



Now What? Imperatives & Options for “Common Core” Implementation & Governance October 2010

With the release of the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and math, as well as the current assessment-development efforts tied to those standards, much of the U.S. is on the way toward shared academic expectations and measures for K-12 education—a remarkable development. Yet a thousand “next steps” must be thought through and implemented if these standards and assessments are to get real traction and yield real benefits for American kids, schools and educators in the years ahead.

With help from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, we at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute have been considering those steps along with a set of thorny issues that will determine the *long-term* viability of this endeavor. What needs to happen in the next five years? A decade hence, who will be in charge of the common standards-and-testing effort? How will these activities be governed? Paid for? And more.

Below you will find **Jeb Bush’s** responses (in red) to a dozen perplexing questions on the future of the Common Core initiative. The questions are split into two sections, the first focusing on standards and the second on assessments. Responses from additional education experts, along with Fordham’s own October 2010 synthesis and recommendations (by Chester Finn and Mike Petrilli), *Now What? Imperatives & Options for “Common Core” Implementation & Governance*, can be found online at http://edexcellence.net/index.cfm/news_now-what-imperatives-and-options-for-common-core-implementation-and-governance.

(Questionnaires and responses are from June 2010. Some references may be out-dated.)

Jeb Bush

Former Governor of Florida

Governance of the Common Core State Standards

- 1) Who should oversee the ongoing development and revision of the Common Core State Standards over, say, the next twenty years?
 - Does something new need to be created or can existing organizations or structures handle it?

Something new needs to be created. The current coalition led by NGA and CCSSO may not be appropriate as we move into a governance and sustainability phase.

- What's the argument for/against turning this whole thing over to NAGB to run (in addition to NAEP)?

NAGB and NAEP are well run; however, the process for development of common core standards was a voluntary, state-driven process that may not be easily transferred to an existing, more nationalized, quasi-government entity.

- What about letting the ad hoc coalition that got us this far (led by NGA and CCSSO) continue to lead the process?
- How urgent is this? Could the "Common Core" initiative proceed for a time with *no* governance per se, then reconvene the original partners to take stock and determine next steps?

Urgency exists as we move to the common assessment system vs a revision of the newly created standards.

- 2) If it's a new governing body, how should it be constituted? What should be its governance? Members? Selected by whom? Should it include (for example) governors? State chiefs? Legislators? Superintendents of major districts? Teachers? Subject matter experts? Who else?

- Since most people believe it's important to maintain state ownership/leadership of the CCSSI venture going forward, what are the best ways of ensuring this?
- Does it need to be a formal entity or could it be a looser confederation or network?

Some have suggested a formalized multi-state compact or membership organization. A looser network of like-minded states could also work. In a more formalized process, care should be taken to ensure an upward pressure on rigor and high standards.

For example, if a multi-state compact is established where all 50 states (or as many as choose to join) have equal votes for determining revision of standards, there also needs to be a check/balance to ensure policy is not brought down to the lowest common denominator. So, an executive committee whose membership would be determined on outcomes (i.e, top 10 states that show results in student progress, performance, growth with low-performing students) could serve as a veto of decisions that lower standards and rigor.

- 3) How, if at all, should *higher education* be involved in the governance of K-12 standards (and assessments)? How about *employers*? Particularly considering that meeting these standards and passing these assessments should signify "college and career readiness"?
- 4) How can the governing body be constituted to increase the likelihood that it will maintain rigor in the face of political push-back? In other words, how to protect the common standards from getting dumbed-down over time? Is there a role here for something like the "validation committee" that participated in the initial CCSSI process?

Yes, there is a role for a validation committee. See comments above on “executive committee”.

- 5) What roles, if any, should the governing body of the CCSSI initiative play beyond overseeing the ongoing development and revision of the standards? Should it undertake research to determine their validity? Their effectiveness? The fidelity of state and local implementation? How participating states handle the “additional 15 %”? Should it undertake any implementation activities itself? Developing curriculum, for example? Monitoring curricular alignment with the standards? Designing instructional materials? Developing professional development modules? Others? If the CCSSI governing body doesn’t oversee these activities, who should (particularly if any of this is to be done in a “common” way)?

Markets and other nationally interested groups like Fordham could initially serve these roles.

- 6) How should this be paid for going forward? If not by the federal government, then by whom? If by states, how would that work? If by the federal government, what should be the relationship of the government to the common standards’ governing body?

If a multi-state compact, then member states could pay dues.

- 7) What other comments or suggestions do you have that might be considered for the long-term governance of the common standards?

Governance of the Common Core State Assessments

- 8) What are the governance implications of finding ourselves with more than one set of assessments aligned to the common standards? Will each successful “consortium” simply govern itself over the long haul? What should those governing bodies look like? How, if at all, should they relate to the governing body of the Common Core *standards*?

There are two major common core assessment consortia that are moving in similar, yet different directions. Let the two groups continue to define and govern themselves.

- 9) What roles should the assessment consortia play, beyond developing and updating the test specifications? Administering the tests over the long run? Ensuring test security? Setting guidelines for participation of special education students and English language learners? Setting “cut scores”? Publishing school-by-school results? Rating schools based on the results? Others? If the assessment consortia don’t oversee these activities, who should (particularly if any of this is to be done in a “common” way)?

The assessment consortia should develop policies on test administration, test security, item data banks, technical quality of questions, etc. They should not get involved in rating schools. Florida has a robust and proven school grading system. States should not be required to change their policies for application of the data within their accountability systems.

- 10) If it turns out that only one assessment consortium wins the “Race to the Test” competition—or that states eventually opt for a single new assessment system—should its governing body be merged with that of the common standards? Why or why not?

No. The development of standards and development/administration of the assessments should be separate activities.

- 11) How should the assessments be paid for going forward? If not by the federal government, then by whom? If by states, how would that work? If by the federal government, what should be its relationship to the assessment consortia?

If done right, common shared assessments should save states money on their current assessment systems. The federal government should pay for the cost of federally-required assessments.

- 12) What other comments or suggestions do you have that might be considered for the governance of the common assessments?