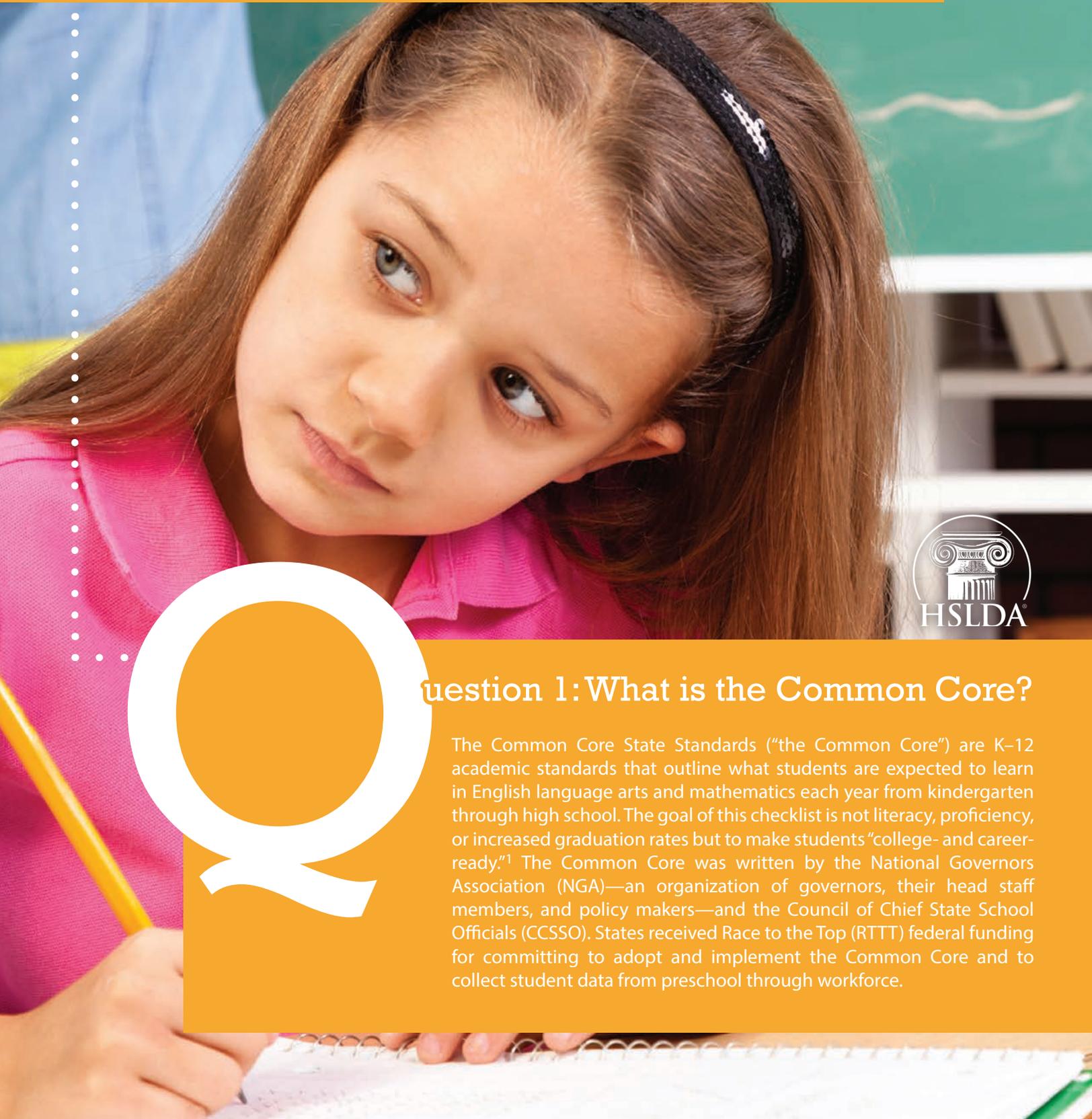




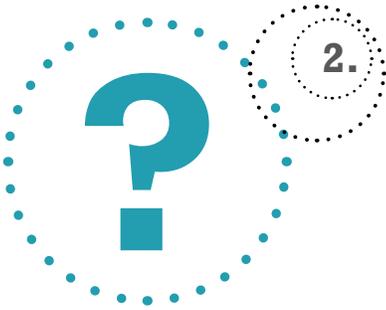
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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Question 1: What is the Common Core?

