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Common Core Sparks War

Scattered opposition to the Common Core standards adopted by 42 states and the District of Columbia is beginning to coalesce into more organized resistance. So far, more than 200 leaders in education, business and public policy have signed a statement arguing against developing national assessments and shared curriculum based on the standards. (See page 3 for the full statement and a partial list of signatories.)

The self-described “counter-manifesto” is a rebuttal of the “Call for Common Content,” released in March by the Albert Shanker Institute, a Washington-based advocacy group named for the late president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) union. The Shanker manifesto, signed by more than 200 union officials, businessmen and policy makers, calls for the development of standards and “shared curriculum” for nearly every subject, including English, math, history, geography, the sciences, arts, and health, but insists such “common curriculum guidance does not represent a straitjacket or a narrowing of learning possibilities.”

The counter-manifesto, organized by Bill Evers of the Hoover Institution, University of Arkansas professors Jay Greene and Sandra Stotsky, Greg Forster of the Foundation for Educational Choice, and former U.S. Department of Education official Ze’ev Wurman, is also a protest against the federal government funding the development of national assessments and instructional materials (\$330 million and \$31.6 million respectively). The document argues that shared curriculum will lock in an unacceptable status quo, threaten state and local control of education, and impose a one-size-fits-all model on students with diverse needs. It also notes that federal law prohibits a national curriculum and tests.

Shanker signatories and other proponents of national standards, assessments, and curriculum maintain that the entire enterprise is voluntary. Randi Weingarten, president of the AFT and prominent signatory of the Shanker paper, asserts that the counter-manifesto’s claim that the “Call for Common Content” is “about creation of a ‘national curriculum’ and ‘national standards’ is just plain wrong.” She and other Shanker signatories insist they aren’t advocating for one curriculum for all students, but for multiple “curricular guides” that teachers can use at their discretion.

Frederick Hess, director of education policy at the American Enterprise Institute declined to sign the “Call for Common Content” despite his support for common standards. The Shanker signatories “can’t go on about a ‘coherent, substantive, se-

quential’ plan for the ‘knowledge and skills’ students need and still claim there is enormous room for people to come out with all kinds of instructional and curricular materials,” he said. “What they’re pushing is a national model of instruction.”



“I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say!”

Counter-manifesto co-author Jay Greene accused the Shanker group of resorting to stealth tactics instead of choosing to defend their nationalization agenda openly. “I think it’s odd that they are denying that they are trying to establish national curriculum,” he said. “Their denials sound like weasel words: ‘Curriculum modules’ are not ‘curriculum.’ It just sounds like someone trying to impose national curriculum who doesn’t want to be called out for it.”

The Obama administration has also stressed that state adoption of the Common Standards and related tests and (See *Common Core*, page 4)

School Flouts Parental Consent

Memorial Middle School in Fitchburg, Massachusetts recently conducted a survey asking students intrusive questions about sex, suicide, and illegal drugs without written permission from their parents. Arlene Tessitore has two daughters enrolled at the Fitchburg school in the seventh and eighth grades who were made to complete the survey. She was upset about the survey’s probing and inappropriate contents and that she was given no notice that her children would be told to complete it, and so she contacted the Rutherford Institute, a civil liberties organization, for legal help.

The survey, called the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), was created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC provides funding for the YRBS to be administered through local social service agencies in 47 states. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s website states that “the YRBS focuses on the major risk behaviors that threaten the health and safety of young people.”

The questions on the survey, however, require and give out more information than what is strictly pertinent and nec-

essary for a middle school health survey. The section on sexual behavior asks questions such as, “Which of the following best describes you? A. Heterosexual (straight) B. Gay or lesbian C. Bisexual D. Not sure,” and “During your life, with whom have you had sexual contact? A. I have never had sexual contact B. Females C. Males D. Females and males.” Another question asks, “The last time you had sexual intercourse, did you or your partner use a condom?”

