

**Testimony of Deborah DeBacker
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**SMARTER IS FEDERALLY FUNDED WITH A FEDERALLY APPOINTED
VALIDATION COMMITTEE.**

When the federal government pays for something, there are always strings attached. And whether you are Democrat or Republican, at some point you will not like the strings attached.

SMARTER is the consortium that Michigan State Board of Ed and Gov. Granholm contracted to write Michigan tests, in 2010. It is a 26 state member, federally funded consortium, with federal validation teams who will review SMARTER tests for "item design and validation". Attached are periodicals reporting this and the actual webpage from the Federal Department of Education where it explains the federal oversight committee.

**[http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2013/04/common_assessment_gr
oups_to_undergo_new_federal_review_process.html?qs=parcc](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2013/04/common_assessment_groups_to_undergo_new_federal_review_process.html?qs=parcc)**

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/performance.html>

Right now there are no governance rules to tell us how a state can challenge a question, change a question or eliminate a question on the test. No policies have been made public

SMARTER has a contract with Michigan to not only write year end testing, but interim, or what is called formative tests. Teachers will have to teach exactly, with exact timing what is tested.

These reasons are probably why 6 states have withdrawn from their testing consortium, Alabama, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Oklahoma and Florida. Utah, Texas, and Nebraska, never signed on to testing. Below is an excerpt from a letter, also attached, from the Georgia State Superintendent John D. Barge to his district superintendents. Note his reasons involve cost, ability to change standards, local districts technology and student time on testing:

“Finally and arguably the most important consideration, adopting the PARCC assessment would limit the ability of Georgia educators to make adjustments or changes to our standards as we see fit. If Georgia educators determine that certain standards need to be shifted or revised, we would run the risk of no longer being aligned with PARCC assessment. Such misalignment would put our students at a disadvantage”

I urge you to retain control of education by retaining control of testing and get us out of the SMARTER and all other testing consortiums. Build our own tests here, using the examples of Texas, who developed knowledge and facts based tests.

NEW YORK, A TEST CASE GONE BAD, WITH POLITICAL FALLOUT

This spring New York State was the first state to take Common Core testing. It was a failure, with Long Island scores dropping from 75.4% passing their former state tests, to 37.5% passing Common Core tests in math. English was about as bad.

Newsday reports that 1,500 parents, teachers and students rallied in a high school football field on Long Island to criticize the Common Core standardized tests. <http://www.newsday.com/long-island/education/1-500-rally-against-common-core-tests-at-comsewogue-high-school-1.5910413>

The New York legislature is now going to hold hearings.

Elected officials who had supported these tests, despite citizens' opposition are now concerned not only about the students, but their jobs as well. This is a left-right coalition. Even before the tests were administered many parents decided to keep their children home on testing days, mostly due to the data collection fears.

Please vote to oppose Common Core and to pull out of SMARTER testing consortium and build a truly exceptional education system that will make our students exceptional, not common.

August 26, 2013

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Common-Assessment Groups to Undergo New Federal Review Process

By Catherine Gewertz on April 1, 2012 10:35 AM

The U.S. Department of Education has created a technical-review process for the two state consortia that are designing assessments for the common standards.

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The technical review will focus on two aspects of the work the assessment consortia are doing: **item design and validation**. This is in contrast to the program-review process that the department began when the two consortia first received federal Race to the Top funding in 2010. That monitors how the states are progressing with the work they outlined in their original applications.

The department outlined the new technical-review work and lists the panelists who will conduct it in a **notice on the Race to the Top-Assessment website**. A **review guide** on that same page details how the department has been conducting its program review, and also includes its Year One reports on each of the two consortia—the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, or PARCC.

The new technical review for the Race to the Top Assessment program is part of the department's bid to find better ways to work with grantees, find out what works and what doesn't, and revise as projects progress, **Ann Whalen, the department's director of policy and implementation, told me last week**. It will focus on the quality of the tests that are being crafted, and see that the groups have a sound research plan in place to validate the tests as proxies for college readiness.

