



DOCTORAL PROGRAMS • School of Arts, Sciences and Education

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EXPERT TESTIMONY OF MARK GARRISON, PH.D., IN OPPOSITION TO THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE (CCSSI).

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Based on my research, I have concluded that the CCSSI should be opposed for four reasons.* They are:

1. There is no evidence that the CCSSI will improve the quality of education, reduce inequalities, or ensure students are prepared to contribute to society or engage in higher learning. For example, researchers have compared states with higher standards to those with less challenging ones, and found that the existence of higher, better or clearer standards did not result in demonstrably better results on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) or other international tests. There is, however, a great deal of research that suggests the CCSSI will further narrow curriculum, further mechanizing teaching. It needs to be understood that the architects of the CCSSI mean to vastly increase the amount of testing (tests controlled by one of the two private testing consortia created with federal funds). Testing will include computer scoring of student essays, which raises a host of issues that I am certain parents will be very concerned about. Finally, after review of many CCSSI documents, I have come to the conclusion that the entire project treats students as “products” or “things” and not human beings. If parents knew the whole truth about what the CCSSI has in store for their children, I believe their opposition would be swift and unanimous.
2. Despite the name of the initiative, there is little evidence that the effort was “state lead.” Many state officials signed on to the CCSSI before the final standards were even written. The former commission of education in Texas, Robert Scott, has publically stated he was pressured by reformers to sign the Common Core Standards MOU. There is evidence that governors in other states compelled their education leaders to rubber stamp the CCSSI. As the legislatures of each state have been largely absent from the process, it is impossible that legislator constituencies were involved, making empty CCSSI advocates claims to have “parent support”. Few parents even know about the CCSSI or that their schools are now being restructured to meet the demands of the CCSSI.
3. The process by which the CCSSI has been adopted and implemented violates basic principles of the United States Constitution and the laws of the United States. The framers of the Constitution worked to construct a political system to avoid tyranny, which meant that governmental power could not be consolidated in one office or branch. Thus, framers insisted on the separation of powers between the legislative,

judicial and executive branches, and a weak central government. Importantly, the right to operate schools was reserved to the States or the people themselves. Education was envisioned as one means to block tyranny through the force of “enlightened public opinion”. But education cannot serve this function if people lose control over their schools. The federal Department of Education, an executive branch, has nonetheless acted to make laws with its Race to the Top (RttT) initiative and its waivers to provisions of No Child Left Behind Act. While executive waivers have legal precedent, Secretary Duncan’s use of RttT funds and NCLB waivers as “incentives” for states to adopt the CCSSI, which is not rooted in existing law, is in fact a form of law making. Taken in conjunction with 1979 law prohibiting the Department of Education from having “any direction, supervision, or control over the curriculum” (section 103b), the CCSSI adoption process is unconstitutional and violates existing federal law as well. And, how many legislatures know that the MOU for entry into one of the two Common Core assessment apparatuses (Missouri is a member of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) *required* alteration or elimination of any state laws that might interfere with the operation of the assessment consortia!

4. While the federal Department of Education is in violation of the law, the CCSSI represents something worse than a “federal power grab.” In fact, the illegal power of the federal government has been used to *remove public power* over education at the *local, state and federal level* and place it in the hands of four *private (501c3) publically unaccountable corporations*, who have strong connections to test publishers and the big private philanthropies secretly driving education reform. They are: the National Governors Association (NGA), the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and the two assessment apparatuses, the Partnership for Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). Most telling is that the Common Core State Standards, standards that now govern curriculum, instruction and assessment across the country, are jointly “owned” by the NGA Center for Best Practices and the CCSSO! Both federal and state legislatures, not to mention local school boards, are complete removed from having a say.

* Any of the above can be elaborated upon request.