate expectations for what students should learn, they are NOT curriculum; local districts continue to make all decisions regarding curriculum, including what books students should read in each grade;
When all the children have the same standards and take the same assessments that are aligned with those standards, teachers will all be teaching to the test with the same curriculum. Further, all college entrance exams are being aligned with these same standards written by the same architects (i.e. David Coleman and company). The Gates Foundation has recently partnered with the largest text book company in the US, Pearson, to create curriculum aligned with Common Core. The Federal Department of Education is funding the testing consortia, PARCC, that will assess adherence to these standards. Again, federally run- funded by special interest entities. We are bordering on a monopoly of the education industry.
7. While Massachusetts remains first in the country on most tests, e.g. NAEP, TIMS, PISA, our students do not do as well as some of our international competitors, so we must continue to improve public education here if we wish to remain competitive;
No one disagrees that we should continually improve public education. Please explain how reducing the reading of classic literature by more than 50%, removing the ability to read or write in script, rewriting our American History to fulfill a political agenda, turning mathematics into a feel good consensus sport, eliminating chemistry and physics from our science classrooms, altering a proven geometry curriculum, removing algebra from 8th grade, or increasing the reading of informational text with no context provided will increase student knowledge. It cannot! Opponents of Common Core have requested the studies and or evidence that might prove this theory and to date that information has never been provided.
8. The PARCC assessment is designed to align with the new standards and to test how well students can apply what they have learned;
*‘Apply what they have learned’- this statement gives no information.
Are we testing reading skills? Vocabulary? Ability to calculate numbers correctly?
Ability to serve as a good community activist? Ability to comply with orders no matter how odd or unreasonable they may seem? ... Or, are we assessing thought process?
Are we asking personal questions about the child and family? Are we challenging moral fiber... hoping to find none?
Are we using these tests to collect data? The answer here is YES.
Parents have already seen this first hand. A true example-
Question 3: “Do Mommy and Daddy let you stay home alone?” When the child informed the teacher she was not allowed to answer personal questions at school, the teacher pointed out that the computer would not offer a question 4 unless she answered question 3.
Simple; flunk or comply and reveal very personal family information.*

More information on data collection:

[http://pioneerinstitute.org/download/cogs-in-the-machine-big-data-common-core-and-national-testing/:](http://pioneerinstitute.org/download/cogs-in-the-machine-big-data-common-core-and-national-testing/)

From Pioneer Institute's "Cogs in a Machine" report on data:

Common Core Tests

The exact data schools and states will collect in conjunction with forthcoming Common Core national tests is open-ended and unknown, beyond obvious information such as student test scores, test responses, and some sort of individual identifier. The two Common Core testing groups are called the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), which at this writing will test children in 15 states and Washington, D.C., and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), which currently plans to test children in 24 states. According to recent meeting notes from SBAC's executive committee, the consortium appears to be privately circulating a draft privacy policy.¹⁰⁹ To these authors' knowledge, SBAC has not publicly released any student data privacy policy, although information from more than three million students is already being sent to SBAC as a result of its practice tests this spring.¹¹⁰

PARCC has, however, published its data-privacy policy. The policy confirms that PARCC and its contractors will collect personally identifiable information (PII) on students, subject to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) protections,¹¹¹ which, as this report explains in its next section, actually provide little protection. This PII, PARCC says, "includes, but is not limited to" the student's name, parents' names, address, date of birth, and mother's maiden name.¹¹² PARCC's privacy policy includes two helpful but inadequate protections for student data: It "shall not be used for commercial purposes"¹¹³ and PARCC will not collect student Social Security numbers.¹¹⁴

Although it's not certain what types of data PARCC may ultimately collect, SBAC's data-collection will almost certainly extend beyond names, demographic data, and test scores. SBAC has said it may test for non-academic "self-management skills" such as "time management, goal-setting, self-awareness, persistence, and study skills,"¹¹⁵ so such attributes would also be included in its databases.

SBAC intends to create "a centralized data repository... where all student responses and professional development materials will be housed and all test results and other information will be generated and reported."¹¹⁶ PARCC is constructing a similar national student database, which will both receive data from and feed it to state databases, according to PARCC's cooperative agreement with the federal government.¹¹⁷

Every state that joined one of these federally funded Common Core national test consortia essentially wrote these organizations a blank check which they are, by contract, allowed to cash for whatever student information they wish to demand. Both consortia have committed, under their cooperative agreements, to "make student-level data that results from the assessment system available [to USED] for research" and other purposes.¹¹⁸ They have further committed through their agreements to "provide timely and complete access to any and all data collected at the State level to [USED]" and any agencies or organizations USED designates.¹¹⁹ PARCC's internal privacy policy—promulgated in response to the unexpected outcry about threats to student privacy through the Common Core tests—appears to prohibit sending data to the federal government: "PII will never be provided by PARCC to the federal government without written authority from a state, or unless legally required to do so by subpoena or court order." But states have already provided such written authority in their agreements with the consortia by agreeing to be bound by PARCC and SBAC's assurances to the federal government in their RttT applications.¹²⁰ In any event, an internal policy cannot take precedence over the cooperative agreement between the consortia and USED—which agreements make it clear that USED will have ongoing access to all student-level data collected in connection with the testing.

