

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

For now, the Common Core applies only to public schools in the 45 states that have adopted it. Federal law, under 20 U.S.C. § 7886, prohibits any federal education mandates from applying to private schools that do not receive federal funds or homeschools.

However, there is no such protection for families who have enrolled their children in programs that receive federal funds, especially those who are using virtual charter schools that are run through the local public school for their home education.

Though the specific provisions of the Common Core only directly bind public schools, it is reasonably predictable that private schools that accept federal funding (through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, for example) may face a decision between foregoing federal funding and accepting the Common Core standards in the near future. Moreover, President Obama intends to condition funding from Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act on states' agreement to follow common standards "developed by a state-led consortium."¹ There is no reason to expect that private schools who receive Title I funding would not have to agree to this mandate.

The current impact of the Common Core on home and private education is revealed in the expanding state longitudinal databases, shifting college admissions expectations, newly updated curricula, and revised standardized tests. All these are fulfilling education historian Diane Ravitch's prediction that "no one will escape [the Common Core's] reach, whether they attend public or private school."²

Perhaps the most immediate threat to homeschool and private school students is the expansion of statewide longitudinal databases. The designers of the new systems fully intend for homeschool and private school students to be part of the massive data collection. At the National Conference on Student Assessment in 2011, officials from Oklahoma explained to CCSSO how the challenge of meeting the data requirements of federal and state education policies are motivating them to "Include student groups not now included (e.g., home-schooled) in the data system."³

In light of the growing revelations that the government is engaging in massive invasion of privacy in spheres other than education, it is utterly impossible to believe that these databases will not be mined and misused to serve the ulterior purposes of a centralized government intent

¹ "Preparing Students for College and the Workforce," White House, 2010, accessed June 4, 2013, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/education_standard_factsheet.pdf; see also "Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (Title I, Part A)," U.S. Department of Education, accessed June 17, 2013, <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html>.

² Diane Ravitch, "Why I Oppose the Common Core Standards," *Washington Post*, February 26, 2013, accessed June 10, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/02/26/why-i-oppose-common-core-standards-ravitch/>.

³ Sunny Becker et al., *Data, Data Everywhere: Progress, Challenges, and Recommendations for State Data Systems* (HumRRO, July 20, 2011), accessed June 5, 2013, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/110361334/Data-Data-Everywhere-CCSSO-Presentation-at-National-Conference-on-Student-Assessment>.

on growing its own power. For more information on the growing possibility of a national database, please see <http://www.hslda.org/docs/news/2013/201309100.asp>.

Apart from the databases, we fear that the Common Core will eventually impact homeschool and private school students by affecting college admissions standards. Institutions of higher education are being pressured to adapt their standards for college readiness to the Common Core standards. The National Governors Association, instrumental in writing the Common Core, compiled a guide for states to use while implementing the Common Core. The document emphasizes that the 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.⁴ Achieve, one of the main organizations evaluating the Common Core, even exhorts institutions of higher education to revise their curricula to create “seamless transitions” from K–12 to postsecondary schools.⁵

This concern is being realized in multiple states, including Illinois. In a 2012 policy brief, the Illinois State Board of Education emphasized the need to seamlessly connect high school and college education by streamlining the curriculum taught to high school seniors and college freshmen according to the Common Core.⁶ Though Illinois encouraged state universities to share with state high schools what kind of material students will be expected to know in their first year of college, nothing indicates that homeschools or private schools would be privy to the same information. This movement to standardize postsecondary academic standards reveals that the Common Core’s emphases and methods will permeate American education beyond elementary and secondary public schools.

The final area of concern for homeschoolers is that national and other popular standardized tests across the country are being rewritten to be aligned to the Common Core. David Coleman, the president of the College Board, was one of the primary authors of the Common Core English language arts standards. He is overseeing the renovation of both the PSAT and the SAT to fully implement the Common Core.⁷ The redesigned PSAT will be used in 2015; the new SAT will

⁴ Tabitha Grossman, Ryan Reyna, and Stephanie Shipton, *Realizing the Potential: How Governors Can Lead Effective Implementation of the Common Core State Standards* (National Governors Association, 2011), 19, accessed June 8, 2013, <http://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/1110CCSSIIMPLEMENTATIONGUIDE.PDF>.

