



# THE VOTER

**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CENTRAL YAVAPAI COUNTY**

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SATURDAY, JANUARY 3, 2015



**COMMON CORE**  
STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE

PREPARING AMERICA'S STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE & CAREER



## Educators Examine New Approach in Forum

- Not a federal government initiative or mandate.
- Begun by the National Governor's Association, Common Core Standards Initiative and the Council of Chief State School Officers in 2010.
- Objective: to bring more alignment, rigor, and consistency to student proficiency,
- and to foster improvement in college and career readiness across the nation.

Teachers and administrators will discuss the new rules of teaching, the complications and struggles of reaching those standards and why this is the path Arizona is taking to improve learning.

Presented by  
League of Women Voters®  
of Central Yavapai County

Saturday, January 3, 2015  
Las Fuentes Retirement Village  
9:00 a.m. for coffee  
Program: 9:30 a.m. to 11:15



### The Panelists

Tim Carter  
Yavapai County School  
Superintendent  
MA, Educational Leadership

Donna Davis  
Senior Community  
Mobilizer,  
Expect More Arizona

Maureen Erickson  
President of Prescott  
USD Governing Board  
Education Doctorate

Billie Orr  
Past Associate  
Superintendent at the  
Arizona Department of  
Education  
Education Doctorate

**PUBLIC WELCOME!**



**Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Thank you all for the donations we received in response to our fundraising letter. It is exciting to open the mailbox to so many envelopes! We want to provide the process to keep our membership engaged – what is going on in the community that you would like to see the league be more involved and visible? How can we make that happen? Our February 7 meeting on Program Planning is a time for membership to get together and discuss these very things. Our board will be meeting on January 6 to plan the details for that meeting - be on the lookout for The Voter later in January – and plan to attend!**

**This holiday season, I'd like to share one of my favorite "messages" I have received over the years:**

### **A Thousand Marbles**

The older I get, the more I enjoy Saturday mornings. Perhaps it's the quiet solitude that comes with being the first to rise, or maybe it's the unbounded joy of not having to be at work. Either way, the first few hours of a Saturday morning are most enjoyable.

A few weeks ago, I was shuffling toward the backyard patio with a steaming cup of coffee in one hand and the morning paper in the other. What began as a typical Saturday morning, turned into one of those lessons that life seems to hand you from time to time. Let me tell you about it.

I turned the dial up to listen to a Saturday morning talk show. I heard an older sounding gentleman, with a golden voice. You know the kind, he sounded like he should be in the broadcasting business. He was telling whoever he was talking with something about "a thousand marbles".

I was intrigued and stopped to listen to what he had to say...

"Well, Tom, it sure sounds like you're busy with your job. I'm sure they pay you well, but it's a shame you have to be away from home and your family so much. Hard to believe a young fellow should have to work sixty or seventy hours a week to make ends meet. Too bad you missed your daughter's dance recital."

He continued, "Let me tell you something Tom, something that has helped me keep a good perspective on my own priorities."

And that's when he began to explain his theory of a "thousand marbles." "You see, I sat down one day and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about seventy-five years. I know, some live more and some live less, but on average, folks live about seventy-five years."

"Now then, I multiplied 75 times 52 and I came up with 3900 which is the number of Saturdays that the average person has in their entire lifetime.

Now stick with me Tom, I'm getting to the important part."

"It took me until I was fifty-five years old to think about all this in any detail", he went on, "and by that time I had lived through over twenty-eight hundred Saturdays. I got to thinking that if I lived to be seventy-five, I only had about a thousand of them left to enjoy."

"So I went to a toy store and bought every single marble they had. I ended up having to visit three toy stores to round-up 1000 marbles. I took them home and put them inside of a large, clear plastic container right here in the shack next to my gear. Every Saturday since then, I have taken one marble out and thrown it away."

"I found that by watching the marbles diminish, I focused more on the really important things in life. There is nothing like watching your time here on this earth run out to help get your priorities straight."

"Now let me tell you one last thing before I sign-off with you and take my lovely wife out for breakfast. This morning, I took the very last marble out of the container. I figure if I make it until next Saturday then I have been given a little extra time. And the one thing we can all use is a little more time."

"It was nice to meet you Tom, I hope you spend more time with your family, and I hope to meet you again."

You could have heard a pin drop on the radio when this fellow signed off. I guess he gave us all a lot to think about. I had planned to work that morning. Instead, I went upstairs and woke my wife up with a kiss. "C'mon honey, I'm taking you and the kids to breakfast."

"What brought this on?" she asked with a smile. "Oh, nothing special, it's just been a while since we spent a Saturday together with the kids. Hey, can we stop at a toy store while we're out? I need to buy some marbles."

## Common Core Standards: The Good, The Bad or The Ugly?

Arizona's new Superintendent of Public Instruction Diane Douglas ran her campaign on one issue, the repeal of the Common Core Educational Standards. Our new governor has said he will revisit the issue.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative was initiated by the National Governor's Association, Common Core Standards Initiative, and the Council of Chief State School Officers in 2010 in an effort to bring more alignment, rigor, and consistency to student proficiency and to foster improvement in college-and career readiness across the nation. It was not a federal government initiative.

