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To Adopt or Not? States Will Decide on Common Standards

Strong Federal Push Behind 'State-Led Initiative'

The 48 states that signed on to the Common Core State Standards Initiative for English/language arts and mathematics last year will soon make decisions on whether to formally adopt those standards. (Alaska and Texas declined to participate.) The effort was spearheaded by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

Supporters frequently emphasize that the initiative is state-led, but the Obama administration has made no secret that national standards are an agenda priority. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan telegraphed his intent as early as February of 2009, declaring, "If we accomplish one thing in the coming years it should be to eliminate the extreme variation in standards across America."

A few states elevated educational benchmarks in recent years, but others lowered them to avoid penalties mandated by No Child Left Behind for underperformance, leading some analysts to describe the effect as "a race to the bottom." Mounting frustration with NCLB and concerns about American students lagging behind internationally increased receptivity to national standards in recent years.

The Department of Education ensured high participation in the Common Core Standards by tying federal grants to state involvement. At a hearing of the House education committee last December, Representative Glenn Thompson (R-PA) said that in making participation in the common standards initiative a category for earning points in the \$4.3 billion Race to the Top competition, the Department of Education had "transformed [the common core effort] from a voluntary-state-based initiative to a set of federal academic standards with corresponding federal tests."

President Obama also told the nation's governors he would like to make Title I funding, intended for disadvantaged students, contingent on states' adoption of the proposed reading and math standards. States could choose to partner with universities to craft standards as an alternative, but it is unclear who would determine if those benchmarks qualified a state for Title I money. Language in the current NCLB legislation forbids the U.S. government from endorsing specific curricula; it remains to be seen whether Obama's blueprint for its reauthorization, renamed the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act, will retain such prohibitions.

'You Can't Pick and Choose'

States were informed after they signed on to the common core initiative that those who ratify the standards must use them in their entirety. "You can't pick and choose what you want. This is not cafeteria-style standards," said David Wakelyn, program director of the education division of the NGA. "Adoption means adoption," reiterated Scott Montgomery, a deputy executive director of the CCSSO.

States may add items to the common standards, as long as the state's additions do not make up more than 15% of the total, said NGA and CCSSO officials. In a none-too-subtle critique, Susan Ohanian, a fellow in the education departments of both the University of Colorado at Boulder and Arizona State University, commented, "Exercising any judgment based on what teachers and parents know about kids and literature is forbidden. To get the Obama bribe, state politicians must promise that schoolchildren will be forced to swallow ALL the Kool-Aid."

The 62-page English/language arts standards aim to "lay out a vision of what it means to be a literate person in the 21st century," able to understand complex works of literature and nonfiction, use critical thinking to sift through large amounts of information, and construct compelling arguments.

The 71-page mathematics standards emphasize key ideas and concepts, and focus on students' ability to explain math problems as well as compute them. Lengthy appendices providing examples and support material accompany both documents. (Visit www.corestandards.org to see a copy of the draft released in March.)

Draft Elicits Praise and Critique

Educators and officials involved in the writing process cited elements of the standards they perceive as strengths. Gene Wilhoit, executive director of CCSSO, said the conciseness of the standards make them manageable for teachers to cover in more than a superficial manner, in contrast to many state versions. Another improvement, said others, is that the material students learn in early years builds a foundation for subsequent years. "Students are asked to do progressively more challenging things, and although that may

(See *State Standards*, page 4)



The Cartel: It's Not About the Kids, It's About the Money

Are your local schools substandard despite ever-increasing funding? Have you ever wondered why? Give documentary filmmaker Bob Bowdon 90 minutes and he can connect the dots for you.

The Cartel is a hard-hitting exposé that shows how the union stranglehold on public education is destroying the lives of millions of children. Bad teachers can't be fired because they have tenure. Politicians are bankrolled and controlled by the unions.

Formerly an anchor and reporter for Bloomberg Television, Bowdon left that job to spend two years answering one burning question: How can a state that spends \$17,500 per student each year fail them so badly?

