



# How Common Core Went Wrong

*Bringing common sense to education  
standards in South Carolina*

Oran P. SMITH, Ph.D.

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**ORAN P. SMITH, Ph.D.**

*Senior Fellow*

*Palmetto Promise Institute*



1201 Lincoln Street, Suite 302  
Columbia, SC 29201  
[www.palmettopromise.org](http://www.palmettopromise.org)  
803.708.0673

ELLEN E. WEAVER, President  
DR. ORAN P. SMITH, Senior Fellow  
[info@palmettopromise.org](mailto:info@palmettopromise.org)

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# Executive Summary

## Eight Recommendations for South Carolina on Education Standards

RESTRUCTURE • REVISIT • REVISE • REJECT • RESTRICT • FREEZE • FACILITATE • FUND

*The advent of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) has ignited a firestorm among parents, educators and policy makers. This paper attempts to cut through the haze with a much needed common sense conservative analysis. In it, we provide a thumbnail history of educational standards in America, how CCSS went wrong, and what South Carolina can do to maintain control of our standards and promote the robust, accountable achievement our students need to equip them for success in school and in life. A number of the solutions we list below are expanded upon in the document text (specific pages are listed).*

**1** South Carolina should **RESTRUCTURE** state education governance to a democratic one so the persons who adopt state education standards are elected or appointed by Congressional District. South Carolina's system, where State Board of Education members are elected from odd-sized judicial circuits is flawed. The history of the adoption of CCSS highlights this fundamental weakness in education governance in South Carolina [p.10].

**2** South Carolina should **REVISIT** our commitment to the federally-funded SMARTER Balanced consortium and create a test option that gives the state more control. Whoever funds the criterion-referenced tests, ultimately controls the curriculum. This is the approach Utah,

Oklahoma and others are taking [p.6,7].<sup>1</sup>

**3** South Carolina should **REVISE** Common Core up to at least the allowed 15%. According to education scholar Willona Sloan, "To allow for some state-level customization, a provision in the voluntary adoption guidelines allows states to supplement the common core standards with state-specific standards, up to an additional 15 percent."<sup>2</sup> This should be undertaken immediately. The state should also consider dropping the Appendix B recommended resources ("exemplars"). Other states provide examples of how this can be done. [p.6]<sup>3</sup>

**4** South Carolina should **REJECT** any future federal funding that temporarily or permanently commits the state to a particular standard, curriculum or testing [p.10].

**5** South Carolina should affirmatively **RESTRICT** the sharing of any non-academic personal data from the state to the federal government or to other states by statute. The Alabama Policy Institute summarizes the concern in this way: "...federal law prohibits the federal government from collecting data on students, but it does not prohibit the states from sharing data they have collected with the federal government."<sup>4</sup> ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council, and others have offered model legislation to address student data accessibility. [p.6-8].<sup>5</sup>

**6** South Carolina should **FREEZE** future Common Core commitments to prevent quick adoption of other standards, like politically charged health or social studies standards. This could be done by asserting legislative oversight. Of note, the Fordham Institute rates the new *South Carolina Academic Standards & Performance Indicators for Science 2013* much higher than national Next Generation Science Standards [p.9].<sup>6</sup>

**7** South Carolina should **FACILITATE** a conversation about what South Carolina parents want. Indiana also took the *freeze* and *facilitate* approach, requiring an extensive statewide conversation [p.6].

**8** South Carolina should **FUND** the demands of the current common core aligned Math and English Language Arts standards only if funding represents a net savings over reversing course. This will require intense monitoring by the Superintendent, the Governor, and the legislature to insure that local control is restored [p.7, 8].

*The Common Core debate is evolving across the country. These recommendations will be updated from time to time and posted on the Forum website at [www.palmettopromise.org](http://www.palmettopromise.org).*

# How Common Core Went Wrong

## Bringing Common Sense to State Education Standards in South Carolina

*Most statewide boards of education in America have adopted a new set of academic standards for their public schools called Common Core State Standards. The Common Core concept had its roots in conservative reform, but it is now clear that a promising initiative has been hijacked by Washington for its own purposes. What does the advent of Common Core mean for South Carolina and the future of education in the Palmetto State?*

### Introduction

Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal, and Reagan education advisers Bill Bennett, Chester Finn, and E.D. Hirsh like the idea of the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for K-12 education. So does The

Fordham Institute, a conservative think tank devoted to education policy.

