

1 **POLICY: COMMON ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

2 **COMMITTEE: EDUCATION**

3 **TYPE: NCSL POLICY DIRECTIVE DRAFT**

4 State legislators support the voluntary state standards initiatives so long as the
5 initiatives remain voluntary, state-led and state-administered, and so long as the federal
6 government does not overstep its role, and the U.S. Department of Education complies
7 with its statutory authority and programs and does not condition the receipt of federal
8 dollars on state participation in common standards efforts.

9 Past federal attempts to create national standards or a national test have proven
10 partisan, divisive and unsuccessful. Federal legislation creating the U.S. Department of
11 Education prohibits direct federal involvement in a national test. Similar language in
12 NCLB prohibits federal involvement in standards, assessments and curricula. These
13 protections against federal involvement in state issues should be adhered to and
14 continued. It is the position of the National Conference of State Legislatures that there
15 is no legitimate or constructive role for federal involvement in national academic
16 standards or a unified national test.

17 State legislators support the need to improve elementary and secondary education so
18 that all students have access to a challenging and rewarding public education.

19 Students in our schools need rigorous state standards that are anchored in real world
20 demands students will face after high school, that are aligned to K-12 curriculum,
21 assessments, high school graduation requirements, college placement standards and

22 other related policy tools and practices. This can be most readily accomplished through
23 individual state refinement of standards or the voluntary participation of states in joint
24 efforts like the Common Core Initiative led by the National Governors Association and
25 the Council of Chief State School Officers. The Common Core and other consortiums
26 have worked diligently to develop a set of standards in Math and English that will
27 enhance the standards set by many states. It is critical that such standards not
28 represent a step backward for some states.

29 Legislators applaud the efforts and results thus far of these state-led consortia.
30 However, federal actions have contributed to our concerns that this effort may have as
31 its ultimate result a nationalized K-12 system that will not remain voluntary and may
32 have already been compromised by actions of both the state-led consortia and the
33 federal government. Specifically:

- 34 • The federal government required a state commitment to adopt the common
35 standards as an eligibility criterion for federal Race to the Top funds even before
36 the common standards were fully developed, released or endorsed.
- 37 • The federal government has committed \$350 million to develop the common
38 assessments that match up to the common standards, and the Common Core
39 Initiative has acknowledged the need for on-going public support for its activities.
- 40 • The current administration's blueprint for reauthorization of ESEA suggested that
41 Title I funds for disadvantaged children be contingent upon each states'
42 acceptance of a set of voluntary common standards.

- 43 • The federal government has a history of co-opting successful state policy
44 initiatives by effectively making them mandatory through the ‘condition of grant’
45 process.

46 The preceding actions raise concerns that this voluntary, state-led effort will prove too
47 attractive for federal officials to ignore. Therefore, state legislators assert that the U.S.
48 Department of Education should refrain from the actions described above that are in
49 conflict with its statutory authority, and specifically that it does not condition the receipt
50 of federal dollars on state participation in common standard efforts.

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