For years, poorer schools received

even more money per student, on average more than \$350,000 per classroom in New Jersey's worst-performing districts, with no improvement. In one district

Bowdon examined, only about \$55,000 of that figure goes toward teacher salaries. The rest supports extremely generous administrator pay, six-figure janitor paychecks, teacher aides with spotty attendance, and other questionable staff positions. Cronyism and nepotism are rampant. An audit found that a full 29% of spending in New Jersey's poorest districts was wasted.

Not everyone goes along with the corruption, but whistleblowers are not hailed as heroes. Just ask Hector Bonilla, a former Newark, NJ principal who was

(See *The Cartel*, page 4)



Doctors Urge Schools not to Label Kids 'Gay' or 'Transgender'

The American College of Pediatricians (the College) mailed a letter to all 14,800 U.S. school district superintendents on March 31, urging them to avoid prematurely labeling children experiencing same-sex attraction or exhibiting symptoms of gender confusion as "gay" or "transgender." The letter also announced a new website, www.FactsAboutYouth.com, intended to provide information to educators, parents, and students about sexual development.

"As pediatricians, our primary interest is the health and well-being of children and youth," explained Dr. Den Trumbull, vice president of the College. "We are increasingly concerned that in too many instances, misinformation or incorrect assumptions are guiding well-intentioned educators to adopt policies that are actually harmful to those youth dealing with sexual confusion."

The letter reminded superintendents that adolescence is a time when young people experiment and experience confusion about many things, including sexual issues. It is also a time when kids are "particularly vulnerable to environmental influences," such as misguided encouragement by school personnel to "come out" and "be affirmed."

Furthermore, pointed out College president Thomas Benton, M.D., studies have revealed that most adolescents who experience same-sex attraction no longer do so by age 25. One study reported as many as 26% of 12-year-olds feel uncertainty about their sexual orientation,

though only 2-3% of adults ultimately identify themselves as homosexual, wrote Benton.

In light of this research, and because of the increased health risks for adolescents who claim a "gay" identity, the College wants to prevent premature labeling that may lead some kids into harmful homosexual behaviors they would otherwise not pursue. Increased health risks include higher rates of sexually transmitted infections, alcohol and substance abuse, anxiety, depression and suicide. The letter also referenced a 1991 study, which found that the risk of a suicide decreases 20% for each year an adolescent delays self-identifying as "gay."

FACTS
About
Youth

INFORMING ABOUT THE
SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT
OF YOUTH



The College letter is not the first school superintendents have received advising them on how to best help students experiencing sexual confusion. In January 2008, school officials received a brochure titled *Just the Facts about Sexual Development of Youth* from a coalition of 13 pro-homosexual organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics (the Academy), the American Psychological Association, and the two largest teachers' unions.

The College developed the Facts About Youth campaign to counter what the organization characterizes as the "incomplete" and "inaccurate" information in the Academy-sponsored *Just the Facts* pamphlet. That publication maintained that all forms of sexual attraction are nor-

(See *Label Kids*, page 4)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

Tucked away in the health care bill, an amendment provides \$250 million for abstinence-only education over the next five years. Senator Orrin Hatch (R- Utah) pushed the amendment through during Finance Committee negotiations, though no Republicans ended up supporting the bill. States may be reluctant to accept abstinence-only funding, however, because it requires matching state dollars, equivalent to 75% of the federal grant. That is not the case with the "comprehensive" sex education grants preferred by the Obama administration, which will receive \$375 million in funding over the same period. (*Education Week*, 4-7-10).

