

Criticism of Ohio's Common Core Educational Standards

(And their application in the Beavercreek, Ohio, School System)

By
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This paper identifies criticisms of the Common Core Educational Standards (or simply Common Core) and their implementation in Ohio and, as an example, in the Beavercreek, Ohio, public school system where the author lives. (Note: Other names are now being used in lieu of "Common Core" to hide the use of these standards.)

Common Core is controversial because, at its root, is the assertion of the power to control our children's education from afar regardless of what a local community wishes. The conclusion I draw is that the purpose of Common Core was to install near absolute national control of what and how our children are taught with the clear result of having control over what our children know or are not taught and, consequentially, how they are prepared (or indoctrinated) for their future. This is the opposite of true local control of our community's public schools as is our natural right as parents engaged in determining what is best for our children's education.

The Beavercreek School System is located mostly in Greene County, Ohio. About 95 percent of its students graduate with about 90 percent of these going on to two- and four-year colleges. Beavercreek per pupil spending is slightly below the state average. In large measure due to the proximity of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, about 25 percent of the Beavercreek adult population has graduate or professional degrees. As this is the district in which the author lives and where the advantages of Common Core have been publicly asserted by the school superintendent in a public meeting, it is used as an example for these discussions.

Recently, reflecting growing public alarm, HB597 has been introduced into the Ohio House to repeal Common Core. This was announced in

¹ Mike Snead is a professional engineer. This paper reflects his personal views on the Common Core standards.

late July and formally introduced in August. About two weeks later on Sept. 9, 2014, the [Columbus Dispatch reported](#) that Gov. John Kasich, in a meeting with their editorial board, commented, "**I don't know that there's any effort to repeal Common Core.** There may be an effort to talk about it." He went on to say, "I wish we could just change the name to Ohio's Standards, or whatever." He continued, "**Until somebody can show me we're eroding local control**, I see no reason to do anything. And I don't think they're (the House) going to do anything, to tell you the truth," Kasich said. "In my judgment, it isn't going to get to me, and if it does, it isn't going to look anything like it is."² (Emphasis added.)

On Oct. 5, Gov. Kasich was interviewed on Dayton's WHIO TV.³ He was asked whether he supports keeping or repealing the Common Core standards. To further understand his views, beyond his earlier remarks noted above, here are his remarks from the interview.

"There's a lot of discussion around it. Here's what people need to understand. We need higher standards for our children in this state and in this country. Forty-one percent, by the way, of Ohio students who enter college are taking some sort of remedial education which shows that we need to beef it up, K-12. Those higher standards have to be met by a curriculum that local school boards write. We're not writing what they should teach and the Federal Government or Barack Obama's not writing what they should teach, contrary to what some people think. It is decided by local school boards with advice from parents who live in the school district. If it was anything other than that, I wouldn't support it, but I do support higher standards and I support local control. And there's a test that is going to take a look at how kids are doing. We have delayed the impact of that test for a year and if the test appears to be, you know, out of line, goofy, or whatever let's just

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<http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2014/09/09/governor-no-common-core-repeal-bill-expected.html>

³ <http://bcove.me/1cay9dec>

get rid of the test, but we're not getting rid of higher standards."

"Again, we're for higher standards and curriculum being developed locally. I don't like to use buzz words—that's what it is, it is a buzz word. I just people to understand what it is. If you support higher standards and local school boards and local communities devising them, I'm for that and if that's what Common Core represents, great. The other thing that is really important is that we've reiterated this in our last budget and we now have parental advisors who can advise those school boards to make sure that curriculum—by the way, it only covers English and math. We're not going into history or any of these other things with the Common Core."

Is Common Core really just a "buzz word" or is it much more that is detrimental to our children's education and local control? Please keep Gov. Kasich's remarks—by the one person who politically controls the use of Common Core in Ohio—in mind as you read this white paper. From his remarks and lack of leadership on the repeal, he appears to have already dismissed the growing public alarm and maintains his support for Common Core.

These Common Core topics are addressed:

1. The role of standards.
2. The role of curriculum and its approval.
3. The expanding role of proficiency tests under Common Core.
4. Using the issue of student mobility to justify Common Core is wrong.
5. Common Core standards were untested before being adopted.
6. The Massachusetts example of outstanding pre-Common Core standards.
7. Common Core math and ELA standards are poor.
8. Common Core math curriculum dumbs down math instruction.
9. Unnecessary math complexity and confusion.

10. Beavercreek K-8 grade math and ELA is now being aligned to Common Core.
11. Why not just change the standards?
12. What is the cost of implementation?
13. What is the status of adopting Common Core nationally?
14. Public opposition to Common Core is growing.
15. What is happening in Ohio to repeal Common Core?

1. **The role of standards.** The purpose of a standard is to uniformly achieve a desired outcome. This started with such mundane things as bolts and nuts being made to a standard to achieve interchangeability. There is nothing wrong with applying standards when their use makes sense and a desired outcome is achieved. The key is to have well-developed and tested standards and to use these standards appropriately.

