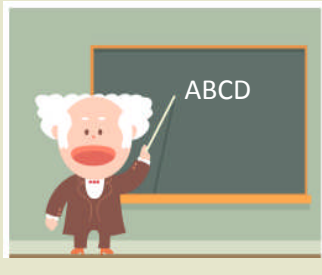




# Special Issue Brief #2

## NATIONAL EDUCATION STUDY

- A - Advocacy
- B - Budget
- C - Common Core Standards
- D - Don't Be Left Behind!



### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

What exactly is meant by the term Common Core Standards? The Common Core Standards are the retooling plan to bring more alignment, rigor, and consistency to students in our K-12 public schools. They are designed to make sure our students are prepared for college work or a career upon graduation.



The new standards will also make sure all states are using the same definition for "proficiency" and the same measurements for things like

graduation rates. The National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State

School Officers initiated the new Common Core Standards. This was a collaboration between states and not a federal government initiative.

The group worked with teachers, school administrators and education experts. They also heard over 10,000 public comments while developing the standards.

Forty eight states and three U.S. territories supported the initiative. Only Alaska and Texas declined to participate.

The final report was issued on June 2, 2010. Federal Aid has been awarded to two groups to design assessment tools for the Standards.

### Special Presentation on Common Core Standards

Saturday,  
September 17, 2011  
10:00 AM to Noon

*A Speaker from the South Cook Intermediate Service Center will speak on the Common Core Standards*  
**Park Forest Village Hall**  
**350 Victory Drive**  
**Park Forest**

### WHY ARE NEW STANDARDS NEEDED?

Currently curriculum for students in the United States varies widely from state to state. Proficiency standards also vary widely. Textbooks have been provided by publishers who favor the needs of

the largest states and assessment test publishers have done the same. In addition, tests are designed to rank students, not to determine if they have mastered criti-

cal skills, or to provide individual scores. Even our high school graduation requirements vary widely across the nation. Some feel it's time to get on the same page.

## SO HOW DO OUR KIDS STACK UP?

International comparisons of students in 60 countries have shown that American 15-year old students perform at about the average level in reading and science but lower than average in math. Researchers tell us that there is more poverty in the U.S. than

in most of the other countries in the International comparison and we have a weaker safety net. A 2008 UNICEF study on poverty of 22 wealthy nations put the U.S. at 21st place.

A generation ago, the U.S. led all other nations in college completion

but today, ten countries have passed us up.

As competition for jobs increases and employers expect more from applicants, our students will be hard pressed to compete in the global economy if this situation does not improve.



It's getting harder to find a good job.

## WILL THE NEW STANDARDS HELP EVERYONE?

*"The new standards will provide an accessible roadmap for teachers, parents and students."*

While the standards will not tell teachers how to teach, they will help to provide an accessible roadmap for teachers, parents and students. The U.S. Department of Education has **not** required adoption of the

standards as a condition of eligibility for federal funds. However, competitive grants awarded by the Race to The Top program did require school districts to adopt the standards in order to receive the funds. In ad-

dition, there is some indication that future grants will carry the same requirement. President Obama's administration has made it clear that they will give priority to those districts who have adopted the standards in the future.

## IS THERE ANY OPPOSITION TO THE NEW STANDARDS?

The strongest arguments against adopting the Common Core Standards for K-12 seem to center on two issues: (1) the cost and difficulty of changing the existing curriculum and assessments, and (2) the sov-

ereignty of states to decide their own standards.

Texas Governor Rick Perry logged in to Arne Duncan with a letter objecting to the requirement of the adoption of the standards for the

RTT grants. He noted the potential cost to his taxpayers and his need to shield his local schools from unwarranted federal intrusion into local district decision making for the reason Texas opted out.



Some didn't like the new standards.

**ARE THE NEW STANDARDS A LOT TOUGHER THAN OUR CURRENT STATE STANDARDS?**



**Did the new standards beat the current state standards?**

The Fordham Institute evaluated the Common Core Standards (CCS) and found the following:

- CCS earned a grade of A - in math while English Language Arts (ELA) earned a B+.
- Common Core Standards were found to be clearer and more rigorous.

- Of 102 comparisons in 51 jurisdictions, CCS were found clearly superior 76 times.

However the state standards in California and other states' standards were found to be clearly better than the Common Core and eleven other states were found to be equivalent or too close to call.

**HOW WILL THE SCORES BE USED?**

While it is never a good idea to base a student's abilities solely on one test score, the Common Core assessments are expected to help teachers better understand what students are learning and where they need to adjust their

teaching. Accountability is a critical issue at the moment and the test scores may soon be used to evaluate teachers or for sanctions or awards. There is a concern that pitting teachers against one another for a limited

pool of reward funds is counter to the collaboration needed now. Rewarding an entire school or team of teachers might be the better plan. Graduation rates and academic growth will likely be measured in the future.

*Collaboration is needed now instead of competition between teachers for a limited pool of reward funds.*

**WILL THIS HELP OUR STUDENTS?**

The future of public education in the United States has become uncertain. Vouchers and tax credit proposals continue to compete for scarce funds. Gaps in achievement and financial resources continue to grow. The Common Core Standards have created an opportunity to achieve consistency and

raise the bar on our achievement. They have also raised concerns about local control and the ability of local teachers and administrators to determine their curriculum. Many questions remain on just how the scores will be used or misused. And looming in the background is the reau-

thorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the No Child Left Behind rules.

If our students are all held to the new Common Core Standards will anyone be interested in making sure they all receive the same resources to get to that higher achievement?



**Will our students be able to compete for a job?**



## League of Women Voters - South Suburban Cluster

### Attention Study Leaders

Drop a line to the LWVIL Issues experts. You can ask your questions, express concerns, check details or just give an update on how your group is progressing.

[Issues@lwvil.org](mailto:Issues@lwvil.org)



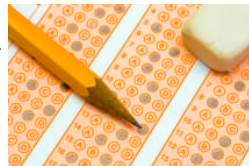
### Keep Your Time Line in Mind



- Begin your study now
- Review the Study Materials
- Conduct your local Consensus Meeting
- Make sure your Report is ready for LWVUS by November 30, 2011

## HOW WILL THE COMMON CORE BE ASSESSED?

Updated accountability systems will require new criterion-referenced tests to measure mastery of curriculum that is based on the Common Core.



Two coalitions, representing 44 states and the District of Columbia, won a U.S Dept. of Education competition for grant money to design comprehensive assessment systems aligned to the Common Core. The tests will also be designed to measure college and career readiness. The awards were divided between the **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers** (PARCC), a 26 state

group that received \$170 million, and the **Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium** (SBAC), a 31 state group receiving \$160 million.

PARCC is led by Florida and is working on offering several assessments by computer, at key times during the year with a streamlined end of year assessment. SBAC is led by Washington and working on adaptive online exams using open source technology with exams twice each school year and optional formative or benchmark exams.

Both consortia are designing assessment systems that will be aligned to the Common Core

Standards and enable cross-state comparisons, attempt to track individual student progress and develop cut scores that show if a student is ready for college or career.

Both contracts call for the systems to be ready for use by the 2014 — 2015 school year.

### To read the long form on the Common Core Standards:

[http://www.lwv.org/Content/ContentGroups/Membership/NEWEBSITE/ProjectsandStudies/PublicEducation/PES\\_VR\\_1\\_CommonStandards.pdf](http://www.lwv.org/Content/ContentGroups/Membership/NEWEBSITE/ProjectsandStudies/PublicEducation/PES_VR_1_CommonStandards.pdf)

Editor: Chris Slowik  
LWV of the Palos-Orland Area