Unionized teachers in Central Falls, Rhode Island were fired after they refused to work an additional 25 minutes a day, provide tutoring on a rotating schedule, and eat lunch with students once a week. Superintendent Frances Gallo proposed the new terms in an effort to improve the high school's dismal 48% graduation rate and 7% math proficiency, but refused to pay teachers more. Teacher salaries at the school range from \$70,000 to \$78,000 in a town with a median income of \$22,000. (*businessinsider.com*, 2-15-10)

A high school health clinic sent a 15-year-old girl off campus to have an abortion during school hours without her parents' knowledge. The mother of the Ballard High School student said her daughter was told that "if she concealed it from her family, it would be free of charge." (*komonews.com*, 3-23-10)

University of California Berkeley students and professors rallied as part of a nationwide protest against education budget cuts and tuition increases. Despite the worst budget crisis in state history, California taxpayers will subsidize public universities to the tune of \$13,000 per student this year. In comparison, Illinois spends \$10,000 on each University of Illinois student and New York pays \$6,000 for each student in the SUNY system. (*Wall Street Journal*, 3-5-10)

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Web site: <http://www.eagleforum.org>
E-mail: education@eagleforum.org

Minnesota Homeschoolers Lobby Legislators to Challenge Obamacare

Each year, a group of Minnesota homeschool students gathers weekly at a church in Roseville, Minnesota to research, discuss, and draft mock legislative resolutions for four public policy issues. Since the students choose topics for the Student Senate class, the 14- to 18-year-olds always pick subjects that interest them; this year they delved into modern slavery, nuclear power and the American war on terror.

Last month they decided their fourth topic, health care, merited more than just academic inquiry.

"After the health care bill passed, we were all sort of outraged, not only at the content of the bill, but the way it was passed, and just the machinations and the back room deals and all that," explained Student Senator Fletcher Warren, age 18, in a radio interview with Sue Jeffers. "So we decided that we should do what we could . . . We wrote out this resolution . . . detailing

our concerns, such as the unconstitutionality of it . . . violating the commerce clause, etc."

The resolution calls upon Minnesota's governor, attorney general, and the state legislature to seek an injunction that would relieve the state of having to comply with newly enacted national healthcare legislation.

On April 6th, the 32 students comprising the class gathered at the St. Paul statehouse to hand-deliver letters and copies of the signed resolution to Minnesota legislators.

The students were able to meet with four representatives and two senators, all of whom welcomed their young constituents.

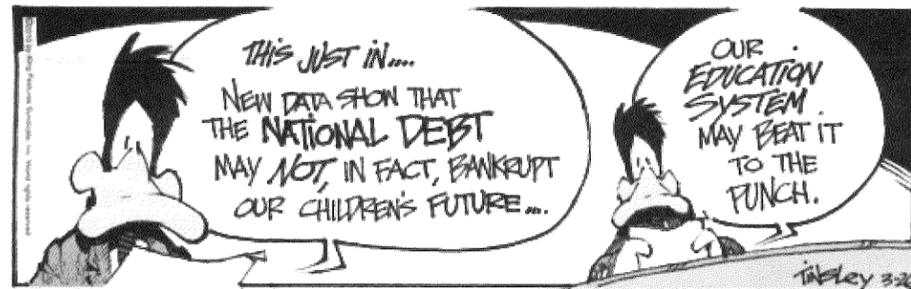
Warren served as chairman of the healthcare committee for the class and was pleased with the way legislators received the student delegation and their message.

"The [state legislators] were all quite friendly and quite pleased to take [the resolution]," he said, describing the experience as "overwhelmingly positive."



Fletcher Warren delivering letter & resolution to MN AG Secretary

MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



Unions and States Poised for 'Race To The Top' Showdown

Delaware and Tennessee beat out 14 other finalists in the highly competitive first round of the Race to the Top, winning \$100 and \$500 million respectively, based on student population. The contest guidelines reward states willing to adopt common standards, evaluate teachers based on student performance, expand charter schools, and aggressively turn around or close failing schools.

Many observers expressed surprise that only two states received first-round grants; Education Secretary Arne Duncan said the small winners circle was designed to encourage the remaining states to continue to refine their reform plans.

