



MUCH ADO

The Cost and Chaos of Replacing Common Core

Of the 46 states that adopted the Common Core State Standards, almost every state has undertaken a review or process to modify the standards. Only Oklahoma and Indiana, however, have fully withdrawn from Common Core standards, resulting in poor outcomes for each. This report outlines the challenges these two states have faced when attempting to dismantle and replace the standards, including the resulting confusion for teachers and significant financial ramifications. The report also evaluates attempts to alter the standards in other states and the real extent to which changes have been made, as well as some of the costs associated with trying to replace or repeal Common Core.

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INTRODUCTION

The Common Core State Standards have become a hot button issue in many states, however only four of the 46 states that adopted the standards have fully repealed them, and only two having actually withdrawn from the standards, with poor results.¹ In most cases, a review reveals distaste for the “Common Core” brand, yet strong support for the standards themselves. As a result, such reviews are often followed by a “rebranding” of the standards and minor substantive changes – usually additions, rather than subtractions. In essence, these states end up with Common Core by another name.

This trend toward rebranding makes sense. States that review Common Core are looking to salve the political issues around the Common Core brand while leaving the standards themselves intact. States that go further pay with millions of dollars spent and years of confusion for teachers.

This report makes the case that the review of standards in New York State should result in new standards that are customized to meet the unique needs of New York students, and remain aligned to the Common Core. It argues that there are at least five lessons for New York from the experience of these other states:

1. *Trying to “repeal” or substantially “replace” Common Core standards would be a waste;*
2. *New “New York” standards must be as or more rigorous than Common Core standards;*
3. *The review process needs to be driven by the State Education Department;*
4. *Classroom teachers must be the driving voices in any revisions; and*
5. *A new name matters.*

Indiana and Oklahoma learned the hard way that while a politically-motivated repeal process is easy, replacing standards is hard. All in, replacing the standards could end up costing the two states just under \$300 million, with Oklahoma spending roughly \$125 million¹ and Indiana approximately \$170 million². And New York serves many more students in many more districts, making the development and implementation of new standards all the more expensive and complex.

¹ West Virginia voted to repeal Common Core in December 2015 and has only begun its process on changing the standards.

“The repeal of the Common Core would be a lowering of standards. Schools, teachers and students have invested a great deal of hard work and the results are positively significant.”

Nancy Ruscio, Superintendent, Homer, NY

Further, chaos ensued in both Indiana and Oklahoma after repealing the standards, creating a nightmarish situation for confused teachers and lowering the bar for students. **Following repeal, Oklahoma reverted to standards which channeled 42 percent of college freshman to remedial classes.**³ In Indiana, standardized testing time ballooned to 12 hours, up from the five the existing Common Core test required.⁴

South Carolina also went to great lengths to repeal Common Core, but its costly repeal process produced a new set of standards that were 90 percent aligned to Common Core, indicating the political rather than educational reasons at the heart of the change.⁵

The West Virginia Board of Education last month repealed the Common Core-based Next Generation Content standards, and has replaced them with what are known as the West Virginia College- and Career-Readiness Standards. Critics are already calling the new standards “Common Core standards rebranded.”⁶

\$170 million

*Amount Spent by **INDIANA** on Repealing Common Core*

\$125 million

*Amount Spent by **OKLAHOMA** on Repealing Common Core*

LESSONS FOR NEW YORK

Across the country, states have undergone long, arduous and political processes to review or, in a few extreme cases, repeal Common Core. With hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars and countless hours of time wasted, all of these processes have or are expected to result in standards that overwhelmingly mirror Common Core. Worse, the uncertainty generated by review and repeal processes is bad for the classroom, putting years of work by teachers, students, parents and communities at risk.

Only Indiana and Oklahoma have attempted to fully repeal the Common Core in any true way, with Oklahoma reverting back to its outdated and inferior standards and Indiana doubling its testing time and developing a complex mix of standards that merge Common Core with its previous standards. But all four states that have repealed Common Core have created years of chaos for students and teachers alike by imposing new standards into classrooms on a regular basis.

