

# Common Core State Standards: Are They Right for Oklahoma?

Report Submitted to the Oklahoma House of Representatives as part of Interim Study #11-048, October 6, 2011 by Restore Oklahoma Public Education (ROPE)

## Brief History of Public Education in America

- The first indication of 'public' schooling in America was found in the Massachusetts Bay Colony
  - The General School Law of 1647 also called The Old Deluder Satan Law (The Constitution Society)
    - Any township containing more than 50 families shall hire a teacher
    - Every town with more than 100 families establish a grammar school
    - Oversight by local school boards
    - Stipulated children to be taught "fundamentals of reading, writing, ciphering, history, geography and Bible study"
- 1787 Northwest Ordinance
  - Provided grants of federal land for the establishment of educational institutions on the basis that "Religion, morality and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." (The CATO Institute)
- Andrew Jackson signed legislation creating the first Department of Education in 1867
  - Department was demoted in 1868 to the 'OFFICE' of education out of fear that a federal agency would exercise too much control over local schools (Ed.Gov)
- Today's Federal Education Department (ED) was created in 1979 by the Carter administration
  - In the 1860s, a budget of \$15,000 and four employees handled education fact-finding.
  - By 1965 (LBJ's first ESEA) the Office of Education had more than 2,100 employees and a budget of \$1.5 billion.
  - As of early 2009, the Department had nearly 4,200 employees and a budget of \$67.3 billion [not including \$100 billion in funding for the next two years provided under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*]. (Ed.Gov)

## Role of the Federal Government in Education

- No Constitutional basis for federal control of education (Boaz)
  - *The History of the Formation of the Union under the Constitution*, published by the United States Constitution Sesquicentennial Commission, under the direction of the president, the vice president, and the Speaker of the House in 1941, contained this exchange in a section titled "Questions and Answers Pertaining to the Constitution" (Matteson) (page 128):
    - Q. Where, in the Constitution, is there mention of education?
    - A. There is none; education is a matter reserved for the states.
  - The U.S. Supreme Court has also refused to recognize any right to a taxpayer-funded education still considering public education a 'privilege' (Boaz)

## Oklahoma Origins of Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

- Senate Bill 2033, passed in 2010, contained a number of public education 'reform' measures to "support Oklahoma's application for the second round of federal Race to the Top (RTT) funding".
  - Section 15B states, "By August 1, 2010, the State Board of Education shall adopt revisions to the subject matter curriculum adopted by the State Board for English Language Arts and Mathematics as is necessary to align the curriculum with the K-12 Common Core State Standards developed by the Common Core State Standards Initiative, an effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The revised curriculum shall reflect the K-12 Common Core State Standards in their entirety and may include additional standards as long as the amount of additional standards is not more than fifteen percent (15%) of the K-12 Common Core State Standards."(Garrett)
- Did not pass House on second reading (62% Aye)
- Passed third reading after Rep. Earl Sears motion to reconsider and House Conference and adoption of CCR
- No known public comment was solicited prior to the passage of this bill
- Like all state legislatures that adopted CCSS early on in the process, Oklahoma passed the bill adopting CCSS before the CCSS had been fully developed (Dean)

## National Origins of Common Core State Standards

- Marc Tucker, President of the National Center for Education and the Economy (NCEE) wrote his friend Hillary Clinton a letter in 1990
  - Urged Clintons to pass sweeping education reform to include National Standards and National Testing to drive an outcome based education model rebranded by using the slogan "high standards"
- "Dear Hillary" letter became 1994's School-to-Work Opportunities Act, Goals 2000 Act and Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Clinton's ESEA reauthorization)(Schafly)
- 1996 - Achieve, Inc was formed by the "nation's governors and corporate leaders" and NCEE at the Education Summit in Palisades, NY
  - Main goal of Achieve was to benchmark education standards and assessments in order to make the 1994 reforms lasting(Learn USA)
- 2008 - Achieve, Inc., The National Governor's Association (NGO) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSSO) produced Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring Students Receive a World-Class Education(Achieve, Inc.)
  - Called for Washington to implement "tiered incentives" to push states to adopt "common core" standards
- 2009 – Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education under newly elected Barack Obama, creates RTTT – a competitive grant process which invites states to compete for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds in four categories.(Ed.gov)
  - Turning around lowest performing schools
  - Building data systems to measure student and teacher progress and outcomes
  - Recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers
  - **Adopting Common Core State Standards (CCSS)**