In passing over Florida and Louisiana, widely considered favorites, many believe Duncan signaled the importance of statewide stakeholder buy-in. Delaware and Tennessee both garnered near-universal district and teacher union support for their applications despite including measures that base teacher pay and promotions on student performance. Florida submitted one of the most aggressive reform plans, but had backing from only 8% of its unions. Louisiana had been widely praised for expanding charter schools and

for its plan to hold teachers accountable, but came in 11th in the competition, in part because of minimal support from school districts and local unions.

Obama administration officials said that as many as 15 states could split the remaining \$3.4 billion in grants, still a pot big enough to set the stage for a showdown between state officials and unions in numerous states. Already post-round-one skirmishes have erupted in Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Minnesota and Ohio.

American Federation of Teachers union president Randi Weingarten attempted to capitalize on the situation in a statement released after the winners were

(See *Race To Top*, page 4)

Top of the Class

Race to the Top finalists, and percentage of teachers' union support for the plans

Rank/state	Score (500 poss.)	Union support
1. Delaware	454.6	100%
2. Tennessee	444.2	93
3. Georgia	433.6	100%
4. Florida	431.4	8
5. Illinois	423.8	31
6. South Carolina	423.2	N.A.
7. Pennsylvania	420.0	100
8. Rhode Island	419.0	4
9. Kentucky	418.8	100
10. Ohio	418.6	100
11. Louisiana	418.2	78
12. North Carolina	414.0	99
13. Massachusetts	411.4	100
14. Colorado	409.6	41
15. New York	408.6	61
16. Washington, D.C.	402.4	0

Sources: Dept. of Education; Partnership for Learning

Book of the Month



Economics in Christian Perspective: Theory, Policy and Life Choices, Victor V. Claar and Robin J. Klay, InterVarsity Press 2007, 255 pages, \$22.



Current national economic and public policy discussions highlight the need for a basic understanding of economics in order to be wise citizens and voters, so we've gone back a few years to recommend a terrific resource. Authors Claar and Klay offer a primer that boasts clear exposition about unemployment, inflation, poverty and more using everyday examples, and without unnecessary technical jargon.

The authors are mainstream economics professors who also happen to be Christians, and they are excellent guides for people who want to support policies based upon both biblical principles and proven economic realities. Be forewarned; they may challenge your assumptions along the way. For instance, do you think promoting economic growth is a moral imperative for Christians? Yes, say Claar and Klay, because long-term growth is the primary driver of job and income expansion that lifts people out of poverty and affords them the dignity of providing for their families.

Drawing upon much research as well as Scripture, the authors show how markets can create wealthier and freer societies, while also inculcating moral virtues such as responsibility, gratitude and generosity. Still, markets have limitations, and Claar and Klay offer a balanced view of what government, market-oriented economies, and religious and cultural institutions most effectively contribute to society.

Questions examined include: What happens to charitable giving when governments take on more of those roles? Does globalization exploit third world nations while taking jobs from Americans? Historically, have government efforts to spend a nation out of a recession proved successful? They have the data.

Other chapters ask: Should Christians be concerned with income disparity as well as poverty? Is economic development at odds with the biblical mandate of creation care?

Books meant to help those with ethical concerns think through public policy alternatives are often written by authors with noble intentions, but little economic understanding. The policy prescriptions they offer often do more harm than good, particularly for the poor they mean to help.

In contrast, Claar and Klay adopt a perspective of "reasoned hope," grounded in the goodness of God as well as sound economic principles. Families who read this book together can expect to enjoy lively dinner conversations, and develop a greater understanding of how individual choices and public policies either support or hinder the human flourishing God intends.

FOCUS: Training Teachers to Promote 'Social Justice'

by Mary Grabar

Disparagement of knowledge was evident at the National Council for the Social Studies conference I attended last November in Atlanta. There, 3,200 teachers were continuing their studies in pedagogy, and gaining continuing and graduate credit to bump them into higher salaries. Most worked for public schools, so taxpayers footed the bill: the \$267 registration fee, plus membership dues, travel and lodging, and the hiring of substitute teachers.

