



# Wisconsin School Psychologists Association, Inc.

March 6, 2014

Esteemed Legislators:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on SB619. My name is John Humphries, and I am here to offer solutions that respect the many positions on the important issues facing us today. I will be sharing the views of the Wisconsin School Psychologists Association, which I serve as President-Elect. I am also a former staff member of DPI, having served as the School Psychology consultant for 7 years before returning to the schools in 2011. I am a Nationally Certified and DPI-Licensed School Psychologist and Director of Special Education and Pupil Services. I currently work in that capacity in the Dodgeville, WI School District.

The primary purposes of WSPA are to serve the mental health and educational needs of all children and youth, and to facilitate and support the effective practice of school psychology. School psychologists are scientists in the field of education. We know and understand research-based practices that use student-level and system-level data to improve student outcomes. Wisconsin School Psychologists are required to hold at least an Educational Specialist level of training, with over 30 credit hours of Post-Master's Degree, supervised practice. As opposed to some states, school psychologists in Wisconsin are eligible for private practice licensure through our Department of Safety and Professional Services. There are about 1,000 licensed school psychologists in our state. WSPA provides today's comments with a unique perspective about the Common Core State Standards based on our backgrounds as scientist-practitioners. We agree with both the State Superintendent and with the Governor, and we have a recommendation for moving forward that takes both of perspectives into account.

On October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013, the Wisconsin School Psychologists Association provided testimony to a legislative task force regarding implementation of the Common Core State Standards. At that time, we called for a number of important measures. These included:

- Use the Common Core as a baseline of expectations.
- Provide more explicit definitions and clarify assumptions of the standards.
- Identify those areas of the Common Core that can be improved and provide more information on how best to implement the new standards.
- Develop a task force to identify areas of needed improvement, along with resources to support high-level implementation of the CCSS. These might be called "The Wisconsin CCSS Extension Standards." This would clearly identify those areas where our state wants Wisconsin students to excel beyond the national standards. Such a task force should include a broad and inclusive group of stakeholders, but also include national experts in reading and math skill acquisition who can guide Wisconsin as we move forward.

WSPA is very concerned with the proposed Common Core legislation. The proposal does not begin with a baseline of the Common Core, and instead develops new standards from scratch, a challenge that Wisconsin has historically struggled with. The proposal does not include a broad and inclusive group of stakeholders. Expanding upon standards will require the involvement of experts with a breadth and depth of training and experience that may be lacking in Wisconsin. We call upon the legislature to define and expand the work group participants for more complete representation and again, to include national experts.

Developing the Common Core State Standards took an enormous amount of work. Our professionals across the state are not yet fully versed in the new standards. How would we possibly expect them to create new, high-quality standards in a year? Ultimately, an excellent product comes from reasoned, thoughtful discussion. WSPA calls upon the legislature to extend the time period for creation of additional standards.

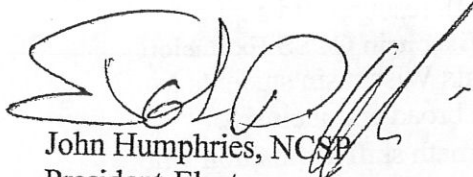
WSPA is concerned with the appropriate role of the state superintendent. The Wisconsin Constitution, Article X, states, "The supervision of public instruction shall be vested in a state superintendent and such other officers as the legislature shall direct." The delegate Lorenzo Bevans summarized his comments about the proposed office of state superintendent by stating, "...who alone can give uniformity, energy, and efficiency to the system?" [*Journal of the Convention of 1846*, reprinted in the *Attainment of Statehood* 568 (Milo M. Quaife, ed., 1928)]

WSPA is very interested in supporting "uniformity, energy, and efficiency" in our system of state schools, as envisioned by the framers of our state constitution. We believe that adoption of the Common Core does precisely this, and that this is one reason why many groups including Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce have publicly given their support. What is the purpose of Wisconsin Standards if they are not aligned to nationally-normed tests or directly comparable to other state's standards? The future of the global marketplace involves competition on a grand scale. Wisconsin students should not be held apart from an opportunity to compete on the same playing field as students from other states. There is no reasonable rationale for taking Wisconsin out of the national conversation on educational outcomes.

Finally, as experts in assessment, we are very concerned with the possibility of the development of a replacement statewide assessment. It is inconceivable that an assessment developed for our state would be as comprehensive and meaningful as the Smarter Balanced Assessment. Furthermore, having one consistent assessment that is used across the nation gives us an excellent way to measure our student's progress. This issue is one that should cause significant concern to all who are interested in moving our schools forward in a uniform and efficient manner.

In summary, Wisconsin deserves higher standards, not replacement standards that could very easily be less rigorous than the Common Core. The proposal inserts politics into a process that should be focused on educational expertise. We again call upon you to use the Common Core as a baseline and add more clarity, rigor, and support for implementation.

Thank you again for your time and focus on these important educational issues.



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/s/  
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March 6, 2014

Good Morning,

My name is Rebecca Kurzynske. As a member of the Oconto Falls Public School District Board of Education, I urge you to vote against Senate Bill 619 and oppose the creation of a Model Academic Standards Board with membership filled by political appointment. This board would be given authority over matters that clearly are the responsibility of the Department of Public Instruction, according to the Constitution of the State of Wisconsin.

A politically appointed board to oversee the development of academic standards is a step backwards and disrespects the profession. Within the Oconto Falls School District and in Districts across the state, we have spent countless hours revising our curriculum to align with the adopted Common Core State Standards and continually work to implement other Model Academic Standards as they are adopted including the Career and Technical Education Standards which were adopted this past fall.

Our administrative team has done an outstanding job of keeping our Board of Education updated on changes to academic standards and how this may impact the education we provide our students. Using the Curriculum Development and Evaluation process prescribed by Board Policy, our administrative team has lead staff in developing program intent, selecting materials, implementing the revised curriculum based on the new standards, and will continue the process by evaluating the program and identifying areas of needed improvement. Our policy states, "The Board has the responsibility for maintaining a minimum program of instruction guaranteed by the state statutes and for initiating improvements beyond that minimum." Our policy goes on to clearly identify responsibilities for maintaining instructional programs consistent with provisions of the constitution of the State of Wisconsin and other applicable policies, regulations, and rules. The policy also outlines the Board's expectation that faculty and administration evaluate the program and report their findings as well as recommendations to the Board.

The standards guide our instruction. However, resources selection, curriculum development, and instructional practice are still determined at the local level based on the needs of the District and its students. As a member of the Board of Education and representative of the Board on our local curriculum committee, I have often looked at options for programing, staffing and curriculum. Ultimately, our locally elected School Board makes the call on what happens in our schools.