What could be wrong with having information about how schools perform against common standards throughout the US?

Do we not want to know how AZ students are doing?

How would common core standards be used?

What are the current sources of academic standards and student achievement?

Is there funding for testing, or is this "another unfunded mandate"?

**Join the Central Yavapai County League of Women Voters on Saturday, January 3rd to hear the arguments for and against adopting common educational standards for grades K-12. Our host is Las Fuentes Resort Village 1035 Scott Drive Prescott. 9:00 AM Coffee Program 9:30 - 11:15. The community is welcome.**

Speakers:

### **Maureen Erickson, ED.D**

Prescott Unified School District Governing Board, President, Education Doctorate, George Washington University. Thirty-two years teaching in elementary, secondary and graduate schools  
Extensive background in testing, program development, program evaluation and business-industry linkages with education.

### **Billie Orr, ED.D**

Past Associate Superintendent at the Arizona Department of Education where she oversaw the development and adoption of the original Arizona Academic Standards from 1996 - 2000. During the first three years of President George W. Bush's first term in office, she worked on education reform issues in Washington, DC. Past experience teaching in Phoenix and Virginia and Principal of a Kiva School in Scottsdale.

### **Tim Carter, MA, Educational Leadership; Yavapai County School Superintendent**

Past Principal Prescott High School. Faculty Yavapai College and School of Law and Finance University of Phoenix. Tim was selected to join the North Central Accrediting Association's Circle of Excellence in 2001, has been recognized with the Robert Taft and Melvin Jones Fellowships. He was inducted into the Arizona High School Coaches Hall of Fame, and was selected as the 2003 Arizona School Administrator of the Year. He has recently served as the President of the Arizona Association of Counties and serves on their Board of Directors. He was honoured by the Capitol Times, as the 2010 Educational Leader of the Year for Public Policy and as the outstanding JTED/CTE Policy Maker of the Year in 2013 and 2014.

### **Donna Davis, Senior Community Organizer, Expect More Arizona**

Donna has been with Expect More Arizona since 2010 and has helped the organization reach more than 12,000 individuals with the message of world-class excellence for all. She has been a member of the Governor's Workforce Policy Council, as well as the Arizona Commission on Service and Volunteerism and is a graduate of Leadership West, Class 3.



## Common Core Standards and Assessments

By Janelle L. Rivers, PhD. The full article with references is available at [www.LWV.org](http://www.LWV.org). Additional information is available at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).

Introduction: In order to provide background information for the consensus process undertaken by the League of Women Voters, this paper summarizes efforts to improve consistency in academic expectations, assessment procedures, achievement standards, evaluation practices and accountability systems across the nation.

### **What are the current sources of information about academic standards and student achievement in the United States?**

Students who move from one part of the United States to another during their K-12 school careers are likely to encounter substantial variations in curriculum. Standards for student performance vary widely by state. States publish annual reports of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), required by federal law, but the meaning of “proficient” in those reports can vary widely from one state to another.

The tradition of local governance has led to inconsistent requirements and standards for student performance across the country. In 2010, the United States did not have a consistent set of academic standards for grades K-12. In fact, even high school graduation requirements vary widely across the 50 states (Achieve, 2010). If state standards vary widely, then opportunities for learning, expectations for achievement and standards for performance will depend upon where students happen to live.

Educational expectations of employers have increased steadily over the past half-century, and students who live in areas that continue to hold low expectations may not be prepared to compete in a global economy.

### **What attempts have been made to create common standards?**

Early efforts to foster development of national standards and a related system of assessments in the core subject areas began in 1992 through awarding of grants to a dozen national organizations. Now, the implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) has created a 50-states-and-50-tests environment in public education.

Neither of these efforts brought about the hoped-for consensus to bring equity, efficiency and higher expectations to K-12 education in the United States. Instead, each state has been allowed to develop its own tests and standards, which were approved by the U.S. Department of Education.

Similarly, at the end of high school, data from college admissions tests (ACT, 2010) reveal variations among states in expectations and performance resulting in a state-to-state range in the percent of students who met college readiness standards that varied from 10 percent to 37 percent in the 2009 data.

### **What is the Common Core State Standards Initiative?**

In an effort to bring more alignment, rigor, and consistency to student ‘proficiency’ and to foster improvement in college-and-career readiness across the nation, the National Governor’s Association (NGA), Common Core Standards Initiative 2010 and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) initiated the Common Core Standards Initiative (CCSI).

It is important to note that this was a collaborative effort among groups with state representation; this was not a federal government initiative. The developers (CCSI, 2010) collaborated with teachers,

school administrators and experts, and then took into account over 10,000 public comments in order to develop standards that would provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare students for college and the workforce. Forty-eight states and three U.S. territories supported the initiative, as did many organizations; however, Alaska and Texas did not participate (NGA, 2009). The final report was issued on June 2, 2010 (NGA, 2010).