I estimate that about a third of the presenters at these workshops were affiliated with universities, mostly education schools; others included high school teachers, government officials, curriculum producers, or the staff of left-wing non-profits engaged in education. At such workshops, taxpayers are helping teachers learn new techniques for advancing the cause of "social justice" in classrooms from kindergarten to college.

The idea of social justice is opposed to traditional American notions of justice based on individual rights, without regard for group membership. Social justice is Marxist in conception and typically adopts a far left agenda: acceptance of homosexuality and alternative lifestyles, radical feminism and abortion rights, illegal immigration, cultural relativism, equality of outcomes in education and work, and a redistribution of wealth.

"Social justice" is often promoted through student-directed learning, most recently called "constructivism," because students are supposed to "construct" their own knowledge. This kind of constructivism, however, fails to improve student learning. Paul A. Kirschner, John Sweller, and Richard E. Clark say it all in the title of their 2006 *Educational Psychologist* article, "Why Minimal Guidance During Instruction Does Not Work: An Analysis of the Failure of Constructivist, Discovery, Problem-Based, Experiential, and Inquiry-Based Teaching."

All of those names are used by education theorists to put a new spin on what Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark accurately call unguided learning or minimal guidance learning. They conclude, "After a half-century associated with instruction using minimal guidance, it appears that there is no body of research supporting the technique. In so far as there is any evidence from controlled studies, it almost uniformly supports direct, strong instructional guidance rather than constructivist-based minimal guidance during the instruction of novice to in-

termediate learners."

One of the studies they cited found that medical students who used problem-based learning (PBL) made more errors than those taught the traditional way. PBL, furthermore, was more costly. The problem with such minimal-guidance pedagogy is that the short-term memory is forced to do the work of long-term memory. The brain is asked to simultaneously search for knowledge, pull together data, and apply it. With no store of knowledge upon which to draw, mental energy is wasted. No learning takes place because nothing is put into long-term memory.

These studies back up what common sense and hundreds of years of education tell us: that one needs a base of knowledge first in order to know what to look for when conducting research and doing problem-solving.

But such lessons fall on deaf ears when it comes to teaching our teachers. Maryanne Malecki, who led one of the workshops, goes into seventh- and eighth-grade classrooms, to, as she proudly proclaimed, "champion social justice." WAMC Public Radio in Albany, New York, her employer, receives funding from the Educational Foundation of America (EFA) to pay her salary. The EFA, according to its website, gives grants in the areas of the arts, democracy, education, environment, health and human services, peace and security, and reproductive rights. Malecki bragged to the assembled teachers that she really works as a "stealth teacher" in "collusion" with the classroom teacher.

Undeterred by common sense, poor test scores, and lack of research to back up their claims, the ideologues in the classroom put the cart before the horse and have twelve- and thirteen-year-olds "brainstorm." So, the groups of social studies teachers in Malecki's "interactive" workshop gathered into little groups, as she has her students do, and brainstormed to come up with research topics. We came up with the topics of "trends and fads," legalization of marijuana, the high cost of college, gun violence, Afghanistan, abortion, poverty and kids, and youth culture. Then we were asked to come up with five questions for each topic in three minutes, an exercise that would presumably eliminate the "shocker" topics kids like — like abortion — that do not lend themselves to research because positions are not supported by data, but by religious beliefs and emotions.

I would bet money that many of the sources chosen for such "research" would be from public broadcasting, which has a plethora of curriculum materials — also available at many booths and workshops

at the conference. In the Wild West of the Internet, students are likely to use sources with an ideological tinge. I would also bet that students would come up with such topics because they had heard about them from teachers.

In fact, just about every "unguided learning session" at the conference seemed to be guided by a "stealth" teacher with an ideological agenda and a contempt for knowledge. "'Doing' Social Studies in Georgia," an all-day workshop, said it all through its title that replaced "learning" with "doing." Here, students who had participated in the Georgia Governors Program enthused about being inspired to research the history of hippies and the "rape of Africa," eleventh-graders collaborated on exploring feelings of various groups the song "Home on the Range" evoked, the Ron Clark Rappers performed their Obama rap song, a student group "shared" about attending the Obama inauguration, and several student groups bragged about their work in service learning.

