



\$\$

Approximately 13% and 33% of the Council's revenue and 25% and 34% of accounts receivable were provided by U.S. Department of Education grants or contracts for fiscal years 2011 and 2010, respectively.

Garrison, M. (January 23, 2013). The Case for Examining the Political Significance of the Common Core. Retrieved from: <http://www.markgarrison.net/archives/1198>

Yet, it is not so clear that the CCSS is a "federal power grab" — at least in the common understanding of what that would mean. In fact, all four major institutions that directly govern the initiative are non-public, 501c3s. They are: the National Governors Association (NGA), the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and the two assessment apparatuses, the Partnership for Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). While there is no doubt that the power and influence of the USDOE was instrumental in bringing about the CCSS, little direct authority (which must be distinguished from influence) over the CCSS appears to rest with USDOE administrators. Yet, as Race to the Top operates on incentives and is based on granting waivers from NCLB testing requirements on the condition that states comply with Race to the Top initiatives, including the CCSS, an argument can be made that USDOE — an executive body — has actually engaged in law making. So, while USDOE policy may not specify that the USDOE has direct control over curriculum, etc., it might nonetheless represent a significant departure from Constitutionally authored practice.[7] The point is to be open to dynamics that don't fall neatly into the "state's rights" vs. "federal power" framework. Maybe the federal government used (illegally) its power to remove components of the governance of public schools from public authorities at both the federal and state levels?

Thus, one preoccupation will be to isolate the role of the USDOE and other federal authorities in bringing about the CCSS and how these roles change federal power and influence.

But, neither does any substantive power over the initiative reside within the states (which is different from saying some state officials might have substantial power). In fact, at both the federal and state level, there appears to be little role for the legislature. The role of local educational authorities (LEAs) or "local school boards" has been diminished over the last several decades under a variety of auspices (e.g., mayoral control, "control boards" and emergency financial managers, etc.). In the case of the USDOE, congressional approved funds (namely Race to the Top) are being expended free of congressional oversight. State legislatures, likewise, seem to have little role in the CCSS, other than to possibly rubber stamp it as required by Race to the Top application "guidelines" (even if a state legislature did consciously adopt the CCSS, they would have, it appears, legislated themselves out of power!). In fact, the long standing state control over public school curriculum and assessment seems to have largely vanished, at least as it existed in its past forms. The details and significance of this development must also be explored.

And, while the executives of each state constitute the membership of the NGA and CCSSO, and state representatives participate in the governance of the assessment consortia, neither of these organizations seems to exist as a means to represent individual state interests or the interests of the electorate of each state (i.e, they don't operate as units of a federalized system). The nature of these arrangements must also be explored, although, since they are 501c3s, their internal workings are not easily subjected to public study. Of course, that fact alone is politically significant.

So, while the Constitution provided means to both block the tyranny of the majority and the tyranny of a strong central authority (blocks which are now obviously permeable), it seems to have no specific means for limiting the power of non-public power over public affairs (e.g., powerful foundations, a different kind of tyranny of the minority) or for stopping the government from privatizing functions of governance (e.g., turning over the role of a legislature to a 501c3). Given the tremendous concentration of wealth that has occurred over the past three decades, this is a key concern, as concentration of economic power yields concentration of political power. Certainly the role of venture philanthropy (e.g., Gates, Broad) rivals the power of the USDOE in terms of bringing about the CCSSI, power based on accumulation of massive private fortunes.[8]

In this sense, the increasingly dominant role of 501c3s in the sphere of education policy and governance warrants a careful analysis of that category of institution and its original and putatively changing role in the political life of the United States.

Finally, in American political thought, public education — controlled by local and state authorities — was itself given as a bulwark against tyranny, and as a means for “the common man” to counter the political power afforded the economic elite. In this sense, traditional public schools were not only presented as “citizen making” institutions, and as a “great equalizer” and the “balance wheel” of society, they were also given a political function, a means of sustaining republican democracy through the expansion of publicly controlled education for the people at public expense as this in itself was thought to mitigate the extreme accumulation of political and economic power. The political significance of the privatization of a system with such a function must also be analyzed.

National Governors Association

National Governors Association (NGA) was founded in 1908 after governors met with President Theodore Roosevelt to discuss conservation issues. Governors decided to form an association through which they could come together to discuss their mutual concerns and act *collectively* (italics added). In 1967, governors established an Office of State-Federal Relations in Washington, D.C.

Retrieved from: <http://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/NGABROCHURE.PDF>

- **NGA Funding**

State dues fund the association's lobbying, communications, management services, and a portion of general administration activities. NGA's dues-supported staff are organized into five offices that provide cross-cutting services across program areas (executive director, federal relations, management consulting and training, communications, and administration and finance). Retrieved from: <http://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/1010GOVSGUIDENGA.PDF>

Council of Chief State School Officers

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a **nationwide, nonpartisan, and nonprofit membership organization**. The only one of its kind to bring together the top education leaders from every state in the nation. Our nation's chief state school officers are committed to creating a public education system that prepares every child for lifelong learning, work, and citizenship. CCSSO's promise is to lead chiefs and their organizations in this effort by focusing on those state-driven leverage points they are uniquely positioned to address-and increasing their capacity to produce students ready to succeed as productive members of society.

