

Jay P. Greene's Blog

The Greene-Polikoff Wager: An Update

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In 2014, Jay made a wager with education policy wonk Morgan Polikoff regarding how many states would, after 10 years, still be a part of Common Core (defined as having “shared standards with shared high stakes tests-even if split between two tests”). The loser owes the winner a cold beer.

At the time the wager was made, the states had almost unanimously adopted Common Core so Morgan was confident but Jay thought political support for CCSS was a mile wide but an inch deep.

Morgan noted that “At last count, 1 state out of 45 has repealed the standards.” I responded: “I’m sure gay marriage opponents felt similarly triumphant in 2004. How many states have effectively implemented Common Core?” [...]

According to Heritage’s count, 15 states have already refused to join Common Core, paused implementation, or downgraded or withdrawn from participation in national tests. I just need all of these states to continue toward withdrawal from Common Core and 11 more to join them over the next ten years. I like my chances.

Just a few months later, Jay posted an update:

With the withdrawal of Iowa this week from the Smarter Balanced testing group, there are only 26 states that plan to use one of the two national tests to assess their students during the 2014-15 school year. It’s true that 35 states remain part of the two testing consortia and some of the 9 states that have delayed implementation of the common tests may begin using one of them in the next few years. But it’s safe to say that several of those 9 delayed start states will never follow through. And some of the 26 states actually using a common test in 2015 are already making noises about withdrawing. See for example reports coming out of Wisconsin and South Carolina.

If one more state that is currently using one of the common tests drops it than decides to follow through on implementation, I will have won the wager. And we have more than 9 years to see that happen.

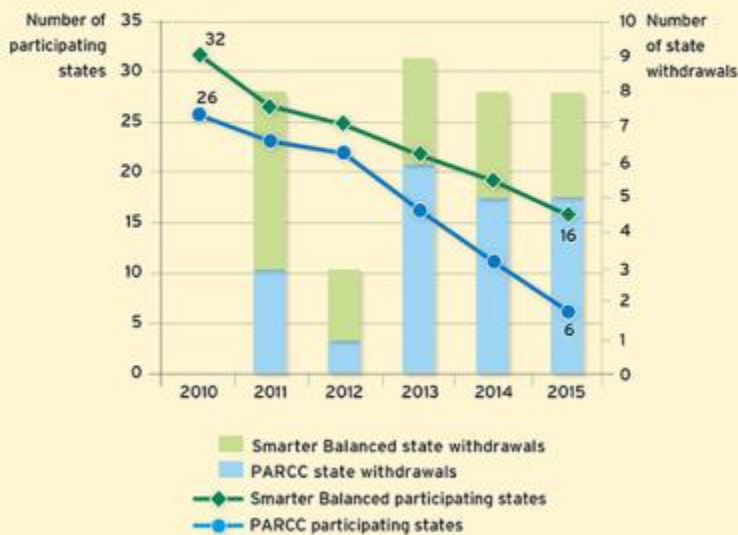
So how is the bet looking two years later? Well put it this way: Jay can probably already taste that beer. From Education Next:

State participation in the consortia declined just as implementation of the new standards and tests was set to begin. The pace of withdrawals quickened over time, particularly for PARCC, which five or six states left every year between 2013 and 2015 (see Figure 1). As of May 2016, just six states planned to implement the PARCC-designed assessment in the 2016-17

academic year. SBAC also faced attrition but fared better and still retains 14 states that plan to use the full test. (That figure includes Iowa, where a legislative task force has overwhelmingly recommended the SBAC assessment, though as of early 2016 state officials had yet to formally accept the recommendation.) By early 2016, 38 states had left one or both consortia, short-circuiting the state-by-state comparability that the tests were designed to deliver (see Figure 2).

State Participation in Testing Consortia Drops Sharply over Time (Figure 1)

In 2010, the Smarter Balanced and PARCC consortia had 32 and 26 member states, respectively, but the consortia steadily lost states in each subsequent year. In contrast, only three states (Indiana, South Carolina, and Oklahoma) have officially revoked the Common Core standards.