United States Senators Tim Scott and Marco Rubio, as well as activist Phyllis Schlafly, political commentator Glenn Beck, and Princeton scholar Dr. Robert George are strongly *opposed* to CCSS. So are Washington think tanks like Cato<sup>7</sup> and The Heritage Foundation.<sup>8</sup>

So who is right? What is a fair and accurate assessment of the true nature and ramifications of Common Core State Standards?

Our goal is to sift through the heated rhetoric on both sides<sup>9</sup> to better understand the right path forward to preserve South Carolina's freedom and her academic integrity to grow her economic prosperity.

First, a little background. Since the beginning of public education in America, which dates to the 17th or the 19th Century depending on one's definition of "public," the nature of the *curriculum* has been a topic of intense debate. The earliest local schools wrestled with what content should be taught, guided by the ultimate question of what it means to be truly educated. Later, communities and states began to establish what academic material and level of proficiency should be expected in each grade. These latter benchmarks embody the idea of *standards*.

The designers of Common Core State Standards define standards in this way:

*The Standards are not a curriculum. They are a clear set*

### Support Common Core...

Gov. Mike Huckabee



Dr. Bill Bennett



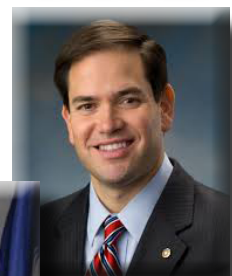
Gov. Bobby Jindal

### Oppose Common Core...

Dr. Robert George



Sen. Marco Rubio



Sen. Tim Scott





*of shared goals and expectations for what knowledge and skills will help our students succeed. Local teachers, principals, superintendents and others will decide how the standards are to be met....*

*The Standards do not define: how teachers should teach, all that can or should be taught, the nature of advanced work beyond the core, the interventions needed for students well below grade level, the full range of support for English language learners and students with special needs or everything needed to be college and career ready.<sup>10</sup>*

While some might quibble with a few phrases in that definition, this framework provides a place to start the discussion.

## Starting from Scratch

What if South Carolina parents were able to start with a blank page that they could fill with their own philosophy, curriculum, and standards for their children?

Because the goal of most families is to prepare for college and a career, these desires would surely include *rigor* and *quality*. *Consistency* and *order* would be essential as well. Less easy to define would be the desire of many that, so far as standards can do so (again we are speaking of standards not curriculum), they should reflect a respect for the *classic* and the proven, and a rejection of the post-modern and the trendy. (An emphasis on

phonics, for example, or even the premise that 2+2 always equals 4 no matter how strong the argument a student can make for 2+2=5.)

Furthermore, understanding that public schools are funded by taxpayers and



■ President Ronald Reagan started a national conversation with *A Nation at Risk*.

governed by elected representatives, South Carolinians would insist on:

- a role for *parents* to have a say in what their children are learning, and
- a respect for *local control* (the shortest possible distance between family, school and decision makers).

We would also accept the inherent interest in producing students capable of competing in an increasingly global job market.

**So, a common sense approach to educational standards would have the following requirements: *rigor, quality, consistency & order, classical approaches, parental authority, local control, and world competitiveness* (see *Report Card*, p.5).**

Principles just like these were the driving force behind a nascent Standards movement that was energized in the Reagan Administration with the release of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983).<sup>11</sup> In *A Nation at Risk*, Ronald Reagan drew the nation's attention to education like never before. The unforgettable phrase for many in that report is: "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war."<sup>12</sup>

There was no sugar-coating. The report decried low standards, inconsistency, and poor quality in education and highlighted five key areas in which to focus if the United States were to pull out of its educational malaise: Content, Standards and Expectations, Time, Teaching, Leadership and Fiscal Support.

## The Standards Movement

Appearing not long after *A Nation at Risk* came the rich scholarship of authors like E.D. Hirsh, Jr. and policy experts like Chester Finn. Some of Hirsh's most important early work on standards were: *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (1987), *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* (1988), and *The Schools*



*We Need: And Why We Don't Have Them* (1996). More recent works include *The Knowledge Deficit: Closing the Shocking Education Gap for American Children* (2006) and *The Making of Americans: Democracy and Our Schools* (2010).

Finn has labored in the conservative education vineyard (a very small plot of ground to be sure) since his days as Ronald Reagan's Assistant Secretary of Education. Finn sees the Standards movement as part and parcel of other reforms teachers' unions oppose: charter schools, educational freedom/school choice, alternative schools, and virtual learning. Leaders like Finn, Jeb Bush, and Bobby Jindal have become known for their advance of all of these reforms, and have the bruises inflicted by the National Education Association (NEA) to prove it.

