

Common Concerns About Common Core State Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessment

September 25, 2013

At the Michigan Association of Christian Schools we share the very real concerns of many public school teachers and administrators over the aggressive advancement of Common Core Standards and Smarter Balanced Assessment. For years both conservative and liberal administrations have, with good motives, undermined the very goals they intended to achieve. It is difficult to find strong support in the trenches for either NCLB (Bush) or RTT (Obama). Even with these programs we are experiencing the law of Unintended Consequences. All children of every conviction, color and creed need and deserve a quality education. We ask that all of our elected representatives protect our children from outside encroachments, political agendas and partisan entanglements. It is our concern, that Common Core State Standards are saturated with all of the above.

We earnestly seek your proactive opposition to Common Core State Standards for several reasons.

You don't have to enact this bill now.

The advancement of Common Core State Standards has been accomplished through methods that bypass the American people through their elected representatives in Congress.

Common Core State Standards represents the US Ed. takeover of education in American History. In fact, some opponents have given it the tagline – “Fed Ed.” If this is going to be a federal takeover of education, we ought to at least expect that our

national representatives would be the ones responsible. They are accountable and the voice of the people.

“Despite what its proponents claim, the formulation and propagation of Common Core State Standards was not a state-led initiative, but rather was the creation of external special interests in Washington, and was funded in large part by The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The groups involved in pushing the mandates, such as the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State Schools Officers, have no constitutional authority over what policies are enacted here in Michigan, but were enlisted to provide political cover for those advocating the Common Core State Standards, who realized that presenting something as an idea from Washington would attract justifiable suspicion.”

The very same people who said trickle down economics when Ronald Reagan suggested it, are now telling us that trickle down education is the next best thing.

Common Core State Standards are impersonal and impractical.

The top down approach now threatens to return us to past failures and reduce our children to the lowest common denominator. Creative and successful instructors are being transformed from innovators into implements of an impersonal agenda. The ability to teach a class or student individually and successfully is being supplanted as children are reduced to statistics rather than free citizens endowed their Creator with distinctive gifts and potential to pursue Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Visit the National Center for Education Statistics (nces.ed.gov) and learn some of the information that will be mined and shared with future employers and who knows who else will have access to the data mined from our children. Covertly blending in with typical education information you might expect, you will notice categories like “Religious Affiliation,” “Religious Consideration,” “Voting Status,” “Total Cost of

Education to Student,” “Family Income Range,” “Dwelling Ownership,” and “Base Salary or Wage.” This is just a sampling of the information they want to collect and share regarding your elementary students!

There is another category for parents. There you can find categories such as “Annual Earnings Rate of Pay,” “Employment Status,” “Hourly Rate of Pay,” “Highest Level of Education Completed,” “Monthly Earnings Rate of Pay,” and “Occupation.”

While there is some information reasonably expected by the school, many of these questions are personal and no information deserves to be shared outside of the school. But we can understand why data corporations would enjoy access to such a rich marketing resource.

The maintenance and distribution of information on our children is as serious as people’s concerns about NSA monitoring our phone lines. Invested with too much power and information any government agency has a tendency to overreach. Consider recent news of California schools send home what has been termed as “Fat Letters” designed to tell parents that their children are obese. Is this the role of any federal, state or local government agency? What’s next? Will charges of neglect or abuse be filed against these parents if the child fails to lose weight? When did the local school assume the responsibility of the family physician? If this type of overreach can happen now on a limited basis, imagine the gravity of it when the feds take over!

The Effect on Private Faith Based Schools

The fact that MACS Schools accept no Title One Money and are not going to comply with the implementation of Common Core State Standards in our non-tax supported schools does not mean that we do not have a vested interest.

In the first place, we care about all the children in our communities. This issue is about more than just what affects us, every child that attends our churches does not necessarily attend our schools. Many of our families have children in the public educational system and we want them to have the best education possible. Then of course, we are constantly receiving transfer students from public schools. It is not uncommon that these students require extra effort to catch up once enrolled in a Christian School. After the implementation of Common Core State Standards we expect the catch up process to be even more strenuous on the child.

Students in our schools will soon be disadvantaged by the new Common Core Standards State testing. Answers to social questions or performing lattice math for example would not comport with the education provided in any of our schools. Therefore, their scores would not adequately represent their achievement. Although our schools would continue to provide a high quality education, we fear that they might be discriminated against in college admissions as well as when transferring from private to public educational institutions.

Final Analysis

School districts learned from each other without being artificially linked together. They were cooperative without being common. And since when has common been good enough for our kids? They excelled and we were the model for the world to follow. The more “progress” we push for the less advantaged our children seem to be. The farther we fall into Common Core State Standards the more difficult it will be to revive our nation’s educational system.

Senator Chuck Grassley has worked diligently in the Senate to compel the Department of Education to comply with existing law that prohibits this federal intrusion into curriculum requirements.

We at the MACS encourage each of our legislators to join this fight to protect our children. While the motives of some Common Core State Standards advocates are suspect, we know that others are just looking for a way to provide a better education for our children. Unfortunately, Common Core State Standards, violates federal law, intrudes on our privacy, is unproven and a dangerous step backwards for America's youth. **We cannot afford to experiment on an entire generation.** Common Core Standards must give way to Common Sense.

