

# The effect of ccss: common core state standards, charter education and morals res...

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



## **The Effects of CCSS: Common Core State Standards, Charter Education & Morals**

### Introduction

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for educational assessment continues to breed controversy from several perspectives, in terms of its effects on moral values and character development in students. Some educators and opponents of the Common Core State Standards implementations question whether instituting CCSS practices will foster the ideals that prompt students to become productive members of society. Another concern involves its effect on charter education. This overview shall present a literature review embedded within a topical content of conversation. As you get a chance to think about a few of the issues involved, a new matrix of thought will help to inform further research. Therefore, the discussion will help to provide a framework for intelligent inquiry as you peruse correlated materials that may expand upon future research. Inclusion of an Education Development Plan for Research ensues, in addition to research predictions. An explanation why the research question was chosen helps to clarify the direction for further research methods, suggested type of data collection needed, predictions, and recommendations for future contributions to the literature by filling in gaps.

### **Topical Issues Integrating a Literature Review**

Americans have traditionally been a fussy bunch. Politics, law, and religion spanned the gamut for heated debate. But an ongoing fervor over the Common Core State Standards in public education has raised the ire of

many. Does the implementation of the Common Core State Standards strip students of learning good moral values? Apparently there are more questions than answers. Paul Takahashi (2014) reports that Common Core proponents desire the country's student populace to receive more stringent educational requirements to improve critical thinking. According to Takahashi (2014) in an article in the 'Las Vegas Sun' "dozens of concerned citizens and parents" have been squabbling over the matter forcing Nevada lawmakers to hold meetings debating "the pros and cons of the new standards" ("State lawmakers hear pros, cons"). Issues infiltrating the topic include: (a) sexual content in Language Arts, (b) character development and who controls content, (c) other content standards and matters, and (d) confusion, clarification, and charter schools. Some parents worry about sexual content to the extent of a possible influx of pornography in the schools.

First, we take a look at the other side of the argument. It is a bit outrageous that parents might be overly concerned with sexual content found in their children's high school literature when television, music videos, and reality TV are filled with sexualized content - both explicit and subliminal. Some would argue that Disney animated productions harbor a plethora of highly sexualized hidden content in their cartoon movies. Regarding the sexually explicit aspect of CCSS choices for literature recommendation, it appears that parents and some educators are responding with fears of their own. According to an article in the 'Eagle Forum' (2014) the Common Core curriculum at the high-school level may include texts like "Black Swan Green," by David Mitchell or "The Bluest Eye" by Nobel Prize for Literature

Laureate Toni Morrison. The article expresses a fear that the thirteen-year-old boy in 'Black Swan Green' describing his dad's genitals (and a sexual act he saw) as too sexually disturbing for high school audiences. Likewise, Morrison's 'The Bluest Eye' is condemned because the girl-child protagonist had been raped by her father. Despite the fact that Ms. Morrison has conveyed that the novel is not recommended, nor suitable for, elementary school-aged audiences, the condemnation stands without apology. Cristina Garcia's novel, 'Dreaming in Cuban' is also summarily disapproved of for "its overt anti-Americanism," the results in the book being banned from Arizona's Buena High School's curriculum derived from overtly sexually explicit content ("Controversy and porn"). While parents and educators certainly would not want their high-school young adults, or elementary aged children reading pornographic material, does critically acclaimed and beautifully written literature qualify?

Most agree that students should have an opportunity to incorporate the learning of good moral values in their educational curriculums. The above examples of CCSS literature recommendations may be sometimes rejected by teachers or schools. Many would characterize such Americans as grossly hypocritical due to the fact of dance-reality TV shows parading around little prepubescent girls bodies, nationally, dressed in sexually provocative costumes. One solid argument holds that even though the Core has not been explicitly designed to incorporate character education, the creation of modeling ethical values contributing to the kind of responsibly productive adults children might become is worthwhile. Fink (2012) states that such collaboration creates schools and classrooms' culture "rooted in respect,

responsibility and excellence” (“ Common Core Building Moral”).

