

State School Board Common Core FAQ

1. General issues relating to Utah's core standards

What exactly is the Common Core?

In Utah, the term “Common Core” is limited to only the state level standards for mathematics and English language arts. The Common Core State Standards for Math and English language arts were created through research and input from many education experts, sponsored by the National Governor’s Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and adopted by 45 states. Utah adopted these standards in 2010, making the Common Core standards for Math and English language arts part of the Utah Core Standards. The Common Core is not a program, assessment system, data collection system, a curriculum, nor a federalization of state education programs. Utah’s core educational standards, including the Common Core standards adopted for math and English language arts, are a set of standards—nothing more nor less than the Utah State Board of Education’s expectations for grade-level appropriate knowledge in core subjects. Where some people have become confused is that in some states the Common Core standards may be attached to federal funding or common assessments. This is not the case in Utah, where neither federal funding nor common assessments are attached to the core standards.

Do core standards promote a “one-size-fits-all” approach to education?

Utah’s core standards **are not** used to standardize and inhibit student progress. They are used as standard benchmarks used to help students gauge progress toward fulfilling their individual aspirations. The purpose of Utah’s core standards **is not** to drive everyone to achieve the same specific goals for each student or for them to achieve at the same pace. It is not designed to promote sameness. Teachers are to use the standards much like a physician uses developmental standards to understand and plan for each child’s needs. The standards are used to help teachers understand in a broad manner what individual children should be able to know and do at each grade level. They are used to benchmark and not judge progress. Our goal is to optimize learning for each student. It is hard to know where an individual student needs assistance or advancement if there are no standards to measure their unique progress. Goals without benchmarks, action steps or standards invite mediocrity, sameness, and failure. To reach a goal or destination you must know where you are, where you want to go and how you are going to get there. Without standards you cannot answer critical educational questions about each individual student. How do you become literate? What is mathematics literacy for a Utah student? Measuring individual student progress toward literacy proficiency and mathematics proficiency is impossible without standards.

Standards are tools for individual teachers and individual students. The Utah core standards are intended to help students become innovative, to excel and to compete with their peers. Students need effective communication, literacy, and numeracy skills if they want to be ready to compete in the emerging global marketplace, at a college or university, or in occupational certificate programs after high school. The standards help Utah students and parents understand and acquire the essential knowledge, concepts, and skills within critical content areas often chosen by parents and student. They are like a set of building codes. They help teachers build an individualized curriculum that is solid and designed according to the learning styles and needs of each student. They define what students should know and do to be college and career ready. Utah’s core standards do not dictate the materials, teaching style, or curriculum to be used by the teacher. They do inform what should be taught, but in the context of determining what students know and then responding to their individual needs. If a school or district forces students to learn the same thing at the same time in the same way, they have a major instructional problem not a standards problem. A teacher who teaches page 65 on Monday and then page 66 to everyone on Tuesday, without thought or knowledge of what individuals or groups need, is a technician not a teacher. Differentiation of instruction that embraces diversity, creativity and personal excellence is an essential expectation of all educators. It is, in fact, an educator standard. Failure to teach what kids need to know is usually a preventable instructional tragedy that can be remedied if teachers understand the expected standard.

Utah has had core standards for decades. The Utah Core is to be taught with respect to differences in learning styles, rates, and individual capabilities. Locally-selected textbooks and teacher-produced

materials are used as tools in implementing the core. Local school districts and charter schools control employing teachers and often set locally-determined curriculum, methods and pedagogy to be used in classrooms. State standards help us ensure students are measured against a stable target. They help districts and charter schools develop and provide high quality curriculum and courses. The new standards are based on rigorous post-secondary and career-ready expectations. Data shows that students need literacy and numeracy skills that will help them be ready to compete in the emerging global marketplace. This expectation is just as important for young people who enroll in occupational certificate programs after high school; success in these programs and in on-the-job training requires the skills and knowledge embedded in the core standards. **Local schools and teachers control the curriculum and instruction.** The core standards do not dictate the curriculum or delivery of content. Utah's **core standards and the curricula are not the same.** The curriculum includes content, instructional elements, methods, pedagogy, materials and resources that are used to teach the high standards Utah has adopted. The standards help teachers organize and prepare for instruction just like building codes help an architect prepare a blueprint. Homes built using building standards or codes are not identical. They are built based on the individual needs and values of the owner but still use the code. The curricula used to implement the core standards vary according to district or charter and the individual needs of students. Locally-selected textbooks are used as tools in implementing the core. At a state level, research-based strategies and materials are recommended, not mandated, leaving the final instructional decisions to districts, charter schools, and classroom teachers. Local stakeholders will continue to innovate and make improvements to their curriculum over time. Teachers are not restricted to a specific grade level or timeline of standards. If children need to review or move slower, the teacher is in command. If students need to go faster or further the same applies.

Standards (minimum expectations) vs. curriculum (materials) vs. pedagogy (teaching methods)

By law, the Utah State Board of Education must establish the standards in core subjects for public schools. This is an important distinction from the curriculum and the instructional methods. **Local schools and teachers control the curriculum and instruction.** The core standards do not dictate the curriculum or delivery of content. Utah's **core standards and the curricula are not the same.** The curriculum includes content, instructional elements, methods, pedagogy, materials and resources that are used to teach the high standards Utah has adopted. The standards help teachers organize and prepare for instruction just like building codes help an architect prepare a blueprint. Homes built using building standards or codes are not identical. They are built based on the individual needs and values of the owner but still use the code. The curricula used to implement the core standards vary according to district or charter and the individual needs of students. Locally-selected textbooks are used as tools in implementing the core. At a state level, research-based strategies and materials are recommended, not mandated, leaving the final instructional decisions to districts, charter schools, and classroom teachers. Local stakeholders will continue to innovate and make improvements to their curriculum over time. Teachers are not restricted to a specific grade level or timeline of standards. If children need to review or move slower, the teacher is in command. If students need to go faster or further the same applies.

