
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: ACTION OFFICERS, EDUCATION ADVISORS
FROM: RGPPC
SUBJECT: COMMON CORE CALL TAKEAWAYS
DATE: 10/14/2013

The Common Core call on Tuesday, October 8th was designed to facilitate a high-level discussion between states on the Common Core landscape. Additionally, this call served as a prelude to the RGPPC Chief of Staff call, which will cover Common Core. The Chiefs' call is on Tuesday, October 15 from 3:00-3:30 pm EST.

On the call, five most commonly raised concerns with Common Core were brought up and described in detail. Below is a brief synopsis of these issues:

Concerns with Common Core State Standards

1. Student data privacy
 - a. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education amended [regulations](#) to the rules addressing student data privacy, known as the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which provided third parties with greater access to the data for educational purposes only.
 - i. Recommendations:
 1. Consider state laws or executive orders (like the [EO](#) signed by Georgia Gov. Deal) as vehicles for new guidelines for how student information is shared with the private-sector and federal government.
 2. Examine the agreement your state has with the testing consortia – namely PARCC and SBAC. These state/consortia and USDOE/consortia contracts may have questionable clauses that need to be addressed or eliminated.
2. Administering assessments
 - a. There is still uncertainty to exactly how the PARCC/SBAC assessments will be administered and how that process will be carried out in states. Broadband infrastructure and computer/laptop/tablet to student ratios for many states are a primary concern.
 - i. Recommendation:
 1. Work with private-sector and/or public institutions to expand broadband access to all schools
 2. Create a technology plan to train teachers and advise schools on devices and assessments
 - b. Additionally, many high schools and postsecondary schools are concerned that the Common Core adopted assessments will not provide an easily understood definition of college and career readiness as is done now through the SAT/ACT system.
 - i. Recommendation:
 1. Consider the ACT series of assessments in lieu of PARCC/SBAC assessments for high school.

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3. Curriculum aligned to the Common Core

- a. This is where a large amount of concern is arising from parents, teachers, and grassroots organizations. It is also where many of the misconceptions originate. The public can generally support raising standards but once the curricula is implemented problems may arise. For example, in Louisiana, fourth grade students were given a homework assignment that included a [paragraph](#) about the rapper “Twista” and referenced words like “Po Pimp” and “mobstaz.”
 - i. Recommendations:
 1. Empower parents to weigh in on the curriculum and textbook selection process. Common Core could have the unintended result of motivating conservatives to address the liberalization of textbooks.
 2. Draw contrast between standards, which are adopted by the state, and curriculum, which is adopted locally. Consider legislative clarification of local ownership of curricula.
 3. Communicate that the potentially controversial Common Core appendices are not a part of the standards that states adopt. Some states have even recommended that parents and teachers rewrite the appendices (or “reading lists”) to better reflect their community’s values.
 4. Consider state or locally led curricula writing process to offer alternatives to pre-packaged third party CCSS-aligned curricula on the market (e.g., Pearson, College Board, Engage NY).

4. Implementation timeline

- a. As states roll out assessment results, there is likely to be widespread concern with the scores assigned to students. Earlier this year, New York experienced drastic decreases in the number of students passing state reading and math exams because of increased standards. Due to the drop in student scores, state officials in New York have proposed a three year moratorium on using the new test scores to make “high-stakes” decisions, such as whether to promote a student or discipline a teacher.
 - i. Recommendations:
 1. If your state currently uses student test scores in determining teacher quality or school letter grades, consider weighting the new scores with a metric similar to the one already in place and gradually raising the bar.
 2. Clearly message the implementation plan to alleviate fear that students will be held back and/or teachers will be penalized.

5. Federal strings attached to Common Core

- a. Historically, education has been primarily a state and local responsibility in the United States. Over the past few years, the federal government has increased its involvement in promoting and incentivizing adoption and implementation of Common Core. The Administration has used PARCC/SBAC funding, ESEA waivers, and Race to the Top money to encourage states to implement the standards.
 - i. Recommendations:
 1. Closely consider whether funding opportunities tied to implementation of a particular policy proposal will help or hinder the implementation of that proposal.
 2. Consider a review process for the standards (e.g., legislative hearings in Tennessee) to allow public comment and reaffirmation of state ownership of standards.