

Dear members of the Education Committee,

I am writing to you today to voice my concerns in regard to the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

Lured by the promise of federal dollars under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, 45 states, experiencing hard economic times, agreed to adopt these standards sight unseen, while five states fully rejected Common Core immediately. Within 3 years, thirty-five of those states have public forums, legislative bills, and hearings on state legislative floors, either previously or presently, for the purpose of serious discussion or action taken towards withdrawing from the Common Core State Standards. The people opposing this span across the board - parents, teachers, Board of Education members, professors, liberals, conservatives. There is no partisan agenda to this.

My concerns are these:

- 1) Who wrote these standards and have they been field tested?
- 2) What will the cost be to our state to implement these standards?
- 3) How do we change things that may not be working for us within our own communities?
- 4) Why such massive amount of data mining on the children?

1) Who wrote these standards and have they been field tested?

According to the Washington Post,

“The Common Core standards were written in 2009 under the aegis of several D.C.-based organizations: the National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and Achieve. The development process was led behind closed doors by a small organization called Student Achievement Partners, headed by David Coleman. The writing group of 27 contained few educators, but a significant number of representatives of the testing industry. From the outset, the Common Core standards were marked by the absence of public participation, transparency, or educator participation.’

And that,

“Early childhood educators are nearly unanimous in saying that no one who wrote the standards had any expertise in the education of very young children. More than 500 early childhood educators signed a joint statement complaining that the standards were developmentally inappropriate for children in the early grades.”

Both Dr. James Milgram, Stanford University emeritus professor, and [Dr. Sandra Stotsky](#), University of Arkansas emeritus professor and former senior associate commissioner in the Massachusetts Department of Education from 1999-2003, both served on official Common Core validation committee and refused to sign off on the

academic legitimacy of the Common Core. Dr. Milgram stated ,

“I can tell you that my main objection to Core Standards, and the reason I didn’t sign off on them was that they did not match up to international expectations. They were at least 2 years behind the practices in the high achieving countries by 7th grade, and, as a number of people have observed, only require partial understanding of what would be the content of a normal, solid, course in Algebra I or Geometry. Moreover, they cover very little of the content of Algebra II, and none of any higher level course... They will not help our children match up to the students in the top foreign countries when it comes to being hired to top level jobs.“

While [Dr. Stotsky](#) said,

“As empty skill sets, Common Core’s ELA standards do not strengthen the high school curriculum. Nor can they reduce post-secondary remedial coursework in a legitimate way. As empty skill sets, Common Core’s ELA “college readiness” standards weaken the base of literary and cultural knowledge needed for authentic college coursework, decrease the capacity for analytical thinking... and completely muddle the development of writing skills.”

“The chief architects for the English language arts standards (David Coleman and Susan Pimentel) have never taught English or reading at any grade level from K-12. Similarly, the chief architects for the mathematics standards (Professors William McCallum and Jason Zimba) have never taught mathematics at any grade level from K-12. Their inability to formulate and sequence developmentally appropriate standards, especially in grades 6-12 (as well as to write clear and unambiguous standards) is apparent in the inferior products they produced “

In Nashua, New Hampshire, the February 25th, 2014 edition of the *The Telegraph* reported that,

“The Nashua Teachers Union asking the New Hampshire Department of Education to allow the school district to opt out of the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

“ After reviewing the exam, Nashua teachers found it confusing and inappropriate for school-age children, according to union president Robert Sherman...and called the new assessment “aggressively punitive, age inappropriate and impersonal in nature.”

“Most disconcerting, however, is the developmental appropriateness of the questions found within the Smarter Balanced Assessment,” he wrote. “The questions are confusing, poorly worded, obviously more designed for adult learners rather than for children, and overly tedious and cumbersome.”

“At least two members of the Nashua Board of Education also have spoken out publicly against the Smarter Balanced Assessment.”

2) What will the cost be to our state to implement these standards?

As far as the cost of Common Core, that is uncertain, however almost everyone agrees it will be expensive. The State of Washington has estimated a total five year estimated state level and district level costs to be \$182,600,000. Estimates suggest that it would cost California taxpayers \$1.6 billion to replace the existing state standards with the Common Core standards. What will the cost be to Connecticut?

3) How do we change things that may not be working for us within our own communities?

The U.S. Constitution grants no authority over education to the federal government. Education belongs to individual states. Education was to be managed by state or local government and by the parents within each community. Common Core has stripped away our state of it's rights to review and approve or disapprove educational materials by allowing a private, unelected, and apparently in most cases, unqualified, group of people, who are hundreds of miles away, dictate to us what we will and will not teach our children, giving parents no recourse in the matter of their children's education. This is a travesty. If teachers find legitimate problems and seek solutions, their hands are tied. No organization or agency, state or federal, including the U.S. Department of Education, has the authority to revise the standards. These standards might as well be written in stone.

4) Why such massive amount of data mining on the children?

[The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology published a report back in February entitled "Promoting Grit, Tenacity and Perseverance: Critical Factors for Success in the 21st Century."](#) From the executive summary:

The test score accountability movement and conventional educational approaches tend to focus on intellectual aspects of success, such as content knowledge. However, this is not sufficient. If students are to achieve their full potential, they must have opportunities to engage and develop a much richer set of skills. There is a growing movement to explore the potential of the "noncognitive" factors—attributes, dispositions, social skills, attitudes, and intrapersonal resources, independent of intellectual ability—that high-achieving individuals draw upon to accomplish success, (pg. v).

I understand the value in identifying a persons strong and weak points, but this amount of data collection, in my opinion, is an infringement on privacy. Our children are fluid, thinking, innovative, creative human beings that should not be dissected into impersonal parts to fit a profile.

This being said, I ask you not to take lightly the concerns of those who object to the Common Core State Standards Initiative, and to investigate this matter on your own. No amount of federal money is worth destroying our children's education and extinguishing their ingenuity for the sake of trying to get a better test score. Please support Proposed Bill No. 5331 and Proposed Bill No. 5078.

Sincerely,

Patricia Charpentier