⁵ Jacqueline E. King, *Implementing the Common Core State Standards: An Action Agenda for Higher Education* (Achieve, January 2011), 5, accessed June 10, 2013, <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Implementing-the-Common-Core-State-Standards-2011.pdf>.

⁶ *Bridging the Gap: An Illinois Toolkit for Using the Common Core for Secondary and Postsecondary Alignment* (Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center, 2012), 11, accessed September 12, 2013, <http://www.epiconline.org/publications/document-detail.dot?id=fe40a824-dd0e-455b-a605-c14c8de1eabb>.

⁷ Tamar Lewin, “Backer of Common Core School Curriculum Is Chosen to Lead College Board,” *New York Times*, May 16, 2012, accessed June 10, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/16/education/david-coleman-to-lead-college-board.html?_r=0; Jason Tomassini, “New College Board President to Seek Common Core–SAT Link,” *Education Week*, May 16, 2012, accessed June 10, 2013, http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/marketplacek12/2012/05/new_college_board_president_has_common_core_backgroud.html.

debut in 2016.⁸ Questions are being added to the ACT to reflect the Common Core’s emphasis on tracing ideas through multiple texts and increased focus on statistics. The ACT will also contain optional open-ended questions to assess students’ ability to explain and support their claims.⁹ The latest version of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills is based on the Common Core.¹⁰ The GED has been redesigned for the first time since 2002 to incorporate “practices and skills from the Common Core State Standards for Mathematical Practice.”¹¹ Writers of the GED explain that they decided to revise the test now because “The shift to the Common Core standards is happening nationwide at the current time.”¹²

The alignment of standardized tests with the Common Core may not seem alarming, because homeschool students consistently score much higher on standardized assessments than public school students. However, as information about the content of newly designed curriculum begins to surface, it is becoming clear that the Common Core’s focus on informational texts makes it easy to accentuate particular schools of thought. For example, English language arts curriculum in Utah inculcates the welfare-state mentality and characterizes a parent’s directions as “nagging.”¹³ Students taking the SAT, ACT, or the Iowa Tests could soon encounter progressive ideologies including social engineering and alternative lifestyles.

The Stanford 10 Achievement Tests have not been changed to reflect the Common Core.¹⁴ Pearson Assessments, the publisher of the Stanford 10 Achievement Tests, did announce that the English language arts assessment was 100% aligned to the Common Core without revision. The mathematics assessment was 98.5% aligned. But parents wishing to avoid traces of the Common Core in standardized tests should still consider this examination an excellent option. Nevertheless, as the government becomes increasingly interested in monitoring the success of students in college and the workforce, the possibility of mandatory national testing for all students will continue to grow.

⁹ “Continuous Improvement Announcements at ACT—May 2013,” ACT, Inc., accessed August 20, 2013, <http://www.act.org/announce/improvements/index.html#act>.

¹⁰ “Riverside Introduces the All-New Iowa Assessments, Form E: Monitor the Growth and Achievement of Today’s Students,” Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, accessed June 10, 2013, <http://www.riversidepublishing.com/products/ia/index.html>.

¹¹ *The GED Test: A Content Comparison* (GED Testing Service, 2012), accessed July 10, 2013, <http://www.gedtestingservice.com/uploads/files/2487f6e1ca5659684cbe1f8b16f564d0.pdf>.

¹² “2014 GED Test FAQs,” GED Testing Service, July 10, 2013, accessed July 10, 2013, <http://www.gedtestingservice.com/educators/2014-faqs#about>.

¹³ Oak Norton, “USOE Recommends Social Justice Curriculum Materials for 1st Grade,” Utahns Against Common Core (May 11, 2013), accessed June 10, 2013, <http://www.utahnsagainstcommoncore.com/usoe-recommends-social-justice-curriculum-materials-for-1st-grade/>.

¹⁴ *A Study of the Stanford Achievement Test Series, Tenth Edition (Stanford 10) Alignment to the Common Core State Standards* (Pearson Education, Inc., 2011), accessed June 10, 2013, http://www.pearsonassessments.com/hai/images/PDF/Stanford_10_Alignment_to_Common_Core_Standards.pdf.