The first meeting in the new review process will take place later this month, when consortia representatives will meet for two days with department officials and the technical-review panelists **here in Washington, Whalen said**. The idea isn't for panelists to reach consensus on the consortia's work, she said. Instead, they will share their thoughts individually with the department to guide it as it works with the two groups. The panel's feedback will also be available, in a yet-to-be-determined form, to the public, Whalen said.

The department's website goes into much more detail about the seven panelists who will serve as the technical reviewers. **But here is a quick list:**

• **Peter Behuniak**, who was Connecticut's assessment director and has advised more than a dozen states on their assessment systems. He was an adviser to former President Bill Clinton in his bid to create a voluntary national test. Behuniak is now a professor in the educational psychology department at the University of Connecticut.

RECENT ENTRIES

PARCC Proclaims Strong State Commitment Despite State Withdrawals

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RACE TO THE TOP TECHNICAL REVIEW

Announcing a Technical Review for the Consortia of States Developing Next-Generation Assessment Systems
March 2013

As part of continuing efforts to support states in their development of the next generation of assessments, the U.S. Department of Education will hold a Race to the Top Assessment Technical Review Process. In September 2010, the Department provided funding to two consortia of states, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced), to develop new comprehensive assessment systems to measure whether students have the knowledge and skills necessary to be ready for college and the workforce.

The data from these new assessment systems, which will be administered for the first time in the 2014-2015 school year, will be used by parents, teachers, schools, and states to make better decisions about how to support students and teachers so that they can be successful. PARCC and Smarter Balanced are now past the halfway mark of their four-year grants – the Technical Review will help the Department support their work by analyzing their progress meeting the requirements laid out in the Race to the Top Assessment program and identifying how we can better partner with the consortia during this critical development phase. The review will focus on two broad areas of assessment development: the consortium’s research confirming the validity of the assessment results and the consortium’s approach to developing items and tasks.

The experts who will assist the Department with the Race to the Top Assessment Technical Review are Peter Behuniak, University of Connecticut; Rebecca Kopriva, Wisconsin Center for Educational Research; Suzanne Lane, University of Pittsburgh; James Pellegrino, University of Illinois at Chicago; Kathleen Porter-Magee, Fordham Institute; and William Schmidt, Michigan State University.

The Technical Review is one component of the Department’s Race to the Top Assessment program review. The program review is the overall method by which the Department provides oversight of and support for the consortia. The Technical Review will be combined with other components, including on-going, but at least monthly, conversations between the Department and the grantee; on-site program reviews by Department staff; stocktake meetings with the consortium and senior leaders in the Department; and the annual performance report. A description of the complete program review process can be found below at: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/review-guide.pdf> (PDF, 27.2K).

- [Race to the Top Technical Reviewer Biographies](#) (MS Word, 141K)
- [Race to the Top Assessment Technical Review Process](#) (PDF, 580K)
- [Spring 2013 Technical Review for PARCC](#) (PDF, 223K)
- [Spring 2013 Technical Review for Smarter Balanced](#) (PDF, 223K)

RACE TO THE TOP ASSESSMENT ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

- [Race to the Top Assessment Program Review Guide](#) PDF (27K)
- [Annual Performance Report \(APR\)](#) PDF (143K)

CONSORTIUM REPORTS

Consortium	Report
Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career	Year 1 Report PDF (1.08M)
	Year 2 Report PDF (1.1M)
Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium	Year 1 Report PDF (803K)
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Dear Superintendents,

Earlier today, I, along with Governor Deal and our State Board Chair, Barbara Hampton, advised the leadership of the PARCC Governing Board that the state of Georgia is withdrawing from the consortium and as such, we will not administer the PARCC assessments in 2014-2015. Georgia will be pursuing other options for developing our own state assessments in English language arts and math at the elementary, middle and high school levels. We will continue to work with Georgia educators, as we have in the past, to reconfigure and/or redevelop our state assessments to reflect the instructional focus and expectations inherent in our rigorous state standards in language arts and math. This is **not** a suspension of the implementation of the CCGPS in language arts and math.

After talking with district superintendents, administrators, teachers, parents, lawmakers, and members of many communities, I believe this is the best decision for Georgia's students. Relative to assessment, our paramount goal is to deliver high-quality instruments. It is critical that these instruments provide key information about student learning and contribute to the ongoing work of improving the educational opportunities for each student.