Beyond being explicit, the YRBS suggests answers to the student in a way that makes each seem equally appropriate and desirable. Other questions give students age-inappropriate information just by reading the answers. “The last time you had sexual intercourse, what one method did you or your partner use to prevent pregnancy? A. I have never had sexual (See *Consent Law*, page 4)



Living Under the Green Thumb on Campus

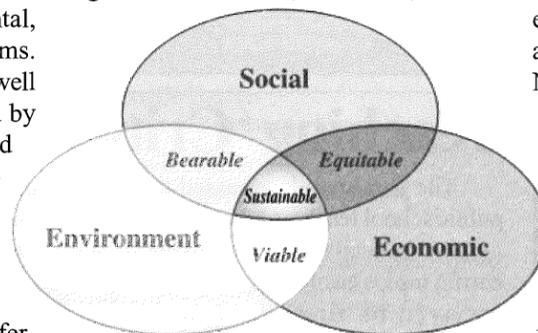
One of the hottest topics on college campuses right now is sustainability. The sustainability movement is about using the earth’s limited resources in a way that keeps them available for future generations. Saving energy, money, and other resources is only rational and responsible. Many colleges, however, are using their educational clout to push an extreme sustainability agenda of environmental, economic, and “social justice” programs.

The sustainability movement was well planned and is supported and funded by some of the top leaders in the U.S. and the world. It began with college presidents giving sustainability a prominent place in campus culture, and eventually pressuring professors to incorporate the ideology into classrooms.

After attending the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, Senator John Kerry, his wife, and a few others created an organization called Second Nature. Second Nature’s mission is “to accelerate movement toward a sustainable future by serving and supporting senior college and university leaders in making healthy, just, and sustainable living the foundation of all learning and practice in higher education.”

Second Nature’s agenda, already adopted by 270 college presidents, has been quite successful. Using a top-down approach, Second Nature supports organizations such as America’s College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) who share their vision. One of ACUPCC’s goals is “integrating sustainability into the curriculum and making it part of the educational experience.”

Another organization, the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), has set goals that include getting more than 50% of students to attend colleges which have signed the ACUPCC and to get 10% of courses to use a curriculum that will “enable students to synthesize an understanding of environmental, economic, and so-



cial forces of change and apply that understanding to real world problems.”

The UN, still very much involved since the 1992 conference, created the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Its goal is to “integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning.”

These organizations have been very effective in making the movement a part of the college pop culture by integrating sustainability into every aspect of the students’ lives, just as they set out to do.

At the University of Delaware, for example, students in a meeting were asked to make changes in their lives to reduce environmental waste by 20%; others were required to advocate for sustainability several times a year. Students were made to

attend private meetings in which their Resident Assistant would evaluate and report on the student’s tolerance of other sexual preferences in an effort to promote “social sustainability.”

The University of New Hampshire’s chief sustainability officer, Tom Kelly, spoke at the Institute on Sustainability in 2009, focusing on “how we in higher education make our work fundamentally about sustainability.” The University of New Hampshire (UNH) explained how this is possible. “Even just walking across a campus itself and noticing the diversity of people and the elements of the campus landscape can inform and influence students, faculty, and staff in subtle yet profound ways. Imagine the impact, then, when a college or university integrates sustainability throughout its core mission and identity.

Many colleges now offer degree programs in sustainability, even up to the Ph.D. level. Colleges such as Yale, Harvard, and Princeton have incorporated enough sustainability ideology into campus life to get A’s on the College Sustainability Report Card.

At Dartmouth College, the goal is “to make environmental concerns a significant priority in our decision making, to lead in the implementation of environmentally sustainable practices, and to place Dartmouth at the forefront in the exploration of issues related to the preservation of a healthy biosphere.” To fulfill this goal, students are encouraged not to use elevators, cars, dryers, or lunch trays.

The problem with the sustainability movement on college campuses is not that (See *Green Thumb*, page 4)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

Buoyed by a climate ripe for education reform, pro-voucher activists in Pennsylvania have spent millions to persuade legislators to pass a voucher bill this year. Long-time school-choice advocate Chris Bravacos said it's refreshing to see all the resources pouring in to support vouchers. "I don't think there's any question that they've been able to somewhat level the playing field that had otherwise been tilted toward the teachers union," he said. (philly.com, 5-8-11)

Northwestern University cancelled a controversial human sexuality class for the next academic year after a torrent of criticism over a live sex toy demonstration during an optional after-class lecture. A naked woman engaged in a pornographic display in front of about 100 students after professor J. Michael Bailey's lecture on kinky sex and female orgasm. University officials said that Bailey "will have other teaching assignments in the coming year." (Chicago Tribune, 5-9-11)

