



December 17, 2012

## Common Core State Standards Initiative: Too Close to a National Curriculum

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### Background

In 2010, the National Governors Association published their “Common Core State Standards” (CCSS). These were meant as voluntary math and English guidelines which individual states could adopt.

HSLDA and numerous other organizations grew concerned about this push to standardize what public school students are taught. HSLDA wrote two articles outlining our concerns, one in [March of 2010](#), and one in [June of 2010](#). We explained that states were being enticed by the federal government—through the Race to the Top program—to align their state curriculum with the CCSS, resulting in de facto national standards. We were concerned that this would lead to a national curriculum and national test, and that the pressure would grow for homeschool and private school students to be taught using this national curriculum.

During President Obama’s 2012 State of the Union speech, the president stated, “We’ve convinced nearly every state in the country to raise their standards.” How were the states convinced to adopt the CCSS? The simple answer—[federal dollars](#). President Obama added adopting the CCSS as a criterion for states to gain points in the Race to the Top education federal grant program, regardless of whether the state already had comparable or superior educational standards. States with the highest points are more likely to win the competitive Race to the Top federal grants.

Forty-five states and the District of Columbia have adopted the CCSS since 2010. Only Alaska, Minnesota, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia have not.

### Are the Common Core State Standards a Good Idea for Public Schools?

Recently, there has been a growing controversy over whether the CCSS are even beneficial. Many states have spent years adopting their own state standards, only to throw them away in favor of the CCSS. Some commentators have said that the CCSS will [weaken English learning](#) and [reduce analytical thinking](#). Others point to a [weakening of math teaching](#). Still others point out that the CCSS will [cost billions of dollars](#) to implement—which could be deal-breaker for states struggling to implement the standards.

The CCSS by themselves are not necessarily controversial. They’re similar in certain respects to other state curriculum content standards for public schools. However, HSLDA believes that children—whether homeschooled, private schooled, or public schooled—do best when parents are fully engaged. And parents are most engaged when they know that they are in charge of their child’s education. Top-down, centralized education policy does not encourage parents to be engaged. The CCSS removes education standards from the purview of state and local control to being controlled by unaccountable education policy experts sitting in a board room far removed from the parents, students, and teachers who are most critical to a child’s educational success.

### Will the CCSS Affect Homeschools?

The CCSS specifically do not apply to private or homeschools, unless they receive government dollars (online charter school programs have no such protection). However, HSLDA has serious concerns with the rush to adopt the CCSS. HSLDA has fought national education standards for the past two decades. Why? National standards lead to national curriculum and national tests, and subsequent pressure on homeschool students to be taught from the same curricula.

The College Board—the entity that created the PSAT and SAT—[has already indicated](#) that its signature college entrance exam will be aligned with the CCSS. And many homeschoolers worry that colleges and universities may look askance at homeschool graduates who apply for admission if their highschool transcripts are not aligned with the CCSS.



Will Estrada has been leading our efforts to defend homeschooling on Capitol Hill since 2006. As the oldest of eight kids, and a homeschool graduate who married a homeschool graduate, he has a passion for protecting homeschool freedom. [Read more >>](#)

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HSLDA believes that a one-size-fits-all approach to education crowds out other educational options, including the freedom of parents to choose homeschools and private schools. A common curriculum and tests based off common standards could be very harmful to homeschoolers if their college of choice refuses to accept a student's high school transcript if it is not based on the CCSS. Homeschoolers could also have trouble on the SAT if the test is fundamentally altered to reflect only one specific curriculum. And our greatest worry is that if the CCSS is fully adopted by all states, policy makers down the road will attempt to change state legislation to require all students—including homeschool and private school students—to be taught and tested according to the CCSS.

### Common Core State Standards spreading

The National Governors Association first focused the CCSS on the general subject areas of math and English. However, there is now movement to create CCSS in [numerous other subject areas](#). The National Governors Association is also urging states to align [early education programs](#) for young children.

This is also encouraged by the federal government's [Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge](#), a program which causes [grave concerns](#) to HSLDA.

Due to laws prohibiting the creation of national tests, curriculum, and teacher certification, governors and state legislatures are the only policy makers who can actually decide whether or not to adopt the CCSS. While the federal government has encouraged the states to adopt the CCSS through federal incentives, the states are completely free to reject the CCSS.

### Further Action

- To find out whether your state has adopted the Common Core State Standards, you can visit this website's [useful map](#). (Please note that this is the website for the common core state standards initiative.)
- Contact your state legislators, including the governor, to discuss this issue with them. Ask them about their position on the issue. Find your [governor's current information](#) here.
- If you have a governor's election coming up in your state, we encourage you to raise this issue with the candidates. Even if a state has already adopted the national education standards, a new governor will be faced with the costs of implementing these new standards and new accountability to the federal government.
- Numerous states that have already adopted the CCSS are considering rejecting the CCSS. Now is the time to help raise awareness of this issue and educate yourself about the CCSS.
- Because this affects all parents, and will not currently affect homeschool freedom, it is not necessary to identify yourself as a homeschooler.

#### Other Resources

#### [Math and Science Common Core State Standards](#)

Eagle Forum: ["Obama Core is Another Power Grab"](#)

Indiana Superintendent: ["Obama Administration Nationalized Common Core Standards Common Core Math Standards Fail to Add Up"](#)

Eagle Forum: ["Common Core Standards Aren't Cheap"](#)

Eagle Forum: ["Common Core Standards Dumbing Down the SAT"](#)

["Common Core Supporter: Maybe Opposition Not Paranoia"](#)

#### [Common Core State Standards](#)

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