The Georgia Department of Education estimates that several million dollars in savings will be realized, annually, by developing our own assessments. The cost estimates for PARCC will be released later today, and these costs far exceed what Georgia can afford.

As we have discussed the technology requirements for PARCC, we have realized that a majority of our districts are not ready for full-scale, online assessments across all grades. The state does not currently have the technology infrastructure or sufficient hardware to handle the test administration demands of PARCC, which include technology-enhanced test items.

While any new test Georgia develops will require greater capacity, allowing for online administration, we will be in the position to work with districts to establish the timeline. This is important, as many districts need greater bandwidth, improved connectivity, and more devices (i.e., hardware) to handle not only assessment administration but day to day instructional requirements.

Developing our own assessments also will allow Georgia to determine the amount of time our students spend testing. Based on current estimates, PARCC anticipates up to 10 hours of student engagement, through multiple test sessions conducted across two testing windows in language arts and mathematics alone. I am optimistic that Georgia's tests will require significantly less time for these two content areas, within a single window, and still provide high-quality information about student learning.

Finally, and arguably the most important consideration, adopting the PARCC assessment would limit the ability of Georgia to make adjustments or changes to our standards as we see fit. If Georgia educators determine that certain standards need to be shifted or revised, we would run the risk of no longer being aligned with the PARCC assessment. Such misalignment would put our students at a disadvantage.

As we begin to build new assessments, please note that our Georgia assessments:

- will be aligned to the math and English language arts CCGPS;
- **will be of high-quality and rigorous;**
- will be developed for students in grades 3 through 8 and high school;
- **will be reviewed by Georgia teachers;**
- **will require significantly less time to administer than the PARCC assessments;**
- will be administered within a single testing window;
- **will be offered in both computer- and paper-based formats; and**
- will include a variety of item types, such as performance-based and multiple-choice items.

I am confident that Georgia can use the information learned from our involvement in PARCC as we develop new tests. We are grateful to Georgia educators who have worked hard to help develop our standards and assessments. We look forward to continuing to work with them to develop a new assessment system for our state.

As we continue to prepare our students to be college and career ready by the time they graduate from high school, I believe this approach will benefit them greatly. As the work continues, I will keep you informed. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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"Making Education Work for All Georgians"

1,500 rally against Common Core tests at Comsewogue High School

August 17, 2013 by CANDICE NORWOOD / candice.norwood@newsday.com



"Today, we are canceling our flight reservations."

He urged the group to use social media to spread the word and demand that state legislators re-evaluate the potential effects of Common Core standards. "Stop it, fix it or scrap it," Rella chanted with the crowd.

Rella has received viral attention after posting a letter to the school district's homepage on Aug. 7 asking state legislators to either help address his and parents' concerns or remove him from office.

New York is among the first of 44 states to adopt the Common Core, which sets uniform learning goals for each grade level. The state's agreement to do so came when the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top initiative awarded grants to states with the program; the state received \$700 million in 2010.

On the Island, 37.5 percent of students in grades three through eight passed math tests in April, compared with 75.4 percent who passed less rigorous tests in 2012. In English, the number of students passing was 39.6 percent, down from 67.2 percent in 2012.

Parents and teachers have voiced outrage and concern over the mental and emotional impact of the new system on young students.

More than 1,500 parents, teachers and students gathered at the Comsewogue High School football field in Port Jefferson Station Saturday to criticize the Common Core standardized tests on which a majority of Long Island students performed poorly.

Protesters carried signs and cheered as they waited to hear from Comsewogue Superintendent Joseph Rella, a vocal curriculum critic.

"All of us have been passengers on a plane being built in midair," Rella said to the crowd.

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"Is it necessary to expose third grade children to that level of stress?" said Gina Rennard, one of nine speakers at the rally and a mother of three. "How do you tell a child that she's not college material?"

The support for the "students, not scores" movement has been "fantastic," Rella said, adding that they will no longer remain invisible on the issue. Rella was one of nine speakers at the event, including Assems. Alfred Graf and Steve Englebright and former Suffolk County legislator Vivian Vilorio-Fisher.

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