Next fall, kindergartners in Auburn, Maine will get something new along with the usual supply of crayons and craft paper. The school board unanimously approved a plan to spend \$200,000 to purchase iPad2 touchpad tablets for nearly 300 five-year-olds and their teachers. Superintendent Tom Morrill believes the plan is a "revolution in education" that will lead to improved test scores. Larry Cuban, former education professor and author of *Oversold and Underused: Computers in Schools*, says there is no evidence that computers bring learning benefits to pupils that young. (edweek.org, 4-22-11)

New Jersey governor Chris Christie told a town hall audience in Manalapan in May that decisions about whether to teach creationism in schools should be made at the local level. "Evolution is required teaching," Christie said in response to a constituent question. "If there's a certain school district that also wants to teach creationism, that's not something we should decide in Trenton." (blog.nj.com, 5-12-11)

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'Advanced' in Name Only

More students than ever are earning credits for advanced classes, according to a Department of Education study released in April. The Department's National Center for Education Statistics examined nearly 38,000 high school transcripts and found that the proportion of graduates completing rigorous coursework rose from 5% in 1990 to 13% in 2009.

Good news on the education front, you say? Not so fast. Despite taking more challenging-sounding coursework, 17-year-olds aren't scoring any higher on federal standardized tests than they did in 1973. SAT scores have flat-lined since 2000, offering further evidence that kids aren't learning more now.

Why the disconnect? According to researchers, many course names are more rigorous than their actual content. It's the course-title equivalent of grade inflation. The new Algebra II is the old Algebra I; College Preparatory Chemis-

try used to be plain old Chemistry. A researcher who has studied the problem in Texas compared the practice to a food marketer labeling a can of orange soda as orange juice. "Like the misleading drink labels, course titles may bear little relationship to what students have actually learned," said Lynn Mellor.

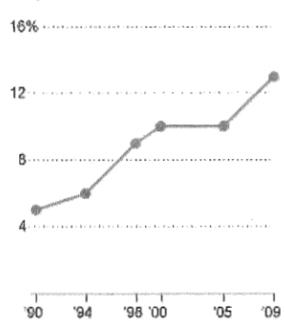
Mark Schneider, a vice president of the American Institutes for Research, said the divide between course titles and what students were learning became apparent a decade ago. Two national surveys showed that the proportion of high school seniors taking trigonometry, pre-calculus or calculus more than doubled between the early 1980s and the early 2000s. "Students were taking more rigorous-sounding courses, but there was no evidence they had mastered the content," said Schneider.

A 2008 survey conducted by William Schmidt of Michigan State University (See *Advanced*, page 4)

Disconnect Between Credits and Test Scores

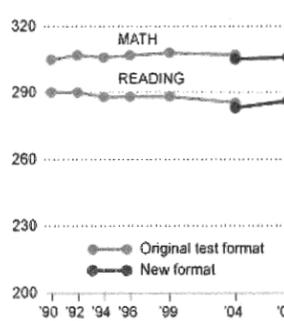
High school students are getting more credits for taking rigorous courses, but they are not scoring higher on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a federal test that measures achievement.

High school graduates completing a rigorous curriculum



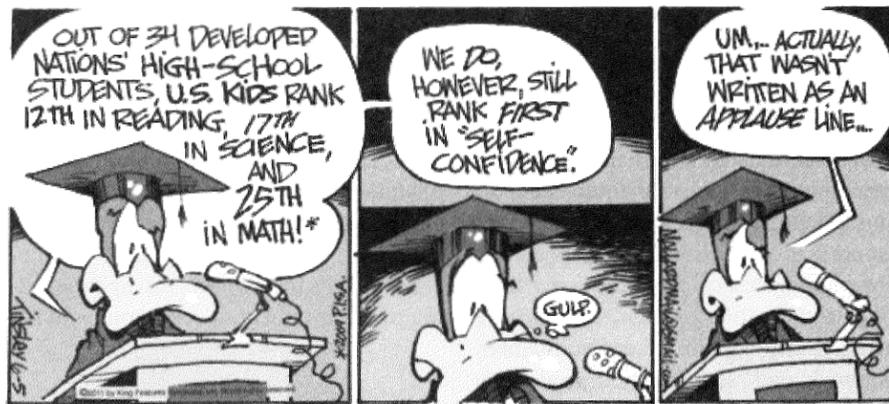
Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Average NAEP score for 17-year-old students



THE NEW YORK TIMES

MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



Teaching 'Critically' About Science

The first state law passed to protect public school teachers who teach students to think critically about controversial scientific topics easily survived its first challenge in May in Louisiana. The Senate Education Committee voted 5-1 to kill a bill intended to repeal the 2008 Louisiana Science Education Act (LSEA), which permits teachers to use supplemental materials in addition to state-approved textbooks for topics such as evolution, global warming, and cloning.

