



Written by [Sheri Few](#) on March 22, 2018

Beware of Gates' New "Education" Fad & "Conservatives" Behind It

A "conservative" public policy group in South Carolina affiliated with former U.S. Senator Jim DeMint has been wrong on education policy since its inception, and it is time that the truth be told.

Palmetto Promise Institute (PPI) brought high-dollar, ill-conceived education policy reforms to South Carolina in 2014 that increased spending for state-level bureaucracy, impeded local control, mandated psychological testing for children as young as four years old, and required retention of third graders who don't meet grade level reading targets.



PPI sponsored this expensive, experimental education package in partnership with Jeb Bush and his Foundation for Excellence in Education (now named ExcelinEd). The Bush organization has been funded for at least a decade by [Common Core financier and UNESCO-ally Bill Gates](#). Bill Gates has dumped billions of dollars nationally into pushing Common Core and hundreds of millions pushing Competency-based Education. Bush's education organization took more than \$6 million from Gates to support Common Core and another \$2.6 million dollars in 2017 for Competency-based Education (CBE).

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We can thank Palmetto Promise Institute for advancing Gates' ill-conceived, experimental, Common Core-based education agenda by encouraging the South Carolina House of Representatives to adopt flawed CBE education policy in H. 4596 on March 9, 2018.

U.S. Parents Involved in Education (USPIE) is working to inform the South Carolina Senate Education Committee on the pitfalls of CBE and H. 4596. It is a complicated topic, where slick talking points hide unproven and damaging education practices.

Everyone knows Common Core is incredibly unpopular; rightly so. Many also know South Carolina was one of many states fooled into a fake repeal, coordinated largely by PPI. South Carolina's current standards are over 90 percent aligned to Common Core. Although some argue this is irrelevant since South Carolina controls the standards, they miss the point that the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) demands College and Career Ready Standards — code words for Common Core.

A few months ago, in a shameful attempt to raise money, PPI claimed credit for ending Common Core in South Carolina, when the truth of the matter is they are largely responsible for the rebranded Common Core version in the state today.

In March 2013, Palmetto Policy Forum (now PPI) coauthored a report with Jeb Bush's Foundation for Excellence in Education (FEE) titled "[TRANSFORMATION: What South Carolina Can Learn From Florida's K-12 Reforms](#)." *The report concludes with a quote from MARC TUCKER!*



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Marc Tucker is no friend to conservative, local control, child-centered education. Recall, in 1992, Republican Congressman Bob Schaffer fought to have [Marc Tucker's "Dear Hillary" letter](#) entered into the *Congressional Record* because the education philosophy it advocated was said to be extremely harmful to America's education system.

Tucker's "Dear Hillary" letter lays out a plan "to remold the entire American system" into "a seamless web that literally extends from cradle to grave and is the same system for everyone," coordinated by "a system of labor market boards at the local, state and federal levels" where curriculum and "job matching" will be handled by counselors "accessing the integrated computer-based program." The current description of Tucker's vision is "a seamless, Pre-natal-20+ data system to develop human capital for the workforce."

In May 2013, Tucker authored [a report with Center for American Progress](#) in which he states, "the United States will have to largely abandon the beloved emblem of American education: local control." He also dared to write "I propose to greatly strengthen the role of the state education agencies in education governance, at the expense of local control ... independent citizen governing boards would be eliminated."

In 2015, [the Joint Commission of Education in Utah](#) hosted a conference with the "intended outcome: to develop a common understanding of K-20 competency-based education." The key note speaker was the infamous Marc Tucker! And, of course Bush's Foundation for Excellence in Education was also featured in the speaker line-up because, as you see, they share education philosophy as does Palmetto Promise Institute (PPI).

Education policy in South Carolina and states throughout our nation have been led by national, federal education fads for several decades: Outcome-based Education, Goals 2000, School-to-Work, No Child Left Behind, Common Core, and now Competency-based Education. The Bushes (Sr., Jr., and Jeb) and the Clintons have been key players in this madness.

USPIE understands the truth must be told concerning the forces driving the agenda in education policy in order to reclaim local and parental control of education in South Carolina and across the country. Advocacy groups including FEE, ExcelinEd and PPI funded with Gates money to lobby for the Gates/Tucker farce and dream destroying education agenda must be exposed.

Palmetto Promise Institute (PPI) aligns itself with ExcelinEd (Jeb Bush), Marc Tucker, and Bill Gates in their advocacy for Competency-based Education.

USPIE is aligned with [American Principles Project](#), and hundreds of thousands of parents across the country who organized to stop Common Core in their states and are organized to restore true education choice to parents of both what and how their children learn. And, USPIE is working to aide South Carolina lawmakers and state legislatures across the country in establishing proven education policy; policy which truly returns control of education to parents and local communities, promote proven education practices, enable teachers to reclaim their profession, and wean states off the federal dollars that control their classrooms.

What exactly is Competency-based Education? It is important to understand how it works in practice in order to understand claims about its benefits versus risks.