On the state level, perhaps the most effective education governor in recent years is Jeb Bush. Prior to the advent of Common Core, Bush drove a massive transformation of education in Florida while he was the state's chief executive. Due to his efforts and those of his legislative allies, Florida had dramatic improvement, moving from behind South Carolina (1998) to light years ahead (2011) of the Palmetto State. (Palmetto Promise Institute published a major study of the Bush reforms last year [2013] and a follow up this year [2014].)<sup>13</sup> As we said earlier, Jeb Bush is an advocate of Common Core because he sees common sense factors in Common Core, and sees Common Core as the next step in the march towards continuous quality

improvement in student outcomes.

For Finn and Bush, CCSS means common sense *conservative* policy: getting serious about accountability and student achievement. Their fight for standards is a quest for *excellence*, not *uniformity*.

A collection of a wide range of pro-CCSS arguments would include:

- No more wimpy state standards that under prepare students and mask the glaring deficiencies of many teacher training programs.
- No more inability for parents to compare their child's achievement to students in Texas or Maine or North Carolina and Georgia because of different standards.
- No more confusion about what a child should know when.
- No more massive, expensive textbooks designed to cover every possible state standard.
- No more archaic paper assessments where students shade a circle to provide their answer.
- More business-oriented facts, fewer "me-oriented" essays on "How I spent my summer vacation."
- More competing with the Chinese and the Europeans, less bureaucratic buck-passing.
- And for South Carolina, an end to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era fairy tales where "proficiency" meant more federal dollars into the state, so we deemed 70% of our students "proficient" in reading. (The percentage who were truly proficient was about half that.)



■ Governor Jeb Bush has been a leader in the movement for more challenging standards.

So far, this sounds pretty good.

## Common Core Goes Horribly Wrong

Unfortunately, the story doesn't stop there.

While *A Nation at Risk* was written from the national perspective, President Reagan made it clear that solving the education crisis was a matter for the *states*. He thought that parents would have the most say if authority were localized, and that our founding values would be more likely



to survive if the federal Constitutional system were allowed to work.<sup>14</sup>

*Nation at Risk* put it this way: “[there is a] sound *tradition*, from the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 until today, that the *Federal Government should supplement State*, local, and other resources to foster key national educational goals” and “[leadership is needed to support] the voluntary efforts of *individuals*, businesses, and *parent* and civic groups to cooperate in strengthening educational programs [emphasis ours].”<sup>15</sup>

***So, what of the rest of the common sense requirements we have identified—classical approaches, parental authority, and local control?***

Developers of the CCSS tell us they have those covered, stating that CCSS were “developed by the states.” Opponents of Common Core tell us that Common Core is just the opposite, a Washington-controlled “Obamacore” for education that takes away state authority and creates a *de facto* federal school board.

Taking those in reverse order, a more accurate assessment for the relationship between Common Core and Obama would be a *hijack*. When Barack Obama was elected in November 2008, the CCSS movement was well underway, but his administration wasted no time in attempting to use the standards as a stick for coercing the states. “Race to the Top,” funds (created by the massive American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, or “Stimulus”) were clearly tied by



■ **The Obama Administration appears to have used Common Core to coerce states.**

the Obama Administration to adoption of some common standard, and Common Core was basically the lone available option. In February, 2010, President Obama went further, asserting that all federal funds for state education (Title I) should be tied to adoption of “a” common standard. Nothing has come of that threat.<sup>16</sup> Frustrated at Obama’s support for Common Core, CC supporter Finn calls

the Administration behavior “jawboning, hectoring, and luring.”<sup>17</sup>

As for CCSS being state derived, yes, the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers developed the standards with help from teachers, parents and experts. But the level of actual state involvement is unclear. We know that a group of experts hired by NGA and the CCSSO is very different from a grand conversation of education leaders and parents from all 50 states meeting in public sessions all over the nation for an extended period. That clearly didn’t happen. The involvement of the staff of NGA and CCSS and consultants they hired doesn’t equate to state involvement in any real sense and provides little comfort to those of us who value robust parental authority and unquestioned local control.

So, based on these common sense requirements is the **Palmetto Promise Institute Report Card** on Common Core State Standards:

Common Core Common Sense Report Card		
1	Rigor and Quality	B
2	Consistency & Order	A
3	Classical Approaches	I*
4	Parental Authority/Input	F
5	Local Control/Input	F
6	World Competitiveness / International Benchmarking	I*
7	Cost	I*

\*I=Incomplete or Uncertain at this time.