The Common Core State Standards (“the Common Core”) are K–12 academic standards that outline what students are expected to learn in English language arts and mathematics each year from kindergarten through high school. The goal of this checklist is not literacy, proficiency, or increased graduation rates but to make students “college- and career-ready.”¹ The Common Core was written by the National Governors Association (NGA)—an organization of governors, their head staff members, and policy makers—and the Council of Chief State School Officials (CCSSO). States received Race to the Top (RTTT) federal funding for committing to adopt and implement the Common Core and to collect student data from preschool through workforce.



2. Is the Common Core already being implemented?

The NGA released the Common Core standards on June 2, 2010. Initially, 45 states, four territories, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity adopted the Common Core State Standards. Minnesota only adopted the English language arts standards. Alaska did not adopt the Common Core (Anchorage School District has fully implemented the Common Core into its curricula), and though it initially was a member of a testing consortium, it cancelled its involvement in 2014. Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia refused to adopt the Common Core or join a testing consortium.

As the pedagogical weakness and ballooning implementation costs of the standards become evident, many states are scrambling to delay or defund implementation. Indiana, Oklahoma, South Carolina, North Carolina, Missouri, and Arizona have rejected the Common Core in whole or in part, and are now planning their own assessments. Louisiana's attempt to reject the Common Core is currently tied up in court. Other states have pulled out of the testing consortia, leaving only 27 state members.

3. How is the federal government involved in the Common Core?

Three sets of laws prohibit the federal government from prescribing the content of state curricula and assessments. Yet the United States Department of Education, more than any other entity, has propelled the Common Core and is funding the creation of standardized assessments.²

First, the department conditioned certain education grants on states' commitment to implement the Common Core.

Second, the department offered waivers from the most burdensome portions of the No Child Left Behind Act in return for states' promising to adopt the Common Core's college- and career-readiness standards and assessments.

Third, the department awarded millions of dollars to consortia of states to craft the assessments based on the Common Core.

4. Does the Common Core have a philosophical bias?

Inherent in the Common Core is the idea that lockstep uniformity, rather than diversity, provides the best education for children. This philosophy gives more power to the federal government and discourages diversity in education, ultimately harming the students that the Common Core seeks to help. The consortia's open-ended assessment questions and the expansive new student tracking systems are ideas which have been strongly promoted by Progressive educators such as John Dewey and Howard Gardner. Dewey argued for standardized curriculum to prevent one student from becoming superior to others and envisioned a workforce filled with people of "politically and socially correct attitudes" who would respond to orders without question.³ Workforce readiness is one of the Common Core's main goals.

The Common Core's rigid and technology-laden approach to learning makes individualized education almost impossible.

5. Does the Common Core provide for individualized education?

The Department of Education has praised the Common Core for its focus on "computer adaptive testing" to supply teachers with data so that they can adjust their teaching styles and provide their students with individualized instruction.⁴ But in practice, the Common Core's rigid and technology-laden approach to learning makes individualized education almost impossible.

The Common Core standards require students to master a checklist of skills every year.⁵ Teachers all across the country must teach from the same prescribed list and at the same prescribed pace. This one-size-fits-all approach will supposedly makes children "college- and career-ready," but will it produce young men and women capable of careers that call for independent analysis and creative problem solving?

6. Is there any evidence that centralized education works better than decentralized education?

In the United States, experimenting with centralized reform has done almost nothing to improve the performance of students. From 1971 to 2008, American students' scores on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) mathematics assessments have only improved 3.4% and reading scores just 1%, despite billions of federal education dollars spent.⁶ In 2011, the Cato Institute found that the achievement gap between students of different socioeconomic backgrounds has not improved since the beginning of federal education spending in 1958.⁷

On the other hand, deliberate decentralization of education in Finland has produced one of the foremost systems in the world, with Finland's students ranking at

the top of international assessment charts in 2000, 2003, 2006, and 2009.⁸

The success of homeschooling in America offers domestic proof of the benefits of decentralized education. In 2013, Robert Kunzman of Indiana University and Milton Gaither of Messiah College reviewed 10 independent studies that found that homeschoolers outrank their traditionally schooled counterparts in collegiate grade point average, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and strength of religious and political views.⁹

The evidence indicates that the designers of the Common Core have chosen the worst possible approach to make students "college- and career-ready."

