**Common Core State Standards and Assessments**

**What school board members and candidates need to know**

There are several elements to the Common Core Standards. These education reform measures are designed to work together. You cannot get rid of one without negating another.

**Standards**

* The Common Core Standards are copyrighted and owned by two private trade organizations: the Natl Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. School districts may not alter or omit any standard
* While school districts are officially allowed to write their own curriculum, the standards are so detailed they do not allow much, if any, room for developing a different curriculum. The extra 15% districts are “allowed” to teach will never be realized because there simply won’t be time.
* Teachers must use materials aligned to Common Core. There are only two publishers who have aligned their text books to CC. These texts will drive curriculum.
* The tight time frame for adoption of the standards and alignment of the curriculum means most districts will simply adopt the most readily available curriculum and resource materials. For instance, proponents will say ELA teachers can choose whatever reading material they want, but the reality is that the tight timeframe will cause most teachers/districts to simply adopt recommended reading lists for ELA standards which have stripped out many of the classics in order to make room for the 70% non-fiction material required by the standards in high school.

**Assessments**

* The Common Core Assessments are on-line computer adaptive tests. School districts are required to have the necessary technology and internet bandwidth in place by fall 2014 for every student to take these tests on a computer connected to the internet. The assessment system only works on Windows 7 or higher.
* This technology requirement is being promoted through the MO School Improvement Plan (MSIP). Up until 2011 this plan had been mutually developed by DESE and the Superintendents. In 2012 DESE unilaterally announced MSIP5 which was not negotiated with the districts as previous versions had been. This plan incorporates all the elements of Common Core although it does not specifically state this or make this connection for districts. Many districts do not know how much of what they are being asked to do is because of Common Core. Some school boards have, currently, not even heard of Common Core.
* Currently, MAP tests cost about $9/student. The CC assessments were originally priced at $10/student. The latest word is that the assessment consortia we belong to are telling states the cost will now be $30/student and written tests (for districts that cannot get their technology in place in time) will cost even more. Districts will have no control over this cost. Neither will the state.

**Teacher Evaluations**

* Part of the Common Core package is a new teacher evaluation system. 50% of a teacher’s evaluation will now be based on student assessment scores. Many experts have said that standardized tests are a poor measure of teacher competency and an inappropriate tool for teacher evaluations.
* The complete evaluation system that will be done on-line (much like your doctor visits now) is being piloted in schools around the country. One school in the Francis Howell district is trying out the new evaluation system on one teacher and has found the process incredibly time consuming and overly bureaucratic. The principal says he cannot imagine applying this process to all 60 teachers in his school. Such a time consuming process means school boards will not be able to use their own evaluation metrics because there won’t be time and they will get push back from the school principals.

**Data Collection**

* Schools will now be the collection point for data on students.
* The National Education Data Model has 350 data points that they ultimately want collected on every student enrolled in public school. You will hear about this database, called the P20 Longitudinal Data System in our state. DESE has a shortened version of what is to be collected on their website, but the total of data points they are being pressured to collect is available on the NEDM site here. It includes things like religion, family income, medical diagnosis and biometric data.

http://nces.sifinfo.org/datamodel/eiebrowser/techview.aspx?instance=studentElementarySecondary

* MO statute says that schools may only collect data on students to be used within the school to compare student academic progress from year to year. There is tremendous question whether the schools have the legal right to collect the additional information let alone send it into a state run database.
* The state database will be shared with the US Dept of Ed. In 2012 Secretary Duncan redefined the parameters of FERPA to allow this data to be shared with other Federal agencies like Health & Human Services, Labor and Corrections as well as third parties who claim a need to know for educational purposes. They will promise that this data will not contain personally identifiable information on students but, given that they will match students to teachers for the performance evaluations, this statement cannot be accurate. We also know that any database which is available to numerous parties is vulnerable to security breaches.
* Read more about who all will have access to this data here

<http://www.missourieducationwatchdog.com/2012/12/who-benefits-from-data-collection.html>