



Wisconsin GrandSons of Liberty

Comprehensive Wisconsin High School Textbook Study

Media Guide

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PRESS RELEASE: for immediate release

Wisconsin GrandSons of Liberty Comprehensive Wisconsin High School Textbook Study Results

Franklin – The grassroots, Constitutionalist group Wisconsin GrandSons of Liberty released the results of a 143 day long study of high school textbooks used in 374 Wisconsin School Districts for grades 10-12. Textbooks from selected subjects were reviewed for neutrality and accuracy. The subjects included algebra, geometry, US history, world history, civics, world geography and economics.

In the course of conducting the study, the group discovered a disturbing lack of transparency as approximately 37% of the school districts contacted violated Wisconsin Open Records Request law and evidently ignored Wisconsin's Textbook Accountability law. The group simply requested a small list of textbooks, which according to *Wisconsin Statute 118.03* should exist and be on file with the District Clerk; yet many districts saw no requirement to abide by Wisconsin Open Records law and provide part or all of the list of approved and utilized textbooks within the district. Furthermore, since K-12 education spending accounts for 37% of the Wisconsin state budget, this failure to comply with a simple book request by saying that "no such record exists" destroys all confidence in the education bureaucracies to be good stewards of public property and raises questions about their fiscal responsibility.

Our analysis reveals that Common Core State Standards (CCSS) aligned texts for algebra and geometry were generally neutral; however, non-aligned texts such as civics, US history and world history exhibited some measure of bias. Ultimately, this study shows that the biases and inaccuracies existed in the texts prior to adoption of the CCSS and recent citizen involvement to look for inaccuracies in curriculum to malign CCSS clearly show these issues existed before CCSS.

In light of Gov. Walker's call for a repeal of Common Core in Wisconsin, we come to a different recommendation. We feel it is more advantageous to conduct a comprehensive audit and detailed fiscal analysis of Wisconsin's seven layers of educational bureaucracy before considering adding an eighth layer of complexity to the already bloated educational staff structure with the proposed "Model Academic Standards Board."

Ultimately, even if the state legislature rejects Common Core, nothing will change at the local level until parents and citizens get involved because it is the local school boards that adopted the standards in the first place.

The full report may be downloaded from the Wisconsin GrandSons of Liberty website.

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Background to the Study:

With the State of Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction (DPI) adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010, school districts started to align language arts and math curricula, materials and trained teachers in the new standards.

In 2013, opponents of the CCSS began efforts to repeal this adoption citing loss of local control of curricula, indoctrination of children with CCSS aligned lessons and texts, the unconstitutionality of expanding the Longitudinal Database, increase in testing and assessments, and the costs associated with CCSS adoption.

The Wisconsin Legislature passed the 2013-2015 biennial budget with provisions to more fully study and identify issues and concerns about the CCSS in Wisconsin: the DPI and the legislature were to hold public hearings on the CCSS, the current standards were to be compared to the CCSS, and the Legislative Fiscal Bureau was to report on the costs associated with implementation versus stopping implementation.

The Wisconsin GrandSons of Liberty (WiGOL) Concerns with the CCSS:

The State of Wisconsin adopted new standards without knowing the implementation costs on a district or state level and neither the DPI, nor the legislature, had performed a cost analysis prior to adoption in 2010.

During the public hearings that were held, other issues, like the expansion of the Longitudinal Database and its subsequent violation of student privacy, as well as the abdication of local authority to unaccountable federal and corporate entities, would come to light.

Expected Outcomes of Study:

Provide a baseline for parents and concerned citizens to fully understand, and become involved in, the curricula choices and teaching materials used in their individual districts and to provide tools to help them identify and address materials that are not accurate or are misleading.

Foster a dialogue between the public and school districts to lead to a better understanding of how the curriculum is affected by the change in standards.

Identify which teaching materials are currently being used in Wisconsin that are CCSS aligned.

Compare spending from prior to 2010 and after 2010 to see the actual change in costs to districts to align with the CCSS.

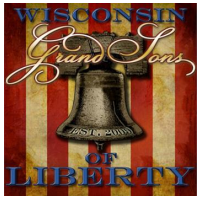
Components of the Project:

Find which textbooks are currently being used in classrooms in Wisconsin,

Review several of the current textbooks for accuracy and neutrality in presentation,

Provide parents with a handbook to encourage and assist them to become more involved.

The issue of school district transparency was added to the project after some districts ignored our initial friendly email that any concerned parent could have sent to the school.