Is the Common Core the same as the Utah Core?

This is a misunderstanding because sometimes the terms are used interchangeably. Utah has had minimum standards for all core subjects for decades, and the State Board of Education is required by law to establish them. The board regularly reviews and updates those standards every several years. In 2010 the State Board of Education chose to adopt standards for Math and English language arts that were common with most other states. Only the math and English language arts standards are common with other states. The Utah standards for other core subjects are unique to Utah, and there is no desire or effort on the part of the Board to adopt common standards in any other subjects. There is nothing that impedes the State Board of Education from changing or altering its standards – in fact, that would be unconstitutional. If the math and English standards are altered significantly, however, Utah would no longer be able to claim they were “common core” standards for comparison purposes with other states.

Is Utah receiving federal money for the Common Core standards?

This assertion might be based on historical developments or what is happening in other states, but it is NOT the case in Utah. A brief explanation should help: First, the creation and adoption of common standards was not imposed by the federal government, so it cannot be considered “nationalization,” per se. If states voluntarily collaborate and freely choose to participate in the adoption of common standards, that is their

prerogative. Second, there is some understandable concern about strings attached to federal funding – but Utah has not received one penny of federal funding attached to the common core standards. While the US Department of Education offered stimulus grant funding as an incentive to adopt the Common Core State Standards in a program called “Race to the Top,” Utah’s grant applications for such were rejected in March and July 2010. The State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards in math and English language arts in August 2010. At the time of adoption, there was no federal incentive available to Utah. The Board adopted these standards because it believes that they are a substantial improvement in both quality and rigor for Utah school children. Some have erroneously insisted that Utah is still obligated to retain the common core standards, despite the grant rejection. The Utah Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel has determined that such an argument is legally invalid. In fact, federal law expressly rejects any notion that a state or agency can be bound to a federal grant requirement unless the state or agency (1) has been approved for such a grant, and (2) has signed a grant or cooperative agreement with the federal government (Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, 31 USCA 6304-6305). Utah has done neither with respect to the Common Core. Finally, Arne Duncan, the US Secretary of Education, has also written a letter to Governor Gary Herbert, dated March 2012, in which he confirms that Utah retains complete autonomy in determining its core standards and may change them at any time.

Isn't the adoption of Common math and English standards just a slippery slope to the adoption of common core science, social studies, and sex education standards.

The “slippery slope” is a bona-fide fallacy of reasoning as it applies to the Math and English Language Arts standards. There is no movement or desire or intention on the part of the State Board to adopt more standards common to other states in additional subject areas, and the core standards are the sole constitutional prerogative of the Board.

2. Quality of Utah's core standards

Are the Common Core standards worse than the standards Utah had before?

Although there are a few dissenters, most experts agree that in Utah, the Common Core standards were a significant improvement over the previous Math and English Language Arts standards. The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, in a report entitled “The State of State Standards and the Common Core—in 2010,” gave Utah an A- for our 2007 math standards (although the Utah State Legislature’s Education Interim Committee felt these standards were not rigorous enough) and a C for Utah’s English Language Arts standards. Utah has a five-to-seven-year revision cycle for core standards. Revisions are based on the need to ensure that students learn what they need to know to be successful after graduating from high school. Utah began revising the standards in 2007, after these legislative concerns were raised about the rigor of our current standards, and in August of 2010 adopted the Common Core standards in math and English language arts. The Fordham Institute gave the Common Core standards in Math an A- and in English language arts a B+. According to the Fordham Institute, the Common Core standards are comparable or superior to the standards in 48 out of the 50 states. The Fordham Institute report ends with the comment, “Common Core provides admirable focus and explicitly requires standard methods and procedures, enhancements that would benefit Utah’s standards.” These new standards are designed to close the gap that exists for many Utah students – the gap between their academic skills upon graduation vs. the expectations for entering college or a career. Further, the State Board has elicited evaluations of the Common Core standards from the top educators in mathematics and English language arts at our Utah colleges and universities. Each has endorsed the Common Core as an upgrade in quality and rigor, as has the Utah Board of Regents. In an unprecedented move, both ACT and the College Board (SAT) have realigned the college entrance exams to the Common Core because they view these standards as the new “gold standard” for college and career readiness.

Does having common standards lead to dumbing down the standards across the board?

Not at all. The common core standards have been built from the best and highest state standards in the country. They are evidence-based, aligned with college and work expectations, include rigorous content and skills, and are informed by other top performing countries. They were developed in consultation with teachers and parents from across the country so they are also realistic and practical for the classroom. Far from looking for the “lowest common denominator,” these standards are designed to ensure that all

students, regardless of where they live, are learning what they need to know to graduate from high school ready for college or a career. Corestandards.org

Do the English Language Arts standards remove classical literature and require students to read EPA manuals and dishwasher repair manuals?

