The Common Core State Standards, a highly contentious topic in our state, are a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts. Developed by the state school chiefs and governors that comprise the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors’ Association (NGA), the standards were designed with the goal of defining the knowledge and skills students should gain throughout their K-12 education in order to graduate high school prepared to succeed in entry-level careers, introductory academic college courses, and workforce training programs.

Released in 2010 and originally adopted by 44 states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), the Common Core State Standards conversation has been one of misconception. Supporters of the standards argue a common set of rigorous national standards will transform American education, prepare students for college and careers, and allow our nation to maintain international competitiveness. Opponents assert that the standards represent a flawed, untested, “one-size-fits-all” approach overreaching into matters best left to local control.
Lawmakers in several states, including North Carolina, have introduced bills revisiting their initial decision to adopt the Common Core State Standards. On April 24, 2014, a state legislative committee proposed that North Carolina drop the Common Core and replace it with a new set of learning standards. Their proposal calls for action that would replace the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts with new education benchmarks to be created by the North Carolina State Board of Education and a new Academic Standards Review Commission. The bill is expected to come up in the 2014 legislative session that began this week. If passed, the Common Core could be out of North Carolina as early as July of this year.

According to an August 2013 PDK / Gallup poll, most Americans don’t know much about the Common Core, and those who do, don’t understand it. This Common Sense Media Article shares some resources for understanding supporting and opposing arguments regarding the Common Core. In addition, Smithsonian’s “What to Make of the Debate Over Common Core,” by Stephen Sawchuck, is another informative read. As we head into the 2014 session of the North Carolina General Assembly, let’s all seek a deeper understanding of the important issues at hand.

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Do you know a teacher who is working hard to help students succeed? Let us know, and s/he could be featured in the next education issue!