Imagine Fifth Grade students start school on day one. They are to learn how to divide. Under CBE, each child logs in to a computer which guides them through the (Common Core) concepts of division. The computer system regularly checks to see if the child has understood what has been "taught" by testing



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their competency. “Regularly” means every 15 minutes or hour or so. If the child demonstrates understanding, as the program defines understanding, the “teaching” continues to the next concept. If the child does not understand, the program repeats or offers an extended explanation. Children are not permitted to move to a new concept until the program believes they are competent on the current topic.

Notice the reference to Common Core concepts of division. All CBE instruction must be aligned to the South Carolina standards, which are over 90 percent Common Core. The state assessment is 100 percent aligned to the South Carolina standards, therefore over 90 percent aligned to Common Core. School accountability is determined by student achievement on the state assessment, so all competency parameters are those defined by Common Core.

With this understanding, consider [PPI’s latest attempt to defend CBE and H. 4596](#) and why USPIE was prompted to describe why PPI might be deceived about CBE.

PPI claims CBE is the exact opposite of Common Core. While it is true that students will proceed through material at their own pace, the material, what children are learning, is in fact, Common Core.

PPI claims CBE will ensure that a diploma will mean graduates learned what the people of SC have determined they need to know. The bill mandates a student to comply with federal assessment requirements and each student must remain enrolled in the state’s student information system. While certain accountability may be waived, the student will still be required to take Common Core-aligned tests mandated by the federal government. All students will be included in the seamless P-20 education data base to develop human capital for the workforce.

PPI claims the bill does not dictate what “this” must look like. The bill mandates emphasis on “World Class Skills and Life and Career Characteristics identified in the Profile of the SC Graduate.” A closer look at the [required competencies](#) finds mandated measurement of values, attitudes and beliefs. Historically, parents have been responsible to teach children values, attitudes and beliefs. But under Common Core and CBE, the computer will teach and evaluate competencies for values, attitudes and beliefs.

PPI claims CBE empowers — not diminishes — local control. H. 4596 directs The State Department of Education to develop evaluation criteria and guidelines for becoming a CBE school. This will become the “application.” This is how the federal and state government control local schools. Just as Race-to-the-Top federal grant applications were used to coerce states to adopt Common Core standards. This isn’t local control.

PPI claims CBE program is entirely voluntary (schools can “opt-in”), supports parental involvement, respects local control and makes no changes to current local authority. If schools comply with all state and federal requirements, they might be approved to be a CBE school and if they adhere to all state and federal requirements, they can continue to be a CBE school. This is coercion — not voluntary. CBE erodes local control and increases centralization of education on the state level, ultimately eliminating the need for teachers, and local school boards — a Marc Tucker goal. USPIE sees no evidence of local control proposed in the CBE law. If the law were to support parental involvement, it would allow a student to “opt-in.”

PPI claims CBE gives local districts who want to innovate the flexibility to do so, while maintaining current level of accountability for student learning. H. 4596 requires the State Department of Education to develop a list of competencies and waiver requirements. This certainly restricts innovation, flexibility, and impedes local control.



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PPI claims H. 4596 will not impose anything of SC schools, but rather gives locals schools flexibility. The mandate to emphasize “World Class Skills and Life and Career Characteristics identified in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate” is an imposition. Where is the flexibility in measuring mandated competencies and complying with the Department’s guidelines? The only flexibility is found in HOW students learn — no longer from their teacher — but from a computer. Not to mention the admitted unknown costs to local Districts to comply with The Department and this latest national education fad.

PPI claims H. 4596 gives parents more options. Opting children out of standardized testing at the end of the year was the only tool left for parents to protest Common Core and curriculum content. Parents will no longer be able to opt their children out of testing embedded throughout the curriculum and necessary to advance to the next level.

Summary Statement

Legislators are strongly encouraged to look beyond the rhetoric and slick talking points offered by PPI about Competency-based Education. Elected officials know parents were right when they opposed Common Core, and the national standards have become more and more unpopular over time. H. 4596 reinforces all the bad aspects of Common Core. South Carolina did revise just under 10 percent of the state standards away from Common Core, but this is not nearly enough to make them acceptable, let alone world class.

What does South Carolina want for children? Do they want children to become drones considered human capital; cogs in the workforce machine?

Or does South Carolina want to empower parents to define and find their children educational opportunities that inspire their children to dream, to learn, to become the best contributing citizens they can be; able to think, to grow, to be the leaders and best of the future South Carolina?

Please join USPIE in defeating H. 4596 and pursuing legislative policy truly in the best interest of South Carolina’s children.

About the author: *Seventeen years ago, as a concerned parent of three boys in government schools, Sheri Few founded South Carolina Parents Involved in Education, a grassroots organization committed to empowering parents. In 2015, Sheri expanded the organization nationally to become U.S. Parents Involved in Education (USPIE). In just three years, the national organization, whose goal is to end the U.S. Department of Education and end all federal education mandates, has 17 active state chapters and is growing. Sheri currently serves as president and CEO of USPIE.*



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