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Selected Subjects:

Algebra, geometry, US history, world history, civics, world geography, and economics.

Methodology of Data Gathering:

1. Sample 374 Wisconsin School Districts that teach grades 10-12, according to the WI DPI database.
2. Email "informal request" asking for a list of selected textbooks in use, in high school grades 10-12.
3. Open Records Request for list of textbooks in use, in high school, in grades 10-12.
4. Follow up contact as needed by email, phone, or in person.
5. Contact 21 selected districts in Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties to borrow textbooks to review.
6. Quantification review of each textbook, identifying 30 keywords (see Appendix A-Section 1).

Analysis:

Once all the information was collected from the school districts from across the state and the common books reviewed, all data was merged with the data collected from the pilot study districts. Annual financial reports for each district obtained from the DPI were then added to the districts' data. Analysis of the data would reveal:

- The current status of the textbooks used in Wisconsin.
- The number of language arts and math textbooks that are currently aligned to the CCSS.
- The coverage, accuracy and neutrality of information presented in the most common texts used statewide.
- Publishers used most frequently.
- Spending trends associated with CCSS adoption.
- Print and instructional media spending.
- Variances in spending from 2010-2012 compared to average spending in 2000-2009.
- Level of alignment and progress towards full CCSS adoption.

School Transparency:

The first step of the project was designed to just gather information and use that to assist in the second and third portions of the project. However, it became clear shortly after beginning the first step that obtaining the information on textbooks was going to take longer and be more involved than originally anticipated.

Of the 374 informal requests sent on December 5, 2013, only 29 districts (7.75%) responded:

- 331 Districts ignored our informal request and did not respond
- 26 Districts answered our informal request
- 14 Districts had bad email contact information listed for public use
- 2 Districts requested we send a formal Open Records Request for the information
- 1 District denied our request for information

On January 15, 2014, a formal open records request (ORR) was sent to the schools that failed to respond. On February 8, 2014, February 16, 2014, and finally on February 21, 2014; follow up emails were sent to School Districts, School Boards, and directors of 2 Wisconsin Association of School Board districts. In total, 1,594 emails were sent and received to obtain information from 223 WI school districts.

As of June 7, 2014 and after 143 days had elapsed after the ORR requests; these were the transparency results:

- 223 Districts completed our request
- 72 Districts denied our request



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- 65 Districts read but failed to respond to our request (all emails were sent with Read Receipt tags)
- 14 Districts still had not updated their district contact information on public websites

SCHOOL DISTRICT TRANSPARENCY:

What was it we were asking for?:

We were asking for a list of textbook information on seven high school level subjects. We didn't ask for a particular format only that they provide us by whatever means the district uses to catalog, inventory, or otherwise definitively identify the textbook and edition currently in use. Typically, that would be the title, publisher, and ISBN (International Standard Book Number).

We didn't expect this to be a difficult task as without accurate inventory and tracking methods, how would districts know which textbooks they possess, their age, and be able to forecast book needs for future years?

Why did we include a "transparency" component to the study?:

We did not initially, but we sent our email request with "Read Receipt" tagging to know if districts would ignore us or try to claim they never received our email. The sheer number of problems involved in getting a reply from school districts led us to the conclusion that if they won't answer a softball question concerning textbook inventory then they are automatically shutting out citizen inquiries and being less than transparent public servants.

Also, with the exact or similar canned replies from multiple school districts it became obvious that some districts had colluded to thwart public transparency.

We also contacted Wisconsin Association School Board (WASB) District Presidents in a final attempt to get information from non-responding districts. Two WASB districts were sent emails on Feb 21, 2014 and these attempts did nothing to generate a response from derelict school districts.

We discovered the canned emails probably originated from the Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESA) Units in Wisconsin that are a layer of 14 regionalized, governmental agencies that serve as a link between the WI DPI, the school districts and the public. 41 School districts sent response letters containing the same phrases and wording in their denial of our request.

Other means of effectively denying or delaying answering an Open Record Request without saying NO:

1. Demanding exorbitant fees.
2. Demanding to know who is submitting the request.
3. Demanding that the requestor fill out "required paperwork."

Wisconsin's Open Records law states that you may charge for "the actual, necessary and direct cost" of locating records, if the costs exceed \$50, and for the actual cost of photocopies. The Wisconsin Department of Justice advises that copying fees under the Open Records law should be "around 15 cents per page and that anything in excess of 25 cents may be suspect." Wisconsin ORR law also permits the anonymous requesting of information.