## Conflicts of Interest and Monopolies

- Achieve, Inc., along with the NGO and the CCSSO produced Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring Students Receive a World-Class Education(Achieve, Inc.)
- Achieve, “is serving as the project management partner for(Achieve, Inc.)PARCC, a consortium of 25 states that was awarded a Race to the Top assessment competition grant.”(PARCC)
- Achieve created America’s Choice through Marc Tucker’s NCEE (America’s Choice)
  - America’s Choice’s “School Design is a coherent, comprehensive design that offers exceptional instructional materials and strategies with first-rate coaching and professional development.” Dedicated to serving every aspect of that required by RTT.(America's Choice)
- Pearson has purchased America’s Choice(Pearson)
  - Pearson provides “Complete and cohesive support to implement the new Common Core State Standards”(Pearson)which includes English and math curricula, consultation services, professional development, and tests(Pearson) as well as being the largest textbook supplier in the world (American Textbook Council)
  - Pearson is a Level 1 funder of the CCSSO (as is Microsoft)(Council of Chief State School Officers)
- The Bill Gates Foundation has played a PROMINENT role in Achieve, America’s Choice, The Common Core State Standards Initiative and PARCC.
  - “PARCC is committed to developing a computer-based assessment system aligned to the math and English CCSS”(Achieve, Inc.)

## What Will the Common Core State Standards Initiative Cost Oklahoma?

- Missouri, Washington, California and Oklahoma signed on to CCSS without winning anRTTTgrant
  - The projected unfunded cost to Californians is projected to be \$1.6 Billion dollars(Lasken)
    - 1 Billion for textbooks aligned with the then-new California standards + 70 million already allocated for textbooks
    - \$800 million for new curriculum
    - \$765 million for teacher training
    - \$20 million for principal training
    - Other assorted costs
  - Washington State’s Superintendent(Office of Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction)has asked their legislature for \$2,156,000 million dollars to implement the CCSS in Washington
  - Missouri reports one unsubstantiated estimate to be \$750,000,000(Logue)
  - Texas will not sign on to CCSS partly because the costs to implement are estimated to be as high as 3 billion dollars
- Oklahoma would be responsible for the same type outlays as California
- Of interest: the state of Ohio, who won an RTTTgrant, has a number of districts returning RTTTmoneysaying they can’t afford to spend more than they’d get from the grant(Starzyk).

- A study in bureaucratic ambiguity. Jonathan Goodman, Professor of Mathematics, Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences, NYU(Goodman)
- The Core mathematics standards are written to reflect very low expectations
  - An extremely unusual approach to geometry from grade 7 on, the most likely outcome of which will be the complete suppression of the key topics in Euclidean geometry including proofs and deductive reasoning. James Milgram, Professor emeritus, Stanford University – member of the Common Core Validation committee(Milgram)
- United States Coalition for World Class Math(US World Class Math)
  - This omission of significant portions of essential Algebra II and Geometry content renders the Common Core Standards inadequate for students who will enter undergraduate programs in STEM or even non-STEM disciplines in much of the country
  - States should not adopt the "College-Readiness" Standards unless they adequately identify the content required for success in credit-bearing mathematics courses in their state universities. The current Common Core Standards draft falls significantly short of this requirement for many states.
  - Are NOT internationally benchmarked(US World Class Math)
- Where's The Math?
  - Place emphasis on Standards for Mathematical Practice which supports a constructivist (progressive) approach.
  - This approach is typical of "reform" (fuzzy) math programs to which many parents across the country object.(Where's The Math)
    - "Students learn perseverance by struggling through—and ultimately succeeding on—very difficult problems. And you just simply cannot do that unless you have mastered the content you need to succeed. Empty problem solving skills simply cannot make up for missing content." Fordham Institute(Porter-Magee)
    - "Relevant" isn't supposed to be a synonym for dumbed-down,it just always seems to work out that way. And my hunch is that students might struggle less with algebra, geometry and calculus if they showed up in high school with a strong foundation in basic math skills." Core Knowledge Institute(Pondiscio)
- Common Core Math writers/reviewers have been unwilling to defend the standards,
  - "Over the past three months, we've now asked six individuals involved in the Common Core math standards to pen a piece making the case for their rigor and quality, and each has declined in turn." Rick Hess, editor, EdWeek.(Hess)

## CCS ScienceStandards

- "This framework does not expect our students to be able to do any science, or to be able to solve any science problem."
  - This framework simply teaches our students science appreciation, rather than science. It expects our students to become good consumers of science and technology, rather than prepare them to be the discoverers of science and creators of technology."Ze'evWurman, Chief Software Architect of MonolithIC 3D Inc., former senior policy adviser at the U.S. Department of Education(Wurman)