Critics of the Common Core standards in English language arts claim that the percentages for reading literary and informational texts in English classes are not supported by research, nor by NAEP reading frameworks. However, neither is true. There is a vast amount of research which stresses the need for a greater focus on informational text comprehension, such as “Reading Between the Lines,” Act, Inc. (2006) and “The Case for Informational Texts,” Educational Leadership, Vol. 61, No. 6 (March 2004). 85% of the reading done by adults is of informational texts. Universities and colleges have repeatedly complained that incoming freshman are deficient in their ability to read and comprehend basic informational college texts. In fact, the top nations in language arts all have a much greater focus on informational texts than does the United States. Further, officials at the National Assessment of Progress (NAEP) have stated that a greater focus on informational texts is essential to college and career readiness. In addressing the Common Core standards in English language arts, NAEP has stated the following:

“The Standards aim to align instruction with this framework so that many more students than at present can meet the requirements of college and career readiness. In K–5, the Standards follow NAEP’s lead in balancing with the reading of literature with the reading informational texts, including texts in history/ social studies, science, and technical subjects. In accord with NAEP’s growing emphasis on informational texts in the higher grades, the Standards demand that a significant amount of reading of informational texts take place in and outside the ELA classroom. Fulfilling the Standards for 6–12 ELA requires much greater attention to a specific category of informational text—literary nonfiction—than has been traditional. Because the ELA classroom must focus on literature (stories, drama, and poetry) as well as literary nonfiction, a great deal of informational reading in grades 6–12 must take place in other classes if the NAEP assessment framework is to be matched instructionally. To measure students’ growth toward college and career readiness, assessments aligned with the Standards should adhere to the distribution of texts across grades cited in the NAEP framework.”

Hence, the trend, according to educational experts, is moving toward an emphasis on informational texts. Critics suggest that the Common Core encourages a 70% - 30% split in emphasis on the side of informational texts in secondary English classes and assert that literary works will simply be moved to the side. Such is a misreading of the Common Core standards. The 70% - 30% split is to be across the entire curriculum, inclusive of social studies, math and science. Hence, there is still plenty of room for literary works in English class.

Some have suggested that the informational texts in Common Core come with a specific agenda. In truth, the local districts, charter schools, and individual instructors will decide what informational texts will be read by students. The Common Core standards do not dictate the reading list. However, an appendix to the Common Core standards does give illustrative examples of the types of informational text in each grade level. Among the recommended readings are the US Constitution and the Federalist Papers. In the end, it will be a local decision as to what informational texts are actually read.

Why don't the new math standards teach algebra until 9th grade? And why do they miss so many key math facts?

In Utah, the courses students take in mathematics are no longer designated as Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, etc. This does not mean that these concepts are not being taught, rather, they are being taught in an integrated fashion and typically at an earlier grade level than in previous math sequences. This chart demonstrates how just some of the Algebra concepts are taught at the various grade levels:

Algebra Concepts in the Core

Additionally, parents and teachers should realize standards are a general benchmark, so they may not contain every single skill necessary to be successful. Multiplication tables may not be mentioned specifically by name, but if the standard for mastery includes complex functions requiring memorized

multiplication tables, licensed teachers are aware those skills must be mastered to achieve proficiency. This simple concept has been the source of significant misinformation with some critics insisting the core standards were incomplete. On the contrary, the standards are simplified and provide more flexibility to choose curriculum and to allow high quality instruction to occur. The Common Core math standards in particular are much fewer in number each year, but the expectations for academic rigor are increased significantly, meaning students will learn fewer concepts in greater depth than before. This approach, of course, would accommodate the need to spend appropriate time studying math facts.

There has been some insinuation that Common Core is really “Investigations Math” dressed up in a new package. Such suggestions indicate a fundamental misunderstanding of standards versus pedagogy. Investigations Math is a curriculum. It is a method of teaching mathematics. Investigations Math relies upon the Constructivist theory, which in simple parlance is the concept of critical math thinking. This was one side of the “math wars” that have raged in our nation for decades. The other side is that of Traditional or Algorithmic theory, which is a focus on math facts and formulas. An easy way to consider these two teaching methodologies is that Algorithmists teach that $9 \times 9 = 81$, while Constructivists ask why is $9 \times 9 = 81$. You actually need a combination of both of these teaching methodologies to fully instruct students in mathematics, as is recommended by the National Math Panel. Again, an integrated approach is the best math strategy, a strategy encouraged by the State Board of Education.

Is there any proof the Common Core State Standards are internationally benchmarked?

The mathematics and English language arts standards were based on the foundation laid by states in their decades-long work crafting high-quality education standards. The standards also draw on the most important international models, as well as research and input from numerous sources, including state departments of education, scholars, assessment developers, professional organizations, educators from kindergarten through college, parents, and other members of the public. In their design and content, refined through successive drafts and numerous rounds of feedback, the standards represent a synthesis of the best elements of standards-related work to date and an important advance over that previous work. They have been vetted and endorsed by members of both political parties, companies and foundations led by conservative and liberal owners, and educators from all walks of life. In addition they have been vetted and endorsed by numerous private foundations and educational experts such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the American Statistical Association, the Fordham Foundation, the National PTA, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, the United States Chamber of Commerce, ACT Inc., Aetna, Boeing Co., Dell Inc., IBM, ING, and Intel, to name just a few.

The standards have made careful use of a large and growing body of evidence. The evidence base includes scholarly research, surveys on what skills are required of students entering college and workforce training programs, assessment data identifying college-and career-ready performance, and comparisons to standards from high-performing states and nations. In mathematics, the standards were benchmarked to the following nations: Canada, Belgium, China, Taiwan, Denmark, England, Finland, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and Singapore. Additionally, a study out of Michigan State University, found that the Common Core standards in Mathematics compared favorably to the top performing nations on the TIMSS. Schmidt, “The Common Core State Standards for Mathematics” (Michigan State University 2012). With regard to English language arts, the standards were benchmarked to the following nations: Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Singapore, and the United Kingdom.