Through **decisive leadership** and *collective state* (italics added) **action**, we are committed to delivering on this promise. Retrieved from:

http://ccsso.org/Who_We_Are/Our_Promise.html

The date of the establishment of the CCSSO is not stated on its website, nor is it stated on the CCSSI website (<http://www.corestandards.org/articles/9-nga-and-ccsso-comment-on-ccssi-governance-suggestions>) but the oldest press release available on that site is dated February 03, 2010. An undated press release describes a partnership established with CCSSO in November 2009. Retrieved from:

http://www.ccsso.org/News_and_Events/Press_Releases/CCSSO_ANNOUNCES_PARTNERSHIP_FOR_NEXT_GENERATION_LEARNING_-_Six_States_Selected_to_Form_Innovation_Labs_to_Transform_Public_Education.html

The Education Data & Information Systems initiative engages in *collective state leadership* and action in three significant areas offering the greatest potential for harnessing the power of information to improve education: (italics added)

- Designing robust and comprehensive state information systems and a consistent, safe, and secure information architecture
 - Developing state capacity and practical resources for accessing, analyzing, and using timely information effectively
- Retrieved from: http://ccsso.org/What_We_Do/Education_Data_and_Information_Systems.html

The Education Workforce initiative focuses on what are arguably the most important factors in student achievement—effective teachers and leaders. CCSSO is calling for states to change the rules, encourage innovation, learn from other sectors, and apply new principles to transform these professions.

CCSSO is the key organization to lead comprehensive change in state education policies (italics added) and practices, as chiefs often *oversee a majority of the components of state human capital systems* (italics added). Through state leadership, collective action, and collaborative partnerships, we are examining every aspect of developing the education workforce through the lens of research, best practices, and policy. Our goal is to create aligned, coherent, and outstanding state systems of educator development and support.

We cannot build and support a stellar education workforce by chance, by staying the course, or by entrusting a small cadre of "stars" to make all the difference. Developing a much larger pool of highly effective educators requires building aligned human resource and development systems for recruiting, preparing, certifying, hiring, supporting, evaluating, retaining, and rewarding educators, and holding them accountable.

CCSSO is responding to these challenges now with work that includes standards for educators and educational leaders, major analyses of professional development effectiveness, and design of an innovative performance review system.

CCSSO is uniquely positioned to spur innovation throughout the education workforce pipeline and system. States share a keen interest and responsibility in improving educator quality and are actively seeking partnerships to transform the many systems that impact the education workforce nationwide.

Retrieved from: http://ccsso.org/What_We_Do/Education_Workforce.html

Garrison, M. (October 5, 2011). The Common Core: Whose Standards are They? Retrieved from: <http://www.markgarrison.net/archives/1103>

This question is being posed from a variety of perspectives. For [example](#), a Tea Party activist noted this:

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (collectively, NGA Center/CCSSO), as the owners of the Common Core State Standards (College- and Career-Readiness Standards and K-12 Standards in English Language Arts and Math), grant this license to the Licensee identified below, subject to the terms set forth herein. The Common Core State Standards are protected by copyright and/or other applicable law, and any use of the Common Core State Standards other than as authorized under this License is prohibited.

And so:

As a parent, where will you go if you feel a change should be made to the ELA or math content to be taught to the students in your neighborhood and community schools? To the school? the local school board? to the state education dept or the state school board? to the federal government? Sorry, it is out their hands. They no longer have control over the content for ELA and math that is to be taught to the students in the states that have adopted the CCSS.

This line of questioning might help explain the choice of language and the administrative mechanisms used to push the standards. If they were national, this notion of ownership would seem counter productive (who owns the American Flag)? If they were federal, clearly they are in the control of the federal government, owned by it, but presumably on behalf of the people as a whole. But they are merely “common” — ushered in and controlled by an “association” of associations that is neither federally constituted nor bound to a state, a “public/private partnership” of government leaders and business interests; an entity that does not report to a legislature or even a defined constituency.

Garrison, M. (January 31, 2013). The Common Core Requires a Governance Structure Fit to Impose the “Student as Product” Mentality. Retrieved from: <http://www.markgarrison.net/archives/1292>

One key aspect of current education reform is to challenge this arrangement, postulating instead that the “challenge” is to first “determine what constitutes an adequate education and then consider, separately, how it ought to be provided.[1] This is “product specification” speak — first design a product (what it is and what it should do) and then find the best manufacturer to “deliver the goods.” This argument is part of efforts to brand “private providers” of “educational services” as serving the “public” (e.g., Educational Management Organizations and Charter Management Organizations, which, by the way, are the best manufacturers of this type of product). It is also part of an effort to justify the rise in power of venture philanthropy as a powerful governing agent.[2] As their funding levels increase (the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation has spent over \$1 billion between 2009 and 2012 on the CCSSI) so does their claim to decide, against public claims.

This raises a key question: Does the form of governance of education — the wide range of ways in which decisions are made about schools and school systems — affect the content of that education? Are decisions about what “constitutes an adequate education” (leaving aside the problematic notion of adequate) affected by who makes those decisions and to whom they account? Does implementation affect the character of what was decided? Current “reformers” seem to be saying, “no.” Public ends, they assert, can more effectively be met by private, self-interested parties.

This thesis is crucial as it underpins current policy, most of which seeks to alter the traditional model of public control: Executives (CEOs, Mayors) should decide, not school boards or even legislatures; “the market place” is a more efficient way to make decisions (public deliberation is inefficient and unable to make “tough choices”); “experts” under the control of venture philanthropy and other forms of “sponsored research” are key ingredients as they recommend the “tough choices.”

Take the example of the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI). Despite propaganda to the contrary,[3] the Standards were not developed by educators or a publicly accountable entity. They were developed by educational trade organizations, business organizations, venture philanthropists, and D.C. political operatives. News reports and the sheer speed with which the Standards were adopted suggest states could not have possibly carried out careful reviews of the CCSSI.

The main governing apparatus for the CCSSI is private in nature, and while it may be subject to some forms of public pressure, it is certainly outside the normal boundaries of local, state or federal control. Neither The National Governors Association nor the Council of Chief State School Officers are directly elected, nor are they as collectives accountable to any publicly elected body.