There are significant lessons for New York as the state embarks on the challenge of revising the Common Core standards to create New York standards.

First, any effort to use the standards review to “replace” or “repeal” Common Core would be wasted. In the end, as other states have discovered, there is no magic set of new standards to replace Common Core. Instead, the Common Core standards are the rigorous, high standards for math and English Language Arts (ELA).

Second, any new standards must be as high as or higher than the existing Common Core standards. As Oklahoma found out, reverting to old, lower standards is a prescription for not improving education and continuing to leave students unprepared for college and 21st Century careers.

Third, creating expensive new programs to undertake the standards review is a waste of public dollars. The review should be conducted by the governing state education body to ensure consistency and cost effectiveness.

Fourth, teachers must be an integral part of the review process. Modifying standards that teachers have been working to implement for more than four years must not create classroom confusion in the end result. Only classroom teachers who are implementing higher standards can provide the insight and expertise to ensure that any new standards are consistent and build upon the work they have already done.

Fifth, a new name matters. In New York, as in other states, the Common Core name has a more negative than positive brand. In particular, utilizing a name that connotes local development and oversight is working in other states. Many states, including Arizona, Florida, Iowa, and Mississippi, have opted to rename the standards in their respective states after finding widespread support for the standards themselves, though general opposition to the “Common Core” brand.

WHAT REPEAL MEANS FOR CLASSROOMS

The process of repealing Common Core presents similar difficulties for all states replacing standards and starting over, given the cost and complexity of the process. Indiana and Oklahoma, for example, have adopted different approaches to rolling out a new set of standards and yet face similar challenges, specifically two main problems:

1. **Repeal Causes Confusion for Teachers:** Learning and preparing to teach to new education standards is a lengthy and difficult process for teachers. As such, repealing and replacing standards over short periods of time is tough on teachers and does not allow for adequate preparation, which ends up costing students.
2. **Standards & Assessments Must Be Replaced:** Repealing standards is one thing, but actually replacing them is another. States rush to draw up new standards, resulting in a less useful reread of Common Core. Or, the state continues to use the Common Core standards while new ones are designed, leaving teachers in a state of limbo. Either way, a rushed design process results in further confusion for teachers and weaker academic standards for students. Additionally, new standards mean new tests – an equally complex and lengthy process.

The below section looks specifically at how these two challenges play out in “repeal states.”

INDIANA

After adopting Common Core in 2010, Indiana paused implementation in 2013 to conduct a yearlong review, and in March 2014, Indiana Governor Mike Pence signed the bill that made Indiana the first state to fully repeal the Common Core standards.

Many Indiana educators were just getting comfortable with the Common Core standards when the state repealed them and brought in new ones. Indiana educators had little time to prepare to teach to the new standards, which were approved in April 2014 for use the following September, **leaving teachers just over three months to learn their new state standards**, adjust their lesson plans, and prepare for major changes to the state assessments. To put this in perspective, Indiana spent three years preparing to change over to Common Core. Teachers, who would usually have at least a year to transition to new standards, only got a few months after the repeal.

In addition, the new exam, rolled out in 2015, caught parents, teachers and students by surprise when **testing time ballooned to 12 hours** – double that of the previous year. One elementary school principal reportedly said they had no idea that “we should be preparing our students’ stamina for this type of testing.”⁷

According to the education department, the state had to add longer, open-ended questions to the assessments in order to measure new ELA and math standards. However, the real reason is more

complex. Designing effective assessments takes time – traditionally at least two years, leaving one year for piloting and the following year for field-testing before the final version is released. Indiana, however, squeezed this entire process into one year, greatly increasing the length of the test to accommodate all the stages. For example, the state had to include additional questions to make up for any faulty questions and pilot items for the test in years to come, which, in essence, test the test.

“We expected more item complexity to increase, but we really hadn't been told that the duration of the assessment was going to be vastly expanded.”

Scott Smith, Assessment Coordinator, Brownsburg Community School Corporation, IN⁸

The state has now managed to reduce testing time to nine hours, although this remains roughly four hours longer than the exams under Common Core. And ironically, one of the arguments against Common Core was that the state had been over testing students.

