



Analysis of Common Core Implications in Tax Credit Scholarship Appropriations Amendment 910124 for PCS (532862) for CS for SB 1512

Karen R. Effrem, MD – Executive Director of the Florida Stop Common Core Coalition, Inc.

While it is a noble aim to want to help poor children and children with disabilities, we generally agree with the concern raised by many that using public tax dollars via vouchers to pay for private schools is problematic. The best way to provide school choice is to allow standards, tests, and curriculum decisions to remain at the local level where they may be decided by parents and duly elected school boards. This would free all teachers, students and families from the tyranny of Common Core's academically inferior, developmentally inappropriate and psychologically manipulative standards, tests and data collection system. Then, public tax money with government strings would not be going to private entities and changing their process and their availability as a distinct alternative to the public system. In addition, according to [educational historian Larry Cuban](#), "There's really no good evidence that past educational reforms, such as revising state educational standards, have made much difference."

If the tax credit scholarship program is to be expanded, using the public school tests as an accountability tool is not effective and very dangerous. Non-public school students are required to take some kind of nationally norm referenced tests already. Non-public students out-perform public school students on nationally norm referenced tests and the SAT and ACT already. There is plenty of possibility for comparison. It is extremely concerning that there would be any discussion of requiring private school students to take any state tests, but especially the new tests that are aligned to Common Core.

Here are the two major issues related to Common Core in this amendment:

1) Private School Curriculum and Standards

The following language is in the amendment on lines 17-20:

(c) The purpose of this section is not to prescribe the standards or curriculum for private schools. A private school retains the authority to determine its own standards and curriculum.

While appreciated, this is aspirational language and not specific enough to prevent private schools from being forced to alter their curriculum if voucher students are required to take the state tests. Also there is also no specific prohibition in this language or in the amendment to prevent private schools and their teachers from being forced or bribed to use the Common Core professional development materials offered by the state, which are mostly developed by the Learning Systems Institute, which will be overseeing the comparison of the public and private school tests (see below).

2) Assessments

The language in the amendment keeps most of the House language giving private schools a choice on which assessments to administer for now (see lines 478-492). However, given President Gaetz's and many Democrat senators' staunch determination to impose "accountability" on private schools, there is great concern that the imposition of the state Common Core tests from the Senate side or in future legislatures is still likely. There is also the strong possibility that the nationally norm referenced tests will be aligning with Common Core in the near future.

In addition, the language on lines 515-516 and 558-606 requires that the test results be analyzed and compared by the [Learning Systems Institute](#) organization that is part of FSU and also responsible for [C-PALMS](#), the Common Core professional development units with their historically challenged means of teaching [1984](#), among other issues, making them unlikely to be an honest broker in the comparisons, because they will likely have a bias towards public school testing, professional development, and standards, particularly the Common Core standards. While it is important to have a study of test results between public and private schools for comparison purposes, the likelihood of receiving an unbiased report from this organization seems quite remote. It is far more likely that the reports from LSI will result in recommendations to use public school (Common Core) standards, tests, curriculum, or professional development, again making the private schools more like public schools.

Based on these concerns, we cannot support this amendment and although for different reasons, we agree with Senator Galvano's original plan to withdraw the tax credit scholarship bill.