Districts claimed varying hours to gather records on 8 or 9 textbooks, from 6 to 20 hours.

- 33 Districts demanded payment for fees to cover the cost to collect information or for copying fees
- 11 Districts claimed it would cost over \$300 for this information



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- 2 Districts failed to provide the requested records after we made payment
- 1 District initially wanted \$1,000 but reduced that to \$19.40 after we replied with a clarifying request

Why does this matter?... because they already have a record that should have been free and easy to access!:
Wisconsin Statute 118.03 requires lists of textbooks adopted by the school board to be maintained and filed with the school district clerk. After 143 days and numerous emails, 28 Districts continued to deny that they have such a record despite spending nearly \$7 Million on textbooks between 2009 and 2012.

TEXTBOOK REVIEW:

Wisconsin School Districts utilize 1,887 unique textbook ISBNs for the subject areas of our study:

The textbook review: of note, this study was conducted as concerned citizens seeking to get an idea of the general level of knowledge, accuracy, and neutrality of common textbooks in use in Wisconsin. It's done to encourage parents and local community members to be part of the school processes and review textbooks plus the other materials used in their districts to determine if they meet their own expectations for students.

Issues with textbooks:

Prentice Hall's 2004 edition of Algebra 1

- *Issue: Community Service Example 3 - Page 198: Finding the Whole – Water Supply 3 – Discusses volunteering at a hospital in order to fulfill the high schools requirement for community service.*
- *Issue: Community Service Exercise - Page 200: Proportions and Percent Equations - Store Exercises: #19: The question is to figure out how many hours to “volunteer” for her school’s requirement for community service. The answer is 30 hours for her school’s requirement. How is this “volunteering” when it is required? How do the courts then give out sentences for community service as a punishment when the schools are stating that community service is required? Won’t that be confusing for our young adults that one is a punishment and one is “volunteering” a wonderful service?*

From “Civics: Responsibilities and Citizenship:

- *Legal System-even though the text states that the Constitution is the law of the land, the President does have the power to make laws as well. Text sites Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation as proof the president can make laws.*
- *American Economy-No information concerning long-term effects of government involvement in the economy. No discussion of inflation resulting from policies of printing money.*
- *Free Enterprise System-The government is looked upon as playing a vital role in ensuring economic growth. Government policies are aimed at strengthening the economy, solving economic problems, and protecting the economic interests of citizens.*

“Economics: Today and Tomorrow”, copyright 1995.

- *p. 416, par. 1, describes how one function of government is to redistribute income and provide for public well being also to provide public goods.*

Paul Krugman’s economics books are in use in 10 districts in the state. The most frequent occurrence of the words “justice” (economic, racial, social, environmental, etc.) and “welfare” (social programs and general assistance) occur in this book. The book also heavily favors Keynesian economics.

In “Economics” by Pearson/Prentice Hall these examples were identified:



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- Page 363 “in this section, you will learn why most Americans believe that the person who earns more money should pay a higher percentage of income in taxes,” and “An overwhelming majority of citizens today consent to having a portion of their earnings taken by the government” both lack citations or sources.
- "Public Goods/Services-Subject is accurate but biased. Government does everything right. All examples of government involvement center on building roads, bridges, or aiding people when they are in a disaster. Nothing is stated about the long-term affect of government programs/bureaucracy. Nor tendency of government to use road tax dollars for other programs (the political side of spending).

WIGOL reviewed seven editions of US history texts and found several examples of inaccurate information. Only three texts were identified as neutral in their coverage of key ideas and topics. In McDougal Littell’s 2009 edition of “The Americans”, an entire chapter was called “The Living Constitution”. This text also promotes the idea that government can solve America’s problems and that the role of government is to help people and in order to keep people safe, more laws must be enacted.

On-going issues with textbooks:

In the final review, during the last few weeks of our study, we discovered that in 2002, the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute (WPRI) had conducted a study that examined the world history textbooks used in Wisconsin.

Their study examined the textbooks for content and bias covering 15 categories to find what was included and excluded in texts. One of the conclusions of the report was:

“This review considered where Wisconsin world history texts succeed and don’t succeed. Among the 15 category areas listed, it is hard to say where the biggest failure resides, from the excesses of multiculturalism to the total neglect of democracy and free markets. The portrayals of Africa, the Middle East, and Islam are inadequate. Maybe the single most glaring disappointment is the utter failure to underscore the human, political, and economic bankruptcy of communism and its dictators. With communism in particular, Wisconsin students are not learning the proper lessons of history.”