The educational process is undertaken in layers where each layer is intended to achieve an educational objective. [From the Ohio Department of Education](#)⁴, this is referred to as a "standards-based education" where "academic content, performance and operating standards are aligned". In Ohio, these standards are provided in three categories:

- **"Content Standards** describe the knowledge and skills that students should attain, often called the 'what' of 'what students should know and be able to do.' They indicate the ways of thinking, working, communicating, reasoning and investigating the important and enduring ideas, concepts, issues, dilemmas and knowledge essential to the discipline.
- **"Performance Standards** are concrete statements of how well students must learn what is set out in the content standards, often called the "be able to do" of "what students should know and be able to do" Performance standards specify

⁴ <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Ohio-s-New-Learning-Standards/Ohios-New-Learning-Standards/Ohio-s-New-Learning-Standards-Resources/Ohio-s-New-Learning-Standards-Terminology>

"how good is good enough." They are the indicators of quality that specify how adept or competent a student demonstration must be.

- **"Operating Standards** describe the conditions for learning. These can include specific expectations and additional guidelines for school districts, communities and families to use in creating the best learning conditions for meeting student needs and achieving state and local educational goals and objectives."

The Common Core educational standards currently contain content standards for only mathematics and the English language arts (ELA). The accompanying national proficiency tests in math and ELA implement performance standards tied to the Common Core content standards.

2. **The role of curriculum and its approval.** In Ohio, **"Curriculum is the way content is designed and delivered.** It includes the structure, organization, balance and presentation of expected or recommended study topics that address content standards and meet local expectations. A curriculum contains three primary elements: substance, purpose and practice:

- **Substance** communicates what should be taught. It is the field of instruction.
- **Purpose** communicates why a topic should be taught. It is the context of instruction.
- **Practice** communicates how a topic should be taught and learned. It is the methodology of instruction, (including the methodology of collecting and using evidence of students' learning to inform and to adjust instruction)."⁵

My understanding is that the curriculum, combined with the local school system's *course of study*, defines how the content substance from the standard is to be taught in actual practice. The teacher's lesson plan takes the curriculum the final step defining what is taught each session and what instructional materials are used. What is important to understand is that because Ohio now mandates, by law, the use of the Common Core math and ELA content standards, these

⁵ Ibid

Common Core standards drive the curriculum—substance, purpose, and practice. To be clear, the curriculum is driven by the standards or is “**aligned**” using Common Core terminology.

Further, because the new text books and other educational materials (e.g., technology-based instruction) have been rewritten to be “aligned” to Common Core, the content of the daily lesson plans—substance, purpose, and practice—are substantially influenced by the Common Core standards. In other words, when the curriculum **becomes aligned** to Common Core—through technology-enabled instruction and revised Common Core texts—these new Common Core standards **become pervasive** throughout our students’ primary education, directly impacting the quality and daily content of their education.

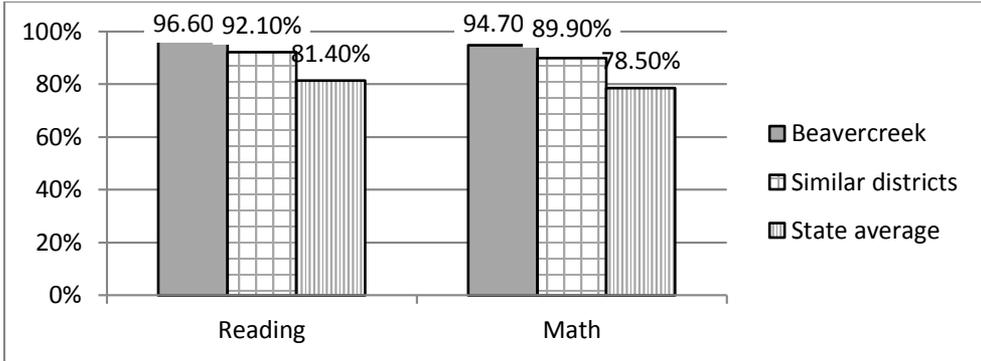
For a community to assert community values and standards in its public education, there must be near total local control of the curriculum’s substance, purpose, and practice. In Beavercreek, this has been done through curriculum committees on which engaged parents have served, reviewing the curriculum in detail. This means that the local community must be able to “sign off” on the curriculum. This also means that the local school board must give its free-will approval absent outside influences, such as conditions tied to grants. But, most important, this means that the implementation of Common Core must be a topic of unrestricted public discussion between the school administration and public, between teachers and parents, and within the school system without intimidation. Such is the importance of our children’s education!

3. The expanding role of proficiency tests under Common Core.

Proficiency tests have long been used to measure the progress of a student’s education and to compare results among different school systems. Such testing is almost always used in association with a standard to show that the standard is being met and, by implication, the desired outcome is being achieved. In industry, where standards are used extensively, this is referred to as quality control.