A particular standard was accepted only when the best available evidence indicated that its mastery was essential for college and career readiness in a twenty-first-century, globally competitive society.

The following documents note the research (national and international) used in developing and benchmarking the standards:

Mathematics Standards Research Base English Language Arts (ELA) Standards Research Base

Only two states (including Utah) adopted “integrated” Common Core State standards - doesn't that defy the purpose of having common standards?

Opponents to the Common Core standards can't have it both ways: opposing common standards because they don't want Utah to be the same as everyone else, and then crying foul when Utah chooses a different instructional sequence to implement the common standards. Math specialists at the Utah State Office of Education studied the needs of Utah students and the gaps in knowledge that were occurring between high school and college. They recommended using an "integrated" approach to implementing the new standards which has been supported by the State Board of Education and math experts in the state of Utah.

University of Utah emeritus professor, Dr. Hugo Rossi, stated that *"the adoption of the integrated model of the Common Core standards ... provides us with a unique and important opportunity that we should not squander."* He goes on to say that *"the 2007 Utah Core was a strong document... but the new Utah Core Standards are even better. They incorporate the idea of integration of content and reliance on student active involvement in context for understanding."*

3. Concerns about federal intrusion in utah public education

What is the official position of the Utah State Board of Education regarding the role of the federal government in determining public school standards, curriculum and teaching methods?

The State Board of Education believes the federal government should have NO role in determining standards, curriculum, and pedagogy in Utah schools. Currently, the federal government has NO influence in Utah's standards, curriculum, or teaching methods – this includes through the adoption of the Common Core standards in Math and English Language Arts.

How is Utah different from other states that have adopted the Common Core Standards?

First, in Utah, the term common core is not a program, it only refers to a set of minimum standards the State Board of Education has established. In other states where there may be federal funding or common assessments connected to the Common Core State Standards, the initiative might be considered a "program." In Utah, however, no federal funding is connected to our core standards and "programs" are left to the discretion of the local district or charter school. A "program" might be considered a system of teaching materials, testing, teaching methods, and other elements. The State Board of Education is committed to preserving local control and leaving programmatic decisions to the elected and appointed officials at the most responsive levels in the local schools.

Has Utah surrendered its state sovereignty by adopting the "federal" Common Core Standards?

First, the Common Core State Standards are not federal standards, they are state standards. Because they were not developed by the federal government and because they were voluntarily adopted by the states, the term "federal standards" is inaccurate. Even if every state adopted the standards (45 have so far), they would still not qualify as federal standards unless they were imposed by Congress, by the White House, or by the Supreme Court of the United States.

Second, Utah has not surrendered any of its sovereignty. In fact, unlike other states, Utah cut its ties with a federally funded consortia of states that was developing common state assessments. At the request of the Utah State Board of Education, the Utah legislature funded a unique Utah assessment system that will test mastery of Utah's core standards in many subjects – not just Math and English language arts where the standards are common to other states. Utah has simply taken the standards, retained its autonomy, and severed any ties that could have been interpreted to compromise our ability to control our own education in any way.

Is the federal government deciding what my children learn in school? I believe that should be determined at the local level, not by unelected bureaucrats in Washington DC!

Fortunately, the Utah State Board of Education agrees with this sentiment. As it stands now, the Board doesn't even make curriculum decisions in the state. The State Board of Education sets broad standards defining minimum expectations. Local school districts with elected board members and charter schools that parents choose determine the specific programs, textbooks, teaching philosophies, pedagogy (teaching

methods) and make all the decisions that affect classroom learning.

Assertions that the federal OR the state government are dictating textbooks and teaching methods in Utah are false. Those decisions are local – as they should be!

Is it true there is no mechanism to amend the Common Core standards?

Since the Common Core State Standards are a collaborative product of the states, it is obvious that each state cannot unilaterally change the standards. States do have the independent ability to choose their own standards, however, and in Utah there are no restrictions or strings attached to federal money that would prevent that. In fact, the Utah State Board of Education has already amended the English Language Arts standards since they were adopted.

Is it true Utah cannot alter its standards by more than 15%?

This is an incorrect statement. In 2009, while the Common Core standards were being developed, the Common Core Initiative discussed a requirement that 85% of a state's standards in math and English language arts had to consist of the Common Core standards in order for that state to claim its standards were consistent with the Common Core standards. This requirement was referred to as the "15% Rule" and was included in the original Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) entered into by the State Board in May 2009. However, a decision was made by the Common Core Initiative in June 2010 to not include the "15% Rule" in the actual copyright and public license of the Common Core State Standards. You may view the copyright and public license at www.corestandards.org/public-license. The public license served to waive and supersede the MOA. Consequently, there is no legally binding restriction limiting the State Board to alterations of the Utah core standards in math and English language arts by more than 15%. In fact, during an August 2012 meeting of the State Board, the Executive Director of CCSSO, one of the two owners of the copyright, testified that there were no restrictions on amending the Common Core State Standards by individual states in order to customize them to their student populations. You may view this testimony at <http://www.schools.utah.gov/board/Meetings/Minutes/2012/08-03-12.aspx>. Critics have asserted that while the 15% Rule was abandoned by virtue of the public license, the US Department of Education resurrected the 15% Rule as part of NCLB Flexibility Waivers. The waiver obtained by the State of Utah contains no references to the 15% Rule. You can view all of the Utah waiver documents at <http://thetutorreport.com/ses-by-state/utah-waiver/>. In fact, in response to a letter sent on behalf of the State Board by the State Superintendent to the US Department of Education asserting our absolute right to amend our standards, Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan replied to Governor Herbert by letter dated March 2012, wherein he confirmed that Utah has absolute discretion over its educational standards and that no federal law or regulation was inconsistent with that absolute right. The letters are attachments to the May 2012 Utah waiver application which can be viewed at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/eseaflex/approved-requests/ut.pdf>.