Senator Karen Carter Peterson (D-New Orleans) sponsored the repeal bill at the request of Zack Kopplin, a recent high school graduate from Baton Rouge. Kopplin said he spearheaded the repeal effort because he believed the LSEA "makes it harder for Louisiana students to get cutting-edge science-based jobs"

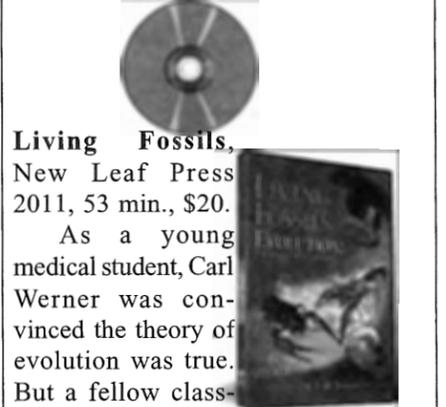
after they graduate because companies would not "trust our science education with this law on the books."

Repeal supporters made much of a letter signed by 43 Nobel laureates stating that the LSEA creates a pathway for creationism and other nonscientific instruction. That assertion ignores the fact that the LSEA explicitly prohibits promotion of any religious doctrine or "discrimination for or against religion or nonreligion."

Louisiana College biology professor Wade Warren countered by presenting a letter signed by 15 scientists who asserted that the Nobel laureates urging repeal "do not speak for many scientists who support open and objective inquiry."

(See *Teaching Science*, page 4)

DVD of the Month



Living Fossils, New Leaf Press 2011, 53 min., \$20. As a young medical student, Carl Werner was convinced the theory of evolution was true. But a fellow class-

mate suggested that certain biochemical formulas and laws of physics contradict evolution and the big bang theory. The classmate bet Werner that he could not prove the theory of evolution, setting the young doctor on a quest that would last more than three decades. After reading hundreds of books on evolution over 20 years, Dr. Werner designed a practical experiment. The theory of evolution suggests that plants and animals have changed dramatically over time. Dr. Werner decided to examine the fossil record during the dinosaur period to see what other fossils were found in the same rock layers. If modern plants and animals were found along with dinosaur remains, it would suggest little change in life forms over time — and that evolution is wrong.

Over the next 14 years, Dr. Werner and his wife Debbie traveled to eight countries to visit 10 dinosaur dig sites and dozens of museums. To their surprise, they found examples of every major plant division and all the major animal groups living today fossilized right alongside the dinosaurs. Interestingly, even though the fossils look remarkably similar, the plants and animals found in dinosaur rock layers were assigned entirely different genus and species names from their modern counterparts.

During the time of Werner's research, none of the 60 museums he visited chose to display the nearly 100 complete mammal fossil skeletons found in dinosaur layers. These fossils are important because they undermine evolutionists' claim that that only a few very small mammals were living at the time of the dinosaurs. Museums also leave out modern varieties of common plants and animals in dinosaur diorama displays, boosting evolutionary theory by giving the false impression that animal and plant life has changed more than it really has.

The *Living Fossils* DVD does what most museums don't — it displays dinosaur-era plant and animal fossils side-by-side with the closest modern species. The video also includes interviews with numerous scientists, underwater shots of Dr. Werner diving at the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, and footage from dinosaur dig sites in Europe and North America.

Watch the DVD and decide for yourself whether the significant changes posited by evolution have actually occurred. To order a copy of *Living Fossils* or other books and videos in the **Evolution: The Grand Experiment** series, call 1-800-771-2147 or visit www.TheGrandExperiment.com.