Test results from third grade are often used as a metric to evaluate and compare school systems. The State of Ohio tracks and publishes such data on our local public schools’ scholastic quality allowing comparisons against an ideal outcome and against comparable and the average statewide results. Here are the Ohio School Report Cards’

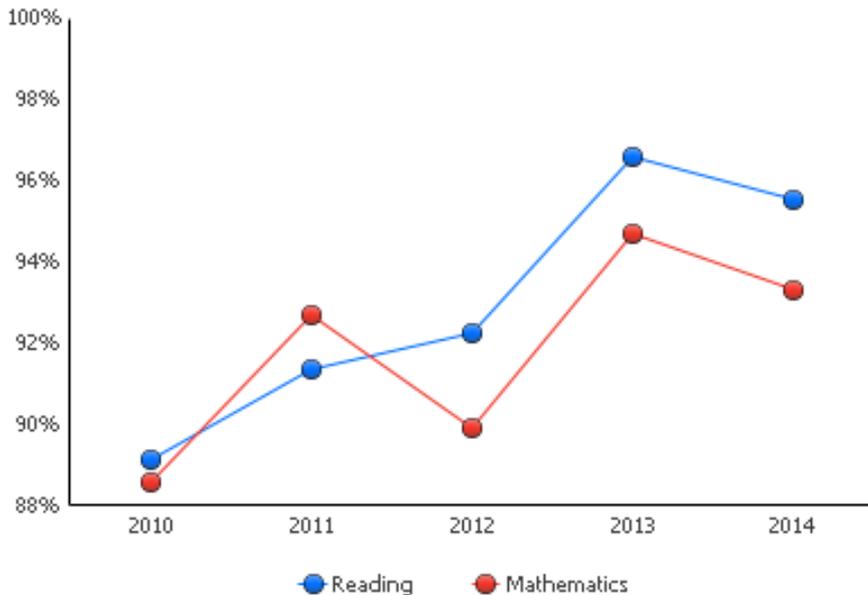
[2013-2014 data for Beavercreek](#) in **pre-Common Core** reading and math compared to similar school districts and the state average.⁶



1 – Beavercreek third grade school system comparison

From the same report card, here is the trend data from 2010-2014. Note that good overall improvement has been achieved in recent years prior to the implementation of the Common Core “system”—a likely indication of the value of local control of the educational process.

⁶ <http://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/Pages/District-Report.aspx?DistrictIRN=047241>



2 - Beaver Creek third grade trend data

While Ohio already collects a broad range of data on students and schools systems to enable such comparisons as above, the Common Core “system” brings another substantial layer of proficiency testing directly tied to the Common Core standards. Indications are that this additional testing will add about six calendar weeks of such testing each year in each grade. To this add three weeks of specific preparatory work to get the students ready for the testing methods and a review of the content of the tests. Thus, the **added Common Core proficiency testing may take about one-quarter of the entire school year**. Does this make common sense? One Ohio teacher, with 25 years of experience, recently addressed this issue head on. [Writing in the Washington Post](#),

...I was explaining how weary I was from the political addiction to mass standardized testing and how educationally abusive it had become to so many of the students in my care.

Last spring, you wouldn't find the fifth-graders in my Language Arts class reading as many rich, engaging

pieces of literature as they had in the past or huddled over the same number of authentic projects as before. Why? Because I had to stop teaching to give them a Common Core Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) online sample test that would prepare them for the upcoming PARCC pilot pre-test which would then prepare them for the PARCC pilot post test – all while taking the official Ohio Achievement Tests. This amounted to three tests, each 2 ½ hours, in a single week, the scores of which would determine the academic track students would be placed on in middle school the following year.⁷

(Note that this excerpt does not do justice to the serious complaints noted by the teacher in her broad criticism. The reader is encouraged to [read the entire article](#). It is chilling to read.)

A reasonable question is **how much of an improvement in scholastic performance must the Common Core standards bring to counterbalance a loss of nearly one-quarter of the school year to their proficiency testing?** Does this make common sense for any district that values classroom instructional time? Imagine if the local school board, on its own, was proposing such annual all-grade proficiency testing impacting up to a quarter of the yearly instructional time. Would this just go into effect with little or no public discussion? This highlights the issue of the apparent absence of true local control. It would appear that a scheme has been implemented by the State of Ohio tied to these proficiency tests—using teacher and school system evaluations, financial incentives or disincentives, etc.—designed to obtain school board and teacher silence and public ignorance of what changes are being made. This is clear intimidation and is a hallmark of progressive politics and is contrary to the assertion of placing importance in “local control”.