- Many brick and mortar schools do not have the technology necessary to administer the tests(Sparks)
- The current focus on testing has tended to make test results the goal of the system rather than a measure.(Cody)
  - ViolatesGoodhart's Law: when measure becomes the goal, it ceases to be an effective measure.(Wikipedia)
- One-third of a billion dollars has now gone into mere development(Flanagan) (not roll-out, printing, training or scoring(Farley)) of Common Core assessments alone, which will in turn render useless the billions already spent, state to state, to develop, print, administer and score standardized tests tied to state standards and curricula.
  - Oklahoma's last contract with Pearson cost the state \$16.7 million dollars(Rolland)
- "Testing [was to] shine a spotlight on low-performing schools, and choice would create opportunities for poor kids to leave for better schools. All of this seemed to make sense, but there was little empirical evidence, just promise and hope." Diane Ravitch, former Asst. Secretary of Education for George. H.W. Bush (National Public Radio staff)
- Oklahoma has had significant problems with testing companies for over a decade
  - This is a national problem described by one think tank (FairTest) as a "perverted game of musical chairs" where companies move from state to state as they are hired and then fired for poor performance.(Rolland)
  - Results allow computation of API and will soon be used to evaluate teachers and principals, the very people closest to the students.
- Conflict of interest
  - Pearson has a poor testing track record in Oklahoma as well as the rest of the nation, but due to corporate mergers, is one of just a handful of testing companies left in the market (Solochek)
  - The interests of testing advocates and testing companies like Pearson are often one and the same.(Rappoport)
    - Because the competition between testing companies is so fierce, Pearson isn't shy about deploying high-powered lobbyists and/or paying expenses for education officials to conduct business(Taylor)
    - In Texas, bills that would have reduced the state's reliance on tests didn't pass
      - The combination of Pearson's power and reformers' influence, makes it difficult for legislators to assess testing's efficacy.
    - Creates testing programs that perpetuate themselves.
    - A business education complex has been created so that industries perpetuate ideologies and ideologies keep the industries afloat.
  - The Wall Street Journal explains that "The implementation of core standards would reduce the burden Pearson faces in adapting materials to individual state requirements and open up an opportunity for Pearson to win a new contract measuring the progress of that common-standards initiative."(Sonne)

## What Are Other Organizations Saying About CCSS?

- Association of American Educators Poll(Garner)

- Results suggest that the increase in federal grants to state and local governments as a result of ARRA will have significant implications at the state and local level as these governments raise revenue to continue these newly funded programs into the future.
- Using our estimates, this increase will eventually result in roughly \$80 billion in future state and local tax and own source revenue increases.

## Are There Other Mechanisms by Which Students can be Nationally Benchmarked?

- Karl Springer, Superintendent of Oklahoma City Public Schools says, “ACT is attractive due to the use of EXPLORE (8th Grade) and PLAN (10th Grade) benchmarking assessments that the state pays for students to take across the state. EPAS allows for districts to benchmark student progress toward meeting college readiness standards.”(McGuigan)
- Though some believe NAEP cut scores to be too high(Fair Test)Kentucky found close agreement between NAEP (proficient, not basic) and ACT’s EXPLORE(Freedom Kentucky)in 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading and mathematics as a benchmark for assessing college and career readiness.
  - Through these comparisons, Kentucky was also able to determine that Kentucky’s own Core Content Test scores in the area of reading and math were seriously inflated.

## Conclusion

- Often cited as the model country for school improvement, Finland does exactly the opposite of the NCLB and RTT/Common Core based reform of the US
  - Many progressive educational policy researchers(Darling-Hammond)and activists point to the fact that, as a socialist country, there are no ‘equity’ gaps among children
  - According to a recent Smithsonian article(Hancock) though it is exceptionally rare for a child to show up hungry or homeless, children nevertheless arrive for school in August miles apart in reading and language levels.
  - What does Finland do differently?
    - Compulsory schooling does not begin until age 7
    - National control over policies was shifted to town councils
    - Educational professionals are selected from the top 10 percent of the nation’s graduates to earn a required master’s degree in education at state expense
      - Require an extra year of schooling for special education teachers
      - [Applicants began flooding teaching programs not because the salaries were so high but because autonomy and respect made the job attractive]
    - The people who run the schools are educators, there are no administrators or administration buildings filled with policy experts and support staff
    - Teachers created the SUGGESTED national curriculum guidelines
    - There are no mandated standardized tests excepting one end of year exam for seniors
    - Every school gets the same amount of government money
    - Teachers realize not every student will go to college and work toward also preparing them for other options (‘two-track system’)

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