Methodology. The methodology for this Report Card is partially subjective, meaning the grades assigned are based on our assessment of how well CCSS meet the requirements we have set. We welcome reader comment. For a discussion of Costs, please see Appendix A.



## How Have Other States Reacted?

**Alaska, Nebraska, Texas and Virginia** did not adopt Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts in 2010. Virginia is an interesting case because though the state refused to adopt CCSS, the state still received an “O.K.” from U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (a waiver from No Child Left Behind requirements) by making changes to its state standards to align with CCSS. Presumably, this waiver would allow Virginia to qualify for future federal grants.

**Minnesota** did not adopt the Math standards but did adopt the English Language Arts standards.

**Pennsylvania.** The Foundation for Excellence in Education summarizes the actions of the House of Representatives [HR 338]: “After adopting Common Core in 2010, a committee of kindergarten through university educators spent a year comparing Pennsylvania’s standards to the Common Core and made recommended changes. The State Board of Education took these recommendations and created a set of revised standards – the Pennsylvania Core Standards. Over the past few years, local districts and the state have spent significant time, money, and resources to ensure that these standards are properly implemented. The most legitimate concerns were detailed by the Pennsylvania House, which recently urged the board to ensure that the standards exceed the rigor of previous standards,

continue to leave districts in control of the means to meet the standards, do not hand over additional control to the federal government, and do not compromise the private information of students.”<sup>18</sup>

**Indiana’s** law [HB 1427] requires public hearings and a cost analysis. It further stipulates that “higher academic standards may be adopted that supplement or supplant the Common Core standards if the higher educational standards would ... meet United States Department of Education flexibility waiver requirements that ensure college and career readiness of students.” Republican attempts to have the study committee recommend leaving Common Core failed for lack of votes in November 2013.<sup>19</sup>

**Alabama** passed a joint resolution instructing the state board of education to insure Alabama control of standards, curriculum, instruction and testing. The state board subsequently made revisions to CCSS including a new math progression and dropping “Appendix B,” which provides exemplars of suggested reading for English Language Arts (ELA) that have been controversial.<sup>20</sup>

**Utah** passed a bill requiring a series of public hearings over whether standards should be adopted. Utah also adopted a measure that “authorizes the state to exit any agreement that cedes control of Utah’s core curriculum standards to any other entity, including a federal agency

or consortium, for any reason, including among others the cost of developing or implementing core curriculum standards, or the proposed core curriculum standards are inconsistent with community values.” **South Dakota** is also requiring a series of hearings.<sup>21</sup>

**Oklahoma’s** State Superintendent of Education announced in July that she is withdrawing Oklahoma from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Oklahoma will instead work with a testing company to develop its own standardized tests for 2014-15.<sup>22</sup>

**Arizona** is staying with Common Core Standards but changing the name. Education Superintendent John Huppenthal asked the Arizona State Board of Education to replace “Common Core Standards” with “Arizona College and Career Ready Standards.” Huppenthal is also recommending that Arizona withdraw from the national consortium it chose, PARCC. Huppenthal estimates that based on the new standards, about 7% of Arizona students will graduate from high school rated ready for college math and about one fourth of graduates will be ready for college level English.<sup>23</sup>

**Wisconsin** is one of the more recent to weigh in (December, 2013), with a specially empaneled Common Core Select committee making nine (9) recommendations. These



recommendations call for: a law to protect student data; a law to restrict the collection of biometric student data; a STEM addendum to standards; an affirmation of the authority of local school boards in standards, curriculum and instructional materials; a process for asserting legislative control over standards with citizen input; a restriction on the [Department of Education] adopting curricular materials and leaving

material selection to local school boards; opposing federal intrusion into education; and creating Wisconsin-based standards.<sup>24</sup>

**North Carolina** set up a legislative research committee that met in December, 2013 and is expected to meet at least three more times. The December meeting came on the heels of the release of the first state test results since the adoption of Common Core. Scores showed a drop

of 33% from the previous year. Though the panel set a March, 2014 deadline for recommendations that will allow the state board of education to move forward with testing, the North Carolina legislature is out of session until May 14, 2014.<sup>25</sup>

*Other states considering legislation on CCSS include Georgia, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Florida, Michigan, Ohio, and New York.*

## Where are we in South Carolina?

So far, Common Core standards have been released for English Language Arts and Mathematics. South Carolina adopted these standards on July 14, 2010 while Dr. Jim Rex was State Superintendent.