The current standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics are posted on the Common Core Standards Initiative's website. Anchor standards for College and Career Readiness (CCR) in reading, writing, speaking, listening, language and mathematics were developed first. The K-12 Standards provide grade-specific targets that lead toward attainment of the CCR standards in each subject area. The current Standards include literacy standards for science, social studies and technical subjects for grades 6-12. Consensus for content standards in science and social studies had not been developed as of winter 2010 (CCSI, 2010).

The U.S. Department of Education has not required adoption of the standards as a condition of eligibility for federal funds. However, states that chose to apply for the competitive grant funds associated with the Barack Obama administration's Race to the Top (RTTT) program were required to adopt the Common Core (U. S. Department of Education (USDE, 2009

## **What are the arguments for and against adopting common educational standards for grades K-12?**

To answer the frequently asked question of why we need nation-wide standards for grades K-12, the Common Core Standards Initiative (CCSI, 2010) asserts, "We need standards to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. Common standards will help ensure that students are receiving a high quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state. Common standards will provide a greater opportunity to share experiences and best practices within and across states that will improve our ability to best serve the needs of students.

Standards do not tell teachers how to teach, but they do help teachers figure out the knowledge and skills their students should have so that teachers can build the best lessons and environments for their classrooms. Standards also help students and parents by setting clear and realistic goals for success. Standards are a first step – a key building block – in providing our young people with a high-quality education that will prepare them for success in college and work. Of course, standards are not the only thing that is needed for our children's success, but they provide an accessible roadmap for our teachers, parents, and students."

Early childhood experts (Gerwertz, 2010), focused on development of children from kindergarten through third grade, have varied in their degree of support for the standards. Some saw value in having a common set of expectations, while others worried that the standards may be too narrow or that important standards could be misused. The strongest arguments against adopting the Common Core Standards for K-12 seem to center on two issues: (1) the cost and difficulty of changing the existing curriculum and assessments and (2) the sovereignty of states in issues related to education.

## **How do content and rigor of state standards compare with the Common Core?**

The suggestion that state standards are likely to be more rigorous than the Common Core Standards has been thoroughly evaluated in a 373-page report from the Fordham Institute (2010). In only three of 102 comparisons were the state standards judged to be more rigorous than the Common Core.

## **Would rigorous standards improve achievement?**

A 2009 study published by the Brookings Institute concluded that there was no statistical association between ratings of the quality of state standards and state scores on NAEP. In fact, it is interesting to note that some of the low-performing states have some of the most rigorous standards. The explanation offered for this discrepant finding is that “high-quality common standards may affect student achievement only in a system in which there are also aligned assessments, aligned curriculum, accountability for educators, accountability for students, aligned professional development, managerial autonomy for school leaders, and teachers who are drawn from the best and brightest, and so on.”

This finding echoes the concerns of educators and decision makers who understand that improvement occurs only when standards are effectively implemented in conjunction with other aspects of the educational system, such as curriculum and assessment. Teachers will need professional development to help them adjust instructional expectations and develop classroom assessments that will accurately reflect the focus of the standards. In order to have a positive impact, the Common Core standards must be translated into action in classrooms, assessed appropriately and reflected in published results from accountability systems.

## **How will the Common Core be assessed?**

Updated accountability systems will require new standardized criterion-referenced tests, which do measure mastery of a curriculum that is based on the Common Core. The federal government is not planning a national test for this purpose. Instead, two groups of states have combined resources to create options for assessing the common core. (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), which consists of 26 states and SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), which consists of 31 states. The development contracts call for both PARCC and SBAC systems to be ready for implementation by the 2014-2015 school year.

## **How would scores from Common-Core assessments be used?**

The developers of the Common-Core assessments have described ways that teachers could use the resulting information. Providing student achievement reports in a timely manner would be only one step in making use of test results. Staff development activities for teachers and administrators would have to address appropriate and inappropriate uses of score reports and help teachers find ways to use the resulting information to adjust instruction. Training teachers and administrators to interpret and use the score report information is important to the quality of implementation of the Common Core.

## **What is the role of the federal government with respect to accountability?**

Since 1969, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2011) has reported results from NAEP, which is also known as the Nation’s Report Card. NAEP has conducted periodic national assessments in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography and other subjects. In 1990, NAEP began conducting and reporting results from voluntary state-level assessments (NCES, 2010). Since the NCLB reauthorization of the ESEA in 2001, states that receive Title I funding have been required to participate in state NAEP in reading and mathematics at grades 4 and 8 every two years.

Schools that consistently fail to meet their targets face a series of increasingly onerous sanctions including being required to allow students to transfer to successful schools and paying for their transportation, offering tutoring at public expense, and eventually restructuring the school. Options for restructuring schools include converting to a charter school, replacing the principal and staff, and relinquishing control to private management or the state.

