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Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.

James Madison

Common Core Standards Cause Major Purchasing Changes

As districts reevaluate their needs in light of compliance with the Common Core Standards (CCS) for English and mathematics, they find themselves facing a multitude of challenges. Education experts across the political spectrum have estimated that CCS implementation, professional development, and curriculum costs will range from \$12 billion over a three-year period to \$15 billion over a seven-year period. Although both sides agree that it is difficult to differentiate between regular upgrade expenses and those attributable to adoption of the Common Core, school districts admit that their purchasing decisions have been swayed by the CCS. To their chagrin, some districts quickly purchased new “common core-aligned” textbooks only to find that the publishers had simply [relabeled](#) previous versions of textbooks with little to no revision. Theodor Rebarber, CEO of Accountability Works, called the time and resources devoted to CCS alignment an “enormous diversion” that will reap “negligible benefits” for current students. Proponents of the CCS posit that over time states will be able to save money by using cooperative contracts to reduce costs, but the current patchwork of available materials and varying state responses will most likely prevent that approach. Also, since the Race to the Top Assessment program [awarded](#) \$350 million to two state consortia to develop computer-based CCS assessments by 2014–2015, some districts (such as Toledo, OH) used the impetus provided by the shift to computer-based testing to secure significant technology upgrades that had languished for years. With potentially thousands of schools switching to computer-based assessments, concerns have been raised about insufficient broadband capability and computers. This spring, widespread testing of the pilot tests has begun. Along with the purchasing changes, districts have begun to reassess the professional development provided for their educators. The National Education Association has issued a letter calling for a reevaluation of the Common Core Standards and the accompanying tests; and the second largest teachers union, the American Federation for Teachers, has called for a one-year moratorium on the high stakes tests.

Secretary Duncan Highlights Graduation Rates

In his [address](#) at the Grad Nation Summit, Education Secretary Arne Duncan celebrated the fact that the 2012 high school graduation rate was the highest in our nation’s history but noted that much work exists to close achievement gaps. In 2012, the graduation rate reached 80% of seniors. He cited statistics that say that approximately 718,000 young people dropped out of high school in 2012. Of that number, the majority of students are those from low-income families, English language learners, and minority households. On the higher education front, the Secretary decried the abysmal college completion rate of 43 percent as “no badge of honor” when compared to the 64 percent college graduation rate in South Korea. Furthermore, he warned that in a knowledge-based economy failure to graduate leaves dropouts with “bleak chances.” He concluded his

remarks with a call to provide more support for teachers and announced new regulations aimed at increasing teacher credentialing standards. To read the full remarks, [click here](#).

Administration Announces Teacher Preparation Regulations

Last Friday, the Administration announced that it will move forward with new regulations affecting higher education programs that offer teacher credentials. While purporting to protect students, much like the 2011 Department of Education regulations covering state authorization, gainful employment measures, and credit hour definitions, these newest statutes greatly increase federal control in education and force colleges to track graduates in order to demonstrate success. The Administration plans to employ its oft used carrot-and-stick method to incentivize colleges to tighten teacher credentialing measures or risk losing millions in federal funding. Unfortunately as is the case with many other big government solutions, this particular regulation [fails](#) to account for the myriad of factors that make for an effective teacher and places the compliance burden on the institution to guarantee the success of its graduates. Lindsey Burke, Will Skillman Fellow at The Heritage Foundation, questions whether the federal government should be getting involved in this arena and if the effectiveness of rigorous teacher credentialing accurately predicts classroom efficacy. Economists Douglas O. Staiger and Jonah E. Rockoff state in the *Journal of Economic Perspectives* that the “current system, which focuses on credentials at the time of hire and grants tenure as a matter of course, is at odds with decades of evidence on teacher effectiveness.” On the one hand, according to studies by the left leaning Brookings Institution there is little connection between teacher certification and student math achievement scores; yet on the other hand, as noted by Heritage Foundation using student outcomes to judge teacher effectiveness is a better method of evaluation, when it controls for the various characteristics and abilities that teachers may have prior to college entrance.

Georgia Governor Signs Bill Banning Obamacare Abortion Funding

Last week, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal [signed](#) Senate Bill 98 which prohibits taxpayer funding of abortion in the Georgia’s Obamacare health care exchange. The bill also prohibits funding of state employee subsidies that cover abortions. This move tracks with federal legislation that seeks to block the abortion funding in the Affordable Health Care Act (ACA). At the state level, twenty-five states have passed similar legislation. Governor Deal stated the he “would not allow the federal government to force Georgia taxpayers to fund abortions.” Americans United for Life President Charmaine Yoest, whose group authored the model legislation, congratulated both the pro-life coalition and the legislators for passing “the kind of courageous, bipartisan effort that engages the majority of Americans troubled by an aggressive and expanding abortion industry.”

In Case You Missed It:

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACCS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[Secretary Duncan Testifies Before House Education Committee on 2015 Budget Request](#)

[Video: Expanding Access to Quality Early Learning: The Strong Start for America’s Children Act](#)

[Heritage Report: 2013 Federal Spending by the Numbers](#)

[Illinois Anti-Bullying Bill Would Restrict Free Speech](#)