Nevertheless as Fink (2012) states the Common Core has been passed in all but five U. S. states and does not seek to instill morality, but rather to tout “ high standards that encapsulate the knowledge and skills students need for college, career and civic readiness in a 21st century global society” (“ Common Core Building Moral”). The root of CCSS implementation seeks to improve American youth’s level of literary and mathematics skills with an increased level of rigor. Beyond the specifics of CCSS literary content Language Arts recommendations as too sexy, thus immoral and inappropriate, there is the general complaint that the Core does not moralize at all. Yet the basic idea reflects that students can raise their academic performance and learn to adhere to good manners, and moral principles. One observer agrees that the CCSS does raise the bar for student academic performance. But the same observer, Fink (2012) wonders why the Core fails to outline what students should aspire to “ be like” (“ Common Core Building Moral”). In other words, and echoing one U. S. Department of Education researcher, the concern is that the CCSS does not explicitly integrate character building importance into the program. Many believe that “ character is the important foundation and common denominator that will help students effectively cope with all of these greater demands” (“ Common Core Building Moral”). We live in perilous times and a complex global world of business. Should not moral standards and ethics be more than an implicit feature of the CCSS curriculum? While character development may not be of prime importance to CCSS implementation who controls the content is worthy of examination.

In *Character Education - A Common Goal*, Diane Berreth and Don Ernst discuss the significance of 'character education' and who controls the content of mandated educational content in public schools. Berreth and Ernst (2001) note that up until the time of the article's writing, public schools proactively sought to instill good character and moral behavior into students, in a deliberate effort ("Character Education"). What has happened? These goals at one time were synonymous with getting a good educational background, and "moral development of its youth" deemed a critical piece of the school-parent cooperative relationship ("Character Education"). Who controls content? Who decides? In previous years parents and schools were partners. Berreth and Ernst (2001) recognized that while parents had primary responsibility for teaching moral behavior, the schools certainly were expected to do their share and engage an effort to input "a sense of the importance of moral values" ("Character Education"). Either way the CCSS controversy persists.

Common Core State Standards support continues to erode the concept. Rycik (2014) reports that the fury is coming from both conservative "activists" balking about Federal control over student curriculum and certain educators who are unhappy with how the process was developed in the first place (p. 52). Perhaps the most noteworthy highlight in the Rycik (2014) article, entitled 'Support Continues to Erode for Common Core Standards and Assessments,' is the issue of the prominence of politically powerful computer magnate Bill Gates involvement. The Gates Foundation played a key role in its development, and as an influential supporter Rycik (2014) informs readers its organization "spread money across the political

spectrum, to entities including the big teachers unions, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association” (p. 52).

Neither state nor local groups were left out of the campaign, including taking advantage of access to a platform (audience) directly with President Obama.

The issue involved herein concerns who drives the decision-making over what constitutes quality, and what can be stipulated. Some would argue that while it is true Bill Gates is certainly smart and adept at computer matters, he is not necessarily well-equipped to decide the fate (or hold a heavy weight) of the public educational format for children of an entire nation. The central point of this controversy alone has generated much heated discussion, and inquiry. Obviously CCSS content has been designed for elevated engagement of critical thinking, and an improved re-development of standards – questions and debate still persist.

Perhaps the best way to help explain the idea of CCSS content for critical thinking is to use the famous case of the Scopes Monkey Trial. Groce, Heafner, and O’Connor (2011) discuss the landmark court decision, in which a “ rhetorical debate between religion and science” occurred and became known as the ‘ Trial of the Century’ (p. 108). State-controlled education had to set the standards as to what would be taught in schools. The Christians did not favor going against the Biblical teaching of creation found in the book of Genesis, to endorse a theory of ‘ evolution’ being taught – that propagated human beings’ descendants from monkeys. The accused teacher Scopes, was found guilty in 1925 of teaching human evolution in a public-school format. The point of the Scopes case, as pertains to the CCSS issue, places the discussion to recognize the interdisciplinary nature of content for higher

critical thinking skills. For example, history involves politics and social aspects, thus the CCSS format seeks to deepen students' abilities to reason. In further consideration of the nature of CCSS, particularly from the language arts and critical thinking perspective, a brief review of the California Common Core State Standards are worth noting.