FOCUS: Why National Curriculum is Bad for America

A Critical Response to the Shanker Institute Manifesto and the U.S. Department of Education's Initiative to Develop National Curriculum and Assessments Based on National Standards

We, the undersigned, representing viewpoints from across the political and educational spectrum, oppose the call for a nationalized curriculum in the Albert Shanker Institute Manifesto "A Call for Common Content." We also oppose the ongoing effort by the U.S. Department of Education to have two federally funded testing consortia develop national curriculum guidelines, national curriculum models, national instructional materials, and national assessments using Common Core's national standards as a basis for these efforts.

We agree that our expectations should be high and similar for all children whether they live in Mississippi or Massachusetts, Tennessee or Texas. We also think that curricula should be designed before assessments are developed, not the other way around.

But we do not agree that a one-size-fits-all, centrally controlled curriculum for every K-12 subject makes sense for this country or for any other sizable country. Such an approach threatens to close the door on educational innovation, freezing in place an unacceptable status quo and hindering efforts to develop academically rigorous curricula, assessments, and standards that meet the challenges that lie ahead. Because we are deeply committed to improving this country's schools and increasing all students' academic achievement, we cannot support this effort to undermine control of public school curriculum and instruction at the local and state level — the historic locus for effective innovation and reform in education — and transfer control to an elephantine, inside-the-Beltway bureaucracy.

Moreover, transferring power to Washington, D.C., will only further subordinate educational decisions to political imperatives. All presidential administrations — present and future, Democratic and Republican — are subject to political pressure. Centralized control in the U.S. Department of Education would upset the system of checks and balances between different levels of government, creating greater opportunities for special interests to use their national political leverage to distort policy. Our decentralized fifty-state system provides some limitations on special-interest power, ensuring that other voices can be heard, that wrongheaded reforms don't harm children in every state, and that reforms that effectively serve children's needs can find space to grow and succeed.

The nationalized curriculum the Shanker Manifesto calls for, and whose development the U.S. Department of Education is already supporting, does not meet the criteria for sound public policy for the following reasons.

First, there is no constitutional or statutory basis for national standards, national assessments, or national curricula. The two testing consortia funded by the U.S. Department of Education have already expanded their activities beyond assessment, and are currently developing national curriculum guidelines, models, and

frameworks in accordance with their proposals to the Department of Education. Department of Education officials have so far not explained the constitutional basis for their procedures or forthcoming products. The U.S. Constitution seeks a healthy balance of power between states and the federal government, and wisely leaves the question of academic standards, curriculum, and instruction up to the states. In fact, action by the U.S. Department of Education to create national standards and curricula is explicitly proscribed by federal law, reflecting the judgment of Congress and the public on this issue.

Even if the development of national curriculum models, frameworks or guidelines were judged lawful, we do not believe Congress or the public supports having them developed by a self-selected group behind closed doors and with no public accountability. Whether curriculum developers are selected by the Shanker Institute or the U.S. Department of Education's testing consortia, they are working on a federally funded project to dramatically transform schools nationwide. They therefore ought to be transparent and accountable to Congress and the public.

Second, there is no consistent evidence that a national curriculum leads to high academic achievement. The Shanker Manifesto suggests that the only possible way to achieve high academic achievement is through a single national curriculum. Yet France and Denmark have centralized national curricula and do not show high average achievement on international tests or a diminishing gap between high- and low-achieving students. Meanwhile, Canada and Australia, both of which have many regional curricula, achieve better results than many affluent single-curriculum nations. The evidence on this question has been exhaustively addressed elsewhere. It does not support the conclusion that national standards are necessary either for high achievement or for narrowing the achievement gap.

Moreover, population mobility does not justify a national curriculum. Only inter-state mobility is relevant to the value of a national curriculum, and inter-state mobility in this country is low. The Census Bureau reports a total annual mobility rate of 12.5% in 2008-9, but only 1.6% of the total rate consists of inter-state moves that a national curriculum may influence. Other data indicate that inter-state mobility among school-age children is even lower, at 0.3%.

Third, the national standards on which the administration is planning to base a national curriculum are inadequate. If there are to be national academic-content standards, we do not agree that Common Core's standards are clear, adequate, or of sufficient quality to warrant being this country's national standards. The Common Core definition of "college readiness" is below what is currently required to enter most four-year state colleges. Independent reviews have found its standards to be below those in

the highest-performing countries and below those in states rated as having the best academic standards.