Common Core Aligned or not?:

Currently, very few records exist in Wisconsin’s schools that indicate if texts or other resources are CCSS aligned. The majority of textbooks used in algebra, geometry and English are not CCSS aligned. However, textbooks are only one resource teachers use to bring courses into alignment with standards.

The School Superintendents Association released a report in June of 2014 stating 79.8% of respondents are having difficulty finding CCSS aligned curriculum and that those materials marketed by publishing companies as being CCSS aligned are not truly aligned with the standards.

Future of Textbooks:

The quality of the content of K-12 textbooks is not entirely within the control of the school boards or the school district curriculum directors. Primarily the publishing houses determine the content of the material and the school districts are then left to select from the choices offered by a dwindling number of textbook publishers. The content of the textbooks has been historically heavily influenced by the states that make large buys,



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specifically, California, Florida and Texas. With the shift to the CCSS, the purchasing domination of these states is weakening.

To combat the rising cost of textbooks and to assure concurrence with the states' curricula content, several states have begun programs to create "open texts" for K-12. These books will be digital versions that be either downloaded for free or for a nominal fee a hardcopy can be had – for as low as \$5. California is undertaking this effort to eliminate the annual expense of \$400 million in K-12 textbook purchases. Similar programs are underway in Florida, Maine, Utah and Washington State.

The changeover to digital formats does not result in an automatic savings to the districts; there are infrastructure and hardware costs that cannot be overlooked. Transitioning from printed textbooks to digital formats to comply with the CCSS is consequential as the cost of providing networking, iPads, annual digital licenses, training, insurance and maintenance on devices increases the annual cost per student by an estimated 6 to 7 times the original cost of providing textbooks.

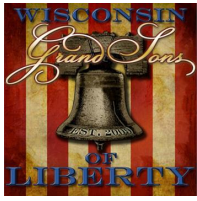
Parent and Community Guide:

There is a myriad of teaching resources used in Wisconsin classrooms. These resources are part of the curriculum adopted by each school board across the state and all combine to teach to a set of standards set by the local school boards, most of which adopted the CCSS voluntarily after the state DPI adopted the standards in 2010.

The books reviewed by WiGOL indicate that the most inaccurate and biased books are those that do not have CCSS alignment (world history, US history, and civics) and algebra and geometry books that are CCSS aligned presented information in a neutral manner. The CCSS are not the cause of the inaccurate and biased lessons and material that currently exist in Wisconsin's schools.

Having local control over curricula and teaching materials is dependent upon parental and community involvement, otherwise the decision-making is left in the hands of school boards and district staff. Parents and community members need to participate:

- Ask to see all teaching materials, textbooks, and curricula for all courses if this information is not provided online or in a course syllabus.
- Look at materials brought home by your child and review. Contact the teacher if there are questions or concerns, or to look at in classroom teaching resources that may not be brought home.
- Attend school board meetings and participate in meetings about curriculum, textbook selection and adoption, and finances. Know who is on the school board and who is your district's CESA and WASB representatives.
- Participate in spring elections for school board and state superintendent. Research candidates and look at their endorsements and campaign financing. If there are no good candidates to choose from, find one or consider running for school board yourself.
- Attend candidate forums before elections and ask questions. Organize a forum of candidates if one is not being planned.
- Participate in fall elections for state senate and assembly and pay attention to any new legislation introduced.



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- Carefully read and understand any school referenda on the ballot before you go vote. Speak with other parents and community members about the referenda and know how it affects the district's finances long-term.

Parental Review of Textbooks:

It is important to know what actual materials are being used in the classroom. Examining textbooks and other teaching materials gives first-hand knowledge of the information being given to the student. The majority of respondents indicated that parents could review textbooks and other teaching materials in coordination with school staff. A small percentage of districts indicated the material was online and could be reviewed with a user name and password. Only 1% indicated that parents could not review the textbooks.

Our analysis reveals that CCSS aligned texts (algebra and geometry) were generally neutral; however, non-aligned texts such as civics, US history and world history exhibited some measure of bias.

Who's Who in Wisconsin Education:

There are several bureaucratic layers of government involved in education that go beyond teachers and principals at individual schools. These levels of education that exist above and beyond individual schools overlap in jurisdiction, control and functions and all have an effect on school budgets, curricula and operations. In Wisconsin, most decisions are made at a local level with school boards and District Administrators. However, there are four additional non-governmental organizations, government agencies and departments on the state level and the US Department of Education that also oversee and influence each district and school either through policy or lobbying the legislature.

