

# EDUCATION NEWS

## *Controversy Over Common Core Shows No Signs of Subsiding*

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**Julia Lawrence**

As the adoption of Common Core Curriculum is drawing closer, the critics on both sides of the political divide are [attacking the efforts](#). Although the national standards that became the CC were envisioned as voluntary, after the Obama Administration made their adoption a prerequisite to the further granting of the No Child Left Behind waivers, conservative lawmakers, who saw the CC as federal overreach, [started protesting](#).

One of the first to formally announce the intention to forgo the CC adoption was the [South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley](#), who is encouraging lawmakers to jettison the standards by legislative means. Although the state had already committed to adopting the standards in 2010, Governor Haley feels that these kinds of education policy decisions should be free from federal interference nor should they be the decisions that can be made on South Carolina's behalf by other states.

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan dismissed Haley's concerns as "a conspiracy theory in search of a conspiracy," but the newest obstacle seems to be a recent Brookings Institution paper that disputed the presumed benefits of using a common set of curricula nationwide. Brookings scholar Tom Loveless pointed out that common state standards did little to equalize academic outcomes within the states, and there was little evidence that the trend would be reversed on the national level.

The reaction, he says, was "like putting my hand in a hornet's nest — people do have a strong reaction to the Common Core."

Last month, New York University education historian Diane Ravitch, a vocal Duncan critic, blasted the standards, writing in *The New York Review of Books* that they've never been field-tested. "No one knows whether these standards are good or bad, whether they will improve academic achievement or widen the achievement gap," she said.

The Cato Institute, a Libertarian thinktank, also weighed in, saying that while the resistance to the adoption of the CCS was non-existent when they were truly voluntary, it's not surprising that lawmakers are taken aback when that decision was, for all practical purposes, taken out of their hands. With billions in funding and NCLB waivers tied to their adoption, Common Core is a de facto national curriculum.

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten called those fears "ridiculous." Guidelines around core subjects don't constitute a national curriculum, she said, but are a simple way to boost skills. "We do our kids a disservice when we do not teach (them) to compete in a global economy," she said.

The standards were supposed to be a cooperative effort spearheaded by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers when the drafting of the Common Core Standards was first proposed in 2009. It's unclear which specific incident was the initial spark, but now, with the overheated rhetoric flying on both sides, it seems that something that was designed to improve education nationwide has evolved into another game of political football.