The (in some cases undefined) power of the Common Core assessment consortia has prompted concern about what, in fact, the member states have agreed to do. Florida's Senate President and Speaker of the House in July 2013 complained publicly that PARCC, which at that time Florida helped lead, had not listed what student data it will demand of states, and had no plans to do so until 2014, the year the tests arrive in schools.¹²¹ Also of concern is the requirement that states have laws that comply with PARCC's privacy policy: "Each member state, in signing a data agreement with PARCC, Inc. warrants that (a) the data privacy and security provisions of this Policy comply with its state law and (b) it will promptly notify PARCC, Inc. and PARCC Contractors in writing of any changes in state law that affect the provisions of this Policy."¹²²

Even more disturbing is that participating states have promised to demand the removal of any state laws that stand in the way of implementing the Common Core tests: "[each state] will conduct periodic reviews of its State laws,

regulations, and policies to identify any barriers to implementing the proposed assessment system and address any such barriers prior to full implementation”¹²³ This may easily include state student-privacy laws, and certainly will if these laws impede the flow of data across state lines and among government agencies. A proposed privacy law prohibiting schools and state agencies from sending student information out of state would have kept student data from going to Oklahoma’s existing out-of-state testing contractor, state Department of Education officials complained this spring.¹²⁴

Further, PARCC, SBAC, CCSSO, and the State Educational Technology Directors Association are creating a digital taxonomy for the standards “to ensure the sharing of standards-alignment information across systems.” This taxonomy has two main goals: to link particular education materials with specific standards so people in different states can share and find them, and to make the two Common Core tests digitally comparable. The latter is a federal grant requirement.¹²⁵ In short, both national Common Core testing groups have a license to collect unspecified student data from states and the consortia may insist on removing any state laws or policies that would impede such collection. The consortia will be feeding this information into national databases, correlating their tests and databases, and granting full database access to the federal government.

In an effort to quell concerns about this testing-related data collection, 34 state superintendents signed a January 2014 letter to U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan insisting that the Common Core testing “consortia will not share any personally identifiable information about K–12 students with USED or any federal agency... our states will not provide such information to USED and...everything we have said here is consistent with our understanding of the cooperative agreement between the consortia and USED.”¹²⁶ These statements flatly contradict the cooperative agreements the Common Core testing organizations have signed with the federal government, as shown above. Through those agreements, states made political commitments to change state laws, regulations, and policies¹²⁷; a letter is a weak rebuttal, especially where, as here, its authors are themselves public officials. In any event, state superintendents do not control the consortia directly, so they have no power to overrule what the consortia decide in cooperation with the federal government.¹²⁸

A bit of clarity in language is also in order, as it is quite clear states will not be directly providing student-level data to the federal government because of these agreements: **The Common Core testing organizations function as middlemen to facilitate this data-sharing. States have promised to give student-level data to the testing organizations, which have in turn promised the federal government open access to student-level data.** It’s that simple.

9. It is being field-tested this spring across the Commonwealth and the results of those tests, including student feedback, will inform the decision as to whether and when to replace MCAS with PARCC; ***Parental input should play a large part in this decision. But for that to happen, parents have to know what is going on. Many parents decided to opt out of the PARCC experiment this year. In truth, however, many others were bullied and misled by the DOE and told it was against the law to opt out. It is not! Teachers that are implementing the PARCC are relaying the message that it is a disaster. The instructions do not even make sense. The questions are not age or grade level appropriate. The students are frustrated and some are handing papers back having answered no questions. Teachers and students are not happy. Parents have been completely left out of this decision to change the way their children are educated in our state. There were no town hall meetings, school meetings or educational forums asking parents their opinion before the Department of Education agreed to adopt Common Core Standards.***

10. The cost benefit report that the further amendment requires the Commissioner to produce will provide the legislature with more detailed information on the PARCC testing program. ***There should have been a cost benefit report back in 2010 before MA applied for the Race to the Top Application!***

The PARCC is an assessment of attitude, not a test of knowledge. Further, it will be the vehicle for massive and intrusive data collection on students and families across the Commonwealth. We should not have ever consider putting this program before our children.