**Common Core State Standards**

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) was a program instituted to create a baseline for academic standards on a national level. “CCSS authors themselves promised that ‘consistent standards will provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live’” (LaVenia et. al. 2015, p. 152). The CCSS was established “to prepare students for college and careers, to compete globally, and to ensure a path for the country’s economic success” (Papola-Ellis, 2014, p. 167). Over the past fifty years, education has taken a change in direction from state-led programs to a national-level program and now a sort of hybrid program between the state and national levels.

**Timeline and Evolution of Common Core**

Over the past fifty years, there have been many reports and political movements to direct educational institutions on what should be taught and how it should be taught in the classroom. One of the first reports that alerted politicians and administrators that a change needed to occur was *A Nation at Risk* (1983). This report was composed by the Reagan administration to help schools create a more rigorous program with new standards for grades K-12. Eight years later in 1991, the *Yearbook of the Politics of Education Association* published an article stating that an organized system needed to be implemented in the classroom for learning to occur. Also in 1991, the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) was formed to monitor progress toward national goals. Later the National Education Summit (1996) stated “that the pursuit of national content standards had failed and the future of standards development lay with the states” (LaVenia et. al. 2015, p. 148). Then in 2001, the Bush Administration passed the No Child Left Behind Act which was used by schools from 2002 to 2015. This act increased educational accountability to improve student performance (Nolen, 2023, para. 1). In 2009, the Obama administration started the Race to the Top (RTTT) Initiative and fund. This was “a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward states that were creating the conditions for innovation and reform” (LaVenia et. al. 2015, p. 149). This was when the push for the states to adopt the CCSS and by 2010all but four states/governors adopted the national standards. Currently, some states have moved away from CCSS, but have adopted their state programs that have a lot of the same tenets of CCSS but are more catered to the state’s needs and desires.

**Patterns in the Common Core’s development**

Even back in the 1800s, there has been a push for a national standard for education, but the states did not want to deal with the federal government coming and telling them how to run their schools. As more research was conducted and new reports were released, schools started to become more open and receptive to the idea of standardized education but still did not want the federal government in charge. This pattern would repeat; research conducted, reports published, societal and political outcries for a change in education, and schools becoming more open to change and changing procedures and curricula to push students to a certain mastery of knowledge. As No Child Left Behind and RTTT were implemented in schools the CCSS took more shape as the national standards that schools would use. The goal of CCSS was “to guide teachers to focus solely on the standards, prescribing what should and should not be included in instruction” (Papola-Ellis, 2014, p. 168). The written text said one thing, but then the training videos seemed that says that only certain practices were to be used in a classroom.

Research was conducted with three elementary teachers at Parker Hills to determine if CCSS was beneficial to the students. During some of the interviews, the teachers mentioned how they completely changed some of their teaching methods due to the training videos they saw on how to implement the CCSS. The two younger teachers were more susceptible to the suggestions being made because they had a lack of experience, and they assumed the researchers would know the best way to teach the students (Papola-Ellis, 2014, pp. 173-177). Papola-Ellis (2014) addresses this thought by coining the phrase of a policy cascade which is defined as:

…the effects of implementing a new policy or initiative in education. They occur when teachers adopt the actions and ideology demonstrated by others above them in the hierarchical structure of a school system, after receiving information from those individuals. Thus, they have their own professional knowledge base and beliefs eroded. (p. 168)

Teachers with good classroom set-ups end up changing the structure of their classroom to cater to CCSS. Even after seeing that the CCSS procedure does not work as well as their own, the teachers would even excuse it since the research was done by the experts and they know what is best. It even got to the point where the teachers at the school were in a faculty meeting and asking for training “to just tell them how to teach” the CCSS lessons (Papola-Ellis, 2014, p. 180).

The standards presented by the CCSS are good to make sure that everyone is on the same page on a national level and the goal is to have the U.S. students to be at the same level as students in other countries. Where some teachers feel the stress is due to the frequent changing in the standards and the standardized tests that go with them. The outcry from this one school is echoed by others as they want to see their students succeed and pass the standardized tests to be able to move on. The pressure of academic performance has even caused some teachers to teach the test, and then other good information or processes are left out of the classroom. Schools that did well with the standardized tests would receive more of the RTTT grant money than a school that would underperform. This would lead to even more of an achievement gap for some schools that were not able to keep up due to lack of funds and the federal government would hold back more of those funds since they underperformed. This became a viscous cycle that some schools still are not able to get out of.

**Pros and Cons**

The biggest benefit of CCSS is that there are standards now set up on a national level. In the case of students having to move from one state to another, there should be a consistency that is taught where the student’s transition should be smooth on the academic side because he/she should be at the same level of knowledge as the students at the new school. Students are also able to see how they compare with peers across the country from their standardized schools. This allows some schools to see weak areas and try to make adjustments to curricula or supplementary materials that are being used in the classroom.

There are also some downsides to the CCSS. The policy cascade that trickles down can make teachers decide that the policy is better than their gut instinct or their experience in how to help their children. “One consequence of the policy cascades at Parker Hills was teachers developing ―learned dependency on outside factors when making decisions about their classroom, while ignoring their own knowledge base” (Papola-Elis, 2014, p. 179). Another major concern for teachers and students is all the standardized testing that occurs. Depending on the school, a student will not be promoted to the next grade level without passing the test. This has led to some teachers teaching the test and ignoring any good content from the text that would not be on the test. Sometimes, the pressure becomes too much which leads to cheating from students and even some teachers. This type of performance review is also not beneficial to students with learning disorders which can make passing a standardized test almost impossible to do.

**Prediction of Common Core’s Future**

The CCSS is implemented in schools because it produces a standard or a baseline for schools to know what information must be covered. Lots of schools/states took those standards or guidelines and then adapted them to use in their schools. My prediction of Common Core’s future is that it will still be implemented, but it will have a different name. Because a level of mastery of skills and information is needed to earn a high school diploma, I believe the Common Core gives the standards for the baseline of information to get a diploma. But standardized testing and teacher training has created pressure on both the students and the teachers which is stressful and demanding. Sidorkin (2014) even gives the following statement on how CCSS is working in schools:

The country has been engaged in a continuous reform effort for at least a quarter of century. Its main strategies stay the same: use high-stakes assessments and other accountability measures to improve the overall quality of education, to increase high school graduation rate, and reduce the achievement gap among racial and socio-economic groups. The results have been positive, but modest (NAEP, 2012): mathematics scores rose somewhat, while reading, history, and science scores remained mostly flat. Geography scores for 12th graders declined. (p. 123)

Sidorkin continues in his chapter that there are limits to different educational ideals and theories. With his statement, he is showing that CCSS is helping, but not helping as much as everyone hoped that it would. CCSS has hit its limit and it needs to be changed or re-evaluated to still be useful to educational institutions.

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