

“Abolish Local School Districts” Proposed by Co-Founder of Achieve, Architect of Common Core’s Standards

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Louis Gerstner Jr., former IBM CEO, and “chairman emeritus” for the organization called Achieve, which he helped found and co-chaired, was the speaker on education reform for the CEO Council at the *Wall Street Journal* in November, 2008. He told the audience that to fix the nation’s schools and to make them more efficiently run, just like a business, and just like he ran IBM, they needed to be consolidated; “*The nation’s 16,000 school districts need to be abolished.*”ⁱ Gerstner also wrote an article that was published in the *Wall Street Journal*, December 1, 2008, which detailed how the districts would be abolished and what would be left. He suggested that Obama and the various governors do this task by executive orders:

*Abolish all local school districts, save 70 (50 states; 20 largest cities). States may choose to leave some of the rest as community service organizations, but they would have no direct involvement in the critical task of establishing standards, selecting teachers, and developing curricula.*ⁱⁱ



What is Achieve and What is Its Influence on Common Core?

Achieve is a public/private partnership (PPP) made up of business corporate leaders and governors started in 1996, which has always had as its primary goal the creation and establishment of national standards for all the States in the nation. The standards were their idea. They formed the cartel to write the standards. They got the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to join the cartel to give the standards some legitimacy. If a few governors and a few State Superintendents were involved, then Achieve could call them “State-sponsored, State-written and State-led” as American education curriculum and testing, according to three federal laws, is supposed to be done. The individual States would thus be more willing to adopt the standards.

What is Wrong with the Above Picture? There are two things. **1) First of all, it used to be taboo to have Public Private Partnerships in our nation.** Governors (public officials) going into business with and forming partnerships with big corporations (private) was always against the traditional ways in America. Big business used to serve as a fourth check and balance on big government to keep it from usurping too much power. But when big business is now in a partnership with big government, there is no more checks and balances and both become bigger and more powerful using tax paying dollars to do so. Another name for a PPP is *fascism* - where private property ownership is allowed but highly regulated and controlled by a strong national government. **2) Secondly, the NGA and CCSSO are not true representatives of the States.** They are both Washington D.C.- based trade and lobbying groups and are not government organizations. Not all governors or State school board members belong to them, and they do not truly represent the States. A true government organization cannot hold copyrights or trade-marks,



or meet behind closed doors as the NGA and CCSSO do. A true government organization must respond to a FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) request placed on it, but that is not the case with the NGA or CCSSO. For all of these reasons, the NGA and CCSSO cannot be used to claim that Common Core was State-written and State-led.

Why Did Gerstner’s Suggestion to Abolish Local School Districts not go over very well? Why are Local School Districts Important? Our Founding Fathers did much research before establishing the form of government that they gave this nation, a Constitutional Republic. They discovered that the best government that lasts the longest and where the people are the happiest is that which is limited and closest to the people, elected by the people and accountable to them. It is much better to have small school districts that represent individual schools where people can go and talk to their elected school boards about their concerns, rather than a huge school district such as LA, where seven school board members reign over 50,000 schools with over 600,000 students. How much influence can one concerned parent have at such a school board meeting? And how much influence could a parent have at a one large school board meeting that represented an entire State of over six million students as California has?

Charter Schools: Another way that local control is weakened is by changing public schools into charter schools which in most States places the schools under a charter with the State and to no longer come under the jurisdiction of elected school boards. That is taxation without representation. California is the exception to this. Charter Schools are still somewhat under the authority of local school boards.

Big Regional Government: Since just simply abolishing local school districts has not worked, a better way of accomplishing the same is by bringing in large regional governments with unelected commissioners to usurp the authority of local, county and State elected officials. Our local school districts are being placed under big regional government just as is happening to our city councils and county board of supervisors. One Bay Area has placed nine counties under one large regional government in the San Francisco Bay area. California has been divided up into 18 large regions. In a slide presentation put out by PARCC, one of the two consortia that are creating the assessment tests, they show on slides 20 and 22, “regional centers” and the “delivery chain” of Common Core coming from the federal to the State to the Region, to the County, to the district then to the school and classroom.ⁱⁱⁱ I heard Dr. Sandra Stotsky speak in person in Fresno last November. She was one of the members of the CC review committee who refused to sign off on the standards saying they were “inferior and would not prepare children for authentic college work.” She spoke about the plans to end local and State school boards and replace them with **regional** unelected boards.

“Change State Policies and Practices”: These are the words that Achieve has on its own website where they state that this is their objective. What if the States don’t think that their policies and practices need to be changed? Is that what Common Core is all about – to further help change our form of State government? Achieve also boasts that their work is the **“pre-cursor to Common Core.”**^{iv}

ⁱ <http://blogs.wsj.com/ceo-council/2008/11/18/gerstners-education-fix-fewer-districts-national-standards/>.

ⁱⁱ <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB122809533452168067>

ⁱⁱⁱ www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/...SirMichaelBarber.ppt.

^{iv} <http://whatiscommoncore.wordpress.com/2012/04/06/what-is-achieve-inc-and-why-should-you-care/>