4. **Using the issue of student mobility to justify Common Core is wrong.** A primary argument made in favor of adopting the Common Core educational standards is to address the issue of

⁷ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/09/05/teacher-no-longer-can-i-throw-my-students-to-the-testing-wolves/>

students moving from one school system to another. With the Dayton area's high percentage of military families, this is an important consideration and a familiar challenge in the Beavercreek School System.

Examination of the above chart of 3rd grade reading and math results highlights the reason for the issue. Students moving to Beavercreek or similar districts from many other school districts in the state (and from other states) may be expected, on average, to have scholastic performance below the average in Beavercreek. For a new student to fit into the specific Beavercreek academic program desired by the student and parents, some catch up may be needed. Is this challenging to both students and teachers? Certainly, but it is the reality that Beavercreek and other comparable area school districts have successfully been addressing for several generations as shown in the overall school results (95 percent graduation rate with 90 percent going on to college). In other words, it's an issue that has been successfully addressed through local control.

What is important to note, of course, is that the student's previous scholastic performance is not necessarily an accurate forecast of their performance once they are incorporated into Beavercreek or similar school systems. Given the opportunity to excel, many students do. With this positive experience, what is the blanket justification to force the mandatory adoption of the inferior Common Core standards on high-performing school systems? The appropriate state response, instead, should be to let the school system respond to the community's expectations for the quality of the education provided—in other words, local control. As seen in Beavercreek, this works well.

Improving the education of students across America is a worthwhile goal. But this is a goal to be achieved fairly, not by hobbling the students in one district with inferior standards/curricula and substantial reductions in classroom instructional time only for the purpose of easing the transition of new students into the district. When the issue of student mobility is raised by Common Core proponents, in reality this is a "social equality" strategy designed to level the playing field between school systems with different levels of scholastic performance. Certainly, some districts may benefit from Common Core, but certainly other, high-performing districts will unfairly suffer. **Thus, adopting Common Core for this reason is a social equality policy is progressive "we know best" political**

control, plain and simple. Fortunately, there is a simple solution to this dilemma—high state standards and local control. Set demonstrated high state standards (e.g., pre-Common Core Massachusetts’ standards) and then give the local school system true local control over the curriculum’s substance, purpose, and practice.

5. Common Core standards were untested before being adopted.

What Common Core does is replace any existing state standards for math and ELA with the Common Core standards. Common sense indicates that a significant new standard should be tested prior to its broad, mandatory implementation to ensure that the desired outcome is achieved. With industrial standards, before a new standard is formally adopted, such testing is mandatory and extensive. In Ohio, this was not the case for Common Core.

The concept of a uniform set of national educational standards is not new. Most recently, it arose through efforts of the National Governors Association, a non-governmental organization promoting public policies advocated by its members. Under President Obama’s “Race to the Top” federal education program, this notion of common standards was embraced. States were explicitly evaluated, with funding to follow, based on their compliance with the coming Common Core standards. Without constitutional authority, in 2009 the Federal Government used \$4.3 billion of federal funds to influence—exert control over—the states to adopt the yet unwritten, untested Common Core standards. (Note that this was a part of the stimulus bill during the severe economic recession in 2009. At that time, state tax revenues were reduced making states especially susceptible to such federal funding “influence”.)

What this action effectively did was to federalize K-12 educational standards as part of a massive progressive “we know best” effort. The Obama administration intentionally used federal stimulus funds to “win” adoption of Common Core by state and local school administrators despite these standards being untested. This happened in Ohio when the standards were adopted by the state legislature and signed by then Governor Strickland in 2010 just days after the standards were released in final form for the first time. Obviously, these were adopted in Ohio before they were tested. Hence, one must conclude that it was all about the money and not a fact-based effort to improve educational standards in Ohio. This highlights the

fundamental political nature of adopting Common Core—expanding progressive political control.

6. The Massachusetts example of outstanding pre-Common Core standards. Like many states, Massachusetts at one time had poor scholastic performance, in part due to low state standards. They rewrote their standards, elevating them to among the best in the nation and, consequentially, achieved substantial improvements in its students' performance. These pre-Common Core Massachusetts standards are often used as an example of what good state standards are and how, at the state level—without federal involvement—their effective implementation can bring beneficial educational results.

Massachusetts has now, apparently, abandoned these excellent, proven standards and adopted the Common Core standards. Why they did this is an important common sense question, don't you think? When one considers what happened, it naturally raises the question of why would a state that worked so hard and was so successful in improving its children's education abandon proven standards? [The Pioneer Institute explains](#) that in the early Common Core implementation, the Federal Government used \$250 million to "encourage" Massachusetts to be an early adopter of Common Core.⁸ This was a clear federal intrusion into a state's responsibility for education and was done, I believe, to neutralize the superior Massachusetts standards and imply that the Common Core standards were of comparable quality.

