



Contact Samantha Levine-Neudel- at 617-723-2277 ext. 211, or slevine@pioneerinstitute.org

Giving Away Our Competitive Advantage: National Standards Adopted

BOSTON – Today, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, which Governor Patrick packed with new appointees in 2008, voted overwhelmingly to adopt national standards for education. In this vote, the BOE single handedly turned back the clock on fifteen years of student achievement and high academic success. Pioneer Institute firmly believes that this vote is a step in the wrong direction. It is well documented that Massachusetts’ current education standards are what distinguishes the Commonwealth from the rest of the country, which are critical to business and job creation. The proposed new standards reduce our ability to further raise the achievement levels of all Massachusetts students. In the future when policy makers seek to make significant improvements to our standards, we will need to seek the approval of dozens of states participating in Common Core.

“The national standards are not as good as Massachusetts’ quality,” says Jim Stergios, Executive Director of Pioneer Institute. “They will inhibit us from continuing to make the kinds of strides we made after the passage of the 1993 Education Reform Act which catapulted Massachusetts to become a world leader in education. After 17 years of public debate to gain hard won reforms, \$90 billion in state and local funding, and diligent implementation by districts and schools across the Commonwealth, it is hard to believe the State would move from proven standards to what we don’t even know will work.”

Pioneer Institute has tracked all throughout the national standards creation process, the quality of the proposed national standards as compared to Massachusetts and other states with high quality academic standards. The analyses of these have been a side by side comparison of those states’ standards and the national standards and have been performed by subject area experts and standards experts such as: Kathleen Madigan , R. James Milgram, Sandra Stotsky, and Ze’ev Wurman. These reports can be found by following the link below.

[Why Race to the Middle: First-Class State Standards Are Better than Third Class National Standards](#)
[Fair to Middling: A National Standards Progress Report](#)

[The Emperor’s New Clothes: National Assessments Based on Weak ‘College and Career Readiness Standards](#)

[National Standards Still Don’t Make the Grade: Why Massachusetts and California Must Retain Control Over Their Academic Destinies Part I: Review of Four Sets of English Language Arts Standards](#)

Those who were responsible for establishing Massachusetts Education Reform act in 1993 and implementing it throughout the 1990’s and 2000’s have come out strongly opposing this move by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to adopt the national standards. The issue of academic standards is not a partisan one. That point is made clearly by both Former Senate President Tom Birmingham and Former Governor William Weld, the two principal architects of the original 1993 Education Reform Act.

According to today's Boston Herald: "We have got the best education performance in the country, and before we tinker with that, there's a very strong burden of proof that someone wanting to change it has to make," said Tom Birmingham, former Senate president and co-author of the state's 1993 education reform act to the Boston Herald today. "I am puzzled as to why we are doing this."

According to yesterday's Boston Globe: "the proposed change 'a retrograde step' and a precursor to eliminating the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System tests, also known as the MCAS... It would be madness to eliminate the MCAS test," said [Former Massachusetts Governor William] Weld. "A lot of blood was spilled, partly during my regime and moreso when (Paul) Cellucci was governor, to preserve the MCAS."

Independent Gubernatorial Candidate, Treasurer Timothy Cahill said "I am extremely disappointed that the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to replace Massachusetts' highly regarded education system with the national model. Today's decision is a step in the wrong direction for students, and we are abandoning more than 15 years of progress made here in the Commonwealth. The Patrick Administration has decided to put Washington ahead of our children and the future of our state."

Unlike the other organizations that have produced reports comparing Massachusetts and other states to the so called Common Core state standards, Pioneer Institute has received and sought no money from any organization or individual with an opinion on national standards.

The three organizations that the Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester sought analyses from have direct financial relationships with funders who support national standards. Achieve, Inc, which has Governor Patrick on its board, received \$12.6 million from the Gates Foundation. Fordham Institute has accepted more than \$1.4 million from the Gates Foundation, including nearly \$960,000 to conduct Common Core reviews. The report undertaken by the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education was also funded by the Gates Foundation.



[Pioneer Institute](#) is an independent, non-partisan, privately funded research organization that seeks to change the intellectual climate in the Commonwealth by supporting scholarship that tests marked solutions against the conventional wisdom of more governmental involvement in Massachusetts public policy issues.