Other sessions I attended included:

1. "Hooray for Heroes," in which famed educator Dennis Denenberg demonstrated how to use puppets in the high school classroom to promote certain "heroes," most notably Eleanor Roosevelt.
2. "Teaching Like a Native," where teachers were enjoined to shed their "Eurocentric" ways of thinking for the more associative (and apparently illogical) modes that Native American children favor.
3. "Muslim Perspectives Through Film and Dialogue: Understanding, Empathy, Civic Discourse," where Barbara Petzen, who is employed by the Middle East Policy Council, showed and offered teachers the film *Allah Made Me Funny*, which disparages Christianity and offers Islam as a hip and tolerant alternative.
4. "Count Me IN! Census and Economic Sustainability," in which, as the title suggests, one needs to be counted in order to get funding from the federal government. A Census Bureau employee and former teacher encouraged teachers to stress to students, especially those who have non-English-speaking (and perhaps undocumented) parents, that all information

on the forms is confidential.

5. "Fulfilling Democracy for All Americans" featured District of Columbia Senator Michael Brown's pitch to teachers to recruit children to advocate on behalf of DC statehood as a civil rights issue.



Mary Grabar

6. "Yes We Can! Students Making a Difference Through Service Learning" offered insufferable children lecturing adult teachers on what is wrong with the world and how they would change it in the future. Their "service learning" projects were preludes for their plans to end war, hunger, planetary ecological destruction, injustice, etc.

7. "Exploring the Human Rights of Illegal Immigrant Students and Communities," involved the use of the adult-themed polemic *Enrique's Journey* in a middle school. The workshop presenter, Los Angeles teacher Martha Infante, shared hand-outs and student projects that revealed the emotional manipulation of children and discussion of adult topics like illegal drug use and domestic violence.

I tried to attend a representative sample of workshops. All were driven by emotion and politics; not one had anything to do with academic knowledge. Although the presenters claimed that instructor guidance was minimal, the fact is that when students lack a base of knowledge, they usually flounder. They look to their "guides on the side" for their ideas. The "stealth teacher" of "social justice," who has manipulated them emotionally, pretends that the students are coming up with topics and conclusions on their own!

As a result, we have ill-informed college students who think they know it all because they can look it up on the Internet. At the same time, they hold precisely the same views that their teachers have on "social justice." If there is a more clever way of brainwashing, I don't know what it is.

Mary Grabar earned her Ph.D. in English from the University of Georgia in 2002 and teaches at two colleges in the Atlanta area. She writes about education, culture, and politics for various print and online publications, and is a published poet and fiction writer. To read her articles, get on her mailing list, or contact her, go to www.marygrabar.com. This article first appeared on the John William Pope Center for Higher Education website.



State Standards *(Continued from page 1)*

sound obvious, it's a real breakthrough," said Michael Cohen, president of Achieve, a Washington organization that played a major role in writing the standards.

Reaction regarding the quality and usefulness of the standards draft has been mixed. A slew of organizations immediately endorsed the document, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Federation of Teachers, and the Council of the Great City Schools, which represents large urban school districts.

Others offered more muted praise. Henry Kepner Jr., president of the National Council of Mathematics, said he appreciated the draft's stated emphasis on problem solving and reasoning, but that those goals weren't adequately supported. Overall, he felt the draft is "on the right track."

Critics Charge Draft Standards are 'Inferior' to Some State Standards

Several parties complained the draft standards were lower than their state's current benchmarks. Sandra Stotsky, part of the draft validation team, said the Common Core standards are less rigorous than those she helped write for Massachusetts. Her specific critiques included "no research base" for the "generic, content- and culture-free" K-12 reading skills, and "pedagogically useless" vocabulary standards in grades 6-12.