Further, Indiana still hadn't released the state assessment results to districts as of December 2015.⁹ Exams are only helpful if teachers, schools and districts can use the results to identify areas for improvement and points of success to improve learning for students. So, delaying the sharing of results defeats the purpose of the exam.

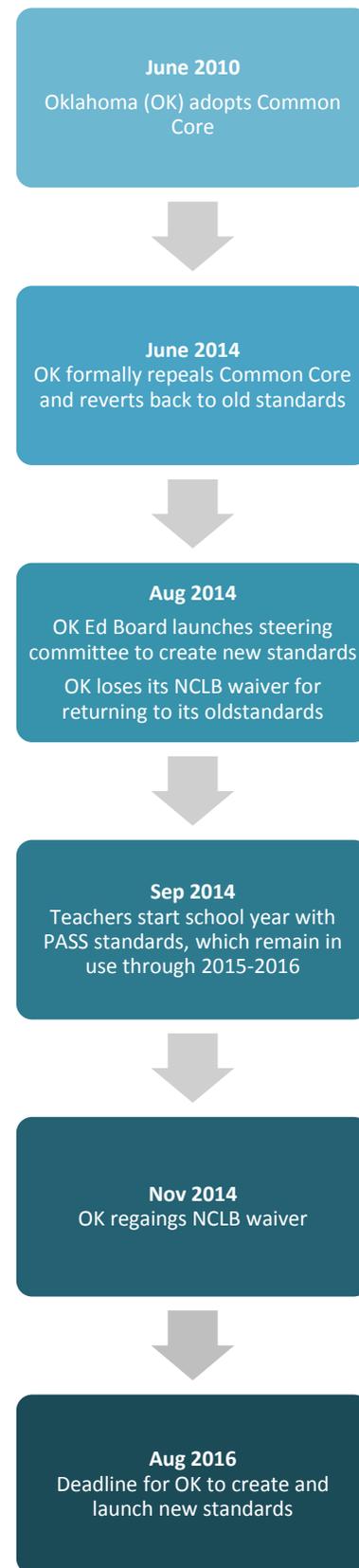
OKLAHOMA

In May 2014, Oklahoma legislators voted to repeal Common Core after only four years. The state is in the process of designing new standards, but in the meantime, Oklahoma schools have returned to their old state standards, known as Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS).

“How are you supposed to plan and prepare when you have so much uncertainty around what you're supposed to teach and how you're supposed to teach it?”

Felix Linden, Eighth Grade Teacher in Oklahoma City¹⁰

As in Indiana, the repeal process in Oklahoma has been challenging, confusing and frustrating for many educators. Teachers were forced to abandon progress made toward implementing Common Core – only to return to their old standards. One assistant superintendent, Gay Washington, recalls that her teachers had only just finished the transition to Common Core when they got word that they would be



returning to the old standards. Washington went on to say: **“We can't go backwards because, for three years, we had gone down a path that we saw was raising the bar, digging deeper.”**¹¹

However, with new standards set for implementation by August 2016, teachers will be forced back to square one once again. In practical terms, this means that they will have to learn two new sets of standards in two years, increasing their workload and causing confusion in the classroom.

“This decision [to repeal] will throw many schools into chaos as they prepare for a new academic year. This decision is not good for Oklahoma’s schools, and it’s not good for Oklahoma’s kids.”

Shawn Hime, Executive Director of the Oklahoma State School Boards Association¹²

Teachers have expressed concern over the PASS standards’ ability to properly prepare students for the SATs and ACTs, tests that will soon be aligned to the Common Core standards. The PASS standards are less rigorous than Common Core, so teachers fear that their students may struggle to achieve on these national exams.¹³ Not only that, but **the PASS standards also do not adequately prepare students for college and careers, with roughly 40 percent of Oklahoma’s high school graduates having to enroll in remedial courses** as college freshman.¹⁴

REALITY OF NEW STANDARDS AND REVIEWS

In every case to date, states that have developed new standards wind up with a version of Common Core by another name. In other states, public reviews of Common Core have turned up dramatic support for the standards themselves. As a result, a handful of states have simply changed the name, “Common Core” and kept the standards themselves. Either way, the states in question have expended great effort and resources on a process which ultimately produces a set of standards that are equal to or lower than what they had before.