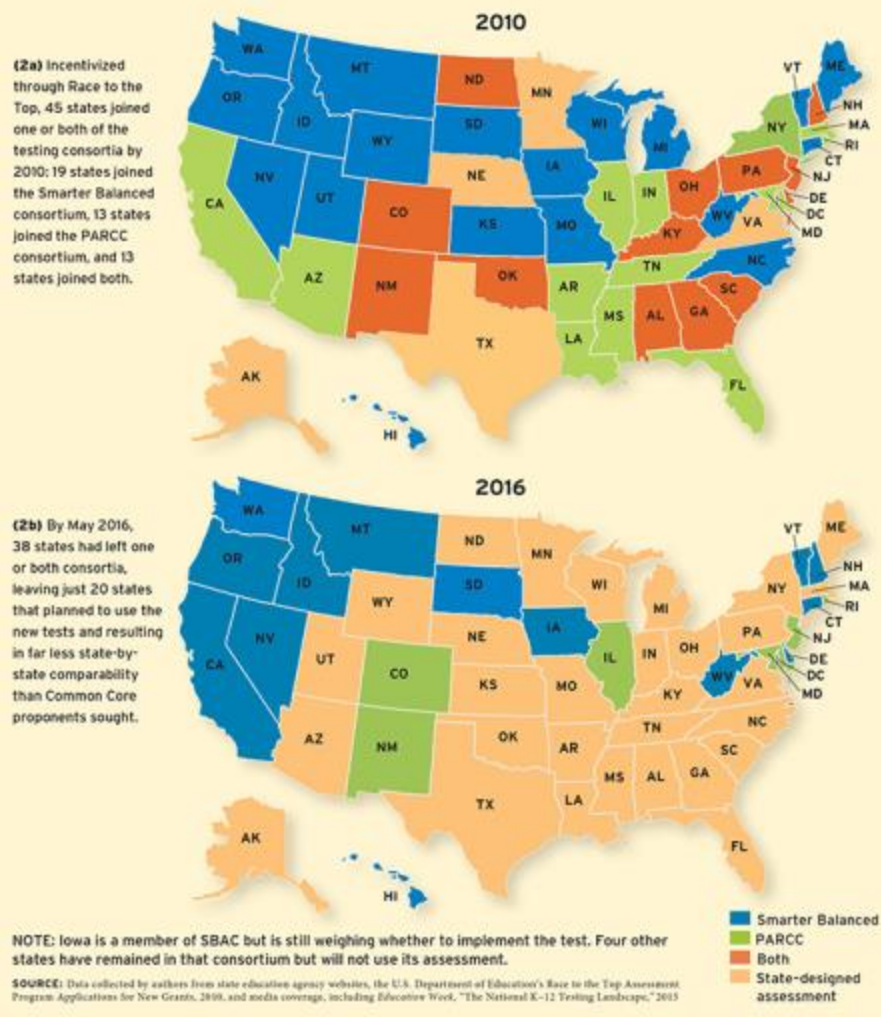


NOTE: States are considered to have withdrawn when either 1) they formally withdraw from participation or 2) they decide to use an alternative, non-consortia-designed assessment.

SOURCE: Data collected by authors from state education agency websites, the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top Performance Assessment Reports for Smarter Balanced and PARCC 2011-2015, and media coverage, including Education Week, "The National K-12 Testing Landscape," 2015

“Oh, how the mighty have fallen!”

Changing Consortia Composition (Figure 2)



Common Core in retreat.

Note that these charts do not reflect the fact that Illinois has just replaced PARCC with a “revamped” version of the SAT for its high school students. Students in grades 3-8 will still take the PARCC, so perhaps Illinois should count as half a state for purposes of the Greene-Polikoff Wager.

Of course, it’s always possible that the remaining CCSS states will work out the kinks, opposition will fade as people get used to the testing regime, and then the political winds will shift again and states will re-enter one of the CCSS testing consortia. A lot can happen in eight years. But there is no denying that Jay was prescient in his read of the situation.

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