The math standards are inferior to those currently in place in California, said Ze'ev Wurman, part of the team that wrote California benchmarks in the 1990s. The Common Core standards don't support teaching "authentic" Algebra I courses even as late as 9th-grade, and the standards appear to be "incompatible with admission requirements to California state colleges," he said.

Governor Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota said the standards would "water down" his state's "rigorous standards" that require students to take algebra by 8th grade.

The Alliance for Childhood, an organization of early childhood health and education professionals, said they have "grave concerns" about the draft's core standards for K-3 based upon "compelling" new research about "how young children learn, what they need to learn, and how best to teach them." Their statement called upon the NGA and CCSSO to suspend draft-

ing standards for K-3 children and called for the creation of an alternate consortium of early childhood specialists to address the matter.

Many of these critiques are particularly pointed given the oft-repeated emphasis of the Obama administration and of NGA and CCSSO spokesmen on "research-based" pedagogy and "college- and career-readiness." A criticism concerning process came from Jim Stergios, executive director of Pioneer Institute, a nonprofit that helped Massachusetts revise their standards in the 1990s. "When was the last time you saw a national effort that was rammed through in three weeks?" he asked, referring to the short time frame allowed for public response to the draft.

Next Steps

States must also consider how adoption of the standards would affect their current student assessment measures. The academic officer charged with overseeing curriculum development for Hartford, Connecticut schools, Penny E. MacCormack, said she was "impressed" with the draft. "No doubt my team will use [the common standards] to improve our work," said MacCormack, "but we are being measured on state assessments," and she and her colleagues must account for that reality.

The NGA and CCSSO have stated they have no plans to create curriculum or assessments based on the standards, but they might play "a catalyzing role" in coordinating the efforts of education organizations, school districts, and publishers to do that work. Education secretary Arne Duncan has already sought input on assessment tools, and has promised \$350 million in federal money for their development.

The final version of the draft will be released by early summer, at which time states are expected to decide whether or not to adopt the standards. Kentucky announced its intent to adopt them back in February. Other states have begun laying the groundwork, including Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Michigan, and North Carolina, according to Dane Linn, education division director of the NGA. (*Education Week*, 1-14-10, 3-17-10; *New York Times*, 3-11-10)

Label Kids *(Continued from page 1)*

mal, and asserted that schools must permit student clubs advocating homosexuality in order to avoid legal challenges.

In rebuttal to Facts About Youth, the Academy issued a statement on its website claiming the College's campaign "does not acknowledge the scientific and medical evidence" concerning sexual development, health or education, despite references to more than 100 research conclusions and professional opinions included in Facts About Youth materials.

The claims and counter-claims between the College and the Academy are not new. In fact, the College was organized in 2002 as a rival professional association. "Increasingly," according to the College website, "the Academy promoted social policy based on political correct-

ness and the wants of adults rather than the needs of children."

The College-sponsored Facts About Youth website has posted criticisms from other parties. Some accused the campaign of promoting "religious right propaganda," but the College denies any political or religious affiliation and does not receive support from such organizations.

In a reply to one gay man's objection, the College stated, "The Facts project makes no moral judgment about one's sexual orientation. For those older adolescents and adults who, after much personal reflection and without school encouragement or coercion, identify as homosexual, we offer no objection except to point out the health risks of this lifestyle."

The Cartel *(Continued from page 1)*

fired after he requested disciplinary action for teachers he caught watching porn on the job. "You keep quiet if you want this high-paying position," he explained. "They'll put your name in the newspaper, which means you'll never be employed again. They play dirty, because there's so much money involved."

State history teacher of the year Beverly Jones was impugned after she pointed out phantom positions in her school's budget. Thirty-year teaching veteran Paula Veggian was demoted and transferred when she exposed her school's falsification of student test scores.