INDIANA

Indiana’s new replacement standards are the product of a rushed approach. They were designed by merging portions of Common Core with its previous standards, which a spokesman for the Indiana Department of Education described as being “about half” Common Core and half other sources.¹⁵ In fact, certain standards were taken from Common Core word-for-word. For example, Indiana’s new standards ask students to “listen to or read the arguments of others, decide whether they make sense, and ask useful questions to clarify or improve the arguments.”

However, the new standards have been met with decidedly mixed reviews. Indiana State Education Board Member Andrea Neal called the new standards “**inferior and less rigorous than the Common Core.**”¹⁶ Amy Nichols, a local math specialist, called Indiana’s new standards a “**confusing mess**” for teachers.¹⁷ Specifically, Nichols cited the lack of separation of certain mathematical topics as a major problem.¹⁸

“I don't think this current slapdash effort to create new standards serves anyone, especially kids, very well.”

Joe Gramelspacher, Math Teacher, Crispus Attucks High School, Indianapolis, IN¹⁹

ELA did not fare much better. According to an education specialist, the new standards are less clear than both Common Core and Indiana’s previous state standards.²⁰ For example, the new Indiana standards abandoned Common Core’s “anchor standard” structure, which set forth the foundational college- and career-ready expectations with further explanation underneath. The new standards also failed to provide consistency in how expectations are organized for annual growth within subject areas. Moreover, Indiana’s new standards eliminated all of the introductory and supporting material that was provided in the Common Core standards, meaning the new standards also lack clarity.²¹

While plenty of states have amended the Common Core standards, it is important that efforts are concentrated into strengthening the existing benchmarks rather than diluting them. Indiana falls into the latter category, making the guidelines more difficult for teachers to follow and lowering the benchmark of achievement for students.

OTHER STATES AT A GLANCE

ARIZONA

In 2013, Arizona changed the name of its standards to Arizona’s College and Career Ready Standards.²² In November 2015, the standards subcommittee began its formal review of the standards.²³

FLORIDA

Florida rebranded the Common Core standards under the new name “Next Generation Sunshine State Standards.” Florida leases a majority of its standardized test questions from Utah, a Common Core state.²⁴

IOWA

In December 2013, Iowa changed the name of the standards from Common Core to the “Iowa Core.”²⁵

LOUISIANA

Louisiana is currently undergoing a review to create “Louisiana Standards” that are expected to result in tweaks that largely mirror the Common Core. As part of the public review process, the State Education Department solicited approximately 30,000 comments on Common Core, and all but 2,500 were supportive.²⁶

MISSISSIPPI

In January 2015, the Mississippi State House passed a bill to rename Common Core to the “Mississippi College and Career Ready Standards.”²⁷ And in September 2015, the Education Department announced 1,300 people had participated in the online review of the standards, half of which were teachers. 90% of the 8,500 feedback items submitted supported the particular standard.²⁸

MISSOURI

The proposed standards to replace Common Core in Missouri were up for public review from November 2 to December 2, 2015, during which period critics said they were too similar to Common Core.

NEW JERSEY

Review is currently underway in New Jersey, however Governor Chris Christie’s Study Commission recommended keeping 85% of the standards and sticking with the corresponding state exam (PARCC), meaning that new standards will largely mirror Common Core.