Is it true Utah is bound by the "Race to the Top" contract even though the grant was denied?

This claim is a severe twisting of fundamental contract law and has also been debunked by the Utah Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel. If this was true, it would be akin to saying families who are not approved for a mortgage loan are still liable to make house payments for money they never received. This, of course, is unreasonable and untrue. Utah is not bound by anything in its rejected Race To The Top application, and in fact the State Board of Education has declined to apply for subsequent rounds of RTTT grant funding. In fact, federal law forbids the US Department of Education from imposing RTTT requirements on states whose grant applications were rejected.

Is it true Utah is obligated to the Common Core standards because the State Board of Education applied for an ESEA (No Child Left Behind) waiver with common state standards as a qualifying assurance?

It is true that Utah used its adoption of the Common Core standards for Math and English in August 2010 as a qualification for its NCLB Flexibility Waiver, submitted in February 2012. The waiver does not prescribe or control Utah's standards, however. It is the other way around, i.e. Utah's freely adopted standards also allow us to receive a waiver from No Child Left Behind (ESEA). If Utah changes its standards, which it is free to do, it will have to amend its application for the waiver - but that is a separate, non-binding matter. If in the future, the US Department of Education decides not to grant the annual

NCLB Flexibility Waiver to Utah because the State Board has altered its Core standards in such a significant manner as to no longer be consistent with the Common Core State Standards, then the State Board together with the State Legislature will have to decide whether to live within the mandates of NCLB or forfeit federal Title I monies. Such would be a difficult decision, but one with which the State Board is completely cognizant..

Incidentally, the same concerns surfaced when the Utah State Board of Education withdrew its membership in the SBAC (a federally funded consortium developing common core assessments), but Utah was not required to remain as a partner in SBAC as many critics insisted.

What is not well understood is the significant intrusion of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) into public education and why Utah applied for a waiver. NCLB mandates that 100% of all 4th and 8th graders be proficient in math and reading by 2014. Those district and charter public schools which do not satisfy this federal requirement will be subject to various draconian “turnaround models” imposed by the US Department of Education. If states decide to ignore the mandates of NCLB, they risk losing all Title I monies, which are those federal funds used to augment poverty stricken schools. While all agree that the federal mandate is unreasonable and should be modified or eliminated through the reauthorization process, Congress is seven (7) years late in that process. No one thought that the federal mandate would be reached before reauthorization. In order to provide relief, the US Department of Education developed a policy to grant ESEA or NCLB Flexibility Waivers in September 2011. One of the requirements of such a waiver is adoption of the Common Core State Standards. Since Utah had already adopted those standards a year earlier, the choice of the State Board was simple. Do we allow significant federal intrusion into our public schools through the NCLB mandate or do we obtain a waiver to avoid that and use our pre-existing adoption of the Common Core State Standards to do so? The State Board chose the later.

Why did the State Board of Education use Common Core standards (Box A) to qualify for the waiver instead of standards approved by local colleges (Box B)?

Because the State Board of Education adopted the common standards for Math and English Language Arts almost 3 years ago, that option could be used on the waiver without receiving an official vote of support from Utah's higher education institutions. Also, board members were advised by legal counsel during a May 2013 board meeting that the requirement for colleges to approve the academic standards for public K-12 schools would compromise the constitutional authority of the Board of Education to set those standards in what is known as the “non-delegation doctrine.”

4. Common core development process

How were the Common Core State Standards actually developed?

In 2008, the National Governors Association (NGA), which is the association of the fifty (50) elected state governors who often act in concert through their association, together with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), which is the association of the fifty (50) elected and appointed state school superintendents who also typically act in concert through their association, decided to commission a study on how states could remain competitive in the changing global marketplace. That study, entitled “Ensuring US Students Receive a World Class Education,” found that elevating our K-12 educational standards was an important feature of remaining competitive. You can read the report at <http://www.corestandards.org/assets/0812BENCHMARKING.pdf>. In sum, in order to be the best capitalists in the world marketplace, our students needed higher levels of achievement, which starts with educational standards. In March 2009, the NGA and CCSSO formed the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCI). CCI recognized the need to bring the fifty (50) elected and appointed state school boards into the Initiative, as it is the state school boards who actually adopt educational standards for their respective states. This was done through a series of Memorandum of Agreements (MOA). Forty-eight (48) states signed MOAs. Utah signed its MOA in May 2009. You can read about the State Board’s approval of the MOA at <http://www.schools.utah.gov/board/Minutes/2009/090501.aspx>. CCI invited many partners into the Initiative. It became the most diverse group of stakeholders ever assembled in public education, conservatives, liberals and moderates, Republicans and Democrats, from the US Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, Governors Jeb

Bush and Chris Christie to the Gates Foundation. You can read about the participants and their endorsement of the Common Core Initiative at <http://www.corestandards.org/resources/statements-of-support>.