Fourth, there is no body of evidence for a "best" design for curriculum sequences in any subject. The Shanker Manifesto assumes we can use "the best of what is known" about how to structure curriculum. Yet which curriculum would be best is exactly what we do not know, if in fact all high school students should follow one curriculum. Much more innovation and development, and research evaluating it, is needed to address this knowledge gap. This means we should be encouraging — not discouraging — multiple models. Furthermore, the Shanker Manifesto calls for national curricula to encompass English, mathematics, history, geography, the sciences, civics, the arts, foreign languages, technology, health, and physical education. We wonder what is not included in its sweeping concept of a national curriculum.

Fifth, there is no evidence to justify a single high school curriculum for all students. A single set of curriculum guidelines, models, or frameworks cannot be justified at the high school level, given the diversity of interests, talents and pedagogical needs among adolescents. American schools should not be constrained in the diversity of the curricula they offer to students. Other countries offer adolescents a choice of curricula;

Finland, for example, offers all students leaving grade 9 the option of attending a three-year general studies high school or a three-year vocational high school, with about 50% of each age cohort enrolling in each type of high school. We worry that the "comprehensive" American high school may have outlived its usefulness, as a recent Harvard report implies. A one-size-fits-all model not only assumes that we already know the one best curriculum for all students; it assumes that one best way for all students exists. We see no grounds for carving that assumption in stone.

Conclusion

The Shanker Manifesto does not make a convincing case for a national curriculum. It manifests serious shortcomings in its discussion of curricular alignment and coherence, the quality of Common Core's national standards, course sequence and design, academic content, student mobility, sensitivity to pluralism, constitutionality and legality, transparency and accountability, diverse pedagogical needs, and the absence of consensus on all these questions. For these reasons, we the undersigned oppose the Shanker Manifesto's call for a nationalized curriculum and the U.S. Department of Education's initiative to develop a national curriculum and national tests based on Common Core's standards.

As of press time, there were more than 200 signatories, including:

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| Hon. Steve Baldwin <i>Former Chairman, California State Assembly Education</i> | Grover Norquist <i>President, Americans for Tax Reform</i> |
| Audrey V. Buffington <i>Former State Supervisor of Mathematics, Maryland</i> | Daniel Oliver <i>Former General Counsel, U.S. Department of Education</i> |
| John E. Chubb <i>Hoover Institution, Stanford University</i> | Hon. Betty Peters <i>Member, Alabama State Board of Education</i> |
| Michelle Easton <i>President, Clare Boothe Luce Policy Institute</i> | Sally C. Pipes <i>President & CEO Pacific Research Institute</i> |
| Karen R. Effrem, MD <i>President, Education Liberty Watch</i> | Hon. Bob Schaffer <i>Chairman, Colorado State Board of Education</i> |
| Bill Evers <i>U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education for Policy, 2007-2009</i> | Jane S. Shaw <i>President, John W. Pope Center for Higher Education Policy</i> |
| Will Fitzhugh <i>Founder & President, The Concord Review</i> | John Silber <i>President, Boston University, 1971-96</i> |
| John Fonte <i>Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute</i> | Eunie Smith <i>President, Eagle Forum of Alabama</i> |
| Greg Forster <i>Senior Fellow, Foundation for Educational Choice</i> | Shelby Steele <i>Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution</i> |
| Jay P. Greene <i>Dept. of Education Reform, University of Arkansas</i> | Sandra Stotsky <i>Common Core Standards Validation Committee, 2009-10</i> |
| Hon. Pete Hoekstra <i>Former Member, U.S. House Committee on Education</i> | Robert W. Sweet, Jr. <i>Former Reagan White House Policy Staffer</i> |
| Robert Holland <i>Senior Fellow for Education Policy, Heartland Institute</i> | Abigail Thernstrom <i>Member, Massachusetts State Board of Education, 1995-2006</i> |
| Hon. Peggy Littleton <i>Former Member, Colorado State Board of Education</i> | Stephen Thernstrom <i>Professor of History, Harvard University</i> |
| Carrie L. Lukas <i>Executive Director, Independent Women's Forum</i> | Ze'ev Wurman <i>Senior Advisor, U.S. Dept. of Education 2007-2009</i> |
| Edwin Meese III <i>Former Attorney General of the United States</i> | To see an up-to-date list of signatories or to add your name, visit www.k12innovation.com . |

Common Core (Continued from page 1)

curriculum is optional, but only the willfully credulous can ignore all the federal carrots and sticks being used to coerce states into “voluntary” compliance. At a time when the national fiscal climate is dismal and state revenues are in decline, states are increasingly dependent on federal funding for public schools. Even the possibility of receiving a one-time federal cash infusion prompted many states to change laws in order to qualify for the Race to the Top grant.