What this really shows is how the Obama administration used stimulus funds to embrace the untested Common Core standards and influence state and local educational leaders in Massachusetts to act counter to their student's best interests by adopting these untested standards. Thus, the federal takeover of the K-12 educational system is clear and intentional under the Obama administration. Obviously, any such federal takeover requires a compensating loss of state and, especially, local control. We see this by the simple fact that the Common Core standards cannot be changed at the state or local level. The notion that Common Core can exist within a structure of true local

⁸ <http://pioneerinstitute.org/news/we-now-have-a-smart-exit-strategy-from-common-core/>

control is not evident. Under true local control, the standards can be changed—under Common Core, they cannot.

7. **Common Core math and ELA standards are poor.** Recently, the Ohio House has taken up HB597 to repeal the Common Core standards in Ohio. Sandra Stotsky, Professor of Education Reform in the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas, testified in favor of the repeal. **She was a 2009-2010 member of the Validation Committee of the Common Core ELA standards.** [In her August 19, 2014 testimony](#), she explains, with clear examples, the deficiencies in the preparation of these standards. For example, she notes “no high school mathematics teachers were involved, no English professors or high school English teachers were, either.” ... “The ‘lead’ writers for the ELA standards, David Coleman and Susan Pimentel, had never taught reading or English in K-12 or at the college level. Neither has a doctorate in English, nor published serious work on curriculum and instruction. They were virtually unknown to English language arts educators and to higher education faculty in rhetoric, speech, composition, or literary study.”⁹

Professor Stotsky concluded her testimony by promoting the adoption of the pre-Common Core Massachusetts standards in Ohio on an interim basis as part of the transition away from Common Core to a new superior set of Ohio standards. This is the proposal in HB597. **To be clear, the bill to repeal Common Core will strengthen, not weaken, the educational standards in Ohio. Opposing repeal is to support weaker educational standards than what is already proven and available.**

[In similar testimony from August 20, 2014](#), Ze’ev Wurman (visiting scholar, Hoover Institute at Stanford University, a former senior policy advisor to the U.S. Department of Education, and a commissioner on the California Academic Content Standards Commission that evaluated the Common Core standards in 2010) addressed the math

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http://searchprod.lis.state.oh.us/cm_pub_api/api/unwrap/chamber/130th_ga/ready_for_publication/committee_docs/cmte_h_com_ru_reg_1/testimony/bd76b462-0517-4543-b9a5-0252e95178f7/5pmsandrastotskyproponenttestimony.pdf

standards. His testimony focused on this point: "That the Common Core's reduced rigor in K-8 will directly lead to reduced enrollment particularly of disadvantaged and minority students in advanced mathematics courses in high school, and is bound to harm their chances to pursue challenging and rewarding careers."¹⁰ In other words, the social equality notion that leveling the playing field with Common Core math brings educational benefit is a false expectation.

These are just two of many such proponent testimony for HB597 [available here](#).

Earlier this year, [Ohioans Against Common Core](#) held a forum in Columbus to help educate Ohio legislators on Common Core. [Here is a YouTube video](#) showing the highlights of the speakers.¹¹ Pay particular attention to the remarks by Dr. Megan Koschnick, Child Clinical Psychologist, starting about 15 minutes into the video about the developmental readiness of young students contrasted against the poor Common Core standards. This directly contradicts the impression of the quality/adequacy of the Common Core standards. Also pay attention to the remarks by Dr. Terrence Moore, PhD, Hillsdale College, starting at 23 minutes where he provides examples of the poor and confusing Common Core ELA standards.

8. Common Core math curriculum dumbs down math instruction. Having a sound understanding of the basics of mathematics is critical in our technological society. Teaching math to young children is not easy as it requires focus and memorization. Many instructional approaches have been proposed and tried over the years. A method proven successful is referred to as "Singapore math" based on the K-6 grade instructional methods developed in Singapore. This method has been used in Beavercreek, being adopted

¹⁰ http://search-prod.lis.state.oh.us/cm_pub_api/api/unwrap/chamber/130th_ga/ready_for_publication/committee_docs/cmte_h_com_ru_re_g_1/testimony/987bfdac-f477-4cbf-b584-e11682e5b506/zeevwurmanproponenttestimony.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GCPJYzjNoo>

to meet the community's expectations. The earlier 3rd grade math results show that this is a successful program for Beaver Creek.

What is the impact of the new Common Core standards?

"The reality is that they are better than 85 or 90 percent of the state standards they replace. Not a little better. A lot better," said James Milgram, a mathematician at Stanford University who sat on the Common Core validation committee. But, he added, "That's really a comment on the abysmal quality of these state standards."¹²

From this statement, the value of having exceptional state standards like those previously used in Massachusetts is important to appreciate. To reiterate the point made earlier, when proven, tested, superior standards are available, why not adopt them if education, and not politics or funding, was the objective of education reform in Ohio?

How about a comparison to the Singapore math methods already employed in Beaver Creek?