CCI brought together the top minds in content, teaching and research for educational standards in mathematics and English language arts to draft the standards. There were two work teams, one for Math and the other for ELA. The Math Work Team consisted of 52 math and educational professionals, including 18 University Mathematics and Statistics professors from a wide range of institutions – Yale, UC Berkley, Arizona State to name just a few. The ELA Work Team consisted of 50 ELA and educational professionals, including 11 University English and Education professors from a wide range of institutions – Stanford, Northwestern, Michigan and others. Each Work Team had three team leaders who coordinated the input from team members. It was a collaborative and dynamic process. Some critics have suggested that the team leaders were the “principal authors” and the other forty something experts were mere window dressing. Such is an inaccurate statement meant to belittle the process. As in all large collaborative groups, there will be differences of opinion, but the result is a consensus product. Each of these work teams had another group of education professionals to use as a sounding board. These were known as the feedback groups. The Math Feedback Group consisted of 22 math and educational professionals, including 9 University Mathematics and Statistics professors from institutions such as Harvard, Texas, and Johns Hopkins. The ELA Feedback Group consisted of 12 ELA and educational professionals, including 5 University English and Education professors from the likes of Illinois and Florida State. The educational backgrounds of each of these 136 experts is listed at www.corestandards.org/resources/process. Their credentials are impressive and are worthy of inspection. These four groups of experts, who included both elementary and secondary school teachers from across the United States, drafted the standards. They published the draft standards in September 2009 and held open a thirty (30) day public comment period. During that comment period, the Utah State Office of Education and its content experts provided extensive public comment on the standards. After the comment period, the draft standards were revised. Many of the comments from Utah made it into the revised standards. The State Board was updated on a monthly basis on the progress of the standards. USOE continued to make comments as revisions were made. In March 2010, the revised draft standards were subject to another thirty (30) day public comment period. In all, some 10,000 public comments were received. A summary of the public comments are contained at <http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CorePublicFeedback.pdf> Throughout the drafting and revisions, CCI had a Validation Committee reviewing the standards. This Validation Committee acted as the peer reviewers of the standards. There were 28 members of the Validation Committee, which included 5 University Mathematics and Statistics Professors, 7 University English and Education Professors, 5 Educational research scientists, and 3 elementary and secondary school teachers. The educational backgrounds of these experts is also impressive and can be viewed at www.corestandards.org/resources/process. In March and again in May 2010, the State Board entertained public comment at its regularly scheduled meeting wherein members of the public commented on the draft Common Core State Standards and presented the State Board with a petition. You can read the public comments at <http://www.schools.utah.gov/board/Minutes/2010/03-05-10.aspx> and <http://www.schools.utah.gov/board/Minutes/2010/05-07-10.aspx>. The Validation Committee voted 24-4 to approve the standards and thereafter the standards were released in June 2010. You can read the Validation Committee Report at http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CommonCoreReport_6.10.pdf. The State Board reviewed the standards in a special June meeting and opened up a public comment period during July 2010 for Utahans to voice their opinions. The USOE also discussed the standards at various meetings held throughout the state. As noted previously, Utah’s application for Race to the Top grants were rejected and the State Board was notified of such in July 2010. During the State Board meeting on August 6, 2010, the State Board unanimously approved the Common Core standards for Mathematics and English language arts. You can read about the adoption at <http://www.schools.utah.gov/board/Minutes/2010/08-06-10.aspx>. Since that time, the State Board continues to receive public comment on the standards. This led to the recent adoption of a cursive writing standard within the Utah Core standards for ELA.

What is more important, the process or the product?

Actually, both are important. The process was transparent and the product is of high quality. The State Board followed the same process that it normally follows for adopting educational standards. If anything,

the adoption of the Common Core standards was a longer process than is generally afforded, taking approximately 15 months to complete.

How can the Utah State Board of Education insist the Common Core standards were created by states when they are a product of the NGA and the CCSSO in partnership with ACHIEVE – all non-elected, private organizations with agendas of their own?

Critics have a fundamental misunderstanding of the NGA and CCSSO. Both are organizations operated under the direct supervision of state officials. When states work in concert with one another, they generally do so through their associations. Hence, the NGA are the state governors and the CCSSO are the state school superintendents. The agendas of each of these associations are the agendas of the governors and state school officers. In bringing the state school boards on, the Initiative represented all of the elected and appointed state bodies that adopt and control state educational standards. Hence, when CCI is referred to as a state-led effort, it truly is.

Are the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other liberal organizations behind the development of the Common Core?

There are conservative, moderate and liberal organizations that partnered with the state-led effort to develop a model set of high quality, internationally benchmarked standards. Consequently, its easy to cherry pick one organization or another that is in disfavor with one political party or another. Conservatives point to the Gates Foundation, while liberals point to the US Chamber of Commerce. Both gave grants to the CCI. Notwithstanding, neither organization is “behind” the development of the standards. Outside of providing grant monies, these organizations were cheer leaders in supporting the goal of the CCI. An interesting side note is that although the Gates Foundation leans left on most issues, on education issues it has a surprisingly conservative twist. The Gates Foundation is the leading private philanthropic organization behind both the charter school movement and performance pay for teachers.

Why did the Utah State Board of Education approve the Common Core standards when they were not tested first?

The Common Core standards are based upon the “best practices” of the states and top performing countries in the world. The research behind the standards can be viewed on this website under Documents, Utah Core. The individual standards are tried and tested, which is why they are the “best practices.” As newer, better practices and standards present themselves, the State Board will modify its existing standards. Standards are modified on a 5-7 year cycle.

Is it true Utah voted to adopt the Common Core standard before the standards were even finished, just so we could apply for the Obama administration’s “Race to the Top” funds?

No. The State Board did not adopt the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics and English language arts until August 6, 2010. Utah applied for Race to the Top grants twice and was denied twice, once in March 2010 and again in July 2010, before the standards were even adopted. The State Board reviewed the finalized standards when they came out in June 2010, but in truth had been following the development of the standards since September 2009 and received monthly updates from the USOE. Hence, the State Board and its USOE content experts had ample time to review the standards throughout the process and in June and July 2010 prior to the adoption in August. At the time of adoption, Utah had already been eliminated from Race to the Top grants.