SOUTH CAROLINA

The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee found that the new South Carolina math standards are in 92% alignment with Common Core, and the ELA standards are 89 percent aligned.²⁹

TENNESSEE

Recently, the Governor and legislative leadership launched a standards review committee. The first phase of the review was a six-month-long public review of the Common Core standards, which solicited more than 131,000 reviews of various standards, with 73,000 supporting the standard in question.³⁰

WEST VIRGINIA

Following a public comment period where 251,400 online comments (submitted by more than 4,100 individuals) agreed with the standards, West Virginia has voted to replace Common Core with its own state standards that are based on Common Core.³¹ This means that teachers can continue using the existing learning materials.³²

THE COST OF REPLACING STANDARDS

These new academic standards — even when they closely resemble the Common Core — come at a major cost. Not only are the dollars invested in Common Core and related resources lost, but the development and implementation of new standards and their corresponding assessments is a major financial undertaking. Because, while the cost of writing new standards alone may seem relatively moderate, professional development, textbooks and classroom materials come at a major expense.³³

OKLAHOMA

In Oklahoma, the State Department of Education estimated that one-time **costs of repealing Common Core would be \$1.24 million**, which includes developing and adopting new standards, creating new assessments, and ensuring the new standards do not align with Common Core (a provision of the passed legislation). However, researchers at the Fordham Institute and the Oklahoma Business & Education Coalition **put the cost at \$125 million, due in large part to the need for new textbooks, professional development and a new assessment**, all of which have to align with the new replacement standards.³⁴

The added cost of new standards comes on top of significant investment in recent years. According to an education department spokesman, **the state spent roughly \$2.6 million to implement Common Core between 2010 and 2014.**³⁵ Of this total, approximately \$2.5 million went specifically toward training and professional development — an amount that would have been spent irrespective of Common Core.³⁶ However, teachers will have to undergo all new professional development following the introduction of new standards, rendering all prior training redundant.

“The cost for me in time and training was phenomenally huge. That’s one of the things that made me really sick when we went back to the old standards.”

Tara Fair, Associate Superintendent, Edmond, Oklahoma³⁷

In addition, Oklahoma’s decision to revert to back to PASS, its old, less rigorous standards, was potentially very costly, as it almost cost the state control over a huge portion of its Title I funding. Given that the PASS standards were not “college and career ready,” Oklahoma risked losing its NCLB waiver,³⁸ the loss of which would have cost the state over \$30 million in flexibility over the funds.³⁹ The state had its waiver revoked in June 2014, but was able to have it reinstated by November of that year.

INDIANA

Indiana estimates that it will spend upwards of \$170 million replacing Common Core in the state. The Indiana Department of Education predicts **new standards will cost \$25 million,**⁴⁰ while the

development of **new tests could add an estimated \$20 million.**⁴¹ Further, an estimate by the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency places the **cost of teacher preparation for new Indiana standards at \$125 million.**⁴²

TENNESSEE

In March 2015, Tennessee Representative John Forgety estimated that if the state were to **replace Common Core, it would cost \$4.2 million** over the next four years. This budget included funding for hiring additional staff to design new standards, as well as professional development for teachers. Forgety also allocated only \$200,000 to update the Common Core-aligned test that is currently under development, which is costing the state \$108 million.

“If [Tennessee] decides to switch again ... you’d be walking away from the investment you made from this point.”

Patrick Murphy, Research Director of the Public Policy Institute of California⁴³

This estimate also fails to account for the cost that local districts would incur, such as textbooks and additional professional development for educators. For example, **the Nashville school district spent over \$8.6 million the last time it bought new math textbooks in 2011**, resources that would be redundant under new standards. Similarly, **the more than \$17 million Tennessee spent rolling out Common Core between 2012 and 2014 would also be for naught.**⁴⁴

LOUISIANA

Former Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal spent \$830,000 in taxpayers’ dollars fighting the standards (unsuccessfully) in federal court, and all of these contracts were awarded without bids.⁴⁵ According to Louisiana’s Department of Education, **replacing Common Core would cost the state up to \$25.2 million over the next five years** and place undue strain on local school districts in particular.

However, former Governor Jindal’s efforts to repeal Common Core were repeatedly rebuffed. The State Education Board plans to vote on the standards review committee’s recommendations in February 2016, with the new standards set for implementation starting next August.⁴⁶ Given the limited amount of time, it would cost all the more to ensure teachers are properly acquainted with any major shifts.

METHODOLOGY

This report was compiled by consulting various online resources and New York-based educators to present a comprehensive evaluation of the effects of repealing and/or modifying Common Core State Standards.

ENDNOTES

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