*The [Common Core] standards don't lead to a complete Algebra I course until high school, unlike in other high-achieving countries. An analysis by Achieve, a nonprofit organization that has supported the Common Core, found that Singapore's math curriculum was similar to Common Core, but that in Singapore, **students more quickly reach a higher level of math proficiency.**¹³ [Emphasis added.]*

A publisher of an education book on Singapore math has "realigned" the instructional material to the Common Core standards, a now common practice in the textbook industry. But here is what they said on their website to alleviate concerns about any "dumbing down" due to this realignment to Common Core:

¹² http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/15/common-core-compare_n_4102973.html

¹³ Ibid

*The new Common Core Edition retains the rigor of Primary Mathematics and is not simply a **dumbed-down** version. Where Common Core State Standards [CCSS] called for content to be introduced in a later level than our previous Editions of Primary Mathematics, we did not simply move content. Concepts are still introduced at the same level as before, and then revisited more in-depth at the prescribed CCSS level. It's evidence that not all "Common Core" curriculum is created equally!¹⁴ (Emphasis added.)*

Recently, students in a California school district [complained about the dumbing down](#) of their eighth grade mathematics.¹⁵

Clearly, mathematics instruction is being intentionally "slowed down" under Common Core. Why is this important to school districts like Beavercreek where 90 percent of its graduates go on to college with many into degree programs requiring a good foundation of advanced high school math? This means that some current instructional content would not be taught in high school if these Common Core standards are rigorously applied. This will impact readiness for college, particularly in fields of science and engineering. If the Singapore system is proving successful, why adopt a less rigorous set of standards as a state standard? Common sense says this is foolish and shows how the state's rush to adopt these standards in 2010 was ill-advised and remains unwise to continue.

9. **Unnecessary math complexity and confusion.** Many students using the Common Core aligned educational material report becoming very frustrated with the complexity of the problems. Parents also report this. To illustrate this point, here is an example of a Common Core problem to do this simple subtraction problem: $427 - 316 = ???$ The problem statement is at the top of the page. It uses an unconventional graphical method to solve the problem rather than simple memorization-based subtraction. This Common Core change

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http://www.singaporemath.com/Singapore_Math_Common_Core_s/272.htm

¹⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vW64m4vjwOo>

has made a simple problem complex, confusing, and frustrating. Why? The parent's expression of confusion and frustration is also shown. Can you figure out how to find and fix the mistake?

Jack used the number line below to solve $427 - 316$. Find his error. Then write a letter to Jack telling him what he did right, and what he should do to fix his mistake.

Dear Jack,

Don't feel bad. I have a Bachelor of Science Degree in Electronics Engineering which included extensive study in differential equations and other higher math applications. Even I cannot explain the Common Core Mathematics approach, nor get the answer correct. In the real world, simplification is valued over complication. Therefore,

$$\begin{array}{r} 427 \\ - 316 \\ \hline 111 \end{array}$$

The answer is solved in under 5 seconds - 111. The process used is ridiculous and would result in termination if used.

Sincerely,
Frustrated Parent

3 - Example Common Core math assignment

[Here is a link to a YouTube video](#) describing a teacher's attempt to explain the new Common Core math for the simple problem of $9 + 6$

= ???¹⁶ In watching this, consider how many mental subtractions are first needed to add two numbers. For a little humor on this serious subject, [watch this 50 year-old](#) "example".¹⁷ The relevance of this comedy routine is that in Common Core math instruction today, **EFFORT is emphasized over ACCURACY**. This is but another attempt at social equality completely contrary to the fundamental purpose of mathematics instruction—how to solve problems accurately.

10. **Beavercreek K-8 grade math and ELA is now being aligned to Common Core.** The Beavercreek School System has received a \$3.866 million grant—Straight A Grant, Round 1—to purchase technology, software, and support for grades K-8. The students have been provided with an iPad (an Apple brand tablet) "loaded with software that assesses each student's knowledge base and achievement in math and English Language Arts. The iPads will also include personalized content that is **aligned with Common Core** and state standards to support students' individual academic growth and achievement."¹⁸ (Emphasis added.)



4 - Photo from Beavercreek School System public website

Here are my criticisms of this approach:

