

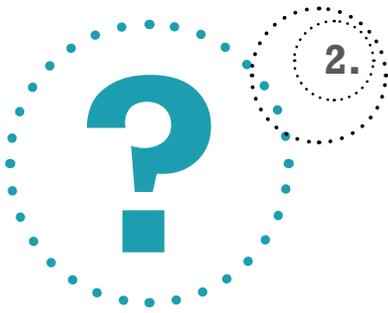
## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Q

### Question 1: What is the Common Core?

The Common Core State Standards (“the Common Core”) are two sets of 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.”<sup>1</sup> 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 receive Race to the Top (RTTT) federal funding for committing to adopt and implement the Common Core and to collect student data from preschool through the workforce.



## 2. Is the Common Core already being implemented?

The NGA released the Common Core standards on June 2, 2010. Since then, 45 states, four territories, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity have adopted the Common Core State Standards. Minnesota has only adopted the English language arts standards. Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia have refused to adopt the Common Core.

As the pedagogical weakness and ballooning implementation cost of the standards becomes evident, many adopting states are scrambling to delay or defund implementation.

## 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 has propelled the Common Core more than any other organization and is funding the creation of standardized assessments.<sup>2</sup> 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 corresponding 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?

Three philosophical threads weave through the Common Core—statism, moral relativism, and progressivism. The statist goals of the Common Core are implicit in the lockstep uniformity that is the central thesis of the program. Relativism's influence on the Common Core is evident in the open-ended and research-based assessment questions and the expansive new student tracking systems, ideas which have been strongly promoted by relativist Howard Gardner. Progressive educator John 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup>

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

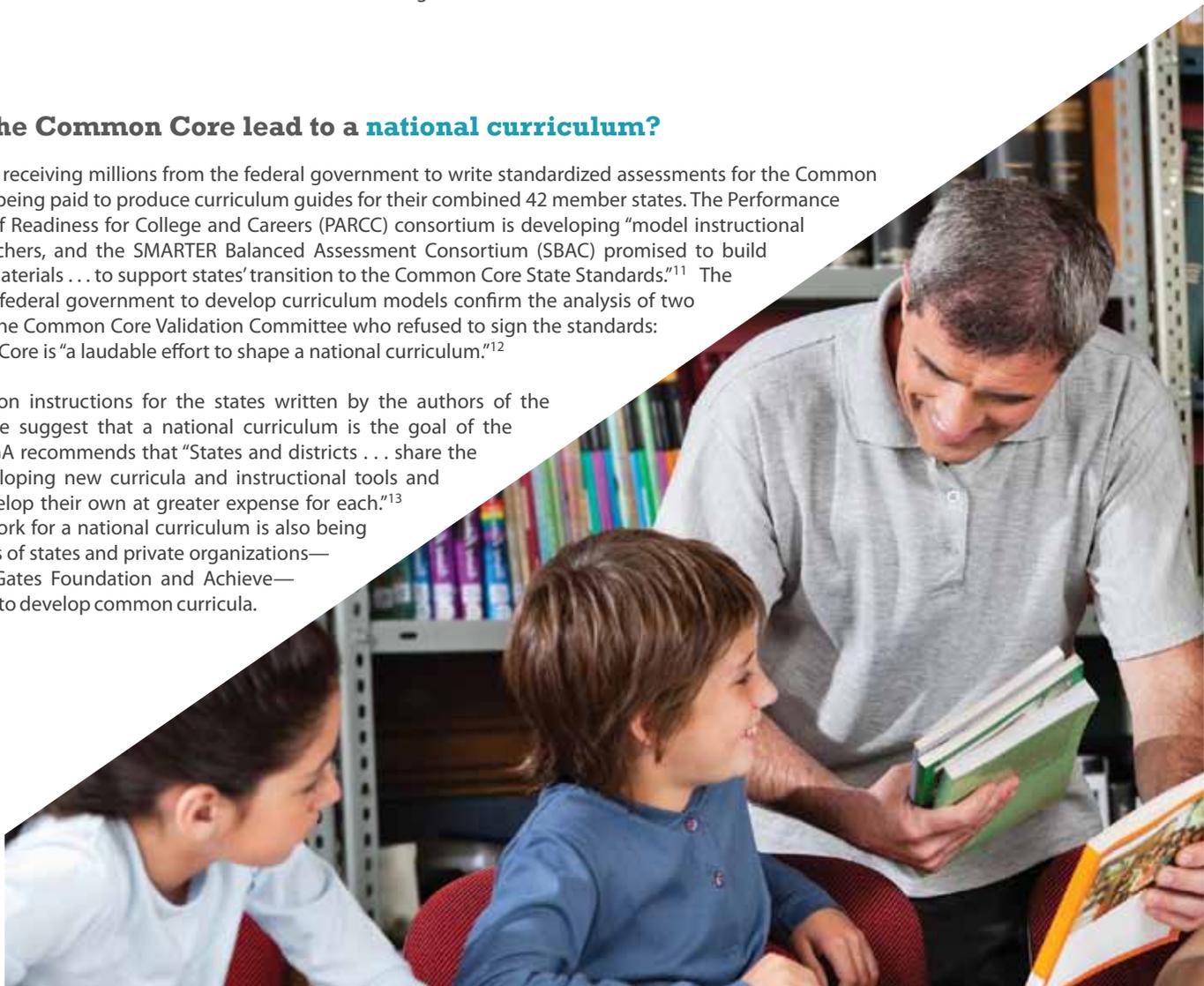
## 7. Will the Common Core impact homeschools and private schools?