Moreover, President Obama has repeatedly said that he wants \$15 billion in Title I funds to be contingent on states adopting Common Standards and assess-

ments. Future Race to the Top grants proposed by the Education Department may also require adherence to the Common Core standards, tests and curriculum.

Despite all the financial inducements to cede state educational control to federal bureaucrats, counter-manifesto signatory Shelby Steele of Stanford University’s Hoover Institution urged Americans to consider the long-term consequences. “Decentralization has been the engine of educational innovation. We shouldn’t trade our federalist birthright for a national-curriculum mess of pottage,” he said. (*Education Week*, 5-18-11 and 3-9-11; *School Reform News*, 5-20-11)

Green Thumb (Continued from page 1)

it encourages recycling or saving energy. Peter Wood, of the National Association of Scholars, wrote in “Critiquing Sustainability” that sustainability “is not so much a subject as an ideology. It mixes together psychological dispositions, beliefs, scientific premises, social activism, government funding, and campus bureaucracy into a heady brew.”

The ideology of the sustainability movement is in opposition to many long-held beliefs of conservative Americans. For instance, college campuses were traditionally places of academic inquiry and discovery, not places to push an agenda on a captive audience. Although sustainability theoretically promotes tolerance, it leaves the college student little choice but to conform. As UNH states, “education in our time can, should, and must promote sustainability.”

For sustainability to work, everyone must believe the same thing and get with the program. This is why colleges have largely bypassed academic inquiry into the scientific facts behind sustainability and moved directly into making it a part of students’ everyday lives and way of thinking. Universities should be catalysts of invention, discovery, and technological progress, not centers of indoctrination.

The necessity for control of resources in the sustainability movement has led to anti-capitalistic leanings. Peter Wood explains that the movement “appropriated environmentalist rhetoric to push something akin to international socialism. It is, even in its mildest versions, allergic to free markets and has a strong attraction to international treaties and NGOs as the best means of advancing humanity toward the new sustainable Eden.”

Sustainability relies on government control to fulfill its goals instead of on consumers to freely invent better ways of using available resources. With backing from the UN and a focus on a “whole world” approach to change, it seems that



the only thing that is left unsustainable is an independent America.

One of the most disconcerting aspects of the sustainability movement is its quasi-religious character, focusing more on faith in the movement than scientific fact. Many people pushing the movement in colleges believe that our lives and the lives of future generations depend on sustainability.

Morality, then, is based on sacrificing time and convenience to sustain the earth. From UNH’s perspective, “Sustainability presents the inescapable questions of ‘what is the good life’ and ‘how do we organize society to sustain a good life now and for generations to come, for everyone?’ People have been asking these questions for thousands of years and so sustainability is not a new concept. But when we talk about sustainability, most of the old, familiar rules no longer apply: this is the case not only for organizational boundaries, but for moral, ethical and intellectual boundaries as well.”

College elites want to change the worldview of their students, ridding them of traditional values and instilling instead the values of sustainability in the environment, economy, and society. Almost anything they want to push can be hidden behind the mask of sustainability. Homosexuality, radical feminism, and racism fall in the social justice division; socialism and government control in the economic division; and, of course, a wide array of extreme conservation programs in the environmental division. Whatever it is, college students are eager to grab up the idea, not to be left behind in the cause of saving the world and bringing in Utopia.

Advanced (Continued from page 2)

found 270 distinctly named math courses offered in 30 Ohio and Michigan high schools. The survey also looked at science classes and found that one district offered ten variations of biology courses including Basic Biology, BioScience, and General Biology A and B. “The titles didn’t reveal much at all about how advanced the course was,” said Schmidt.

Course-title inflation is easier to document in math and science classes, said re-

searchers, but they suspect it is happening in English and other subjects too.