Several groups spend big money to influence policies and laws that affect education in Wisconsin. Taxpayer funded lobbyists represent WASB, Milwaukee Public Schools, and the Madison Metropolitan School District. There are also professional associations, publishers and corporations lobbying for legislative policy making.

SCHOOL BOARDS:

There are 38 School Board powers as listed in *Wisconsin Statute 120.13*. School Boards of Education are the "watchdogs" of the community and sets the agenda for the education of the students as well as make decisions about school programs, adopting the school budget, adopts academic standards and monitors student achievement, enacting/altering/repealing a broad range of rules and regulations (policymaking), evaluating policies, people and programs/school operations, advocates for the students and schools, communications with the public, etc. The School Board works with the superintendent.

SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR or SUPERINTENDENT:

The School District Administrator reports to the Board of Education and acts in accordance of the policies, rules and regulations established by the Board of Education as well as laws and regulations of the State of Wisconsin.

COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES (CESA):

Created by the state legislature in 1965, the 12 CESA Districts are the link between school districts and the state. They may provide leadership, coordination, and education services to the school districts, UW-System, and technical colleges. Working with the DPI, CESAs assist districts with the transition to the CCSS by providing professional development programs, online training, and other resources. They are minimally funded by state



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aid, which does not exceed \$25,000 annually, but with state and federal grants, and district payments, several operate budgets in excess of \$20 million.

WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS:

In 1921, the Wisconsin Association of High Schools and Graded School Boards was created. This group later became the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB), a voluntary, nonprofit, membership organization.

WASB is a registered Wisconsin Lobbying Organization. There are 15 WASB regions in Wisconsin. Each WASB region can be comprised of multiple CESA districts, but the regions are not defined by CESA boundaries. WASB funding comes from annual, regular dues from member public school boards and CESA Board of Control members. Additionally, school districts make payments for services WASB provides.

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION:

At statehood in 1848, the Wisconsin Constitution provided for the development of local schools and required that education would be available to all children as well as to establish the state university in Madison and colleges all through the state as needed. There are 426 local school districts for elementary and secondary programs along with 12 cooperative educational service agencies (CESAs).

US – DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION:

The US Department of Education (ED) is a federal government agency that establishes policy, and administrates and coordinates federal assistance to schools. The ED was established in 1979 by combining several agencies. The ED budget consists of federal financial aid for education (policies), data collection on America's schools, key educational issues focus, forbidding discrimination, and providing equal access to education.

Congress created the ED in 1979 with these stated purposes:

1. *To strengthen the Federal commitment to ensuring access to equal educational opportunity for every individual;*
2. *To supplement and complement the efforts of States, the local school systems and other instrumentalities of the States, the private sector, public and private educational institutions, public and private nonprofit educational research institutions, community-based organizations, parents, and students to improve the quality of education;*
3. *To encourage the increased involvement of the public, parents, and students in Federal education programs;*

STATE LEGISLATURE:

The Department of Public Instruction Policy and Budget Team analyzes and monitors the legislation that affects schools, libraries and the department. There is also a legislative liaison that works closely with the DPI for any concerns and questions regarding the education legislation.

Some of the legislation for 2013-2014 Session:

- AB 40 - 2013-15 Biennial Budget Bill
- Assembly Bill 126 - Charter Schools
- Assembly Bill 297- Mascots and Logos
- Assembly Bill 777 - Educator Effectiveness Equivalency



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- Senate Bill 76 - Contract for Additional Charter Schools
- Senate Bill 51 - Three credits math and science
- Senate Bill 619 - Academic Standards Board

LAYERS OF REDUNDANT BUREAUCRACY:

Already there are seven separate policy, legislative, and influencing layers of bureaucratic control affecting education of Wisconsin students. The 101st Legislature's AB617/SB619 bill would have added a Model Academic Standards Board increasing the levels of administration to eight!

The current structure has resulted in CESA and WASB organizations that select each other's members, recommend each other's candidates for positions, collaborate on lobbying and coordinate legal responses. The CESA and WASB districts provide the same services to their overlapping school districts and they both charge school districts millions for the services that they provide. The question must be posed as to why so many levels of educational administration are needed and just exactly what do they all do?

Elected school board members can serve the district, represent their district in their regional WASB, and be the representative for the CESA district. If all three offer salaries, pensions, and other benefits, Wisconsin taxpayers are paying three times for the work of one person.