

The Sun Times

Paul Rawlings: Common Core

By Paul Rawlings

March 17, 2015

In 2009 the State School Chiefs (CCSCO and National Governors Association (NGA) coordinated a state-led effort to develop the Common Core State Standards a standard which define the knowledge and skills students should gain through their K-12 education in order to graduate high school prepared to succeed in entry-level careers, introductory academic college-courses and workforce training programs. Common Core tests are called Partnership For Assessment Of Readiness For College And Career Assessment (PARCC)

The federal government had no role in creating Common Core. The federal government is barred by law from dictating what is taught or how it is taught in the public school system.

Arkansas is one of the 43 states which adopted the Common Core State Standards. 10 of the 43 states have quit using Common Core tests.

U.S. News & World Report published two articles February 27, 2015 entitled Who Is Fighting Against Common Core and Who Is Fighting For Common Core and The Washington Post on February 26, 2015 published an article entitled The GOP Curriculum. These articles provide information on those who seek to make Common Core a national political issue.

Opponents:

Koch Brothers, Freedom Works, Cato Institute, Republican Senators Marco Rubio, (who claims it is a White House effort to turn the Department of Education into a National School Board) Charles Grassley, Lindsey Graham, and Rand Paul who would abolish the federal Department of Education. Glen Beck who plans to lead a rally in Washington against Common Core says it is a backdoor means for the government to spy on citizens.

Republican presidential candidates Bobby Jindal, Scott Walker, Mike Huckabee, Chris Christie

Supporters:

70% of working teachers according to recent polls conducted by the National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers, Republican presidential candidates Chris Christie 18 months ago, Jeb Bush, and John Kasich. Bill Gates, Michelle Rhee, David Coleman,

Paul Reville, U.S Chamber of Commerce, National Governor's Association and most of its members.

Pamela Byrd National Assessment of Education Progress State Coordinator said the Common Core Standard had been implemented throughout the state's education system and the standards are working. Byrd said "Arkansas was one of two states that scored significantly higher in math and reading on state grade results from 2009-2013."

In an 86 to 1 vote on March 6, 2015 the Arkansas Republican controlled House passed HB1241 to stop using Common-Core assessment tests in the state's schools beginning next year.

On March 10, 2015 I sent an email to Representatives Josh Miller, John Payton and Senator Missy Irvin advising them I was writing an article to be published in The Sun-Times and ask Representatives Miller and Payton to inform me how they voted and why on HB 1241 and ask Senator Irvin how she would vote and why on the bill if it reached the Senate. All were requested to email their answers to me before noon Friday March 13 and none of them responded to my request.

Last month Governor Hutchinson said he would appoint a task force headed by Lt. Governor Tim Griffin to study Common Core. More than 750 people have made application to be on the committee.

In an editorial March 10, 2015 on the PARCC and the old Benchmark test it replaced, The Arkansas Democrat Gazette stated: "But the state has spent \$8 million for this new (PARCC) test. Which by the way, is \$6 million less than Arkansas has spent on the old tests. To sum up the case for the new tests: they're less expensive, of better quality, and better liked by teachers and administrators. So naturally the Arkansas House votes 86 to 1 to toss it out after this year."

Russell Hester, superintendent of the Heber Springs School District for the past six years was educated in the public school system of Pulaski County, Arkansas. Hester earned a BSE degree from South Arkansas University, and a MSE degree from the University of Central Arkansas. Hester has spent 40 years educating young people in Arkansas, 20 as a classroom teacher, 20 as an administrator and has this to say about Common Core and PARCC testing:

- * There is no direct cost to the school district in administering the PARCC test. Funds paid for by the State Department.

- * Our staff administers the test after training

- * I do not know what professional company will read the results. The ADE has contracted with an out of state company,

- * The test results will not be available to us until the late summer, so the results do us very little good for next year's planning.

* The Common Core initiative is a set of standards that the state adopted, so we strive to teach those skills necessary at each grade level.

* If the PARCC test is not given next year, there will always be an accountability document. The benchmark is giving away to PARCC and if PARCC goes away, the state will develop another test.

* The State law says that all students will be tested or if they opt out the students will have to be remediated, so I think there will always be some test for the grades.

* I do support an accountability test. Do I agree with all of the facets of the present process, probably not, but I do think the Core emphasizes the deepest basic learning expectations for our students.

Become an informed citizen on all government issues; participate in your government by voting and conveying your opinion on Common Core and all issues to your elected officials.