Soon after the standards were adopted, the state entered into a relationship with a “consortium” to help with implementing the standards. Two consortia had been established with funding of \$180 million each from the US Department of Education—the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College & Careers Consortium (PARCCC). South Carolina has contracted with SBAC to help create new Common Core-aligned assessments (tests). Because of federal funding for SBAC, so far the state has not expended any funds for SBAC.

The four school years running from 2011-2012 through 2014-2015 are significant

for Common Core implementation in South Carolina. According to the calendar set by the State Department of Education in 2010, 2011-12 and 2012-13 are Transition Years, 2013-14 would be a Bridge Year where CCSS would be used for instructional purposes only, and in the 2014-2015 school year the standards would be fully implemented.

If a survey conducted last year by the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) is accurate, most districts are implementing the standards on schedule. Of the 81 school districts in South Carolina, 40 responded to the April, 2013 survey.<sup>26</sup> Of the 40, 31 reported that as of that date they were prepared to fully implement Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics for 2013-2014. As of this writing, the EOC has not yet approved a set of Common Core aligned SBAC assessments that, according to this schedule, must be in place next spring.

## The Controversy and Reaction

Beginning in 2010, and ramping up in the spring of 2013, CCSS has attracted strong opposition from both left and right. Michele Rhee, an educator from the middle of the ideological spectrum on education, said that Common Core is being opposed by the left because teachers unions don’t want accountability.<sup>27</sup> Diane Ravitch, an education policy scholar who would identify herself as left of center, has taken up another line of attack. It is her belief that the problem with the new standards is they will do little to raise academic achievement for anyone, but will hurt the poor disproportionately, as evidenced by the sharp decline of test scores of at-risk students in New York under CCSS. According to Ravitch, CCSS caused a “collapse” in test scores, with only 17% of African-American students in New York passing.<sup>28</sup>

Opposition from conservatives is even



more well-developed and widespread.<sup>29</sup> FreedomWorks, Tea Party groups, Professor Robert George’s American Principles Project, and a number of groups organized around kitchen tables like Utahans Against Common Core have appeared for the sole purpose of opposing

CCSS. This opposition led to the passage of a resolution by the Republican National Committee and other widely reported actions. Key to the success of such efforts has been the fact that the general public was almost totally unaware of the standards and their impact when they were

rushed through most states. There were no public comments when South Carolina adopted CCSS standards in 2010.

*Conclusion: Given these concerns, our research calls for an open approach adopting best practices from other states.*

## SOUTH CAROLINA LEGISLATIVE ROUND UP



South Carolina has attempted to deal with Common Core legislatively since Senator Mike Fair filed the first bill in February, 2011. Fair also attempted to insert a budget proviso to restrict state funding for CCSS in the fiscal 2012 budget.

**S.300**, filed by Senators Grooms, Bryant, Bright and Shane Martin last year (2013), would void *ab initio* (from the beginning) “any actions taken to adopt or implement the Common Core State Standards as of the effective date of this section.” That would essentially attempt to put the toothpaste back into the tube.

Also filed in 2013, Rep. Eric Bedingfield’s **H.3893**, which would give the legislature a stronger role in standards, made it to the floor of the House of Representatives before being

recommitted to the Education & Public Works Committee on January 15, 2014.

**S.888** (Senators Campsen, Courson, Hayes, Grooms, Peeler, Larry Martin, Verdin and Turner) takes a different approach, requiring General Assembly approval as a new, required layer if new or changed standards are not developed by the State Department of Education. If the standard is developed (created) by the department, the new requirement does not apply. This ensures a degree of local accountability and input in the process.

## APPENDIX A: QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

***Is it necessary or important that standards be uniform or “common” across the states, and the world? Is U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan correct to decry “50 goal posts”?***

As a selling point for Common Core State Standards, this one isn’t very convincing. Few students transfer between states, and a world standard isn’t necessary so long as

state standards are internationally benchmarked and rigorous. As SC State Education Superintendent Zais has often stated, it is not necessary that “every student learn the same material on the same schedule.” Furthermore, norm-referenced tests can provide comparisons of South Carolina students to other states and the nation. A welcome outcome of this debate would be more transparency and more accountability

tools. After all, accountability to parents was to be an outgrowth of Common Core.

