



July 29, 2011

American Legislative Exchange Council
K-12 Education Reform Subcommittee
1101 Vermont Avenue, NW, 11th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Subcommittee Members:

I write today to encourage you to table the Comprehensive Legislative Package Opposing the Common Core State Standards Initiative. Now is the time to insist on rigorous academic standards that will prepare our students for success in college and their careers.

Today's high-wage jobs require greater skills, particularly analytic skills, the ability to read complex texts and write well, and advanced knowledge in the areas of math, science, engineering and technology.

However, in all but a few states, academic standards of educational performance are too low, leaving many graduating students unprepared for the rigors of the 21st century economy. A recent analysis by ACT concluded that only a quarter of our college freshmen are academically prepared for first-year courses. Their K-12 schools have failed them.

Some might rally to demand a federal program "fix" this endemic crisis, but I believe that educational standards belong to our states. They must take the lead to repair our schools.

And states are stepping up to meet this need. The Common Core State Standards were voluntarily developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators and experts to provide a framework of clear and consistent standards to challenge nearly every state's current required math and English language skills. They are built on what we've learned from high-performing international competitors and leading states. Already some 43 states and the District of Columbia have signed up for adoption.

There is concern that this initiative will result in Washington dictating what standards, assessments and curriculum states may use. But these voluntarily adopted standards define what students need to know without defining how teachers should teach or students should learn.

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States accept the challenge while retaining the flexibility and authority to determine how to help their students achieve - and exceed - these academic levels.

The Standards focus on what matters most for college and career readiness in math and English.

Take math for example. Research shows that mastery of fractions is crucial for higher math performance. So the Common Core State Standards provide clear grade-by-grade standards for learning fractions built on the best practices of high-performing countries.

In literacy, the best indicator of college readiness is the ability to read and understand complex texts. Common Core Standards set, for the first time, clear benchmarks to ensure that each grade is reading sufficiently complex text in diverse subject areas.

The future success of our country rests with our students, and their success depends on the quality and breadth of their education. Common Core is a state-led effort to have higher college-ready, internationally-benchmarked standards to improve education. It would be a shame for ALEC to take a position against higher standards. Rather, let us view the Common Core State Standards as a floor from which states can build a framework of high-quality and rigorous coursework that equips all students with the knowledge and skills for success in life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeb Bush". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeb Bush

CC: Education Task Force Members

Dave Myslinski