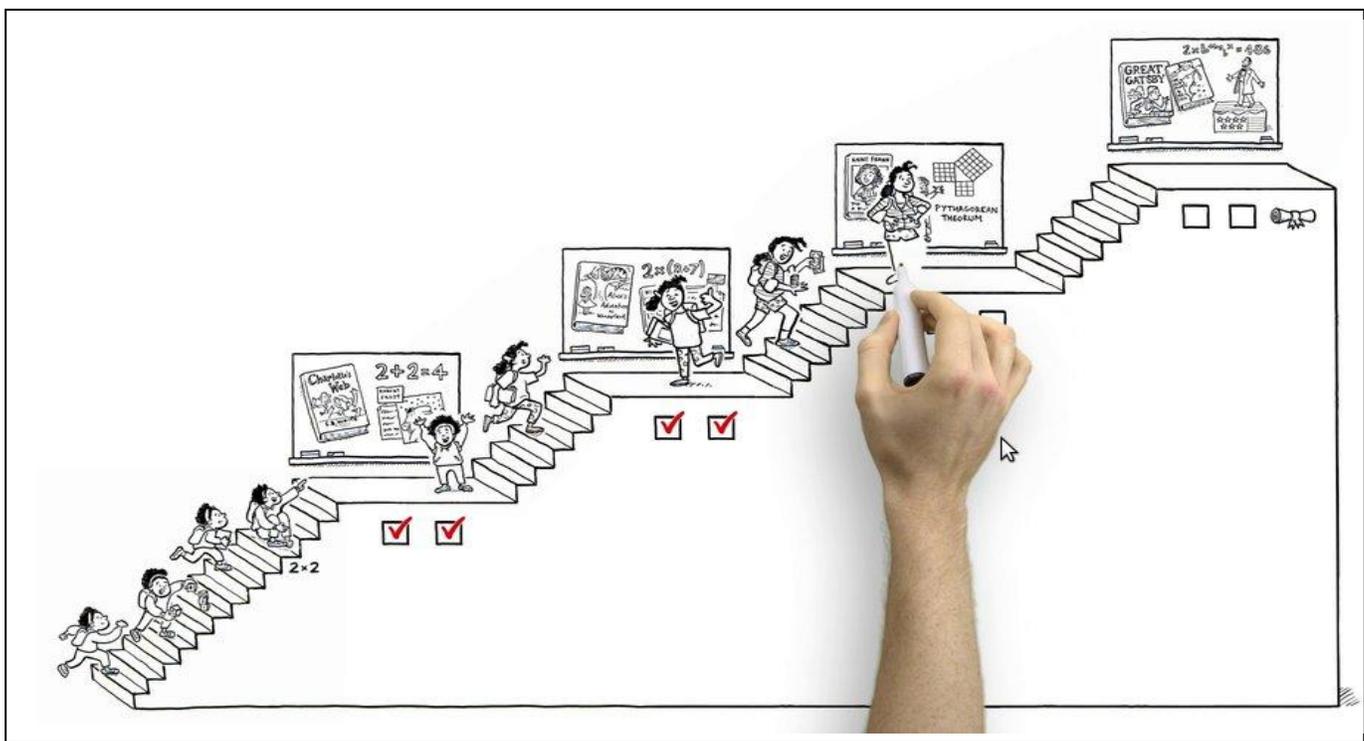
There is not much evidence to support the effectiveness of any of these restructuring options (Ravitch, 104-105). The blueprint for reauthorization of the ESEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2010a) has proposed modifying the state-by-state accountability measures by reporting graduation rates and measures of academic growth in addition to student academic achievement.

### What happens next?

(As of June 2014, [43 states](#), the Department of Defense Education Activity, Washington D.C., Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands have adopted the CCSS in ELA/literacy and math. They are now in the process of implementing the standards locally.) State agencies have begun to develop implementation plans, but many teachers and administrators have had little or no exposure to the standards. The media has indicated that there is considerable interest in using test scores as part of evaluation and accountability systems, and professional measurement experts have agreed to collaborate on revised recommendations for appropriate test construction and appropriate uses of resulting scores. Still many questions remain unanswered.

**The future of public education in the United States has become uncertain.** Vouchers and tax credit proposals continue to compete for educational funds. Public schools in many places have reported that funding sources are inadequate. In recent years, an ever-increasing number of students have opted for online educational opportunities, either through public school options or through private providers. Gaps between historically underachieving groups and the rest of the population continue to exist.

The Common Core has created an opportunity to achieve consistency and raise standards. The Common Core has also raised concerns about the latitude that local educators have to determine curriculum and set standards. Finally, state consortia have begun developing new assessments, but many questions remain as to how the resulting scores might be used or misused. Revision of the ESEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) looms on the horizon, and the role of the federal government in supporting and regulating public education could be redefined in numerous ways.



<http://www.corestandards.org/>

## Will Common Core survive? Opponents increase their influence going into 2015

By: [Ben Giles](#) November 24, 2014 , AZ Capitol Times



A wave of anti-Common Core lawmakers and officials now occupy key offices in Arizona, but it may not spell the end of the controversial education standards in the state.

Diane Douglas, Arizona's newly-elected superintendent of public instruction, called her ascension to office a mandate to end Common Core. And anti-Common Core lawmakers were appointed to lead education committees in the Senate and House of Representatives, providing a smoother path for bills trying to undo or neuter the education standards, which are now fully implemented in Arizona schools.