7. Will the Common Core impact homeschools and private schools?

The Common Core will impact homeschools and private schools in at least three ways.

First, sufficient legal protections do not exist to exempt homeschool and private school students from statewide longitudinal databases.

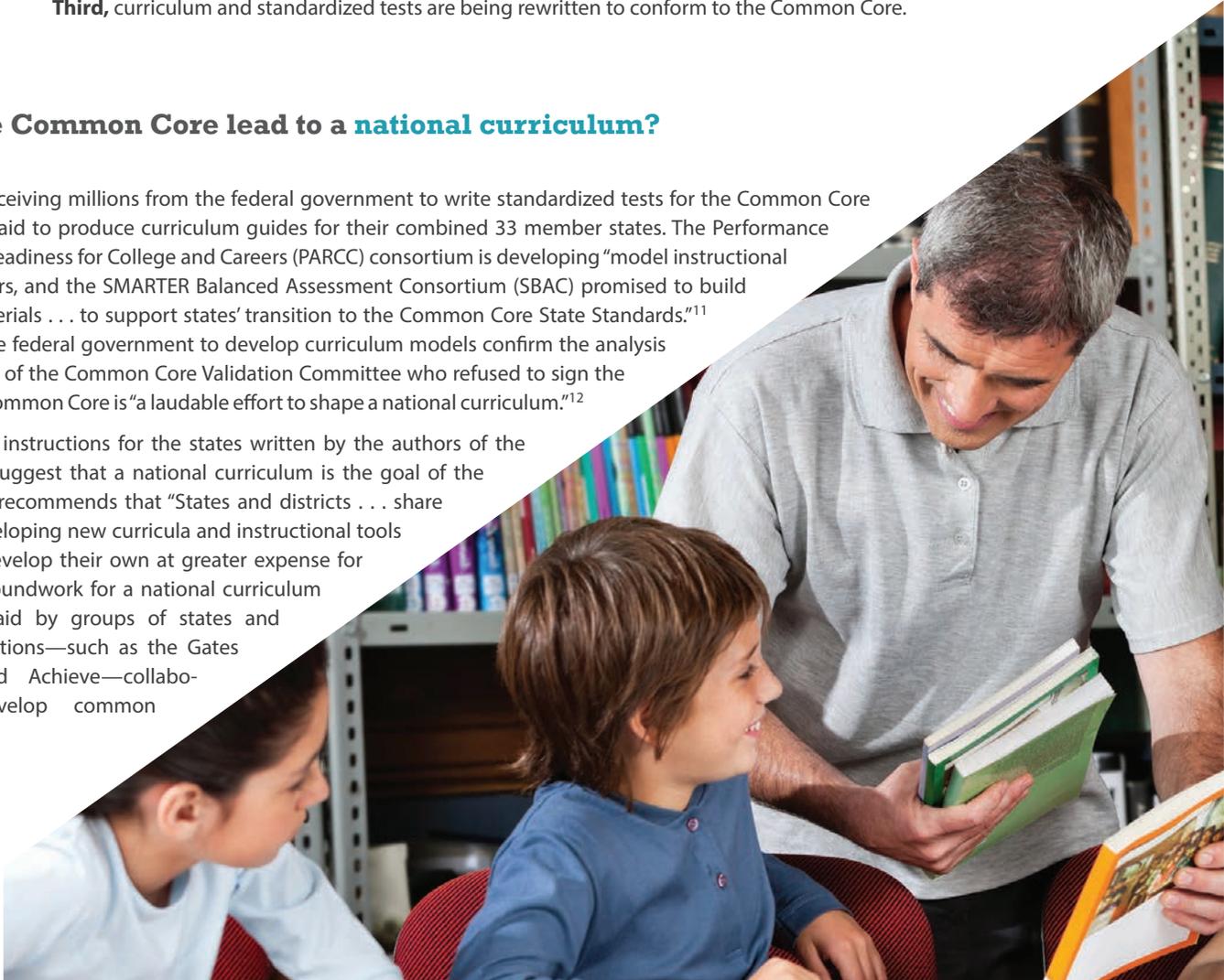
Second, college admissions standards will be affected: Common Core standards for college readiness will be used by institutions of higher learning to determine whether a student is ready to enroll in a postsecondary course.¹⁰