Why has there been no legitimate research done on the efficacy of the common core standards?

There has been significant research which underpins the Common Core standards. The research is found at www.corestandards.org and on this website at the Documents tab under Utah Core. Critics continue to make this assertion in the face of actual evidence to the contrary.

Why did the only qualified scholars who worked on developing the standards decide not to approve

them?

Critics have developed a straw man argument to assert that the only legitimate scholars on the Validation Committee were the four dissenters, denigrating the other 24 experts who approved the standards through the peer review process. In doing this, critics suggest that only mathematicians have the proper credentials to determine whether the Common Core math standards are valid. Then the critics suggest a very narrow definition of mathematician – that being University Professors who are actively teaching and have a PhD in Mathematics. Hence, the only “qualified scholar” on the Validation Committee is Dr. Milgram, who voted against the math standards. The critics argument falls on a number of grounds. First, mathematicians are not the only scholars who can determine the validity of math standards. In fact, standards need experts in testing protocols and pedagogy to determine the sequencing of the standards. Second, the definition of a mathematician is not so limited as critics assert. The common definition of a mathematician is one who holds a graduate degree in either mathematics or statistics and works in the field of mathematics. Under a true definition of mathematician, there were 5 other mathematicians on the Validation Committee aside from Dr. Milgram, including a mathematics professor from Taiwan who is an international expert on math standards, a Statistics PhD from MSU who is reported to be the top expert on international math benchmarking in the United States and a top expert on math standards from the University of Georgia who holds a Masters in Mathematics and a PhD in Math Education (pedagogy). Interestingly, there were nine (9) mathematicians who fit the critics standards sitting on the Math Work Team, including one of the authors of the California math standards who worked with Dr. Milgram on those standards and disagrees with Dr. Milgram’s current Common Core analysis. His critique can be found at Hung-His Wu, “Phoenix Rising,” American Educator (Fall 2011).

Why doesn’t the State Board use the “world class” Massachusetts standards in English language arts and Mathematics instead of the Common Core?

In 2001, with the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), an federal organization whose agenda centered on federalizing the public education system in the United States, came to prominence. NAEP was a division of the US Department of Education. NAEP’s governing board is appointed by the US Secretary of Education. In NCLB, NAEP became the measuring post for compliance. States were required to have a representative sample of 4th and 8th graders take NAEP federal tests in math and reading. States were also required to provide NAEP with aggregate student data. NAEP assessments typically have a preamble of 13 questions for 4th and 8th graders about various aspects of their lives. NAEP recently announced that it would begin using the National Education Data Model to revamp those 13 questions. NAEP based its assessments on a series of educational standards which it developed. These NAEP standards became the *de facto* federal education standards. The annual NAEP test results became known as the “Nations Report Card.” While states were not required to adopt the NAEP federal standards, they were required to participate in the testing. Those states that wanted to score well on the NAEP, realigned their state standards to the NAEP federal standards. Those states that resisted the federal intrusion into educational standards, did not score well on NAEP. While NAEP advertised its educational standards as “world class,” other entities such as ACT and the College Board (SAT) chose not to align the college entrance exams to the NAEP federal standards because they did not believe them to be adequate college and career ready standards. Utah did not realign our Utah Core standards to NAEP and, as a result, Utah generally scores in the average range on NAEP tests. Massachusetts, however, decided to completely realign their standards to NAEP. Dr. David Driscoll, Commissioner of Education for Massachusetts (1999 – 2007) has stated “[d]uring the time I was Commissioner, Massachusetts chose NAEP performance standards . . . as our guides in developing our own curriculum frameworks, state assessments and performance standards.” (In Defense of NAEP, Washington Post, Feb 17, 2012). His principal lieutenant in doing this was Dr. Sandra Stotsky. Hence, the Massachusetts standards are substantially the same as the NAEP federal standards. As a result, Massachusetts soon became the top performer on the NAEP assessments. With the advent of the Common Core State Standards, the Massachusetts Board of Education voted to replace its NAEP aligned standards with the Common Core. The Massachusetts Board of Education conducted a Comparative Analysis, doe.mass.edu/candi/commoncore/0111ELAanalysis.pdf, which provided a side-by-side comparison between the ELA standards in Common Core and the Massachusetts 2001 & 2004 standards. The comparison shows significant deficiencies in the Massachusetts 2001 and 2004 standards. The

Massachusetts Board of Education “cited the increased academic rigor and stronger expectations for student performance when it voted 8-0 to adopt the Common Core Standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.” In sum, Utah did not adopt the Massachusetts standards for the same reason we did not realign our Utah Core standards to the NAEP federal standards, we did not believe them to be the best standards for our students. The Common Core standards were clearly superior, which are also the conclusions espoused by ACT, the College Board and the Massachusetts Board of Education.

Why was a cost analysis never completed – and why is it we still don't know how much the Common Core will cost us? Some estimates have been over \$15 Billion!

The State Board has not received any additional monies to adopt the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics and English language arts. The costs of professional development to train teachers to use the Common Core standards is minimal. Prior to budget cuts in recent years, the State Board had \$87 million to use on professional development. The 2014 budget allocates only \$1 million. The State Board has used those monies to put on Core Academies over the summer recess in order to train teachers. We specifically decided to phase in Common Core over five (5) years to alleviate additional costs. There are no Common Core textbooks on the market, but there will be a time when there are. In the past, Utah never had textbooks that were aligned to its Core standards because textbook publishers catered to the big states, like California and Texas. Common Core changed the landscape. We are finding that for the first time Utah is a player in the textbook market. Textbooks, however, will be purchased on the normal purchasing cycle. The cost of technology will be significant, but that is the result of the State Board’s move toward Computer Adaptive Testing and doesn’t really have much to do with the adoption of the Common Core.