But enough lawmakers who've supported the standards in the past remain in office to block the passage of any bills trying to buck Common Core.

Common Core, renamed for the state as Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards, consists of a set of learning standards for English and math developed by an association of states and adopted by 46 of them.

Sen. Kelli Ward, R-Lake Havasu City, and Rep. Paul Boyer, R-Phoenix, are both skeptics of the standards, and could use their new chairmanships of the Legislature's education committees as a means to chip away at the standards.

"Having the ability to set the agenda, literally and figuratively, provides Representative Boyer and Senator Ward with a significant bully pulpit from which to criticize and even alter Common Core," said consultant Barrett Marson.

Ward, a surprise choice as Senate Education Committee chair over the incumbent Sen. Kimberly Yee, sponsored several bills in 2014 that sought to undo Common Core.

Ward said she'd like to place a moratorium on using a high-stakes test as a graduation requirement, a proposal she pushed earlier this year and plans to introduce again in 2015. She also wants

to scrutinize the Arizona State Board of Education's recent contract with American Institutes for Research, the company hired to administer a new competency exam to test Arizona students based on the Common Core standards.

The Legislature has already appropriated \$18 million for testing.

Ward sponsored legislation that would have permitted local school districts and charter boards from opting out of any test based on Common Core standards, and voted for several anti-Common Core bills that were ultimately defeated on the Senate floor.

The senator said she wants to offer as much local control over education standards as possible, and if that means a school district or school wants to use the Common Core standards, that's fine.

"Trying to push a one-size-fits-all standard like Common Core is not good for Arizona, and it's not good for our kids," she said.

Boyer, open to undoing the academic standards, said he must first consult with new lawmakers and policy advisers to see if it's feasible to do so. Because they were adopted in 2010 by the state Board of Education, it may be costly for Arizona to dump them now and come up with its own assessment.

A 10th grade literature and history teacher, Boyer said his concern with Common Core is that the standards' overriding goal is to create workers, not creating well-rounded persons.

"It seems to me that the end goal for Common Core is to create an education workforce, and that sounds all well and good, but in my opinion, that should never be the sole purpose of teaching," he said.

Ward and Boyer now have an ally in the executive office as well. Gov. Jan Brewer was supportive of the Common Core standards, and used an executive order to change its name in Arizona to the Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards – an attempt to, at least in name, localize the standards and protect them against critics who call the standards a federalization of Arizona's education system.

Governor-elect Doug Ducey was adamantly opposed to Common Core throughout his campaign. But he always shied away from saying whether he'd attempt to repeal or replace the standards, or saying what he'd do if the Legislature sent him a bill to scrap Common Core in Arizona.

Since his election, Ducey has not committed to a course of action on Common Core. However, he recently left the door open to the possibility of signing legislation to get rid of the standards. In a Nov. 17 interview with the Arizona Capitol Times, Ducey made it clear that he's willing to consider nixing Common Core, as long as Arizona has the "right standards" in its schools and is properly handling testing, much of which he said is already in place.

"I am opposed to Common Core. And if we could do something that's Arizona-specific in terms of standards, that would be something I'd embrace," Ducey said

Ducey said he would have to see the details of any such bill before he made a decision.

"When you ask me about any legislation that I'll sign, very rarely is it single-issue and one page. So the devil's in the details. I'll tell you what legislation I'll sign when I've got the specifics in front of me," he said.

Ducey, who campaigned heavily on reforms to the K-12 system, said Common Core has been an "unhappy distraction" in the debate over education.

Despite the election of Ducey and Douglas, as well as the appointments of Ward and Boyer, it may still be difficult for any anti-Common Core bills to reach the governor's desk.

“Certainly a chairman is a very important and influential person. But in the Senate you still need to get 16 votes to pass,” said Chuck Essigs, a lobbyist for the Arizona Association of School Business officials.

Several bills were defeated on the Senate floor in 2014 thanks to votes by Democrats and a group of GOP lawmakers: Sens. John McComish, Adam Driggs, Steve Peirce, Bob Worsley and Michele Reagan.

Each of the bills sought to impede Common Core in some way, from prohibiting the state board from implementing the standards to allowing local school districts to opt of any assessment adopted by the state board. Another would have placed a moratorium on requiring an assessment for graduation for the next three years.

Reagan and McComish won’t return to the Legislature, but even three GOP votes from among the 17-member Republican Senate caucus would be enough to squash any efforts to block the standards in 2015.

“There’s a lot of agita over Common Core from a segment of the Legislature,” Marson said. “Translating that into 16 and 31 will prove very difficult. Not impossible, but very difficult. If previous votes signal future votes, you could see Democrats bonding with a handful of Republicans to block that.”

If lawmakers want to make an impact on Common Core this school year, they’ll have to act early in the legislative session to have an impact, Essigs said.

That may be difficult, according to Marson, who said part of the problem with all the anti-Common Core rhetoric is that there’s no alternative being presented. Most lawmakers agree that some set of academic standards, and a test to assess competency in those standards, are a good thing, Marson said.

The Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry supported the defeat of anti-Common Core bill’s earlier this year for that reason – high standards and an assessment are vital to the business community, and while the chamber isn’t on the “Common Core or bust” bandwagon, it does want to ensure that there is some way of measuring students’ academic achievement, said spokesman Garrick Taylor.

“A discussion about dismantling the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards would also need to be held hand in hand with what standards should replace, or should be installed in place of (the standards) that we’ve already adopted and are implementing now,” Taylor said.

## **D.C. Leads Nation as U.S. Per Pupil Tops \$10,600, Census Bureau Reports**

<http://www.census.gov/govs/school/> 6/21/2012

The nation's elementary-secondary public school systems spent an average of \$10,615 per pupil in fiscal year 2010, up 1.1 percent from the previous year, according to statistics released today by the U.S. Census Bureau. District of Columbia public schools spent \$18,667 per student in 2010, which is the most of any state or state equivalent. States that spent the most per pupil were New York (\$18,618), New Jersey (\$16,841), Alaska (\$15,783), Vermont (\$15,274) and Wyoming (\$15,169). (See table 11. [Excel](#) | [PDF](#)).

These statistics come from [Public Education Finances: 2010](#), a Census Bureau report that provides tables and figures on revenues, expenditures, debt and assets (cash and security holdings) of the nation's elementary and secondary public school systems for the 2010 fiscal year. The tables include detailed statistics on spending — such as instruction, student transportation, salaries and employee benefits — at the national, state and school district levels.

Public school systems received \$593.7 billion in funding in 2010, up 0.5 percent from the prior year. Of that amount, local governments contributed \$261.4 billion (44.0 percent), followed by revenue raised from state sources, which contributed \$258.2 billion (43.5 percent), and federal sources, which provided the remaining \$74.0 billion (12.5 percent).

Revenue from state sources decreased by \$18.0 billion, a 6.5 percent decrease from 2009. This is the largest decrease in state funding from the prior year since the Census Bureau began publishing school system finance statistics on an annual basis in 1977 and only the second year since 1977 in which state funding decreased from the prior year (revenue from state sources also decreased 1.7 percent between 2008 and 2009).

Revenue from federal sources increased by \$18.1 billion, a 32.5 percent increase from 2009 and the largest increase in federal funding for public school systems since 1977.

Total expenditures by public school systems were \$602.6 billion, a 0.4 percent decrease from 2009. This decrease in total expenditures marks the first time since the Census Bureau began publishing school system finance statistics on an annual basis that expenditures by public school systems decreased from the prior year. In 2010, current spending increased 1.2 percent to \$524.0 billion, of which \$317.8 billion went to instruction and \$179.0 billion to support services, such as student transportation and general administration. Capital outlay expenditures amounted to \$59.4 billion, a 12.8 percent decrease from 2009.

Other highlights:

- **States that spent the least per pupil were Utah (\$6,064), Idaho (\$7,106), Arizona (\$7,848) and Oklahoma (\$7,896).**
- All nine states in the Northeast region of the U.S. were ranked among the top 15 in per pupil spending in 2010. Out of the 16 states with the lowest per pupil spending, 15 were in the South or West regions. The remaining state, South Dakota, is in the Midwest.
- Of the 50 largest school systems by enrollment in the U.S., New York City School District (\$19,597), Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland (\$15,582), Baltimore City Public Schools in Maryland (\$14,711), Milwaukee Public School in Wisconsin (\$14,038) and Prince George's County Public Schools in Maryland (\$14,019) had the highest per pupil spending in 2010.
- Instructional expenditures accounted for the largest spending category for public education, totaling \$317.8 billion in 2010, of which \$211.1 billion (66.4 percent) went to instructional salaries and wages.
- Public school systems in North Dakota (22.0 percent), Mississippi (21.2 percent), New Mexico (20.7 percent) and Idaho (20.4 percent) received the highest percentage of their revenues from the federal government, while public school systems in New Hampshire (6.6 percent), New York (6.7 percent) and the District of Columbia (6.7 percent) received the lowest.
- Property taxes accounted for 64.8 percent of revenue from local sources for public school systems.
- Total school system debt increased by 1.9 percent to \$406.9 billion in 2010.

## When charter schools are nonprofit in name only

**Many institutions are paying for-profit companies for management services, and regulators are taking notice**

[Marian Wang](#), ProPublica, Salon.com, Dec. 11, 2014

A couple of years ago, auditors looked at the books of a charter school in Buffalo, New York, and were taken aback by what they found. Like all charter schools, Buffalo United Charter School is funded with taxpayer dollars. The school is also a nonprofit. But as the New York State auditors wrote, Buffalo United was sending “[virtually all of the School’s revenues](#)” directly to a for-profit company hired to handle its day-to-day operations.

Charter schools often hire companies to handle their accounting and management functions. Sometimes the companies even take the lead in hiring teachers, finding a school building, and handling school finances.

In the case of Buffalo United, the auditors found that the school board had little idea about exactly how the company – a large management firm called National Heritage Academies – was spending the school’s money. The school’s board still had to approve overall budgets, but it appeared to accept the company’s numbers with few questions. The signoff was “essentially meaningless,” the auditors wrote.