¹⁶ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uc3Pv5Q_AdA

¹⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkbQDEXJy2k>

¹⁸ <http://www.beavercreek.k12.oh.us/Page/12018>

- a. This is an example of the use of grants to “win” adoption of Common Core. Keep this in mind as you read the following apparent issues.
- b. This is the idealized implementation of Common Core from the perspective of the technology industry and progressive-leaning educators. Each student receives a tablet containing proprietary software managed externally by a contractor in support of the school system. The software, the tablet-based instructional material, and the tablet-based proficiency testing are all aligned to the Common Core standards and, it appears, largely beyond the control of the local school system. Someone, somewhere else now controls Beavercreek children’s’ K-8 education in the areas of math and ELA. This means that they, and not the community, substantially controls the substance, purpose, and practice of the curriculum in math and ELA as provided through these technology aids.
- c. As I understand the use of this system, each student is being remotely fed a unique curriculum of instructional material and proficiency tests individually tailored to the student’s strengths and weaknesses. While this happens, the teacher “proctors” the class, observing what is happening on a “dashboard” on their computer. As more Common Core standards are adopted—for example, for science, social studies, etc.—more and more of the student’s time will be spent in this computerized instructional mode and less and less with a teacher who’s actually teaching. This means that more and more of a teacher’s time will be spent not teaching while, at the same time, local control of what is taught will become a vestige of the “old days”.
- d. In Beavercreek, much was made of the students and parents thrill with getting a school-provided tablet. However, little mention was made of the fact that the utility of the tablet is only as good as the software and that the school system appears to be almost entirely out-of-the-loop on what specific instructional material is provided and what proficiency testing is undertaken by the students as these are provided by third parties.
- e. With this tablet-based system “aligned with Common Core”, it is unclear how the Beavercreek schools will continue to teach

the superior Singapore math. (On this topic, I have received conflicting information from people in the school system.) Will Common Core math instruction on the tablets simply be dropped and Singapore math taught as has been done? Or, because this is a grant-based Common Core implementation, will the students be obligated to “learn” the Common Core methods via the tablets in addition to learning Singapore math using traditional methods? This appears to be an example of a federal/state “**straightjacket**” of instruction due to having taken grant money to implement Common Core. A similar situation may exist with the ELA instruction.

- f. A prominent criticism by childhood educational professionals of the use of the Common Core standards in the early years is that they were not aligned to the developmental abilities of the students. Is this the case for such a technology-based turn-key educational system that is beginning in kindergarten? Are young students literally being given a computer tablet, shown the on/off button, and then being left to figure it out themselves especially when parents are befuddled by a lack of access and familiarity with the technology?
- g. What are the medical and social skill implications of this switch to prolonged use of tablets starting in kindergarten? Potential issues with posture, eyesight, prolonged exposure to microwave radiation by developing bodies, lack of social interaction in the classroom with the teacher and other students, lack of developing cursive handwriting skills, physical immobility, lack of developing sound teacher-student relationships in the classroom, etc., have been raised in the media or would appear to be apparent areas of concern. Handling a “light” one-pound tablet for a prolonged period as an adult is different than for a small child.
- h. What is the added long-term financial burden on the school system? Beaver Creek was fortunate to have the initially technology tools provided by grants. Is this to be the case in every school district, forever? Or are local school systems being financially encouraged to embrace an expensive learning system, substantially dependent on external technology support contracts, adding a new layer of costs to local school

systems once the grants end? Is this to be the basis of a new student “fee”—essentially an un-voted tax on parents?

- i. Finally, who is responsible for a tablet being broken, perhaps accidentally (or intentionally) by another student on the ride home on a school bus? Text books have stood this classic test of real-world use quite well. They often last for years. It now appears that this cost of breakage will be shifted to parents. I’ve also heard talk of the selling of “insurance”.

11. **Why not just change the standards?** This is a common sense question once the poor quality of the Common Core standards is recognized. The reality is that to maintain near absolute control over the standards and, thus, the curriculum, technology, testing, etc., changing the standards has been made very difficult.

- The Common Core standards are owned by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. These standards are copyrighted with strict permitted usage and legal requirements. ([Here is the public license.](#)¹⁹)
- As a copyrighted document held by a private organization, no change to the standard can be made, per my understanding, without formal nationwide adoption. In other words, no local tailoring.
- The copyright notice shall be displayed on any Common Core publication or public display. However, where a state has “adopted the Common Core State Standards in whole”, schools in that state are exempt from the copyright notice provision, as I understand the license. **What this appears to mean is that schools, while fully using Common Core, can remove this name from the standards.** The Beavercreek School System website, I’m told, had prominently used the term Common Core, but now it is not readily seen even though these Common Core standards are being used. I could not find the term Common Core mentioned in the curriculum areas under mathematics and language arts—the two areas where the standards are being used. Why is this being done? This

¹⁹ <http://www.corestandards.org/public-license/>

renaming of the standards is, apparently, a common practice across the country to try to hide the use of these standards from public awareness. This is indicative that changing the standards at the local level is likely legally impossible by the terms of the license combined with restrictions through funding grants.

12. **What is the cost of implementation?** Fairborn City Schools report that the cost of implementing Common Core is about \$2 million. A recent Dayton Daily News article reports the cost in Kettering and Beavercreek totaled about \$12 million on technology from state grants. One can surmise that the cost in Greene County is likely pushing \$10 million, if not more. There are 88 counties in Ohio. This means that the cost of implementing Common Core just in Ohio is probably pushing \$600 million. (In Massachusetts, it was \$355 million for a state population of under 7 million.)

Remember, this is your tax money being spent. It makes common sense to spend this wisely; not to garner political advantage or advance progressive political goals.