Third, curriculum and standardized tests are being rewritten to conform to the Common Core.

8. Does the Common Core lead to a national curriculum?

The consortia receiving millions from the federal government to write standardized tests for the Common Core are also being paid to produce curriculum guides for their combined 33 member states. The Performance Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium is developing "model instructional units" for teachers, and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) promised to build "curriculum materials . . . to support states' transition to the Common Core State Standards."¹¹ The efforts of the federal government to develop curriculum models confirm the analysis of two members of the Common Core Validation Committee who refused to sign the standards: the Common Core is "a laudable effort to shape a national curriculum."¹²

Implementation instructions for the states written by the authors of the Common Core suggest that a national curriculum is the goal of the standards. NGA recommends that "States and districts . . . share the costs of developing new curricula and instructional tools and not each develop their own at greater expense for each."¹³ The groundwork for a national curriculum is also being laid by groups of states and private organizations—such as the Gates Foundation and Achieve—collaborating to develop common curricula.



9. Does it matter

that testing is being aligned with the Common Core? ●

Proponents of the Common Core, including U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, emphasize the need to imitate some countries with high-ranking education systems by creating consistent assessments across the country that measure student progress through open-ended and research-based questions.¹⁴ This has spurred the federal government to fund a set of nationalized tests aligned with the Common Core. Two consortia of states—PARCC and SBAC—received \$170 million and \$160 million from the Department of Education to craft standardized assessments. Additionally, the SAT, ACT, and GED will be redesigned to align with the Common Core, and the latest version of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills is based on the Common Core.¹⁵ Combined, the new assessments and revised tests will create de facto national testing.

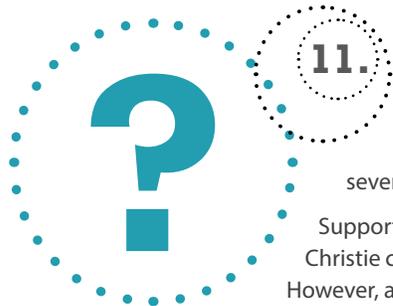
10. Does the Common Core include a national database? ●

All 50 states have had statewide longitudinal databases in place to track their students' scores on assessments for the past decade. Yet the authors of the Common Core are clear: the success of the standards hinges on the increased collection of student data—including demographics and postsecondary education performance—from preschool through the workforce.¹⁶ States that have adopted the Common Core to receive Race to the Top funding and states that are members of the assessment consortia have committed to expanding their data collection. Additionally, in 2012, the U.S. Department of Labor announced \$12 million in grants for states to build longitudinal databases linking workforce and education data.¹⁷ Most concerning, in 2011 the Department of Education unilaterally altered the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) so that any government or private entity that the department says is evaluating an education program has access to students' personally identifiable information without parental notification.

The new data systems are not confined to public school students. FERPA does not currently protect homeschooling families in states where families must submit documentation of intent to homeschool.¹⁸

Combined with the changes to FERPA, the implementation of the Common Core is unleashing what is arguably the most comprehensive tracking of citizens that America has ever seen.

Success of the standards hinges on increased collection of student data.



11. Who supports the Common Core and why?

The support of liberals such as Joel Stein (former chancellor of the New York City Schools) and Michelle Rhee (former chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools) for the Common Core is not surprising. But several prominent conservatives are also backing the Common Core.