In the charter-school sector, this arrangement is known as a “sweeps” contract because nearly all of a school’s public dollars – anywhere from 95 to 100 percent – is “swept” into a charter-management company.

The contracts are an example of how the charter schools sometimes cede control of public dollars to private companies that have no legal obligation to act in the best interests of the schools or taxpayers. When the agreement is with a for-profit firm like National Heritage Academies, it’s also a chance for such firms to turn taxpayer money into tidy profits.

“It’s really just a pass-through for for-profit entities,” said Eric Hall, an attorney in Colorado Springs who specializes in work with charter schools and has come across many sweeps contracts. “In what sense is that a nonprofit endeavor? It’s not.”

Neither National Heritage Academies nor the Buffalo United board responded to requests for comment. (Update: NHA spokeswoman Jennifer Hoff said in an emailed statement, “Our approach relieves our partner boards of all financial, operational, and academic risks – a significant burden that ultimately defeats many charter schools. Freed from burdens like fundraising, our partner boards can focus on governance and oversight ... NHA and its partner schools comply fully with state and federal laws, authorizer oversight requirements, and education department regulations – including everything related to transparency.”)

While relationships between charter schools and management companies have [started](#) to [come](#) under [scrutiny](#), sweeps contracts have received little attention. Schools have agreed to such setups with both nonprofit and for-profit management companies, but it’s not clear how often. Nobody appears to be keeping track.

What is clear is that it can be hard for regulators and even schools themselves to follow the money when nearly all of it goes into the accounts of a private company.

“We’re not confident that sweeps contracts allow [charters schools and regulators] to fully fulfill their public functions,” said Alex Medler, who leads policy and advocacy work at the National

Association of Charter School Authorizers, a trade group for charter regulators. The organization [discourages](#) the arrangements. “We think this is an issue that needs attention.”

Officials have gotten glimpses of questionable spending by some firms using “sweeps” contracts.

Take the case of Brooklyn Excelsior Charter School, another National Heritage Academies school. In 2012, state auditors tried to track the \$10 million in public funding given to the school, only to conclude they were “[unable to determine](#) ... the extent to which the \$10 million of annual public funding provided to the school was actually used to benefit its students.” From what auditors could tell, the school was paying above-market rent for its building, which in turn is owned by a subsidiary of National Heritage Academies. They also had concerns about equipment charges.

The auditors couldn’t ultimately tell whether the charges were reasonable because National Heritage Academies refused to share the relevant financial details. The firm also refused to provide detailed documentation for \$1.6 million in costs recorded as corporate services, claiming the information was proprietary, according to the audit. The board president of Brooklyn Excelsior did not respond to our request for comment.

While the auditors in New York were disturbed by what they found, they could do little more than issue reports with advisory recommendations. “We can’t audit the management company,” said Brian Butry, a spokesman for New York Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli.

In Michigan, where NHA is the largest charter-school operator, state education regulators have voiced similar frustrations about the degree to which these private firms are shielded from having to answer to the public about how money is spent.

“I can’t FOIA National Heritage Academies,” said Casandra Ulbrich, Vice President of the Michigan State Board of Education, referring to the right to request public documents from public agencies. “I don’t know who they’re subcontracting with, I don’t know if they’re bid out. I don’t know if there are any conflicts of interest. This is information we as taxpayers don’t have a right to.”

Last year, Ulbrich and the State Board of Education had called for more transparency to be brought to the financial dealings of charter-management firms. They specifically asked the legislature to [outlaw sweeps contracts](#). “Unfortunately,” Ulbrich said, “it fell on deaf ears.”

The Internal Revenue Service has questioned some cases of sweeps contracts, but has not taken a consistent stand on whether the contracts are appropriate.

It’s not just charter regulators and auditors that have reason to be wary of such setups. Some charter-school boards that signed sweeps contracts have found themselves shut out of the operations of their own schools.

In Ohio, ten charter-school boards sued their management firm, White Hat Management, in 2010 after they couldn’t get answers to basic questions about why their schools’ performance lagged and how the school’s money was spent.

Even so, it was a challenge for the schools to take back control. After handing over the bulk of their money to White Hat for years, the schools had little money of their own, said Karen Hockstad, an attorney who’s been representing the school boards in continuing litigation.

“Their hands are tied. They don’t have the money to build brand new infrastructure and get new desks and books and anything else,” said Hockstad. White Hat Management did not return a request for comment.

Some charter-school regulators – recognizing their limited authority over charter-management companies – are beginning to push back, requiring schools to get more information from management firms. Still, that hasn’t stopped some management companies from [putting up a fight](#).

Regulators in the District of Columbia are seeking more legal authority over management firms after [two recent scandals](#). The DC Public Charter School Board has asked the city council to pass legislation that would allow access to the books of management companies under certain conditions. So far, that effort has gone nowhere.

Is democracy for sale?  
Can the voters afford it?