13. **What is the status of adopting Common Core nationally?** [This Associated Press story](#) lists the adoption of the Common Core standards state-by-state.²⁰ What this analysis shows is that the adoption of these Common Core standards is far from being uniform as the name implies. Texas and Virginia, for instance, did not adopt these standards. Several other states have backed out. In Florida, the legislature is working to remove the mention of "Common Core" in an attempt to quell rising public opposition while, it appears, maintaining the standards under a different name. Isn't this what Gov. Kasich wishes would happen in Ohio when he attempts to label Common Core as "buzz words" instead of acknowledging the substantial K-12 control they are really imposing?

What has transpired across the nation is a political battle between those desiring more federal and state control (or not willing to fight this) and those desiring true local control.

²⁰ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/02/50-states-common-core_n_5751864.html

Remember, there is nothing in the U.S. Constitution that makes this an area of federal or national responsibility.

Indiana, after initially adopting the Common Core standards, recently tried to drop out. Unfortunately, what the legislature failed to do was to define what standards to use instead of the Common Core standards. This left this key decision in the hands of the governor and state school superintendent. The compromise solution, between the Republican governor and the Democratic state school superintendent, was to adopt a version of the Common Core standards referred to as "Common Core-lite". In other words, the Indiana governor bowed to progressive politics.

Fortunately, Ohio legislators leading the effort to repeal Common Core recognized this deficiency. Ohio HB597 added the measure to replace the Common Core standards with the pre-Common Core Massachusetts standards until new Ohio standards are developed.

14. **Public opposition to Common Core is growing.** As mentioned, a new bill has been introduced in the Ohio House to repeal the Common Core standards (HB597). (In fact, this is a replacement to an earlier repeal bill stalled in the Ohio House education committee.) In testimony in support of this bill, an architect who ran for a House seat in the last primary and was testifying in support of the repeal, noted that he spoke to 108 teachers at random, across several counties, during his primary campaign. Of the 108 teachers he spoke with, 106 opposed Common Core. It has been brought to the author's attention, that there is substantial concern about Common Core by teachers, but they have been intimidated into silence.

In August, *Education Next*, a quarterly education journal from Stanford University's Hoover Institution, published a poll showing that 40 percent of teachers now oppose Common Core, a substantial increase from 12 percent in 2013.²¹ A Gallop poll also published in August showed that 60 percent of the public aware of Common Core opposed Common Core.²² The [Washington Post quotes](#) the president

²¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/18/ednext-2014-survey_n_5688376.html

²² <http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/common-core-educational-standards-are-losing-support-nationwide-poll->

of the American Federation of Teachers as saying that while they have supported Common Core, "these standards must be guides, not straightjackets. ... Support will continue to drop as people no longer see standards or standardized tests as helping children."²³

Mandated, unchangeable standards tied to Common Core-aligned computerized instruction tied to mandatory proficiency tests are straightjackets on our children.

15. **What is happening in Ohio to repeal Common Core?** A bill was introduced earlier this year in the Ohio House to withdraw from Common Core. The bill, however, became tabled in the House Education Committee reflecting continued broad bi-partisan political support for Common Core. By August, public alarm in Ohio about Common Core had elevated the importance of the repeal effort. A new bill was introduced to replace the former bill and add additional requirements. Among these is the requirement, learning from the Indiana experience, to replace the Common Core standards on an interim basis with the proven pre-Common Core Massachusetts standards. A new set of Ohio standards of comparable quality would then be developed and implemented along with associated proficiency testing.

While there is general acknowledgement that the Common Core standards are better than the pre-Common Core Ohio standards, the Common Core standards are still significantly deficient. Replacing them with the superior pre-Common Core Massachusetts standards is common sense if, as Common Core advocates argue, raising the standards is an important key to improving Ohio students' education statewide.

Reflecting the politics of Common Core in Ohio, while the new repeal bill has been introduced in the House and hearings have been held, there is no companion bill in the Ohio Senate. **As Gov. Kasich has indicated, there's apparently really not "any effort to repeal Common Core" in the Ohio legislature.**

shows/2014/08/19/67b1f20c-27cb-11e4-8593-da634b334390_story.html

²³ Ibid

Against clear common sense opposition to Common Core, **something or someone is preventing the Ohio legislature from acting.**

Another hidden political agenda apparently is at work. Further, while the Ohio House leadership expresses support for the repeal bill, the Ohio House will not reconvene until after the November election in a lame duck session. At that time, there will be only a handful of legislative days left for the bill to be passed in the House and a companion bill to be introduced and passed in the Senate. **If this repeal action is not completed this year, then the entire process will need to start over with the new legislative session beginning next year.** Meanwhile, our children's education suffers and substantial funds are being wasted on an inferior education system. A united call by engaged Ohio voters for the expedited repeal of Common Core can, of course, sway the outcome this year. The key for voters, of course, is to support candidates with common sense and values the voter supports.