

1 POLICY: COMMON ACADEMIC STANDARDS

2 COMMITTEE: EDUCATION

3 TYPE: POLICY DIRECTIVE DRAFT

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

10 The federal government's role in K-12 education policy has been greatly expanded by
11 the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act as well as the programs within the
12 American Recovery & Relief Act. These Acts prescribe new and far-reaching
13 procedural, administrative and implementation conditions that states and local school
14 districts must meet as conditions for receipt of those funds. The current federal role is
15 strong on mandating procedural and administrative compliance and weak on successful
16 interventions and rewards for enhanced student performance.

17
18 Some have proposed national standards or tests as a way to address the shortcomings
19 and unintended consequences of NCLB. Past federal **attempts** efforts to create
20 national standards or a national test have been proposed by every administration since
21 the presidency of George H.W. Bush. Each federal attempt has **have** proven partisan,
22 divisive and unsuccessful. Federal **statutory construction in the** legislation creating the

23 U.S. Department of Education prohibits direct federal involvement in a national test.
24 Similar language in NCLB prohibits federal involvement in standards, assessments and
25 curricula. These protections against federal involvement in state issues should be
26 adhered to and continued. It is the position of the National Conference of State
27 Legislatures that there is no legitimate or constructive role for federal involvement in
28 national academic standards or a unified national test.

29
30 ~~The nation's~~ **State legislators support the need to improve elementary and**
31 **secondary education so that all students have access to a challenging and**
32 **rewarding public education. Students in our schools** States need rigorous state
33 standards that are anchored in real world demands students will face after high school,
34 that are aligned to K-12 curriculum, assessments, high school graduation requirements,
35 college placement standards and other related policy tools and practices. This can be
36 most readily accomplished through individual state refinement of standards or the
37 voluntary participation of states in joint efforts like the Common Core Initiative led by the
38 National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The
39 Common Core and other consortiums have worked diligently to develop a set of
40 standards in Math and English that will enhance the standards set by many states, ~~but~~
41 ~~at the same time could be a step backward for some states.~~ **It is critical that such**
42 **standards not represent a step backward for some states.**

43
44 ~~The nation's legislators support the need to improve elementary and secondary~~
45 ~~education so that all students have access to a challenging and rewarding public~~

46 ~~education. Challenging, common academic standards may be an element in a~~
47 ~~successful reform plan but in and of themselves have little significance and no impact~~
48 ~~on student performance according to Russ Whitehurst, formerly Director of the Institute~~
49 ~~for Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education.~~

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51 Legislators applaud the efforts and results thus far of these state-led consortia. At the
52 same time we find it troubling that the professed intention of the leaders of this effort is
53 to advance its focus from standards to assessments, to common curriculum, textbooks
54 and teacher preparation programs — the admitted next logical steps for the effort.

55 **However,** Federal actions have contributed to our concerns that this effort may have as
56 its ultimate goal **result** a nationalized K-12 system that will not remain voluntary and
57 may have already been compromised by actions of both the state-led consortia and the
58 federal government.

59

60 Specifically:

61 The federal government required a state commitment to adopt the common standards
62 as an eligibility criterion for federal Race to the Top funds even before the common
63 standards were fully developed, released or endorsed.

64

65 The federal government has committed \$350 million to develop the common
66 assessments that match up to the common standards, **and the Common Core**
67 **Initiative has acknowledged the need for on-going public support for its activities.**

68

69 The Common Core Initiative, in an April 2010 position document, acknowledged the
70 need for on-going federal support for its activities.

71

72 The current administration's blueprint for reauthorization of ESEA suggested that Title I
73 funds for disadvantaged children be contingent upon each states' acceptance of a set of
74 voluntary common standards.

75

76 The federal government's *has a* history of co-opting successful state policy initiatives by
77 effectively making them mandatory through the 'condition of grant' process.

78

79 The preceding actions *raise concerns* validate the concern that this voluntary, state-led

80 effort will prove too attractive for federal officials to ignore. Therefore, state legislators

81 assert that the U.S. Department of Education should refrain from the actions described

82 above that are in conflict with its statutory authority. ~~Therefore the nation's legislators~~

83 ~~support the voluntary state standards initiatives so long as they *the initiatives* remain~~

84 ~~voluntary, state-led and state-administered and so long as the federal government~~

85 ~~complies with the prohibitions delineated in its charter and its statutory programs and~~

86 ~~*does not condition* not tied to the receipt of federal dollars *on state participation in*~~

87 ~~*standards efforts.*~~