An informal response from **American Heritage** outlining our reasons to reject Common Core standards at this time.

**American Heritage** and Common Core

American Heritage of South Jordan is a private school, and therefore has the choice whether to adopt the national Common Core standards. In our study of the tenets of the program, we have found many worthy goals—many of them having commonalities with our own curriculum. We have also found many points of concern that have prevented us from adopting Common Core at American Heritage of South Jordan at this time. The following bullet points outline our reservations.

* The National Governors Common Core Standards (NGCCS) were not vetted outside the committees that created them. There was no testing or tracking in any school system in the country to determine success/failure rates before essentially using all students in the nation as experimental “guinea pigs”. Many private schools are adopting a wait-and-see attitude until solid positive evidence has been obtained.
* The standards are mandated by the executive branch of the government through the use of government money which necessarily dictates compliance by participating districts to centralized control of education. It is disquieting that the Legislative branch (and thus the people) has had no representation in the adoption of Common Core. We feel that states should ultimately fashion their own educational goals and plans with local districts and areas having primary input to curriculum adoptions.
* Common Core has been heavily funded and promoted by the Gates Foundation, the Pearson textbook company, UNESCO, the National Education Association, and other corporations and entities. The goals of these organizations regularly fall outside the standards and morals embraced by American Heritage.
* States receive federal funds for adopting Common Core. American Heritage does not accept federal funding and therefore is not bound to federal or State mandates. Federal money given always results in *quid pro quo* from the State. Districts currently believe they will continue to maintain control over curricula; we believe that the government has essentially “purchased” control and hegemony over public education, and that that control will continue to increase over time.
* Common Core states that students will be prepared for career readiness, two-year nonspecific colleges, and four-year institutions. These requirements seem unrealistic, as a “one size fits all” program cannot meet all the needs of these post high school students.

Historically, national education was created by industry in order to educate the populace to a standard that would effectively supply factories with competent workers. Today, Common Core is heavily supported by large corporations, again, hoping to staff their companies with capable workers. This is a pragmatic goal but not a noble one. We believe true education prepares children to make a positive difference in the world by becoming critical thinkers and possessing strong moral character.

* Common Core reduces the time students spend with classical literature in favor of non-fiction and informational writings. Some critics have suggested that the swing toward “informational” pieces will allow the possibility of “advocacy learning.” Additionally, the literature is not presented in a logical format, but strictly by grade level and standards achieved.

Conversely, American Heritage’s Classical Ed curriculum pairs classic literature with historical events in chronological order to provide context for the content and the author. We believe heavy involvement with classical literature and primary source material provides students with strong character examples and an understanding of the human condition.

* Of the funds dedicated to Common Core from the federal government, $350 million has been set aside to formulate assessments. Unfortunately, the assessments were not completed before the standards were implemented. The new testing was administered in the New York public school system, with overall results down 30 percent. Clearly, adjustments are needed to the assessments, the curricula, or both.
* States earn points to receive federal money. The more federal requirements the individual states meet, the more money they receive. One way to get extra money is to closely collaborate with the local teacher’s union when forming curricula. We assert that both the NEA and the UEA do not espouse conservative methods or themes for education, thus our goals do not align.
* With regard to the state’s applications for federal money, states also receive points for catering to the needs of under-represented groups and girls/women. American Heritage believes that classical education allows for all students to learn and grow at their own particular pace, level, and individual understanding. Standards at American Heritage are not changed to promote any one group over another.
* The State of Utah is involved with a consortium of twenty-one States to create curricula that conforms to Common Core standards. Because each State is allowed only one vote, changes or objections to the methods or proposals of the consortium may be difficult to overturn. Utah must abide by the decisions of the majority unless it engages in the laborious process to remove itself. As stated previously, we feel education is best served when education decisions are made locally in order to best prepare those students for grade promotion and post high school education success.
* According to the America Competes Act, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and the Common Core Application Standards, participating schools must collect databases of student information. States are urged to improve the collection and use of data and to remove any impediments to the state linking data. Collectible information includes, but is not limited to:
1. family politics, beliefs, and religious practices
2. mental or psychological problems of the student or family
3. sexual attitudes and behaviors
4. illegal, anti-social, demeaning, or self-incriminating behavior
5. students’ appraisals of others
6. relationships with lawyers, physicians, and ministers
7. family income

Additionally, data on learning styles and behaviors obtained through the use of electronic human measurement devices for facial expression, posture analysis, skin conducting sensors, and a pressure mouse are proposed. These tests would require parental permission, however, some have suggested that possible loopholes may allow districts to test students without permission. Longitudinal database systems have already been adopted by twenty-four states which have received federal money to implement these protocols.

* Information collected by the states will be managed by a private organization called in Bloom, which is a private company that has been given $100 million by the Gates Foundation. We are not in agreement regarding the depth of the data mining planned or the possible places where the information may be shared.

American Heritage, along with many other people and organizations, has concerns about the implementation, the assessments, and the overall goals of the national Common Core program. We feel the national scope of this program generalizes curricula, which takes the focus away from the individual student. Without further testing or published results, Common Core presents as the antithesis to our educational goals as a school.

Sources consulted:

*American Thinker*, Carol Hornsby Hanes, 8/2/13

*New American*, Mallory Sauer, “Data Mining Students Through Common Core.” 4/25/13

*The Salt Lake Tribune*, 2/18/14

Stotsky, Sandra, Professor of Education Reform, University of Arkansas, 12/6/12

The Pioneer Institute

The Pacific Research Institute