***Can South Carolina afford, financially, to adopt Common Core standards? Can the state afford to rescind them?***

This is somewhat of an open question. The Palmetto State began investing in CCSS in 2010. To pull the plug and start over



would be costly. The State Department of Education estimates the cost of developing and implementing standards to replace Common Core to be \$66 million per year. Implementation would require three years.

A hard figure for needed costs to date related *only to Common Core* is difficult to determine due to the fact that expenditures for professional development (training teachers), and instructional materials (textbooks, etc.) are on a rotation. Because ELA and Math purchases were fast-tracked in the rotation, the state has been expending funds it would expend even if there were no Common Core.

A more difficult question is determining the fiscal impact and readiness for the technology demands of CCSS testing. Schools will need sufficient terminals for CCSS based tests for a reasonable number of students to be taking the assessments simultaneously. Have school districts and the state invested sufficiently in technology?

As for assessments, the Department has begun developing assessments aligned with the English Language Arts and the Math CCSS as a part of the federally-funded SMARTER Balanced Consortium (SBAC). If the state chooses to leave SBAC in favor of a different off-the-shelf assessment or to develop its own assessment there could be costs, but not in the range of costs presented by reversing course on CCSS entirely.

***Based on the standards that have been published thus far (Math, English***

***Language Arts), would adoption represent for South Carolina a step forward in rigor or a step back?***

South Carolina has a reputation nationally for poor performance, but it is inconsistency that plagues the quality of our standards. For example, the Thomas Fordham Institute compared South Carolina's current Science standards to the national Next Generation Standards and found our parameters "clearly superior." In fact, South Carolina was one of only eight (8) states to receive an A- or above on standards from Fordham.<sup>30</sup>

But on the previous English Language Arts and Math standards, Fordham gave South Carolina's old pre-Common Core English standards a "D" and Common Core a "B+." The old Mathematics earned a "C" and Common Core an "A-."

***If Common Core Standards go forward in South Carolina, will the legislatively-appointed State Board of Education, its elected Superintendent, and its 81 elected school boards lose "sovereignty" over curricula—the ability to choose what is taught here in South Carolina?***

This is one of the most important questions of the Common Core debate. Our position is this is not a matter that should be left to chance. A "firewall" should be erected that should unquestionably protect local authority. This could be part of a larger debate that is needed about democratic accountability to parents, a missing element of our educational system in South Carolina.

***What is the relationship between standards, curricula, and testing (assessment)? Why is this important?***

Education scholar Peter Cunningham uses a helpful track and field metaphor, "The standard is the bar that students must jump over to be competitive. The curriculum is the training program coaches use to help students get over the bar. The assessment is the track meet where we find out how high everyone can jump. And the accountability system is what follows after its all over and we want to figure out what went right, what went wrong, and what it will take to help kids jump higher."<sup>31</sup> So, state control of the assessment (test) is crucial.

***We have adopted Common Core for Math and ELA and have chosen a testing consortium. So what options are now available to South Carolina going forward?***

The crossroads where South Carolina took a wrong turn was clearly July 14, 2010. South Carolina, under pressure from Race to the Top to adopt benchmarked standards, took the path of least resistance without any caveats or review, certainly not any firewalls.

As for future forks in the road, based on the experience of other states, South Carolina has options. We offer a number of these as suggestions in the Executive Summary. We also provide reports on the actions of other states (pages 6-7) and a listing of active South Carolina legislation (page 8).



## APPENDIX B: SOUTH CAROLINA COMMON CORE TIMELINE

### 1965

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 provides federal funding for education but forbids a national curriculum.

### 1974

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is enacted to govern student education records and data.

### 1979

Creation of the United States Department of Education as a cabinet level agency under President Jimmy Carter.

### 1983

A commission established by President Ronald Reagan publishes *A Nation at Risk*. The report calls for setting standards for what students should know and be able to do, and marks the starting point of “standards-based” education reform. The movement also calls for monitoring whether students are learning through standardized tests. In the following years, states move to adopt standards, pushed along by federal legislation. Teachers groups also publish model standards of their own.

### 1994

A series of Clinton administration-backed laws (Goals 2000: Educate America Act and the Improving America’s Schools Act) require states to set standards and corresponding tests.

### 1996

At the 1996 National Education Summit, governors and business leaders pledge to work together to raise standards and achievement in public schools. Achieve, a non-profit, non-partisan group which will become instrumental in the creation of the Common Core, is founded.

### 1998

The South Carolina General Assembly passes the Education Accountability Act creating the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) and a “performance based accountability system.” The EOC is composed of legislators, educators and business leaders.