Why did the Utah State Board of Education do something so unconstitutional, violating due process – and make an "end run" around the public and Utah's elected representatives?

The State Board is vested by the Utah Constitution with the “supervision and control” of the public education system, including the adoption of educational standards. Hence, it is the purview of the elected State Board to adopt standards. When the State Board approved the MOA in May 2009, its first move was to inform the Utah State Legislature’s Interim Education Committee of the action in June 2009. The State Board has kept the Utah Legislature apprised on all developments along the way with regard to Common Core. The same is true of the Governor. There was no end run around the public, but there were three 30 day public comment periods. The State Board had monthly public updates during the 15 month process and entertained public comment throughout the process. Simply because some critics did not become engaged in the Common Core process until after it was adopted does not equate to a due process violation.

5. Data mining and sharing

What was the purpose of the Utah State Board of Education's resolution 2013-03 regarding data sharing?

The State Board adheres to a strict policy of releasing only aggregate student data to the federal government and other entities. Student level data is **never** released. Notwithstanding such policy, there is a state statute which can be read to require release of some student level data. The State Board has asked the State Legislature to close this privacy loophole. In the past 2013 Legislative Session, the State Board promoted the passage of SB 82 which would have closed the loophole. Unfortunately, the bill did not pass. The State Board issued a Resolution to emphasize to the State Legislature the Board’s commitment to work with it to close the privacy loophole.

With the US Department of Education weakening FERPA, how can we be sure our children's private data will not be shared?

The State Board of Education will not release any student level data to the federal government. Data that is released which fulfills NCLB data information mandates is limited to aggregate student data only.

Is the Common Core part of the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) that will track and share our children's private, personally identifiable information?

Common Core refers to age appropriate educational standards. It is not a database. Utah began collecting and warehousing data to improve its educational system in 1998. In 2007, USOE applied for and received a longitudinal data systems grant from the Bush Administration's Department of Education. This grant did not require the collection of any specific data, but did require that Utah establish a "unique student identifier" in order to safeguard the privacy interests of individual students. In 2009, USOE applied for and received another longitudinal data systems grant to upgrade our system. The Utah Longitudinal Data System does not track data on individual students. Rather it produces aggregate student data for release to the federal government to comply with NCLB, as well as for USOE internal purposes as a means of improving the educational system. The State Board uses such data to determine whether the educational policies currently in place are working.

Is Utah required to collect and share student biometric data, skin temperature readings, DNA swabs, brain scans, MRI procedures, and behavioral tracking?

No. In fact, Utah does not collect any of this information on public school students. Utah does not use the National Education Data Model espoused by the US Department of Education and NAEP.

What data is currently collected by the State of Utah and by the federal government?

Utah collects data on student birth dates, gender, race, special education status, CRT results, ESL, Free & Reduced Lunch status, grades, credits, enrollment dates, school, and district. Utah also collects the following behavioral indicators: graduation data, grades, school discipline, and school attendance. No individual student level data is ever released. Only aggregate data is released.

6. ASSESSMENTS

Why was American Institute of Research (AIR) chosen to create Utah's new assessment system?

AIR was one of many contractors who submitted bids to help create the State Board's computer adaptive assessments, which are replacing the Criterion Reference Tests (CRT) in the Spring of 2014 in Science, Math and English language arts. The committee that reviewed the bids voted 10-1 to award the bid to AIR due to its superior bid proposal.

How can we justify using AIR in light of its liberal agenda and its mission focusing on behavioral research?

While a division of AIR does conduct behavioral research, the division that will be assisting the State Board to create computer adaptive assessments does not. AIR is a recognized leader in developing computer adaptive testing. It is that expertise which will be utilized by the State Board. In selecting contractors through an open bid process, political affiliations or agendas are not considered. As for AIR, it is a non-partisan, non-profit research, assessment, and technical assistance organization founded in 1946, which employs 1,600 staff and is headquartered in Washington, DC. Clientele served by AIR includes the College Board, CISCO Systems, IBM, Verizon, Staples, the Department of Defense and NASA.

How can the Utah State Board of Education guarantee our student assessment data will not be used by AIR for purposes beyond the scope of our contract – including behavioral research?

The AIR contract with the State of Utah requires compliance with all federal, state and local laws and regulations, which is inclusive of the Utah Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (UCA §53A-13-301 & 302 and its implementing regulation, R277-487-5. Further, the State Superintendent elicited from AIR a written commitment not to share any student data outside of this project, in a letter from AIR, dated April 29, 2013.

How will the Utah State Board of Education prevent AIR from using test questions from SBAC or other sources funded by the federal government?

In the past, the USOE has used test questions from many sources on the CRTs. The State Board will continue assure that appropriate care is given to the content of the assessment questions in the new computer adaptive testing system. In addition, a panel of Utah parents will review and approve each question used in the assessments.

How can parents be sure the right people will be appointed to write and review test questions?

All test questions will be reviewed by a panel of 15 Utah parents. Five parents will be selected by the State Board, five parents will be selected by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and five parents will be selected by the President of the Utah State Senate.

How can parents insure test content will be appropriate if the test questions are secret and not available for public inspection?

The purpose of the 15 member panel of parents is to provide a measure of confidence in the appropriateness of the test questions. Any inappropriate questions will be weeded out.