Supporters of the Common Core such as Chester E. Finn, Jr., president of the Fordham Institute, Jeb Bush, and Chris Christie contend that the Common Core will rebuild state standards that crumbled under the No Child Left Behind Act.¹⁹

However, almost no independent evaluations of the Common Core by education experts have praised the academic rigor of the standards.

Backers also use the mobility argument, summarized by the NGA: “When a student moves from Utah (a member state of SBAC) to Arizona (a member state of PARCC), parents and teachers need to be confident that the understanding about a student’s knowledge and skills gleaned from the state test means the same thing in both places.”²⁰ A devastating flaw in this argument is that it banks on the unstated premise of a national curriculum: gaps in education when a student transfers from a school in Vermont to a school in Texas can only be avoided if the same things are being taught at the same time across the entire nation.

The final argument—standardization—hinges on the premise that one textbook, or just a few aligned with the Common Core, would be an improvement over the numerous and varied textbooks available today. William Bennett, secretary of education under Ronald Reagan and founder of K12 Online Learning, adds a sociological component to the standardization argument by presuming that the common knowledge imparted by the Common Core will lead to more fervent national discussions.²¹

12. Why oppose the Common Core?

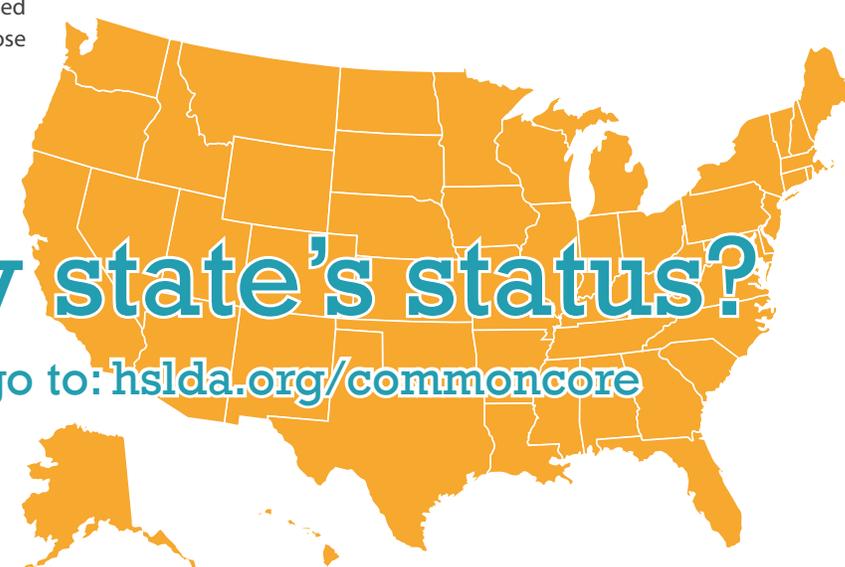
Education professionals, policy analysts, and government officials center their critiques of the Common Core on four points.

- **First**, the standards are academically deficient. Three of five members of the Common Core Validation Committee who refused to validate the standards have published reports condemning their academic merit. One of the reports concludes that the Common Core English language arts standards do not make students “college- and career-ready,” arguing that the lack of literary material required by the standards does “not ensure . . . sufficient literary and cultural knowledge for authentic college-level work.”²² It also examines the Common Core mathematics standards, concluding that the Common Core leaves students one or two years behind the National Mathematics Advisory Panel’s recommendations, the requirements of some states, and the standards of leading countries by students’ 8th-grade year.²³
- The **second** argument against the Common Core is that the standards will not repair the broken education system. Brookings Institute policy analyst Grover Whitehurst observes that high academic standards and high student achievement are not connected.²⁴ Statistics show that states with high academic standards score about the same on standardized assessments as states with low standards.²⁵
- **Third**, critics of the Common Core condemn the way the standards are being implemented. Randi Weingarten, president of the second-largest teachers’ union in America, and Diane Ravitch, an education historian who has pushed for national standards for years, criticize the government’s use of RTTT funding to coerce states into adopting the Common Core.²⁶ Critics also point out that states will have a difficult time shouldering the cost of implementing the Common Core. While estimates for implementing the program range from \$12 to \$16 billion, the federal government has given states only \$4.35 billion.²⁷
- **Finally**, members of Congress, U.S. senators, and the Republican National Committee oppose the Common Core because it has handed the education authority of the states to the federal government. Lawmakers have raised concerns about the Department of Education’s unilateral revision of FERPA, its push for expanded state longitudinal data systems, and its close involvement in Common Core implementation.