### 2001

President Bush signs the No Child Left Behind Act, which strengthens requirements for the kinds of standards states must set and requires states to test students in specific grades and subjects. States are still free to set standards and create their own tests.

### 2008

The National Governors Association, state education commissioners and other groups begin organizing development of common standards in math and English language arts for grades K-12.

### 2009

Governors and state education commissioners from 48 states plus the District of Columbia commit to developing the Common Core standards. Only Alaska and Texas do not join the effort.

### February 2010

Kentucky becomes the first state to adopt the Common Core, before they’ve been publicly released.

### March 10, 2010

The first draft of the Common Core standards is released to the public for comment.

### May 12, 2010

Common Core State Standards adopted by South Carolina State Board of Education on first reading by unanimous vote. No citizens register to testify on the standards during the public comment period.

### June 2, 2010

Final Common Core standards released for states to adopt or reject.

### June 9, 2010

State Education Superintendent James Rex, Governor Mark Sanford and State Board of Education Chairman Tim Moore sign Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium. [continued next page]





## APPENDIX B: SOUTH CAROLINA COMMON CORE TIMELINE (cont.)

On behalf of the state, the officials agree to seven (7) responsibilities, including: “agree[ing] to support the decisions of the Consortium,” and “identify[ing] and implement[ing] a plan to address barriers in State law, statute, regulation, or policy to implementing the proposed assessment system and to addressing any such barriers prior to full implementation of the summative assessment components of the system.” The “barriers” to implementation identified in the MOU in the Summer of 2010 include:

1. The need to *rewrite current law* “to allow for administration of the consortium assessment system.” The *Governing Body with Authority to Remove the Barrier* is listed as “Legislation” [sic] with an Initiation Date of 2011 and a Target Date for Removal of Barrier of 2014.
2. The fact that “[a]ccording to state law, EOC must review test items and item data, recommend actions or modifications, and approve assessment programs following the first statewide field test.” The *Governing Body with Authority to Remove the Barrier* is also listed as “Legislation” [sic] with an Initiation Date of 2010 and a Target Date for Removal of Barrier of 2014.

The MOU also requires SMARTER Balanced to meet fifteen (15) criteria, including having “a representative governance structure that ensures a strong voice for State administrators, policymakers, school practitioners, and technical advisors... The governance body will be responsible for implementing plans that are consistent with the MOU, but may make changes as necessary though a formal adoption process.”

### June 14, 2010

The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) votes 8-4 with one (1) abstention to approve the Common Core State Standards for SC. No citizens register to testify on the standards.

### July 14, 2010

As recommended by State Superintendent James Rex, the South Carolina State Board of Education adopts the Common Core State Standards on second reading by a majority voice vote. Two board members request to be listed as voting against. The Board voted to fully implement the standards in the 2014-2015 school year with 2011-12 and 2012-13 to be Transition Years. 2013-14 is slated to be a Bridge Year where CCSS would be used for instruc-

tional purposes. The State Board selects the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium as the group to develop assessments aligned to the CCSS over The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). No citizens register to testify on the standards during the public comment period.

### August 2, 2010

California adopts Common Core standards on the day federal officials set as the deadline for states to apply for federal funds through the Race to the Top program. In the competition, states get extra points for having adopted Common Core standards.

### June 9, 2011

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium renewed.

### November 4, 2011

Montana becomes the 46th (and final) state to adopt the Common Core standards. Alaska, Nebraska, Texas and Virginia are the four that did not; Minnesota did not adopt the math standards but did adopt the English language arts standards.

### 2011-12 school year

Development of new standardized tests tied to the Common Core standards begins. The effort is led by two consortia of states, PARCC and Smarter Balanced. The groups will share \$360 million in federal grants to develop the new tests. Ohio is a member of PARCC.

### 2012-13 school year

PARCC and SMARTER Balanced begin pilot testing of new standardized tests.

### 2013-14 school year

Field testing continues for new standardized tests.