The Common Core will impact homeschools and private schools in at least three ways. First, designers of the expanded statewide longitudinal databases fully intend to collect data about homeschool and private school students. 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.<sup>10</sup> Third, curriculum and standardized tests are being rewritten to conform to the Common Core.

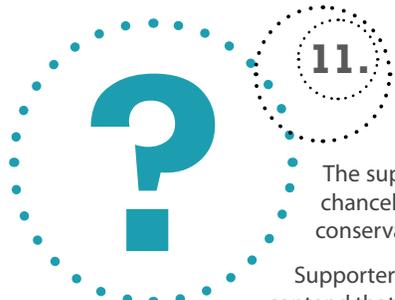
## 8. Does the Common Core lead to a national curriculum?

The consortia receiving millions from the federal government to write standardized assessments for the Common Core are also being paid to produce curriculum guides for their combined 42 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."<sup>11</sup> 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."<sup>12</sup>

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."<sup>13</sup> 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.







## 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.<sup>20</sup> 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.”<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup>

## 12. Who opposes the Common Core and why?

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.”<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup>

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.<sup>25</sup> Statistics show that states with high academic standards score about the same on standardized assessments as states with low standards.<sup>26</sup>

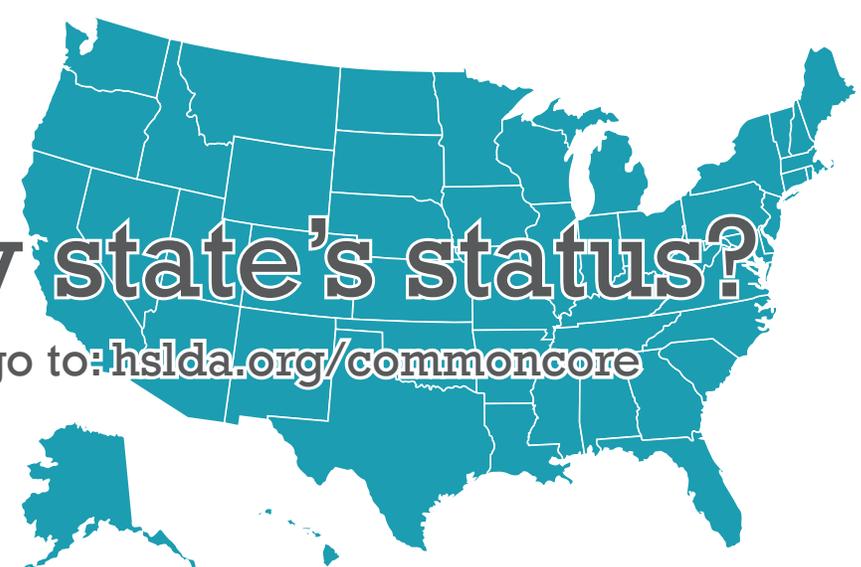
Third, critics of the Common Core condemn the way the standards are being implemented. Randi Weingarten, president of the second-largest teachers’ union in America, and Diane Ravitch, an education historian who has pushed for national standards for years, criticize the government’s use of RTTT funding to coerce states into adopting the Common Core.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup>

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](http://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](http://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 by the 2013–14 school year, but your representatives can still stop the Common Core. 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.**

The Race to the Top program is still receiving money through annual resolutions passed by Congress. Ask your federal representatives to introduce or support legislation that will cut off further Race to the Top funding and stop the involvement of federal bureaucrats in education.

### **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](http://hslida.org/elert).

•••● For tips, talking points, and sample letters, go to [hslida.org/commoncoreaction](http://hslida.org/commoncoreaction)

## Endnotes

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# 2013 COMMON CORE TIMELINE

June

2008

The Hunt Institute for Educational Leadership, which had 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.<sup>1</sup>

## DURING 2008

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

## 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.

RTTT

## 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.)



JUNE 1, 2009

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

## SEPTEMBER 2009

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

## JANUARY 19, 2010

RTTT

The deadline for Phase I of RTTT.

## MARCH 2010

The second draft of CCSS is released.

## APRIL 14, 2010

RTTT

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.

## JUNE 2, 2010

The final Common Core State Standards are published.

## AUGUST 2, 2010

RTTT

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.

## DECEMBER 31, 2010

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

## 2013-14

TARGET: All participating states will have fully implemented the Common Core into their curricula.



TARGET: States in consortia will administer new assessments.

2014  
to  
2015

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