Behind all of the dismal tales of greed, graft and goons are real children stuck in failing and often violent schools. The film introduces us to 17-year-old Juan, a soft-spoken kid who played shortstop in high school and wants to open his own car repair business. After ten years in Camden, NJ public schools, Juan could not recite the alphabet, much less read. His math skills were slightly better; by the 8th-grade, he knew the multiplication tables up to four times four.

Students enrolled in a program called Community Education Resource Network (CERN) tell why they prefer it to the public schools they left. Some cite teachers who actually care about student learning, and others stress finally feeling safe at school. The contrast in funding is as stark as the attitudes of teachers and students. Instead of a \$17,500 per student budget, CERN is run on a shoestring and a prayer. Teachers are volunteers, classes are held at a church, and the school uses textbooks thrown away by public schools. After working with kids who graduated from Camden public schools, CERN co-founder Angel Cordero has some pointed questions for district teachers and administrators: "For 12 years, what did you do with that child? What did you do with the money?"

The film also explains how unions collude with bureaucrats and politicians to oppose school choice in the form of vouchers or charter schools. There is a huge demand among parents and students for charter schools, yet New Jersey approved only one out of 22 charter school applications in 2008. One heart-rending

scene shows parents and young kids waiting to see whose names will be drawn in the charter-school lottery. Two women whose daughters' names are drawn can't contain their joy and run out of the room, nearly dancing, praising God for His blessing. When asked what this means for their kids, one replies, "It means they have a chance." As tickets are drawn for the last few available spots, tears begin to stream down one young girl's face. Her mother holds her and tries to comfort her, but the little girl can't stop crying.

Bowdon, whose mother was a public school teacher, makes clear that he isn't out to demonize every teacher and every administrator. But he isn't falling for the argument that supporting good teachers precludes criticizing bad ones. "This absurd idea that you have got to support every teacher, or else you hate all teachers, has been an effective myth put forth by the union for years," he said.

Though the Garden State is the backdrop for most of the film, Bowdon uses national data to prove problems extend well beyond New Jersey. Despite higher spending on education than most other nations, only 35% of all American high school students are proficient in national reading tests, and only 23% are proficient in math. High school dropout rates for many cities are beyond alarming: 54% in Atlanta, 65% in Baltimore, 58% in Cleveland, and 38% in Memphis. "Much like the drug cartels, this enterprise is national. But instead of running coke and pot on the backs of mules, [the education establishment folks are] running their careers and get-rich-quick scams on the backs of your children," remarked Michael Slenske in an article about the film. (www.good.is, 4-20-10)

Limited screenings have been held in major cities including Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, and New Jersey. A Bowdon Media representative said there is a possibility of wider screenings, and a DVD will be available later this summer. To view clips from the film, visit www.thecartelmovie.com.

Race To Top *(Cont. from page 2)*

announced. "It is worth noting that states where such [labor-management] collaboration did not exist are not among today's Race to the Top winners," she said.

Duncan told the *Wall Street Journal* that he welcomed the tension between unions and state officials, but warned states that softened reform plans to gain union buy-in would not be strong contenders. "Watered-down proposals with lots of consensus won't win," he said. "Proposals that drive real reform will win."

Ohio has resorted to promising cash for union signatures. State education officials recently stated they would guarantee a minimum level of funding to districts whose schools and unions back the state's grant application. Education leaders in Connecticut are considering a similar proposal. (*Wall Street Journal*, 3-29-10, 4-26-10; *Education Week*, 4-7-10)

To those concerned that struggling kids receive support, the college countered that support should include access to all available information, including the effectiveness of therapy for many with unwanted same-sex attraction.

At least one superintendent responded positively. The unnamed official described the College's efforts as "refreshing," and admitted that most school personnel "do not want to get involved," lest they be accused of "homophobia, intolerance, and hate."

In one sense, the College agrees that educators should not get involved. Schools should not attempt to diagnose or treat any student's medical condition, stated the letter, and it is "certainly not a school's role to 'affirm' a student's perceived personal sexual orientation."