### 2014-15 school year

All participating states to begin using new standardized tests for math and English language arts. The new tests replace tests that had previously been used in each state.<sup>32</sup>



## ENDNOTES

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5. American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) model legislation, <http://www.alec.org/model-legislation/electronic-data-privacy-protection-act/>
6. Standards Central, The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, <http://standards.educationgadfly.net/>
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8. Corona, Brittany. "FT's Weingarten: Common Core Implementation Will Be Worse Than Obamacare," *The Foundry*, The Heritage Foundation, December 10, 2013. <http://blog.heritage.org/tag/common-core-standards/>
9. "I also urged Michigan legislators to delay any Common Core testing until they were confident that teachers had the professional development and resources to teach them and students had had adequate time to learn what would be tested." Ravitch, Diane. The Biggest Fallacy of the Common Core Standards, *Huffington Post*, posted August 24, 2013; McGrory, Kathleen. "New Standards Cause Rift Among Republicans, Tea Party Groups," *Tampa Bay Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau*, August 19, 2013.
10. [www.corestandards.org/slideshow/](http://www.corestandards.org/slideshow/); "The state has offered detailed curriculum frameworks targeted towards Common Core tests. But these frameworks are voluntary, and school districts and teachers can readily choose to include more or different material, if they think it will produce better results. In the meantime, the best way for Massachusetts to prevent a dumbing-down of instruction is to press constantly for higher standards — and perhaps even to have a state-specific test that goes beyond the Common Core. Performance on a common test will help evaluate which curricula are most effective, which is why the Common Core test will do the most good when individual states and districts experiment widely." Glaeser, Edward L. "Unfounded fear of Common Core," *The Boston Globe*, June 14, 2013.
11. *A Nation at Risk* (1983), <http://www.scribd.com/doc/49151492/A-Nation-at-Risk>
12. *A Nation at Risk*, p.5.
13. The full text of the Palmetto Promise Institute report comparing Florida and South Carolina, as well as an update with the latest (2013) figures, can be found at [www.palmettopromise.org](http://www.palmettopromise.org).
14. President Reagan echoed Patrick Henry. The Anti-Federalist Henry told the Constitutional Convention on June 5, 1788 that under the current draft of the new Constitution, "...our rights and privileges are endangered, and the sovereignty of the states will be relinquished..."
15. *A Nation at Risk*, p.16.
16. "In February 2010, President Obama said he might tie funds from the federal Title I program to adoption of the Common Core standards, but the administration never followed up on that plan." Rothman, Robert. "Five Myths About Common Core State Standards," *Harvard Education Letter*, Volume 27, Number 5 (September/October 2011).
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18. "Core Mission for Pennsylvania Schools," Jeb Bush, *FEE*, August 29, 2013. <http://excelined.org/news/core-mission-pa-schools/>
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23. Creno, Cathryn. "Common Core Flak May Spur Changes," *The Arizona Republic* and *azcentral.com*, September 17, 2013.
24. "Recommendations from the Select Committee on Common Core Standards," Wisconsin Legislature, December 12, 2013.
25. Bonner, Lynn. "Common Core Backlash Casts Shadow on Future Testing in North Carolina," *Raleigh News & Observer*, January 2, 2014; Spencer, Preston. "Battle Over Common Core Curriculum Continues," *Statesville Record & Landmark*, December 22, 2013.
26. A number of South Carolina legislators expressed great concern that when they asked for information about district by district implementation of CCSS, only about half of the school districts in South Carolina responded to the request for information sent on their behalf by the Education Oversight Committee (EOC). Such a poor response indicates the challenges that face the Governor, Superintendent of Education, State Board of Education, the EOC, and the General Assembly as they attempt to implement a statewide education policy.
27. Lerum, Eric. "Uncommon Equity and Rigor: StudentsFirst Supports the Common Core," *StudentsFirst*, February 21, 2013. <http://www.studentsfirst.org/blog/entry/uncommon-equity-and-rigor-studentsfirst-supports-the-common-core>
28. "There is no evidence that the Common Core standards will enhance equity. Indeed, the Common Core tests in New York caused a collapse in test scores, causing test scores across the state to plummet. Only 31 percent 'passed' the Common Core tests. The failure rates were dramatic among the neediest students. Only 3.2 percent of English language learners were able to pass the new tests, along with only 5 percent of students with disabilities, and 17 percent of black students. Faced with tests that are so far beyond their reach, many of these students may give up instead of trying harder." Ravitch, Diane. "The Biggest Fallacy of the Common Core Standards," *Huffington Post*, August 24, 2013.
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30. Standards Central, The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, <http://standards.educationgadfly.net/>
31. Cunningham, Peter. "Muddying the Waters on Common Core," *Fordham blog*, June 10, 2013.
32. Special thanks to Molly Bloom of State Impact Ohio for developing the majority of this timeline.





palmetto promise  
INSTITUTE

Post Office Box 12676



Columbia, SC 29211

[palmettopromise.org](http://palmettopromise.org)