Researchers suggest several possible reasons for the course-title inflation trend. Administrators want to help students satisfy tougher high school graduation requirements. Parents want to believe their children are taking demanding coursework. Administrators look good when more students take ambitious-sounding classes.

Consent Law (Continued from page 1)

intercourse. B. No method was used to prevent pregnancy. C. Birth control pills. D. Condoms. E. Depo-Provera (or any injectable birth control), Nuva Ring (or any birth control ring), Implanon (or any implant), or any IUD. F. Withdrawal. G. Some other method. H. Not sure.”

Kids not yet exposed to illicit drugs or other poor health choices were made to answer questions such as, “During your life, how many times have you used methamphetamines (also called speed, crystal, crank, or ice)?” and, “During the past 30 days, did you vomit or take laxatives to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight?” Another question asked, “During the past 30 days, how many times did you sniff glue, breathe the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhale any paints or sprays to get high?”

These are the kinds of questions that parents should be able to protect their children from. However, some parents, such as Arlene Tessitore, were not given that opportunity. Schools often fail to notify or gain permission to conduct the survey even though it is theoretically required by the CDC. In a document entitled, “Conducting Your Own YRBS” the CDC explains, “You also should obtain parent permission for students to participate. Two approaches to securing parental permission are available. *Active parental permission* means that you collect a signature from each parent authorizing the student’s participation. A student is not allowed to take part in the YRBS unless a parent has returned a signed form indicating their approval of their student’s participation in the survey. Only students whose parents have provided written approval in this manner can participate in the survey. *Passive permission* means that students are excluded from the survey only when a parent returns a signed form denying permission.”

According to federal law however, passive permission is insufficient. The *Protection of Pupil Rights* amendment allows parents to protect their children’s

privacy. It states that “no student shall be required, as part of any applicable program, to submit to a survey, analysis, or evaluation that reveals information concerning . . . mental or psychological problems of the student or the student’s family; sex behavior or attitudes; illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior . . . without the prior written consent of the parent.”

The questions on the YRBS fall directly into the categories requiring “written consent of the parent.” According to Rutherford Institute President John Whitehead, “passive notification is merely a surreptitious way to avoid obtaining written parental consent. And in the end, whether due to the child losing the notification form or forgetting to give it to the parents, parents are often left in the dark, unaware that their children are being subjected to such invasive tests.”

Yet the CDC suggests in “Conducting Your Own YRBS” that schools use passive permission because, “active parental permission typically requires more time and resources and may reduce the number of students who participate in the survey.”

According to the Rutherford Institute, a representative from the local agency administering the YRBS at Memorial Middle School said that the agency requires a 98% participation rate to continue receiving federal funding. The CDC states “as a general rule, expect the use of active parental permission to reduce student response rates by about 50 percent unless you implement extraordinary follow up procedures.” Perhaps this is why the *Protection of Pupil Rights* amendment and parental rights in general have been misused and ignored. Schools know that if active parental consent is required they will lose participation and federal funding partly because many informed parents would not want their children to be exposed to the YRBS or because they never saw the permission form.

Teaching Science (Continued from page 2)

Their letter accused LSEA opponents of “seeking to confuse the issue” by mislabeling scientific critique of evolution as creationism. “If science educators follow the approach of LSEA critics, science education will become science indoctrination,” they warned.

Professor Wade refuted the LSEA critics’ repeated assertion that there is no real controversy and no credible critique of evolution to present in science classes. He testified about a previous hearing where one anti-LSEA biologist had the “audacity” to claim “there is no controversy among professional biologists about the fact of evolution,” right after other scientists had spoken about problems with evolution.

Legal professionals also came to defend the 2008 law. Retired judge Darrell White read a letter from Southern University law professor Michelle Ghetti advising that there are no constitutional grounds for repealing LSEA because both the language and intent of the law pass constitutional muster.

The victory for academic freedom and free scientific inquiry in Louisiana may prove important because it has the potential to embolden other states to adopt similar laws. In fact, since January, legislators in nine states have proposed bills that promote critical analysis of evolutionary theory and ensure academic freedom for faculty regarding contentious scientific issues, but all of them either died in committee or have been postponed until the next legislative session. (*nola.com*, 5-26-11; *washingtonpost.com*, 4-22-11; *evolutionnews.org*, 5-27-11)