Writing in the Contra Costa Times (2014, August 20) Harrington clarifies the situation. Harrington (2014) explains that many public attitudes opposed the Common Core Standards without really understanding them, and favoring a "strong support for charter schools" ("National Education Poll"). The misconception emerged in confusion over how they functioned. Many Americans were unaware of the CCSS existence, and opposed them because they believed the protocol stunted teachers' ability to be utilize flexible choices in teaching. Also, a majority mistakenly thought that all charter schools were religious and required tuition payments - not true. With all its criticisms the nice thing about the Common Core's protocol is that it improves foundational learning-to-read skills in the K-2 crowd. Moustafa (2014) states in 'Improving the Common Core's Foundational Skills in Reading K-2' the phonics basics are enhanced by coupling the skills to children's cognitive developmental stage - thereby vastly enhancing their initial grasp of reading and comprehension (p. 11). In the midst of all the issues however, it is important to remember the factors of the largest education donor (Bill Gates) and the need to ensure equity in the charter schools.

Ed Finkel writes about the largest donor to education: Bill Gates. Finkel (2012) insinuates that Gates certainly brings a 'pot of gold' to the



educational funding table, especially at a time when “ schools are more strapped financially than ever” (p. 70). But mixing politics with public education can be tricky. Regarding charter schools’ standing and model, allows much flexibility in their educational structure, planning and pioneering ways in which teacher representation can confront district powers. Potter and Kahlenberg (2014) posit that chartering is innovative, and allows founders to “ choose a socioeconomically and racially diverse neighborhood in which to locate the school” (“ Ensuring Equity in Charter Schools”). This approach certain reflects the real-world face of global inhabitants, in terms of student exposure and learning to get along with others.

\*{photo of President Obama and Melinda Gates, courtesy Ed Finkel article}

## **Education Development Plan to Conduct Research**

1. Step One: Identify the goals for professional inquiry of which issues to focus on. These might include corporate donation influence, CCSS public school performance versus charter schools, educator performance data (or satisfaction), etc.
2. Determine specified research activities to support goals. For example, decide plan implementation to include observation, surveys, interviews, or various rubrics of data collection.
3. Integrate university learning and theory to coursework, and action research study, carefully documenting findings, discussion, methods, and results.
4. Identify team members of the research group.
5. Document evidence of progress towards chosen key issue.

## **Research Question:**

What are the key issues that affect Common Core State Standards in terms of decision-making, corporate donors, and outcomes in implementation of comparisons to charter schools?

The reason for choosing this research question is because it is interesting, and leaves room for the graduate researcher to pursue any angle he or she wishes while simultaneously contributing to filling any gaps in the current literature. This topic is currently and constantly unfolding, thus affording the availability of much room to explore the main topic by concentration or focus upon any key issue, or set of correlated issues. The methods of research have been mentioned above. Perhaps the scope of observation might involve classroom involvement to determine teacher satisfaction. This activity could be followed up with interview and anonymous (non-threatening) surveys from teachers. The same might be applied to administrators, in a contrast and comparative fashion for different regions of the country. You may consider different districts, in terms of socioeconomic differences within the same city, county, or state. Gathering and comparing past test scores data, from before the CCSS program was implemented, to after it was in place. In this way, you can see if student performance has improved. You might do the same type of activities for both public and charter schools.

## **Predictions and Expected Outcomes**

The expectation dictates an uncovering of current value showing the outcomes of Common Core State Standards progress in student academic performance, as a comparative in certain states or regional areas of your

choosing. As previously indicated, a regional or city-wide evaluation may uncover which charter schools are implementing any of the CCSS protocols, and which ones are not. A key prediction will indicate teacher and administrator attitudes about corporate donors to the federalized public school program protocol. Another prediction is that you will learn that many people (especially the public and parents) do not understand what Common Core State Standards indicate, and what it may be able to do for their child. Another important prediction is that not all parents will agree that certain literary material, for example in the case of high school language arts material, is vulgar or unduly sexualized. Once again, a non-threatening survey to parents may be useful in this aspect. You will find out which areas of the country (city, or state) are more conservative in moral opinions. You most likely will be able to predict if, for example, there were higher rates of teenage pregnancy that seemed to correlate to the 'sexualized' material at the high-school level in comparison to the statistical data before the implementation of the CCSS program. You will be able to predict parent attitudes as guardians of their children's education and as purveyors of their home-taught morality. You will certainly be able to have the opportunity to gain an understanding of parental attitudes, in terms of how do they view their children's trustworthiness to make good moral decisions and ethical choices as they burgeon into adulthood. You can predict which parents see their children as data-driven, success-driven, content-driven, and the extent (if quantitatively or qualitatively measured properly) of their interest in learning.

## Recommendations:

Focus upon a single, doable area, which can realistically contribute to the current body of literature on the subject.

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