

# Congratulations. You Own It.

## An Open Letter to Wisconsin State Elected Officials on the Full and Imminent Implementation of Common Core State Standards

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April 23, 2014

At the beginning of April, the Wisconsin State Legislature concluded its 2014 floor sessions. Yet, Common Core State Standards (CCSS)—the single most prominent issue of the last year in Wisconsin politics—remains unaddressed. As leadership has announced that the legislature will now take a nine-month hiatus, CCSS is unlikely to see any serious opposition at the state level until at least January of 2015.

With CCSS presently retaining status as official state standards, and Smarter Balanced assessments scheduled to roll out this fall for the 2014-2015 school year, the legislature's failure to act means that total implementation of CCSS is now imminent in Wisconsin. Smarter Balanced assessments are the enforcement mechanism that will be used to ensure compliance with CCSS and aligned curricula.

Because Smarter Balanced assessments have not been in place in Wisconsin up to now, our state has not yet experienced the full reality of CCSS. This fact has allowed several individuals in key positions on both sides of the aisle to tout the standards' alleged benefits in a manner that few in Wisconsin currently have the experience or the courage to refute. The haze created by this well funded and heavily marketed campaign of misinformation has resulted in confusion, inaction, and even active pro-CCSS entrenchment on the part of many state legislators, district and school administrators, the business community, and even some parents and teachers. Meanwhile, the informed parents, teachers, and taxpayers who have explored CCSS beyond the superficial talking points have been championed only by a small but dedicated coterie of legislators. Those legislators who did understand and make an effort to jettison or undercut CCSS found themselves effectively sidelined by those with greater influence and higher positions of authority.

Well done, then, to Wisconsin's state-level CCSS advocates. You've won this round. You successfully convinced many that rejection of CCSS was just an issue of the "fringe" Tea Party. Despite the wishes of constituents, you ensured that a true CCSS kill-bill never saw the light of day. You ensured that other legislation that might help to undermine CCSS was watered down, marginalized, or killed outright. CCSS will proceed on schedule. Kudos to you.

But be careful about celebrating this victory.

Everything is about to change.

With the deployment of the Smarter Balanced assessments, the rosy CCSS talking points upon which you have relied are about to be exposed for what they are. CCSS is going to cause pain in this state. And in the blame game that ensues, those who have facilitated CCSS either actively or by their inaction will quickly become vulnerable.

Congratulations. You own it.

What exactly do you now own?

- You own the unhealthy and as yet unimagined degree of pressure that will shortly be placed on Wisconsin children to perform on an unending stream of standardized assessments with little validity. <http://bit.ly/tests-hurt>
- You own the fact that even students previously considered high achievers are likely to fail the Smarter Balanced assessments in droves, providing a false measure of both performance and underperformance. <http://bit.ly/unending-tests>
- You own the inaccurate labeling of "underperforming schools" and the subsequent school closings that CCSS and the Smarter Balanced assessments have, in part, been engineered to ensure. <http://bit.ly/underperforming>
- You own the injudicious use of student performance on Smarter Balanced assessments to judge wrongly and misleadingly the quality of teachers. <http://bit.ly/teacher-quality>
- You own the shredding of the art of teaching—the reduction of teachers to proctors in their own classrooms—by means of extensive embedded pedagogy within CCSS that doesn't just demand compliance from teachers concerning *what* to teach but also *how* to teach it. <http://bit.ly/kills-creativity>, <http://bit.ly/demoralize->

[teachers](#)

- You own the convoluted and bizarre teaching methods embedded within CCSS pedagogy and the ways in which they will cripple many students' ability to understand and learn. <http://bit.ly/cripple-students>, <http://bit.ly/not-teaching>
- You own the distress of parents as they realize they can no longer assist their children with homework because not even as competent adults can they understand the methods by which their children are now being taught. <http://bit.ly/parents-dont-understand>
- You own the rejection of individualism that is part and parcel of the CCSS mandate to teach the same and yield the same, regardless of the unique character, learning styles, circumstances, and aspirations of each child. <http://bit.ly/different-styles>
- You own the vast frustration with learning that CCSS is guaranteed to yield as well as the utter disinterest in learning that will spring from it. <http://bit.ly/ccss-frustration>, <http://bit.ly/ccss-dropout>
- You own the widget-factory schools that CCSS will create. <http://bit.ly/ccss-widget>
- You own the fact that the for-profit charter schools intended to replace “failing” public schools will likewise be CCSS-based widget factories, enriching no one but the people who collect the tuition. <http://bit.ly/ccss-for-profit>
- You own the fact that, under CCSS, students who want to reach farther will only be prepared for a two-year non-selective college, not a four-year university. <http://bit.ly/non-selective>
- You own the coming anger of local taxpayers who will soon realize that you have essentially pushed them into an unfunded mandate—CCSS infrastructure and training costs that will likely exceed the expectations and budgets of most school districts. <http://bit.ly/ccss-high-cost>
- You own the additional taxpayer anger that will result when they discover that all of the spending you helped to push them into was for an initiative doomed to failure from the outset. <http://bit.ly/ccss-doomed>
- You own the invasion of student and family privacy that CCSS furthers through its data gathering, data storage, and data mining components. <http://bit.ly/ccss-privacy>
- You own this initiative's disregard of the U.S. Constitution, which gives the federal government no authority over education, as well as its disregard of at least three federal laws forbidding the federal government from involvement in school standards and curriculum. <http://bit.ly/ccss-unconstitutional>
- You own the undercutting of Wisconsin children's ability to determine their own unbounded future. <http://bit.ly/biz-demands>
- And much, much more...

And the saddest part about this long and troubling list of items you've just owned?

It was all avoidable.

Apparently, it is not enough for Wisconsin to learn from the experiences of others. Instead, we must have the full experience—sacrificing the education and mental wellbeing of children, breaking the trust of parents, demoralizing teachers, and picking the pockets of taxpayers.

Even a modicum of honest research should have revealed to you precisely what we and many others have found—that despite the billions spent on marketing spin, CCSS is nothing new. It's merely a doubling-down on every failed education reform of the past thirty years; truly the lipstick-clad pig.

Just a glance to the east would have revealed that full implementation of CCSS has already been a complete train wreck in states like New York and Kentucky, causing massive public outcry from parents, teachers, and taxpayers alike. Conservatives and progressives are fighting CCSS hand-in-hand in those states and elsewhere, as they increasingly will be here. Are you aware that they're taking names and working to remove people from office in New York and elsewhere over this “education” fiasco? Do you think that same thing won't happen in Wisconsin? Do you think it hasn't already begun?

Don't say we didn't warn you.

Common Core State Standards are all yours now.

Sincerely,

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