State Consortia
Participation:

My state’s status?

go to: hsllda.org/commoncore





..... **How do we stop the Common Core?**

HSLDA is actively working on this issue to protect homeschooling freedoms. But the Common Core can only be stopped if citizens in every state demand that their representatives block the standards. **What should you do?**



FIND YOUR LEGISLATOR
hslida.org/findmylegislator



1. Contact your state legislators immediately.

Governors and boards of education have committed some states to the full implementation of the Common Core, but your representatives can still stop its progress. State legislatures can defund the implementation of the Common Core as the Michigan Legislature did, or follow the example of the Texas Legislature and reject the Common Core by prohibiting school districts from basing curricula or tests on the standards.

Please inform your legislators of the dangers that the Common Core poses to educational freedom and ask them to defund or reject it.

2. Contact your federal representatives.

Although the Race to the Top program is no longer funded, Congress must reiterate in U.S. law that no federal funds should be used by the federal government to incentivize states to adopt any set of national standards or to be involved in any testing consortia. In addition, Congress must act to ensure that the Department of Education's waivers that are granted to states to release them from onerous provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act are not conditioned on the state using the Common Core or participating in any testing consortia.

3. Spread the word.

Inform your friends about the dangers of the Common Core and ask them to join you in speaking out against it. Go to the website below for infographics and other tools for sharing.

4. Stay in touch with HSLDA.

We are monitoring the status of the Common Core in every state, and will alert you to important legislation pending in your state. You can sign up for HSLDA updates at hslida.org/elert.

..... ● For tips, talking points, and sample letters, go to hslida.org/commoncoreaction

COMMON CORE TIMELINE

June
2008

The Hunt Institute for Educational Leadership, which received a \$2.2 million grant from the Gates Foundation the previous month to promote the adoption of national standards among governors, hosts a conference with the National Governors Association (NGA) to explore strategies to make the United States a global leader in education.¹

DURING 2008

NGA and the Council of Chief State School Officials (CCSSO) begin accepting grants from private organizations to write the Common Core.²

FEBRUARY 17, 2009 \$5B

The American Recovery and Restoration Act authorizes the Race to the Top program (RTTT), and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announces that \$5 billion has been allotted for education incentives.



JUNE 1, 2009

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative is launched, and 48 states sign a memorandum committing to the development of standards.

DECEMBER 2008

NGA, CCSSO, and Achieve provide the incoming Obama administration with *Benchmarking for Success* outlining the state adoption of a common core of internationally benchmarked standards and assuring that state textbooks, curricula, and assessments are aligned to these standards as two of the top five priorities.

MARCH 7, 2009

The RTTT program is announced. Applying states must demonstrate their willingness and readiness to adopt common “college- and career ready” standards. (This was an “absolute priority” on the RTTT score sheet.)

SEPTEMBER 2009

The first draft of CCSS is released by NGA and CCSSO.

MARCH 2010

The second draft of CCSS is released.

JUNE 2, 2010

The final Common Core State Standards are published.

DECEMBER 31, 2010

Ten more states have adopted the Common Core, and five more will join by the end of 2011.

JANUARY 19, 2010

The deadline for Phase I of RTTT.

APRIL 14, 2010

Stage II applications for RTTT funding requiring states to commit to adopt “a common set of K–12 standards by August 2, 2010” are due.

AUGUST 2, 2010

RTTT Stage II application revision deadline. Revisions must demonstrate each state’s implementation efforts. Thirty-one states (and the District of Columbia) have already adopted the Common Core.

MARCH 2014 – DECEMBER 2015

States begin realizing the detrimental effect of Common Core. By the end of 2015, 30 states drop out of the testing consortia and 10 states reject Common Core altogether.

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FUTURE UNCERTAIN

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