The League of Women Voters of Greater Tucson invites you to be part of the audience for a special meeting Saturday, January 17, 2015, 9:30 to 12:00 at Access Tucson Community Media, 124 E. Broadway Blvd. The meeting will be videotaped and shown on Channel 12 and Access Tucson over the next several months.

This meeting will examine what effect 'dark money' has on the democratic process. Does it suppress votes? Does it prevent voters from meeting the candidates? Does it prevent candidates from controlling their campaigns?

These questions and more will be discussed by expert panelists including political reporters from the Arizona Capital Times, Arizona Republic/KPNX-TV and the Tucson Weekly, and political consultants with representatives from Marson Media, IWS and Leibowitz Solo. Candidates with first hand experience from the 2014 election cycle have also been invited.

Audience members will have an opportunity to share their thoughts and ask questions.

**Seating is limited.** Please RSVP by January 5 to 327-7652 or reply to this email.



**IMPORTANT WEBSITE  
REFERENCES**

LWVUS Website  
[www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

LWVAZ Website  
[www.lwvaz.org](http://www.lwvaz.org)

LWVCYC Website  
[LWVCYC.org](http://LWVCYC.org)

We recommend that you check these out monthly, or more often. Lots of good information! Bookmark them to save on typing, or go to [lwvaz.org](http://lwvaz.org), where there are links to click on. Or Google LWVCYC!

Our website includes current and past VOTERS, and other great material. You can also find us on Facebook and Twitter.

*Reminder – Members are always welcome to attend Board meetings.*

*To request placement of an item on the Board agenda and/or to receive the Board agenda packet, contact the LWVCYC President a week in advance.*

**LWV MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION**

**2014-2015**

Membership in the LWV is open to any person 18 and over who subscribes to the purposes and policies of the LWVUS. Dues for 2014-2015 cover payment for local (\$16.00), state (\$13), and national (\$31.00) memberships.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Note type of membership, and make check to “LWVCYC”:

\_\_\_\_\_ \$60/Yr                      Individual Membership

\_\_\_\_\_ \$90/Yr                      Household Membership

Plus suggested donation:

\$\_\_\_\_\_ Contribution to League (not tax deductible)

\$\_\_\_\_\_ \*Contribution to Education Fund (tax deductible)

\*Donations to the LWVAZ Education Fund must be made by separate check, to preserve tax deductibility. This supports our Webpage and Voter Service activities. Thank you!

Both new and renewal members, please include this form with your check.

New: \_\_\_\_\_

Renewal: \_\_\_\_\_

**OR**

Be a “Friend” of LWVCYC:

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50/Yr Individual    or    \_\_\_\_\_ \$75/Yr Household  
(open to businesses and individuals)

Please mail this form and all checks to:

**LWVCYC**

**PO Box 11538    Prescott, AZ 86304-1538**

**Please renew your membership, if you have not already done so!**

## LWVCYC Calendar 2014-15

DAY	DATE	TIME	ACTIVITY	TOPIC/PLACE
Sat.	Jan. 3	9-11:30	General Meeting Las Fuentes	The Core Curriculum: The Good, The Bad, or the Ugly
Thu	Jan 15	5	Thursday Meet-Up	Happy Hour/Eagles Nest
Tues.	Feb. 3	8-9:30	Board Meeting	
Sat.	Feb. 7	9-11:30	General Meeting Las Fuentes	Local and State Program Planning, LWV Studies Review
Thu	Feb 19	10	Thursday Meet-Up	Coffee Hour/Starbucks on 69
Tues.	Mar 3	8-9:30	Board Meeting	
Sat.	Mar 7	9-11:30	General Meeting Las Fuentes	Water – Is there enough in the Yavapai Highland? What can we do about it? What is being done?
Thu	Mar 19	5	Thursday Meet-Up	Happy Hour/Eagles Nest
Tues.	Mar. 31	8-9:30	Board Meeting	
Sat.	Apr. 4	9-11:30	General Meeting Las Fuentes	Legislative Update
Thu	Apr. 16	10	Thursday Meet-Up	Coffee Hour/Starbucks on 69
Tues.	Apr 24	8-9:30	Board Meeting	
Sat.	May 2	10:30-1:30	Annual Meeting	Election of Officers, Program, , Lunch, Speaker
Thu	May 21	5	Thursday Meet-Up	Happy Hour/Eagles Nest
Sat	June 6	10-4	Board Retreat	?
Thu	June 18	10	Thursday Meet-Up	Coffee Hour/Starbucks on 69
Thu	July 16	5	Thursday Meet-Up	Happy Hour/Eagles Nest

**Join the Central Yavapai County League of Women Voters on January 3rd to hear the arguments for and against adopting common educational standards for grades K-12. Our host is Las Fuentes Resort Village 1035 Scott Drive, Prescott.**  
**9:00 AM Coffee; Program 9:30 - 11:15.**  
**The community is welcome.**



**League of Women Voters  
of Central Yavapai County  
P.O. Box 11538  
Prescott, AZ 86304-1538**

**A nonpartisan membership organization, the League of Women Voters neither supports nor opposes political parties or candidates, but encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.**